

THE IDEALIZED WORLD OF MALORY'S "MORTE DARTHUR":  
A Study of the Elements of Myth, Allegory, and Symbolism  
in the Secular and Religious Milieux of Arthurian Romance

by

MURIEL A. I. WHITAKER

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department  
of  
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the  
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April, 1970

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study.

I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date May 3 1970

## ABSTRACT

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, Sir Thomas Malory synthesized the diverse elements of British chronicle history, Celtic myth, French courtoisie, and Catholic theology which over a period of six hundred years or more had gathered about the legendary figure of King Arthur. Furthermore, Malory presented in definitive form the kind of idealized milieu that later writers in English came to regard as romantic. Malory's Morte Darthur presents dramatically the activities of a mythic aristocratic society living in a golden age. It preserves the "history" of a British king who defeats the Emperor of Rome and establishes an empire stretching from Ireland and Scandinavia to the Eastern Mediterranean. It portrays the adventures of heroic knights whose prowess is inspired by idealized ladies and whose achievements are helped or hindered by such supernatural agents as fays, magicians, giants, dwarfs, angels and devils. The actions of the knights conform to a ritualistic pattern of quest and combat determined by stereotyped chivalric conventions and performed in a symbol-studded environment. Colours, numbers, costumes, metals, arms, armour, and horses have symbolic significances which may be hierarchic, emotive or moral. Castles and perilous forests represent the antithetical values of security and danger, peace and combat, civilization and primitivism, love and hate. In this antipodal environment occur encounters which often adumbrate a struggle between forces of good and forces of evil.

In the religious milieu of the Grail quest, elements of the secular milieu are adopted for the purpose of expressing truths of

Catholic faith and morality. The Grail Knight's search for Corbenic is an allegory of the soul's search for God. Arms and armour, dress and colours, animals and plants have symbolic significances drawn from Biblical exegesis and Christian art.

The unifying element in the historical, romantic and religious milieux is the quest motif; it is the means by which the ideals of the Malorian world are revealed. The historical quest for the crown of Rome shows Malory's view of sovereignty and the ideal of the good king. The romantic quest for fame and fair ladies shows his view of chivalry and the ideal of the good knight. The spiritual quest for the Holy Grail shows his view of religion and the ideal of the good Christian. It is a measure of Malory's art that the wishfulfilling dream world of romance projects an illusion of reality.



I wish to express my thanks to all those who so valiantly assisted on the preparation of this thesis; in particular to Professor W. M. Thompson of the Department of English and to Professor Richard Holdaway of the Department of French at the University of British Columbia.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Introduction.....	1
I The Historical Quest: The Road to Rome...	9
II The Romantic Quest: Castles and Perilous Forests.....	43
III The Romantic Quest: The Journey to the Centre.....	87
IV The Religious Quest: The Way of Salvation.....	143
Conclusion.....	205
Bibliography.....	217
Appendix A Medieval Views of Time and History.....	236
Appendix B Medieval Views of Place.....	257

## Abbreviations Commonly Used in Documentation

- Works     --   The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugène Vinaver.
- ALMA     --   Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R.S. Loomis
- HRB     --   Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia Regum Britanniae, ed.  
              Acton Griscom.
- M.A.     --   alliterative Morte Arthure, ed. Edmund Brock.
- Sommer    --   The Vulgate Version of Arthurian Romance, ed. H.O. Sommer.

## INTRODUCTION

Malorian scholarship, which received much of its initial stimulus from the publication of H. Oskar Sommer's Le Morte Darthur (London, 1889-91), gained fresh impetus from Eugène Vinaver's 1947 edition of the manuscript discovered thirteen years earlier in the Fellows' Library of Winchester College. Yet, as J. A. W. Bennett, the editor of Essays on Malory (Oxford, 1963) points out, "'a large field is yet left unto sharper discerners.'" The collaborative history edited by R. S. Loomis, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1959), indicates that studies of literary sources and analogues continue to occupy the paramount position in Arthurian scholarship.

The number of books devoted exclusively to Malory is not large. G. L. Kittredge's Who Was Sir Thomas Malory? (Boston, 1897), E. K. Chambers' Sir Thomas Malory (London, 1922) and Edward Hicks' Sir Thomas Malory, His Turbulent Career: A Biography (Cambridge, 1928), have concentrated on biography. More recently, William Matthews' The Ill-Framed Knight (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966) has proposed that the author of the Morte Darthur was a Yorkshire Malory rather than the Warwickshire "felon" who is generally considered to be the "knight-prisoner" of the Winchester manuscript.

In the area of interpretation, Vida D. Scudder's Le Morte Darthur of Sir Thomas Malory: A Study of the Book and Its Sources (London and New York, 1921) fleetingly mentions

archetypal material but its emphasis is on literary sources; the author concludes that although Arthur's knights occasionally display "disconcerting fairy habits," yet in the main "they and the life they share reflect with extraordinary accuracy the varied aspects, material and psychological, of contemporary Europe (p.8)." Eugene Vinaver, too, in his Malory (Oxford, 1929) suggests that the author is concerned with contemporary reality and that he substitutes for the remote idealism of the French romantic writers "the philosophy of a practical and righteous fifteenth-century gentleman (p.109)." Vinaver's conclusion that "it is not Malory who can lead us back to the enchanted realm of Arthur and Lancelot" represents a position contrary to that taken in this dissertation.

In an effort to disprove Vinaver's contention that Malory wrote eight separate books, a number of scholars have contributed essays to Malory's Originality, editor R. M. Lumiansky (Baltimore, 1964). These deal with the theme, structure and characterization of the Morte Darthur in relation to its sources. In addition to considering the problem of unity, Charles Moorman's The Book of King Arthur (Lexington, 1965) is concerned with the themes of love, religion, and chivalry. However, Moorman's emphasis on the failures of the Round Table distorts the Malorian vision and contradicts the view that Malory is presenting an ideal world. Another critic, Edmund Reiss, describes his Sir Thomas Malory (New York, 1966) as a "full-length, unified critical examination of Malory's work, emphasizing the artistic and thematic relationships"; Reiss purposely excludes any examination of "the backgrounds

of Arthurian romance."

There is a considerable body of periodical material devoted to Malory, much of it listed in Vinaver's bibliography (Works I, cxxxii-cxlii). Additional titles may be gleaned from the Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society, edited by Lewis Thorpe. So far as can be ascertained, no one has analysed extensively the elements of myth, allegory, and symbolism in Malory's work or shown how they are related to the projection of an idealized world.

Several critical works have provided suggestions for the approach which I have taken. Rosamund Tuve's Allegorical Imagery (Princeton, 1966), a study of some medieval sources of sixteenth-century allegory, elucidates the philosophical and aesthetic bases of allegorical romance. Her chapter on "Romances" is often pertinent to Malory though it is directed primarily toward Spenser's Faerie Queene. Angus Fletcher's Allegory (Ithaca, 1964) shows the relationship between the allegorical mode of expression and ritualistic patterns of structure such as the progress and the battle. The work is eclectic and does not focus on the medieval period in particular. Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism (New York, 1966) proposes that myth is the archetypal source of romance and designates the quest as its basic motif. His analysis of apocalyptic, demonic, and analogical imagery is relevant to Arthurian material but he seldom cites examples drawn from medieval works.

The bases of the Galfridian myth of Arthur as continental conqueror have been discussed by R. H. Fletcher in The

Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, second edition (New York, 1966), R. W. Hanning in The Vision of History in Early Britain (New York and London, 1966) and J. S. P. Tatlock in The Legendary History of Britain (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950). None of them sees Arthur's journey as a quest. On the contrary, Hanning finds that the Wheel of Fortune metaphor controls the vision of history in Geoffrey's work while Tatlock cites the legends of Alexander as providing an important precedent for the imperialistic theme.

Many scholars have found in Celtic mythology the sources of Arthurian marvels, both secular and religious. Lucy A. Paton's Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance, second edition (New York, 1960), H. R. Patch's The Other World According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1950) and R. S. Loomis' numerous books and articles were particularly useful. Yet none of these critics gives Malory more than a passing glance.

All Malory citations in this dissertation refer to Eugene Vinaver's monumental second edition of the Winchester manuscript, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, three volumes (Oxford, 1967). Some direct comparisons have been made between the Morte Darthur and such source materials as the alliterative Morte Arthure, editor Edmund Brock (London, 1865) and the Vulgate Version of Arthurian Romance, editor H. O. Sommer (Washington, 1909-13). To a large extent, however, I have relied on Vinaver's Commentary (Vol. III) in determining how Malory differs from his sources.

King Arthur has been described as "a shadowy apparition clothed in the mists of legend and stalking athwart the path of history to distract and mystify the sober chronicler."<sup>1</sup> The historicity of Arthur is a puzzling problem which does not concern us here.<sup>2</sup> The "historical" Arthur known to the Middle Ages was not a dux bellorum of the Celts<sup>3</sup> but an idealized type of Anglo-Norman conqueror depicted by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his Historia Regum Britanniae (ca. 1137).<sup>4</sup> Even in the twelfth century, historians were complaining of the mythic elements that had infiltrated the "history." The nugae Britonum that William of Malmesbury<sup>5</sup> condemned and the fabulosi Britones to which Giraldus Cambrensis<sup>6</sup> referred were products of the Celtic imagination. Geoffrey himself did not ignore the world of myth and magic in his fabulous history.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>W. L. Jones, King Arthur in History and Legend (Cambridge, 1933), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>The best short summary of evidence is K. H. Jackson's "The Arthur of History," ALMA, pp. 1-11.

<sup>3</sup>On this theory, see R. G. Collingwood, Roman Britain and the English Settlements (Oxford, 1937), pp. 321ff; Geoffrey Ashe, From Caesar to Arthur (London, 1960) and The Quest for Arthur's Britain (London, 1968).

<sup>4</sup>Ed. Acton Griscom with trans. by R. E. Jones (London, 1929).

<sup>5</sup>Chronicles of the Kings of England, ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1847), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup>"Speculum Ecclesiae," Opera, ed. J. S. Brewer and J. F. Dimoch (London, 1861-91), Vol. IV, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup>R. H. Fletcher, op. cit., pp. 85-108 and J. S. P. Tatlock, op. cit., passim.



Another strain entered the Arthurian material from France where ideals of chivalry and courtly love were embodied in romances of Arthur and his knights. Chretien de Troyes' Ivain, for example, demonstrates that mingling of magic, chivalric prowess and courtoisie which is found in most subsequent Arthurian romances including the Morte Darthur. The final stage in the creation of the ideal world was the assimilation of Christian doctrine. The values of Catholic theology were presented in terms of a chivalric quest for the Holy Grail.

The world of the Morte Darthur is a mingling of diverse elements--Celtic, Christian, classical, courtly, historical and pseudo-historical--and these elements derive whatever unity they might possess from the use of chivalric imagery and the quest motif. It is suggested that in spite of many realistic details, the world in Malory's Morte Darthur, as in most Arthurian literature, is essentially idealised. It is a world that exists for the benefit of a romanticized aristocratic society<sup>8</sup> enjoying for the most part the peaceful violence of a chivalric golden age. It is frequented by mythic agents both Celtic and Christian--fays and the wizard Merlin, angels and devils. Its setting consists chiefly of castles and perilous forests that represent the

---

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel (New York, 1961), pp. 52-3: Myth appears in a novel when the action and the particular set of manners represented in the book are organized in a total symbolic construct of such a kind that it not only reflects the aspirations and ideals, the attitudes and customs of a large social group, but also seems to give these attitudes and customs the sanction of some higher authority.

antipodes of the chivalric world. Camelot is the symbolic centre of la chevalerie terrienne, Corbenic and Sarra the apocalyptic goals of la chevalerie celestienne, Rome the emblem of imperial power. Though the historical and religious quests proceed according to the linear time scheme of universal Christian history,<sup>9</sup> the use of the seasonal and liturgical cycle imposes on linear time a symbolic time scheme characteristic of myth and romance.

It would be erroneous to suggest that the Morte Darthur should be read as a consistent allegory. The literal meaning is the chief and often the only matter of interest. Nevertheless, in the secular milieu we are intermittently aware of the larger struggle between good and evil that is the basis of tropological interpretations. The Round Table is a moral institution and its knights are agents of right. In the religious milieu, on the other hand, the allegory is pervasive. The quest for the Grail is not merely a literal journey from Camelot to Corbenic. It is the soul's journey towards the City of God. Psychomachiae interrupt its progress, giving a tropological as well as an anagogical import. The explanations of hermits, saintly women, and other representatives of the Deity ensure that we do not miss the significance of the allegory imposed by the Christian author or authors. Motifs of the religious quest for the Grail recur in the final book in order to presage and explain the ultimate salvation of Lancelot and Guinevere.

---

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix A.

We may suppose that Malory's contemporaries approached the Morte Darthur in much the same way as Sir John Harrington read Orlando Furioso:

First of all for the litterall sence (as it were the utmost barke or ryne) they set downe in manner of an historie, the acts and notable exploits of some persons worthy memorie, then in the same fiction, as a second rine and somewhat more fine, as it were nearer to the pith and marrow, they place the Morall sence, profitable for the active life of man, approving vertuous actions and condemning the contrarie. Manie times also under the selfesame words they comprehend some true understanding of naturall Philosophie, or sometimes of politike government, and now and then of divinitie: and these same sences that comprehend so excellent knowledge we call the allegorie.<sup>10</sup>

Though the reader might give his attention primarily to the outer rind, he would retain an awareness of larger implications--ideals behind the realities, cosmic struggles between good and evil, mirrored in the quests that Arthur and his knights achieved in a world governed by ritual and symbol.

---

<sup>10</sup>Orlando Furioso (London, 1591), reprinted in G. Gregory Smith, Elizabethan Critical Essays, 2 vols., (London, 1937), Vol. 2, pp. 201-2.

## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORICAL QUEST: THE ROAD TO ROME

Whether the original Arthur was a god, a culture hero, or a dux bellorum of the Brythonic Celts who fought against the Saxons in the late fifth century,<sup>1</sup> the Arthur of Malory's Morte Darthur is a romantic hero in a historical context. When Geoffrey of Monmouth first presented Arthur as a medieval monarch and a continental conqueror,<sup>2</sup> it is possible that his concept of the British king may have been influenced by the figure of Charlemagne<sup>3</sup> in French history and legend. It may also have been influenced by the character and achievements of William the Conqueror.<sup>4</sup> The author of Malory's immediate

---

<sup>1</sup>Bibliographical material on the origins of Arthur may be found in J. D. Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance, 2nd ed. (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), II, pp. 381-398; Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R. S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), passim; E. K. Chambers, Arthur of Britain, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 283-294. Recent works on the historical Arthur include Geoffrey Ashe's The Quest for Arthur's Britain (London, 1968) and Beram Saklatvala's Arthur: Roman Britain's Last Champion (Newton Abbot, 1967).

<sup>2</sup>Historia Regum Britanniae, ed. Acton Griscom, trans. R. E. Jones (London, 1929); Variant Version, ed. Jacob Hammer (Cambridge, Mass., 1951).

<sup>3</sup>On Charlemagne as a source for Arthur see J. D. Bruce, I, p. 24; E. K. Chambers, 38, 72, 86 et al.; R. H. Fletcher, The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles (New York, 1966), p. 84; J. S. P. Tatlock, The Legendary History of Britain (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950), pp. 310-311; G. H. Gerould, "King Arthur and Politics," Speculum II (1927), 38ff.

<sup>4</sup>Fletcher, pp. 109-112; Tatlock, pp. 308-309.

source, the alliterative Morte Arthure,<sup>5</sup> may have taken as a model Edward III,<sup>6</sup> and Malory himself may have idealized in Arthur the prestigious Henry V<sup>7</sup> or his own immediate overlord, Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, under whom the Warwickshire knight served at the siege of Calais.<sup>8</sup> Historical analogies<sup>9</sup> may well account for the realism which sometimes characterizes Malory's treatment of the chronicle material. Nevertheless, romantic elements are sufficiently important to permit us to treat Arthur as a romantic hero and his progress to Rome as an exemplification of the quest motif. In the Morte Darthur, as in many "histories" of the Middle Ages, we find that "close union of the primeval and magical with hard-headed politics" which for Friedrich Heer constituted the atmosphere of courtly romance.<sup>10</sup>

Lord Raglan's hero pattern of royal ancestry, mysteri-

---

<sup>5</sup>Ed. Edmund Brock, EETS OS 8 (London, 1871) and John Finlayson (Evanston, 1967).

<sup>6</sup>See Williams Matthews, The Tragedy of Arthur (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), pp. 184-192.

<sup>7</sup>Vinaver's Introduction to The Works of Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford, 1967), I, xxxi-xxxii.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Pageant of the Birth, Life, and Death of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, ed. Viscount Dillon and W. H. St. John Hope (London, 1914).

<sup>9</sup>See Nellie Slayton Aurner, "Sir Thomas Malory--Historian?" PMLA, xlviii (1933), 360-391.

<sup>10</sup>The Medieval World: Europe 1100-1350, trans. Janet Sondheimer (London, 1962), p. 134. On medieval views of history see Appendix A.

ous conception and birth, protected childhood, magical recognition, preliminary successes, crucial struggle, victory, and apotheosis is well illustrated in the traditional life of Arthur. It is these aspects of the biography that may be regarded as mythic.<sup>11</sup> Through his father, King Uther Pendragon, he is linked to the legendary kings of Britain, descendants of the Trojan prince, Brutus.<sup>12</sup> Through his mother, Igraine, he is related to the Celtic enchantress, Morgan le Fay.<sup>13</sup> His illicit conception is contrived by Merlin, the magician who brings Uther to Igraine in the guise of her husband.<sup>14</sup> Spirited away at birth for his own protection, the child is brought up secretly. His right to the throne is proved at the appointed time by the magical test of the sword in the stone. His victories over the rebellious kings are effected with the assistance of Merlin and through the potency of his own magical weapons. In a crucial struggle he kills first the giant of St. Michael's Mount, then the Roman Emperor. He marries a princess, Guenevere, and receives a marvelous wedding present, the Round Table.

---

<sup>11</sup>Lord Raglan, The Hero (London, 1936), pp. 178-180, 188. Some critics suggest that the legends of Arthur derive from those of Alexander. Cf. Tatlock, pp. 312, 320; Matthews, pp. 32-67, and George Carey, The Medieval Alexander (Cambridge, 1956).

<sup>12</sup>On Trojan genealogy, see Appendix A.

<sup>13</sup>On the rationalization of Morgan in French romance see Lucy A. Paton, Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance (New York, 1960), pp. 162-166.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. the classical myth of Jupiter and Alcmena.

Finally, after a fatal battle, he is transported to the Celtic Otherworld, Avalon,<sup>15</sup> to be healed of his wounds. From there he will return to save his people.<sup>16</sup> Such is the mythic core that Malory inherited.<sup>17</sup>

In the centuries preceding Malory's, the character of Arthur had been subject to diverse representations. The Arthur of Celtic myth had been a tribal hero who led his band of warriors on Otherworld quests and monster-slaying adventures (as in Kulhwch and Olwen or The Spoils of Annwfn, for example).<sup>18</sup> The Arthur of the Latin Vitae was a local tyrant "with an undisciplined character which occasionally calls for saintly correction."<sup>19</sup> In the French romances he was a roi fainéant, a "banal maitre de ceremonies."<sup>20</sup> In the Perles-

<sup>15</sup>On Avalon as a Celtic Otherworld, see R. S. Loomis, "The Legends of Arthur's Survival," ALMA, pp. 64-67; H. R. Patch, The Other World (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), pp. 284ff; Paton, passim. On the identification of Avalon and Glastonbury, see Geoffrey Ashe, King Arthur's Avalon (London, 1957).

<sup>16</sup>The "Briton hope," according to Tatlock (pp. 204-205) is the only evidence of popular familiarity with Arthur before HRB.

<sup>17</sup>On sources of the mythological material see Chambers, pp. 205-232; Fletcher, passim.

<sup>18</sup>Kulhwch and Olwen and The Spoils of Annwfn are generally regarded as Pre-Galfridian. Cf. ALMA pp. 15, 32. Tatlock disagrees, op. cit., pp. 194-9. On evidences of the Arthurian legend before 1139, see R. S. Loomis, Wales and the Arthurian Legend (Cardiff, 1956), pp. 179-220.

<sup>19</sup>E. K. Chambers, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>20</sup>J. Bedier, Revue des deux mondes LVII (1891), p. 860, cited by P. Rickard, Britain in Medieval French Literature (Cambridge, 1956), p. 76, fn. 1.

vaus his sloth had undermined the Round Table and enervated the whole kingdom. In Robert de Boron's Mort d'Arthur his continental expedition was a minor adventure undertaken to help Lancelot regain his lands from a usurper. In the Prose Lancelot he was so weak that he could not protect his vassal Ban nor avenge his death.<sup>21</sup> He was powerless to prevent the theft of his golden cup in Li Contes del Graal or the abduction of his queen in Le Chevalier de la Charrette. None of these versions of the Arthurian material except the Welsh treats Arthur as a hero.

Therefore, Malory turned to the English chronicle tradition which depicted Arthur as a great British king, continental conqueror, and Christian champion. It is probable that for Malory and most of his contemporaries Arthur was a historical personage. That the presentation of national history was regarded even in the seventeenth century as Malory's primary purpose is suggested by the subtitle that William Stansby gave his 1634 edition of Le Morte Darthur:

The most ancient and Famous History of the renowned prince Arthur, King of Britaine,. . . wherein is declared his Life and Death with all his glorious Battailles against the Saxons, Saracens, and Pagans, which (for the honour of his Country) he most worthily achieved. . . .

Attempts to discredit the historicity of Arthur were rigorously resisted for hundreds of years after the appearance of Geof-

---

<sup>21</sup>Elspeth M. Kennedy, "King Arthur in the First Part of the Prose Lancelot," A Medieval Miscellany presented to Eugène Vinaver, ed. F. Whitehead, A. H. Diverres, F. E. Sutcliffe (Manchester and New York, 1965), pp. 186-195.



frey's Historia. The fourteenth-century Scalacronica of Sir Thomas Gray includes "a hole Chapitre speking agayne them that believe not Arthure to have beene King of Britaine."<sup>22</sup> Caxton, too, firmly condemns those who deny<sup>23</sup> that there "was suche a noble Kyng named Arthur, and reputed one of the nine worthy, and fyrst and chyef of the Cristen men." As proof of Arthur's historicity he offers not only the numerous chronicles, but his tomb at Glastonbury,<sup>24</sup> his seal in Westminster Abbey, Gasain's skull<sup>25</sup> and Cradoc's mantle in Dover Castle, the Round Table<sup>26</sup> at Winchester and Lancelot's sword and many other things "in other places."<sup>27</sup> Finally, as an

---

<sup>22</sup>John Leland, Assertio Arturii, cited by Fletcher, pp. 8-9.

<sup>23</sup>Among the doubters of Geoffrey's reliability were William of Newburgh, Giraldus Cambrensis, Ralph Higden and his translator Trevisa, and Polydore Virgil; cf. Fletcher pp. 178-185, 260.

<sup>24</sup>In 1190, at a time when Henry II's Celtic subjects were cherishing the hope of Arthur's return, the grave of Arthur and Guenevere was conveniently found at Glastonbury soon after the discovery of a leaden cross bearing the inscription, "Hic jacet Sepultus Inclytus Rex Arturus in Insula Avallonia," cf. Giraldus Cambrensis, De Principes Instructione viii, 126-9 (ca. 1194). See also C. A. Ralegh Radford's "Glastonbury Abbey," The Quest for Arthur's Britain, ed. Geoffrey Ashe (London, 1968), pp. 119-138.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Malory's allusion to the burial of Gawain at Dover, Works, p. 1232.

<sup>26</sup>"Arthur's Round Table," first described by the chronicler Hardyng ca. 1450, may still be seen at Winchester; cf. R. S. and L. H. Loomis, Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art (New York and London, 1938) I, p. 40.

<sup>27</sup>Caxton's preface is reproduced in Vinaver's edition, pp. cx/iii-cxlvii.

indication that Malory himself probably accepted the historicity of Arthur there is his colophon at the conclusion of the Roman Wars episode:

Here endyth the Tale of the Noble Kynge  
 Arthure that was Emperoure hymself  
 thorow dygnyté of his hondys (247).

Medieval visions of history synthesized three pasts--the Judeo-Christian, the Graeco-Roman and the national barbarian.<sup>28</sup> The life of a national hero was part of the linear progress of world history. Malory accepts this frame, relating it to the biography of Arthur by means of genealogy. Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, is a pseudo-historical son of the historical Constantine the Great who proclaimed himself Roman Emperor at York in 306 A.D., removed the seat of empire to the shores of the Bosphorus and accepted the Christian faith, earning for himself "every attribute of a hero, and even of a saint."<sup>29</sup> Malory's Arthur cites this ancestry, as well as his relationship to a ~~earlier~~ pair of British conquerors Belyn and Bryne, in order to establish his right to undertake the quest for Rome (188). The message which the senators deliver to Lucius asserts Arthur's belief that

Ye have occupyed the Empyre with grete wronge, for  
 all his [i.e. Arthur's] trew auncettryes sauff his  
 fadir Uther were Emperoures of Rome (192).

---

<sup>28</sup>R. W. Hanning, The Vision of History in Early Britain (New York and London, 1966), p. 40. See also Appendix A.

<sup>29</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, abridg. D. M. Low (London, 1960), p. 266.

Genealogy, an important element in both pseudo-history and romance, is utilized to increase the stature of the legendary hero and to place him in the perspective of world history devised by Christian historiographers. Furthermore, Malory's description (not in his source) of Constantine as "dame Elyneys son" (188) and the allusion to the recovery of the True Cross produce the synthesis of national, classical and Christian "history" that the figure of Constantine represented in the Middle Ages. Arthur, then, belongs clearly to the tradition of "Christianissimus rex," an idealized type created by medieval historiographers.<sup>30</sup>

As a grandson of the fourth-century emperor, Arthur must be presumed to have flourished during the fifth century in the troublous times of the Saxon invasions. Malory, however, barely mentions the Saxons, and then only as enemies of Mark, not Arthur (619-626).<sup>31</sup> The ethos of his historical vision is rather that of the High Middle Ages. The reluctance of the barons to accept Arthur as heir to the throne resembles the contentiousness that surrounded the accession of such historical English kings as Stephen and Henry VI. After his succession, the young Arthur seems to reflect the image of the ambitious and energetic Angevins whose determination to unite the British Isles took them into the fastnesses of Scotland and Wales. His effort to maintain political stability takes

---

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Asser's Alfred, Suger's Saint Louis, and Bede's Oswald.

<sup>31</sup>Contrast the role of the Saxons in Layamon's Brut.

on ironic overtones in its fifteenth-century context when what A. N. Myers calls "the nemesis of Lancaster" had resulted from the failure of the Crown to resist and control the magnates' usurpation of royal powers.<sup>32</sup>

In minor details, also, Malory's attempts at rationalization and localization may be seen. He creates an air of authenticity about the marvelous events leading to the hero's conception by adding apparently unnecessary specifications to the story of Igraine's seduction. The castle of Tintagel is described as being "but ten myle hens" (9); Uther's seduction of Igraine is made to occur "more than thre houres" after her husband's death. Sir Ector, to whom the child's upbringing is entrusted, is not the "pas trop riches hom" of the French source but a "lord of fair lyvelode in many partyes in Englund and Walys" (10). The sword test is localized in the churchyard of "the grettest chirch of London--whether it were Powlis or not the Frensshe booke maketh no mencyon" (12). And Morgan le Fay learns her magic arts not in the Celtic Otherworld but in a nunnery (10).

Even the pervasive myth of the undying Arthur is counterpoised in Malory's Morte Darthur, as it was in La Mort le Roi Artu, by the "historical" death and burial of the Christian king in the Archbishop's chapel at Glastonbury. The conclusion of the story of Arthur is recounted in words that are Malory's own contribution and that represent his attempt at

---

<sup>32</sup>England in the Late Middle Ages (Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 101ff.

reconciling the Celtic myth of Arthur's return with the Christian view of history as a unique linear progress from the Creation to the Last Judgment:

Now more of the deth of kynge Arthur coudē II never fynde, but that thes ladyes brought hym to hys grave, and such one was entyred there whych the ermyte bare wytnes that sometyme was Bysshop of Caunturbyry. But yet the ermyte knew nat in sertayne that he was veryly the body of kynge Arthur: for thys tale sir Bede-were, a knyght of the Table Rounde, made hit to be wrytten.

Yet som men say in many partys of Inglonde that kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of oure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wynne the Holy Crosse. Yet I woll nat say that hit shall be so, but rather I wolde say: here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff. And many men say that there ys wrytten uppon the tumbe thys: Hic Iacet Arthurus, Rex Quondam Rexque Futurus (1242).<sup>33</sup>

It is possible to see the influence not only of the stylized medieval historical view but also of authentic British history in the Morte Darthur. To a greater extent, we are aware of authentic British geography in Malory's work as compared with the vagueness and inaccuracy of the French romances<sup>34</sup> and the unevenness of the chronical material.<sup>35</sup> In

<sup>33</sup>A seventeenth-century engraving in Camden's Britannia of the cross said to have been found in Arthur's grave depicts a form of letters proper to the eleventh century or earlier, rather than to the twelfth century when the grave was discovered. See C. A. Ralegh Radford, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. J. Frappier, Etude sur La Mort Le Roi Artu (Paris, 1961), p. 22, F. Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en prose (Paris, 1954), pp. 146-7; Richard, op. cit., pp. 100ff.

<sup>35</sup>On Geoffrey's British geography see Tatlock, pp. 7-84. A significant feature is the large proportion of places with Roman associations.

the first sentence of Morte Darthur, Uther is described as "kyng of all England" (Malory's addition). England or Logres, as it was frequently called, was a kingdom of undefined limits in Geoffrey's work and in the French romances. For Malory it has specific boundaries. It extends in length from Sandwich to Carlisle (1200). Its geographic divisions are marked by great rivers,<sup>36</sup> the Humber in the north (127, 129, 700), the Trent (25), the Thames (1094-5, 1125), and the Severn (887). Localization is the chief feature of Malory's geography.<sup>37</sup> Camelot is specifically identified with Winchester (286, 1050, 1227), the old capital of the Saxon kings;<sup>38</sup> Joyous Gard with Alnwick or Bamborough (1257);<sup>39</sup> Astalot with Guildford (1065);<sup>40</sup> the castle of Magouns with Arundel.<sup>41</sup> There are also old names

---

<sup>36</sup>Cf. the maps of Matthew Paris.

<sup>37</sup>It is impossible to accept Beram Saklatvala's statement that "from Malory's text we do not even know in what places his [i.e. Arthur's] adventures befell him." Arthur: Roman Britain's Last Champion, p. 18.

<sup>38</sup>William I perpetuated the royal association by holding Easter court there.

<sup>39</sup>Malory may have been present at the sieges of these castles in 1462-3. Cf. Vinaver, Works, p. xxv.

<sup>40</sup>On the appropriateness of this identification see G. R. Stewart, "English Geography in Malory's Morte D'Arthur," MLR, vol. XXX (1935), pp. 204-209.

<sup>41</sup>This castle was the seat of the Yorkist Fitz Alans, enemies of the Lancastrians whom Malory supported.

associated with Roman Britain and still familiar to fifteenth century readers--Watling Street down which the Roman envoys hurry to their embarkation at Sandwich, the walled city of York, Carleon-on-Usk where Arthur is crowned, London, the capital of Uther Pendragon, Carlisle, a Roman station that is the seat of Arthur's court in the later books of Morte Darthur.

Many of Malory's place names belong to the fifteenth-century world, some of them associated for the first time with Arthurian romance--Westminster with its tombs, tournaments and trials,<sup>42</sup> the royal forest of Windsor with its hunters and hermitages, St. Paul's in London, Glastonbury where the monks had developed a thriving tourist industry with their legends of Arthur's grave and Joseph's thorn, Amesbury where there had been a foundation of nuns since ca. 980. Some locales such as the Thames-side setting where Lancelot swims his horse across the river to Lambeth and where Elaine orders the preparation of her funeral barge are presented with the specificity of first-hand knowledge. The realistic impression created by Malory's description of the final events in the chronicle of Arthur gains not a little from the careful use of such place names as Canterbury, Winchester, the Tower of London, Dover, Bareon Down and Salisbury.

In Malory's treatment of continental geography the

---

<sup>42</sup>Many trials, including that of Sir Thomas More, were conducted in Westminster Palace. From the time of Edward III medieval parliaments met there. On March 4, 1461, Edward IV seated himself on the throne in Westminster and was hailed as king by his supporters and the populace. Cf. the popular acceptance of Mordred.

conventional chronicle material<sup>43</sup> is similarly infused with realistic details suggesting personal knowledge. Vinaver persuasively argues that Malory altered Arthur's itinerary so that instead of going straight south and east through Luxembourg, Metz, and Lucerne, he might turn north towards Flanders in imitation of the route followed by Henry V on his way from Fécamp to Agincourt.<sup>44</sup> The geography of Lancelot's lands seems to bear a relation to the condition of France during the Hundred Years' War before the reconquest of Aquitaine and Normandy in 1453. So small are some of the fiefdoms which Lancelot distributes that their names could only have been known, it is thought, to someone who had served in the area.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, though Malory attempted to make the exploits of Arthur credible by relating them to a particular temporal and spatial setting, Arthur's Roman expedition is no less romantic than the secular quests of the Round-Table knights or the Grail knights' search for Corbenic. Since Rome<sup>46</sup> was the world empire best known to medieval historiographers, its crown

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Tatlock, pp. 85-115.

<sup>44</sup>Vinaver, Works, p. 1396-8.

<sup>45</sup>P. 1670, no. 1204, 27-32. On Malory's knowledge of France see also Edward Hicks, Sir Thomas Malory (Cambridge, 1928), pp. 16ff; N. L. Aurner, "Sir Thomas Malory--Historian?" PMLA XLVIII (1933), pp. 362-391; William Matthews, The Ill-Framed Knight (Berkeley, 1966), pp. 147-150.

<sup>46</sup>On medieval views of Rome see Appendix B. It was Geoffrey who first depicted Arthur as conqueror of Roman territory. According to Fletcher, pp. 50, 82ff, 126ff a tradition of foreign conquests already existed before the writings of HRB.



- symbolized unequalled power and glory in the temporal sphere.

Far from being an example of "unfortunate imperialism" as it was in Geoffrey's Historia,<sup>47</sup> the journey to Rome is the most glorious event in Malory's biography of Arthur. Not only does it prove Arthur's power and worthiness as national hero but it reflects Malory's concepts of chivalry and sovereignty as well. It is an idealization of history embodying the dream of continental supremacy which English claims to French lands had fostered since the Norman Conquest.

When The Tale of the Noble King Arthur begins, more than twenty years have passed since the youthful hero had drawn the sword from the stone. Lancelot, whom Merlin had seen as an infant in the land of Benwick (125), has now grown up and come to court. Arthur has fulfilled the destiny proclaimed by Merlin at the coronation feast:

. . .he shal be kyng and overcome alle his enemyes,  
and or he deye he shalle be long kynge of all Englonde  
and have under his obeyssaunce Walys, Yrland, and  
Scotland, and moo reames than I will now reherce  
(18; Malory's addition).

His territories have been extended to the continent by the acquisition of "many Fayre contrayes that Arthure had wonne before of the myghty kynge Claudas" (194; Malory's addition). The Round Table has been established as Arthur's administrative arm, settling disputes, righting wrongs and maintaining peace throughout the kingdom. Merlin, the architect of Arthur's early successes, has long been imprisoned under "the grete stone." The structure of Morte Darthur demands a climactic victory be-

---

<sup>47</sup>Hanning, p. 155.

fore the history of Arthur is interrupted by the cyclic adventures of knight-errantry. The story of Arthur's Roman Wars which Malory found in the alliterative Morte Arthure provides the means of testing the king's heroic qualities and demonstrating the ideals which he embodies.

The historical quest is initiated by a romantic convention.<sup>48</sup> As Arthur is presiding over "a ryal feeste and Table Rounde" (185), the ceremonies are interrupted by strangers who present a challenge that cannot be ignored:

' . . . the gretis welle Lucius, the Emperour of Roome, and commaundis the uppon payne that woll falle to sende hym the trewage of this realme that thy fadir Uther Pendragon payde, other ellys he woll bereve the all thy realmys that thou weldyst, and thou as rebelle, not knowynge hym as thy soverayne, withholdest and reteynest contrary to the statutes and decrees maade by the noble and worthy Julius Cezar, conquerour of this realme' (186); (the allusions to Uther and Caesar are Malory's addition).

In the world of chivalric romance, a challenge results in the immediate departure from court of a single knight of the Round Table or a small group of knights. A different ritual is pursued in the historical quest. Though Arthur himself controls the action and is the chief participant, he must have the approbation and military support of all those who owe him feudal allegiance.<sup>49</sup> He calls a council of noble lords

---

<sup>48</sup>The same motif for initiating quests is used in the milieu of courtly romance and in the story of the Grail.

<sup>49</sup>On the parallel historical situation under the Angevins see G. O. Sayles, The Medieval Foundations of England (London, 1966), pp. 325-329.

and "the moste party of the knyghtes of the Rounde Table" (187; Malory's addition). "The Conqueror," as he is designated in this tale, is supported by lords of England, Cornwall, Little Britain, West Wales, Ireland, Argyle, the Outer Isles and France. Though Arthur had defeated the King of Denmark in the War with the Five Kings and presumably had gained the allegiance of Scandinavia, the Northern allies mentioned by Geoffrey (HRB IX, XIX) and the alliterative poet (ll. 44-47) are omitted by Malory, no doubt because he wanted the glory of the achievement to fall entirely on Arthur and "oure noble knyghtes of mery Ingelonde" (209; Malory's addition).

In the organization of his quest, two further aspects of Malory's originality should be noted. The aggrandizement of Lancelot which occurs throughout the Roman Wars<sup>50</sup> is initiated at the council of war where he is presented as an ardent young knight and as a substantial feudal lord of France. While Lancelot's role is increased, that of Mordred is omitted. The king's nephew--or son--had traditionally fulfilled the function of regent during Arthur's absence,<sup>51</sup> but Malory's Arthur appoints as co-regents Sir Baudwen of Britagne and Sir Constantine, Arthur's designated heir. Vinaver sees the historical analogy of Henry V's appointment of Bishop Beaufort and the Duke of Bedford as the source of Malory's change.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup>Cf. Mary E. Dichmann, "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius," Malory's Originality, ed. R. M. Luminansky (Baltimore, 1964), pp. 74-79.

<sup>51</sup>HRB X, ii; allit. M.A. ll. 644-692.

<sup>52</sup>pp. 1367-8.

It is also likely that the concept of the historical quest as an event that demonstrated Arthur's invincibility and earthly glory precluded the mention of his nemesis.

The romantic quests of the knight-errant occur in a vaguely defined world of castles and perilous forests. The spiritual quests of the Grail knights take place in allegorical landscapes that reflect the condition of man. In contrast, the historical quest follows a clearly marked route that had long been familiar to legionaries, crusaders, merchants and pilgrims.<sup>53</sup> Symbolically, the envoys of the Roman Emperor lead the way:

Thus they passed fro Carleyle unto Sandwyche -  
warde. . . . And so the same nyght they toke  
the watir and passed into Flaundres, Almayn,  
and aftir that over the grete mountayne that  
hyght Godarde, and so aftir thorow Lumbardy and  
thorow Tuskayne, and sone aftir they come to  
the Emperour Lucius (191).

It is the way that Arthur will take. Barfleet, Paris, Soissons, Cologne, Lucerne, Milan, Pontremoli, Spoleto, Viterbo, and the virtuous vale of Vysecounte with "vynys full" are stages of the progress to "the cite of Syon that is Rome callyd" (244). There Arthur intends "by the rever of Rome [to] holde my Rounde Table" (190) as evidence of the quest's successful completion.

It is the nature of a quest to invite interruption. The final goal cannot be reached until the hero's prowess has

---

<sup>53</sup>George B. Parks, "King Arthur and the Roads to Rome," JEGP XLV (1946), 164-170.

been proven in combat and his power of restoring order demonstrated.<sup>54</sup> The idea of the quest as a redemptive process is reflected in Arthur's encounters with the giant of St. Michael's Mount and with the Emperor Lucius, both sources of evil in the environment. The hero's victories are significant because they demonstrate his superiority and enable him to effect that improvement of society which is the hero's true function.

As Arthur passes over the water from the known world of Britain to the unknown world of the continent,<sup>55</sup> an allegorical dream prepares him for the fearful struggles that lie ahead.<sup>56</sup> Foreknowledge gained through warning and prophecy is a conventional attribute of the questing knight. It creates an atmosphere of **foreboding** and, at the same time, establishes faith in the hero's prowess. The magnificent dragon that symbolizes Arthur is further embellished by Malory's addition of claws "lyke clene golde" and a "tayle. . .fulle of tatyrz,"

---

<sup>54</sup>On the redemptive role of the mythic hero see Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (New York, 1961).

<sup>55</sup>Cf. the knight-errant's movement from the known world of the court to the unknown world of the forest.

<sup>56</sup>On the belief that dreams foretell future events and on the role of allegory in prophetic dreams see Constance B. Heatt, The Realism of Dream Visions (The Hague-Paris, 1967). Arthur's dream, an enduring part of the chronicle tradition, occurs in HRB, X, ii, Wace, XX 11, 528ff. Layamon 25, 500ff, Robert of Gloucester 4146ff. Malory's version follows his source closely--allit M.A. 11. 758,-831.

signifying the knights of the Round Table. The horrible bear that represents "som tyraunte that turmentis thy peple" or "som gyaunt" is presented in demonic imagery--"all blak, in a clowde," "his pawys were as byg as a poste," "all to-rongeled with lugerande lokys," "the fowlyst beste that ever ony man sye." Its "grysly tuskes" tear the dragon's flesh so violently that the sea becomes blood red (196-197). The images are a preparation for the giant of St. Michael's Mount and the demonic setting in which he is found.

The episode of Arthur's fight with the giant "goes back to very remote mythical antiquity."<sup>57</sup> Malory adopts the greatly expanded version of the story which he found in the alliterative Morte Arthure and gives it a moral significance that Geoffrey's account lacked (HRB, X, iii). No sooner has Arthur landed in Normandy than he is told of a great giant that has been tormenting Arthur's subjects for more than seven years; moreover, he has just carried off the Duchess of Brittany. As heroic king and conqueror, it is Arthur's duty to eradicate the evil. Adopting the metaphor of a pilgrimage, that is, of a religious quest, Arthur sets out with Bedevere and Kay in search of "the saint"<sup>58</sup> (199). From a "blythe contray full of many myrry byrdis" Arthur climbs alone to the crest of the crag with its cold wind, flaming fires, wailing widow,

---

<sup>57</sup>Fletcher, p. 90. Tatlock's contrary view, pp. 87-88, is not really convincing in view of the fact that giant-killing or monster-killing seems to have been a primary motif in a great many mythological traditions.

<sup>58</sup>The ironic metaphor is repeated on p. 204, l. 6-15.

new marked grave, captive maidens, spitted children and gnawed bones. This is "the world that desire totally rejects: the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion."<sup>59</sup>

The demonic nature of the giant and the heroic quality of Arthur are conveyed not only by means of the landscape associated with each but also by their appearance. Arthur in his jesserant, bascinet, and broad shield is "clenly arayed." His sovereignty is signified by his crown, his chivalry by his sword, and his Christianity by his dagger, a symbol of trust in God. The giant, in contrast, is a satanic figure that illustrates Tuve's suggestion that "allegorical elements enter the imagery in the form farthest removed from ordinary realism and closest to 'realized idea.'"<sup>60</sup> His physical ugliness reflects his evil disposition. Animal images denote his bestiality. Like the bear in Arthur's dream, he is "the foulyst wyghte that ever man sye" (202); "there was never devil in helle more horryblyer made." He is a "doggys son" with teeth like a greyhound. He gnaws on the limb of a man and the flesh of Christian children. He is a murderer, a rapist, a cannibal. Instead of a sword he carries an iron club, the characteristic weapon of giants and a symbol of brutality and social inferiority. He fights according to no rules, relying on his physical strength to crush

---

<sup>59</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York, 1966), p. 147.

<sup>60</sup>Rosamund Tuve, Allegorical Imagery (Princeton, 1966), p. 189.

his victim. In addition to his physical appearance and bestial habits, fire imagery evokes a demonic association. On the top of the crag Arthur finds "two fyres flamand full hyghe." Beside one is the new grave of the Duchess; by the other the breechless giant warms himself while his macabre meal is prepared--"twelve chyldir but late borne, and they were broched in maner lyke birdes (202)."

The emphasis on physical dismemberment reinforces still further the demonic atmosphere. The giant's genitals are "swapped in sunder," his forehead cloven to the brain, his belly cut "that oute went the gore, that the grasse and the grounde all foule was begone" (202). The giant defiles the scene in much the same way as do the devils in the milieu of the Grail quest.

This interpretation of the giant fight may be an example of imposed allegory. Yet the extensiveness of Malory's treatment here in comparison with giant killing episodes in the romantic cycle suggests that, like the author of the alliterative Morte Arthure,<sup>61</sup> he attached moral implications to the old myth, a view supported by the ending. The king's victory is marked by the public exhibition of the giant's head, the distribution of treasure to the knights (Malory's addition), and the building of a church on the mountain to signify the triumph of good over evil.<sup>62</sup> In this way the primitive

---

<sup>61</sup>See John Finlayson, ed. Morte Arthure (London, 1967), pp. 16-18 and "Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael's Mount," Medium Aevum, xxxii (1963), 112-120.

<sup>62</sup>In HRB, X, iii, the church is built as a memorial to Hoel's niece.



concept of the culture hero ridding the land of monsters in order to benefit mankind is assimilated into the medieval view of the sovereign's responsibility for the maintenance of law and order.

The bear "oute of the Oryent" in Arthur's dream signifies not only the mythical enemy but also the "historical" foe. The rivalry between the Eastern Empire of Byzantium (surviving the Western by a thousand years) and Western Europe which had been partitioned into barbarian successor states determines the composition of the opposing forces. The Emperor summons allies from the reaches of the Graeco-Roman world (the influence of the Alexander legends and of the Crusades may be seen here)<sup>63</sup>--Alexandria, India, Armenia, Assyria, Africa, "Europe the large," the Outer Isles, Arabia, Damascus, Egypt, Damietta, Cappadocia, Tarsus, Turkey, Persia, Pamphylia, Syria, the land of Prester John,<sup>64</sup> from Nero to Nazareth, from Greece to Galilee, Cyprus, Macedonia, Calabria, Catalonia, Portugal and Spain. Malory's addition of the last two countries to the traditional catalogue indicates that by the fifteenth century the geographic focus had shifted

---

<sup>63</sup>Cf. Tatlock, pp. 113ff; Carey, The Medieval Alexander, passim. According to Saklatvala, op. cit., p. 49, the list of Arthur's enemies is analagous to the allies of Theodosius who helped the Emperor of the East defeat Maximus at Aquileia in 388 A.D. Saklatvala regards Maximus, who was proclaimed Emperor by the army in Britain in 383 A.D. and then invaded the continent, as a prototype of Arthur.

<sup>64</sup>On the mingling of fact and fancy in medieval geography, see Appendix B.

to the west as a result of Portugese voyages and the Spanish expulsion of the Moors. As the giant of St. Michael's Mount greatly surpassed Arthur in size, so the number and resources of Lucius' army, consisting not only of kings and dukes with their "horrible peple" but also of fifty giants, engendered by fiends, far outweighs Arthur's forces. It is a romantic convention that seemingly insuperable barriers should impede the progress of the quest. Yet a Roman senator is forced to admit what every reader of romance knows, "For this day one of Arthur's knyghtes was worth in batayle an hondred of oures" (218; Malory's addition).

The demonic nature of Lucius' army is revealed by its composition (demon-bred giants and Saracens) and by its actions. At the council of state preceding the quest, King Angwysch reminds Arthur:

And Scotlonde had never scathe syne ye  
were crowned Kynge, and whan the Romaynes  
raynede uppon us they raunsomed oure eld-  
ers and raffte us of our lyves (188).

Now, as Lucius makes his way westward, fair countries are destroyed, conquered castles in Christian lands are manned by pagans, innocent people are murdered. "Where that he rydyth all he destroyes" (205) the marshal of France reports and Lucius himself announces, "for the douchery of Britayne I shall thorowly dystroy hit" (194).

Arthur is equally implacable in his determination to wipe out the enemy. No gold under God will save their lives. It is better that the Emperor and his lords sink into hell than that a Round Table knight be wounded (211). Those that "accompany them with Sarezens" do not deserve to live (224;

Malory's addition). The theological allusions are consistent with the depiction of Arthur as a Christian Champion.

The use of animal imagery contributes to the contrast between the Britons and Romans. In "the thycheste of the pres" Arthur "raumped doune lyke a lyon many senatours noble" (224). Sir Bors and Sir Berrell fight like two boars (209). Priam's Saracens follow him "as shepe oute of a folde," so willing are they to desert the Romans and join Arthur (238). When Sir Kay is wounded, Cliges and Bedivere "fared with the Romaynes as grayhoundis doth with harys" (222). In each case it is Arthur and his knights who exhibit the nobility, strength and skill of the lion, boar, and hound while the enemy is equated with the weaker and more timid animals.

While Lucius and his forces symbolize evil, they also embody the power and glory that Arthur claims.<sup>65</sup> Rich imagery is used to evoke the Roman imperium. The envoys sent by Lucius to Arthur's court are "xij ancyen men berynge eche of them a braunche of Olyve in token that they cam as Embassatours";<sup>66</sup> in token, too, of the pax Romana that St. Augustine

---

<sup>65</sup>According to Hanning, p. 49, the national historians of Western Europe, e. g. Jordanes and Gregory of Tours, sought to dignify their own nations by showing them to be worthy inheritors of the Roman Empire and culture. Geoffrey's Arthur may be the product of a similar motivation.

<sup>66</sup>Caxton's text, Bk. V, Ch. 1. This detail does not occur in the Alliterative Morte Arthure but is found in Geoffrey's HRB IX, XV.

had praised.<sup>67</sup> When the Arthurian knights approach the  
Roman camp for the first time they see

many prowde pavylyons of sylke of dyverse  
coloures that were sette in a medow besyde  
a ryver, and the Emperoures pavylyon was  
in the myddys with an egle displayed on lof-  
fte (206).

Sir Bors is opposed by "a gay knight. . .all floryshed in  
golde" and by "a bolde barowne all in purpull arayed" (208).  
Sir Priam wears a hauberk of mail studded with rubies. The  
symbolic eagle and the imperial colours on the battlefield  
create the aura of Roman magnificence to which Arthur later  
pays tribute in the funerary arrangements for the dead Emper-  
or, his allies and senators:

The kynge let bawme all thes with many good gummys  
and setthen lette lappe hem in syxtyfolde of sen-  
dell large, and than lete lappe hem in lede that  
for chauffyng other chongyng they sholde never sa-  
voure, and sytthen lete close them in chestys full  
clenly arayed, and their baners abovyn on their  
bodyes, and their shyldys turned upwarde, that  
eviry man myght knowe of what contray they were (225).

When the Roman Ambassadors had reported back to Lucius  
after their hasty retreat from Arthur's court, they had de-  
scribed the British Monarch as "the royallyst kynge that  
lyvyth on earthe" and the knights of the Round Table as non-  
pareils; "of wysedome and of fayre speeche and all royalté  
and rychesse they fayle of none" (192). Malory omits the  
lengthy description of the Christmas Day Feast which in the  
alliterative Morte Arthur suggests the brilliance and sophis-  
tication of the English court. Instead, he relies on the im-

---

<sup>67</sup>Confessions V, xix.

agery of the battlefield to convey the chivalric stature of Arthur and his knights: Lancelot's banners, Gawain's "bowerly bronde that bryght semed" (207), Arthur's "clene" arms with their "doleful dragon," Uwayne's bright sword that strikes down the Emperor's standard, Excalibur cutting the giant Galapas "of by the kneis clenly," and finally cleaving the Emperor "frome the creste of his helme unto the bare pappys."

The hyperbole that characterizes romance is apparent in the description of the battle. Kay, Clegis, and Bedevere in one encounter kill more than five hundred. Sir Lancelot and his friends slay so many that "thousandis in an hepe lay thrubelyng togedir" (224). Arthur himself, "raumping doune lyke a lyon" kills a hundred thousand. "Was never kyng nother knyghtes dud bettir syn God made the worlde" (221).

The glorification of Arthur is moral as well as political and military. There is a conflict not only of nations but of ideas and ideals, of Christianity against paganism, good rule against bad, justice and mercy against brutality and arrogance, the chivalric conduct of the few Arthurian knights against the ruthless force of the enemy hordes. There is no moral confusion regarding friends and foe, no disparity between appearance and reality, as there so often is in the world of knight-errantry. The enemy is rigorously suppressed; only the joust between Gawain and Priamus ends in the romantic way, with the conversion of the enemy and his absorption into the Round Table.

Many of Malory's original additions are designed to elucidate the contrasts between the forces of good and the forces of evil. When the army of Lucius invades France, destroying the country and slaughtering the people, Arthur sends the Emperor a message:

' . . .sey I bydde hym in haste to remeve oute of my londys. And yf he will nat, so bydde hym dresse his batayle and lette us redresse oure ryghtes with oure handis, and that is more worshippe than thus to overryde maysterlesse men' (206).

On the battlefield a man should be governed by his virtues, not his vices. Excessive hardness is foolish "whan knyghtes bene overmacched" (217). A desire for fame should not overcome one's feelings of humanity:

for oftetymes thorow envy grete hardynesse is shewed that hath bene the deth of many kyd knyghtes; for thoughe they speke fayre many one unto other, yet whan they be in batayle of thow eyther wolde beste be praysed (223).

A desire for gold and silver should not persuade one to spare God's enemies; "the man that wolde save them were lytyll to prayse" (224). While adding passages which reveal his idea of a good knight, Malory omits episodes in his source which detract from the ideality of Arthur and his Round Table. The insults which Gawain hurls at Lucius, Arthur's violent rages, the ravaging of the countryside by the knights, the taking of children as hostages, the motive of revenge, and the harsh treatment of the vanquished are among the omissions which enable Malory to maintain the ideality of the quest.

Furthermore, idealization characterizes the quest's milieu. Isolated images rather than the lengthy rhetorical descriptions of the source are the means of depicting the

battlefields, unchanging throughout the episodic combats that interrupt the progress to Rome. Trumpets and tabours, severed heads, spilling guts, swords stained with gore and brains, corpses lying on the bare earth, swords striking sparks from helmets, and coursers charging across the field evoke the violence<sup>68</sup> and excitement of the scene. As in medieval tapestries and illuminations,<sup>69</sup> the design is crowded with armed men, horses, swords, shields, and standards. The monotonous repetition of stylized images that characterized Romanesque art is apparent in literary battle scenes of the Middle Ages.<sup>70</sup> Melées alternate with single combats, the paired warriors occupying the foreground while bowmen, knights, giants, coursers engage in "a stronge batayle on every syde" (220). These engagements are the "historical" counterparts of the jousts and tournaments which fill the romantic milieu.

An important aspect of Malory's originality in The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius is the structural change effected by his long postponement of the denouement. In other chronicles of Arthur, the king is recalled to England by Mordred's rebellion before Rome has been reached. A speedy reversal of fortune follows the king's continental successes,

---

<sup>68</sup>Malory actually omits many of the grim details in his source.

<sup>69</sup>Cf. "Kings in Battle" from the Picture Bible (M638 f11), French, ca. 1250 reproduced in Laura Hibbard Loomis' Miniatures! Medieval Vista (New York, 1953), pl. 6, illustrations from Le Roman de Lancelot du Lac et de la Morte du roi Artu, British Museum Ms. Ad. 10294, fourteenth century, reproduced in Geoffrey Ashe's The Quest for Arthur's Britain, ill. 21; Trojan War tapestries.

<sup>70</sup>Cf. Wylie Sypher, Four Stages of Renaissance Style (Garden City, 1955), pp. 20ff.

depriving him of queen, kingdom, knights and life. Arthur's downfall is attributed to hubris, the waging of unjust wars, and the turn of Fortune's wheel.

From a structural point of view, the Emperor's death, which occurs in the vale of Soissons<sup>71</sup> in May, leaves Malory with a large distance spatially and temporally, to be covered before Arthur can be crowned in Rome at Christmas. For the author of the Morte Arthure, the death of Lucius is a pivotal point marking Arthur's turning from a just war against pagans and Roman oppressors to wars of aggression against Christian nations. The philosopher who interprets Arthur's dream of Fortune condemns his violence:

Thow has schedde myche blode and schalhes distroyede,  
 Sakeles in cirquyte in sere kynges landis. . .  
 I rede thou rekhyn and reherse unresonable dedis,  
 Or the repentles full rathe all thi newthe werkes.  
 (ll. 3398-9; 3452-3)

Arthur's treatment of conquered peoples and his unbridled ambition are the cause of his downfall.

Malory must treat subsequent events in such a way that they will not denigrate the hero or weaken the Round Table. The action must move towards the climactic coronation in Rome, attended by all the great knights. Kay and Bedevere, who had been killed by the Romans in the Morte Arthure, are therefore preserved in Malory's version. The warlike activities of the knights are presented as exercises in self-defence. In a passage without parallel in the source Priam warns:

---

<sup>71</sup>On the possible identifications of Soissons see Vinaver, p. 1389, n:218. 20.



'ye shall fynde in yondir woodys many parellus knyghtes. They woll putte furth beystys to bayte you oute of numbir, and ye ar fraykis in this fryth nat paste seven hondred, and that is feythfully to fewe to fyght with so many, for harottys and haynxmen wol helpe us but a lytyll, for they woll hyde them in haste for all their hyghe wordys' (235).

The imbalance of the forces in favour of the enemy justifies the Arthurian knights' engagement in combat. A similar pattern is frequently observed in the romantic milieu.

The atmosphere of romance is also evoked by the treatment of the Gawain-Priamus adventure with its ritual of challenge and response, the courtoisie of the combatants, the ideal spring landscape, the marvelous healing waters of Paradise that cure the terrible wounds. The king's anger at the defiance of the Tuscan city is balanced by his graciousness to the suppliant ladies who "kneled downe unto the kynge and besought hym of his grace" (242; not in the source).

Many violent war scenes are greatly reduced or omitted altogether.<sup>72</sup> In Morte Arthure the ravaging of Tuscany is described in detail:

Thus thy spryngene and sprede, and sparis but lyttille,  
 Spoylles dispetouslye and spillis theire vynes;  
 Spendis un-sparely, that sparede was longe,  
 Spedis theme to Spolett with speris inewe!  
 (ll. 3158-3161)

Malory portrays Tuscany as an idyllic setting where Arthur sojourns "with solacee at his harte" in a "vertuose vale amonge vynys full" (244). The effect of imagery in conveying atmosphere is illustrated by the contrast between the trampled vine-

---

<sup>72</sup>Cf. M.A. ll. 2948-2988; 3034-3043.

yards of the first description and the flourishing vines of the second.

By treating the continental expedition not as epic or tragedy but as chivalric quest, Malory can conduct Arthur to Rome and allow him to return to the acclamation of his court in London, utilizing the same structural pattern of withdrawal and return that characterizes the adventures in the romantic and religious milieux. Although he may have read the description of Arthur's coronation in John Harding's Chronicle (ca. 1435), the only chronicle in which Arthur reaches Rome, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Malory himself devised the Roman ceremony as a fitting conclusion to the wars and one which demonstrated Arthur's superiority as knight and Christian king. He had been preceded to Rome by the legates, who had announced his imperial designs, and by the tribute of corpses, "the tane and the trewage of ten score wynters bothe of Ingelonde, Irelonde, and of all the Est londys" (226). He had demonstrated on the road to Rome his worthiness to hold imperial power. The giant of St. Michael's Mount had been overcome, the Romans and their pagan allies defeated, the ladies of Tuscany protected, the king's valour, justice, mercy, moderation, and affection for his knights demonstrated. The conquered had promised to "make homage unto Arthure all his lyff tymes." Church and State in the persons of cardinals and senators had besought him to be crowned in Rome "kyndly, with crysemed hondys, with septure, forsothe, as an Emperoure sholde" (244). The symbols of sovereignty are conferred "by the Poopys hondis, with all the royalté in the worlde to welde

for ever." It remains only to establish "all the londys frome Rome unto Fraunce," for the ideal of sovereignty is expressed through a peaceful and orderly empire. Malory's idea of good government is conveyed in Arthur's words to Lancelot and Bors:

'Loke that ye take seyng in all your brode londis, and cause youre lyege men to know you as for their kynde lorde, and suffir never your soveraynté to be alledged with your subiectes, nother and soveraynge of your persone and londys (245; not in the source).

The quest for Rome, then, may be regarded as a symbolic action demonstrating the ideal of sovereignty. The good king is one who overcomes evil and establishes peace.

Though as history the quest for Rome occupies seven years of linear time, the use of the seasonal cycle produces a symbolic time scheme which seems to encompass the events within a single year. The Roman legates demanding tribute arrive when Arthur is celebrating the New Year's Day feast with "nine kyngis, and the fayryst felyship of knyghtes. . . that durys on lyve" (192). Arthur calls for a parliament at York "after the utas of Seynte Hyllary"--January 21st--and proposes that his army assemble at Sandwich within fifteen days (194). Lucius plans to cross Germany and be in France by Easter. Riding towards St. Michael's Mount, Arthur passes through a springtime setting--"a blythe contray full of many myrry byrdis." Gawain and his companions first see the Roman camp through the "grene wood." The senators announce to the Potestate in Rome that their Emperor has been killed in the month of May (226). When Arthur and his knights reach Tus-

cany, Sir Florens and his fellowship tie their horses in a low meadow full of sweet flowers, suggestive of early summer (228). Lammas (the first of August) finds Arthur at Lucerne where he lies at leisure before descending into Lombardy. In Vysecounte the vines are full, loaded for the grape harvest which occurred in October (244). Soon after, on a Saturday as Malory indicates, the Roman senators beg Arthur to grant them six weeks in which to prepare for the coronation. The king graciously agrees to be crowned at Christmas,<sup>73</sup> the end of the seasonal cycle. The coronation completes the quest, both spatially and temporally. As the knights remark, "worshyp be Cryste, this journey is well overcom" (246).

It is evident that Malory's King Arthur is an idealized character performing symbolic acts in a setting that is only intermittently realistic. Arthur exhibits many attributes of the mythic hero. The son of a legendary king, he inherits the throne because of his success in a magical test. He overcomes his insular enemies with the aid of a magician and an Otherworld weapon. He gives evidence of his heroic quality by defeating two non-historical opponents--the Giant of St. Michael's Mount and the Emperor Lucius. At the end of his life

---

<sup>73</sup>Cf. the coronation of Charlemagne at Rome on Christmas Day, 800 A.D. Wearing the chlamys and sandals of a patri-cius Romanus, he received the crown from the hands of Pope Leo III and was anointed with the oil that symbolized the sanctity of the king. The populace confirmed the coronation with the ritual cry hailing Charles as Augustus, crowned by God the peace-bringing Emperor of the Romans. In addition, he was offered the act of homage that had been reserved since 476 for the Eastern emperor.

he is escorted to Avalon by a group of supernatural ladies.

No adventure more clearly reveals his heroic stature than the story of his Roman expedition. Structurally, it follows the quest pattern of departure from the familiar world of the court, movement into an unknown environment, episodic confrontations with a series of enemies whom the hero inevitably overcomes, climactic victory, recognition, and return to the familiar world. The cyclic movement of the quest is imposed on the linear movement towards a goal. Similarly, in the temporal sphere, the symbolic cycle of the seasons is imposed on the linear progress of history.

Because of the struggle between good and evil implicit in Arthur's combats with the giant and with the Romans, it is possible to give the story an allegorical interpretation. The representation of Arthur as the type of christianissimus rex, the symbolic significance given to his actions, and those of his knights, and the use of allegorical imagery contribute to the ideality of the work. Malory's biography of Arthur is a dream of history rather than history itself.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ROMANTIC QUEST: CASTLES AND PERILOUS FORESTS

In the world of chronicle, as we have seen, the heroic Arthur, King of Britain, is made to confront dangers and undertake military expeditions from motives of national aggrandisement and personal fulfillment. The quest for the crown of Rome is a quest for glory and power in the political sphere. Its achievement employs the combined efforts of Arthur, his allies, and his knights who receive such material rewards as the giant's treasure and the Romans' conquered lands. The extension of boundaries, the acquisition of territories, the receipt of tribute, and the swearing of allegiance are mundane rewards associated with a time and place specified in British chronicle tradition. The mythic biography of Arthur is made a part of universal history set in linear time; Arthur's empire is a part of the universal empire established by the Roman state. There is unity of vision in both the temporal and spatial spheres which gives consistency to the historical myth.

In Arthurian romance, on the other hand, the kingdom of Logres, as distinct from the Britain of chronicle, is a royaume aventureux for King Arthur and his knights. Instead of being presented as the administrative centre,

for an extensive empire, Arthur's court is a point of departure for the heroes. Lone questers, they seek through the perilous forests, sombre wastes, and tempest-tossed waters of Logres the adventures which will test in isolation their chivalric qualities.

Unlike the "historical" world, the romantic milieu consists of antithetical elements which are not combined in a unified view but rather are balanced and alternated. The knight-errant sets out from the sophisticated, idealized, and hospitable world of court and castle with its gracious lord and lovely lady. He enters the strange, marvelous, dangerous forest to seek adventures which will prove his possession of the highest chivalric virtues--prowess and loyalty. Since honour, glory, and amorous tribute are its motivations, the quest is not complete until the knight has returned to the centre of the secular world, Arthur's court. There defeated knights and rescued ladies testify to his prowess while king and court acclaim his achievements.

The ritual of departure and return is illustrated in The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake. Tiring of the jousts and tournaments at court, Sir Launcelot

thought hymself to preve in straunge adventures, and bade his newew, sir Lyonell, for to make hym redy, 'for we muste go seke adventures.' So they mounted on their horses, armed at all ryghtes, and rode into a depe foreste. . . (253)

After many adventures with witches and giants, distressed

damsels, evil knights and members of the Round Table,  
 Lancelot

com home two dayes before the feste of Pente-  
 coste, and the kynge and all the courte were  
 passyng fayne. And whan Gawayne, sir Uwayne,  
 sir Sagramoure, and sir Ector de Mares sye sir  
 Launcelot in Kayes armour, than they wyste well  
 that hit was he that smote hem downe all wyth  
 one spere. Than there was lawghyng and smylyng  
 amonge them, and ever now and now com all the  
 knyghtes home that were presoners with sir Ter-  
 quyn, and they all honoured sir Launcelot (286).

Then every knight whom the hero has defeated "bears rec-  
 ord" of Launcelot's exploits and a lady whose lover was  
 wounded brings him along to be made a knight of the Round  
 Table, "at the requeste of sir Launcelot."

And so at that tyme sir Launcelot had the  
 grettyste name of ony knyght of the worlde,  
 and moste he was honoured by hyge and  
 lowe (287).

Just as knightly prowess increases the glory and joy of  
 Arthur's court and of the Round Table, so the failure to  
 accept an adventure and bring it to completion brings  
 dishonour, as Merlin reminds the king at his wedding  
 feast. The guests are already seated when a white hart  
 runs into the hall, followed successively by a white  
 bratchet, thirty couple of black hounds in full cry, a  
 wailing lady on a white palfrey, and a rapacious knight  
 on a great horse. The noise and confusion are miti-  
 gated when a wedding guest runs off with the bratchet  
 and the mounted knight kidnaps the lady:



So whan she was gone the kynge was gladde,  
for she made such a noyse. 'Nay,' seyde  
Merlion, 'ye may nat leve hit so, thys  
adventure, so lyghtly, for these adven-  
tures muste be brought to an ende, other  
ellis hit woll be disworshyp to you and  
to youre feste!' (103).

The scene well illustrates the antithetical elements which comprise the romantic setting. The court's harmonious and ritualistic enjoyment of Arthur's wedding feast is interrupted by chaotic, mysterious and compelling forces from the forest. The ambivalence results from the differences between the French and Celtic elements of romance. The one is concerned with the ceremonial conduct of an aristocratic society, the other with the impact of magic on the individual.

The milieu of courtoisie is a world strictly regulated by the codes of chivalry and courtly love. Here the ladies are beautiful, gracious, worthy of worship, the king is noble and generous, the knights brave, courteous, and loyal. It is what Northrop Frye calls a world of innocence rather than of experience.<sup>1</sup> Here are no cultivated farmlands linked economically to the neighbouring castle, no city streets bustling with activity grounded in commercial reality, no battlefields sought for political and economic profit.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism (New York, 1966), p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>Auerbach points out that "the strikingly realistic workroom in Yvain. . . was not established because of concrete economic conditions but because the young king of the Island of Maidens had fallen into the hands of two evil gnomelike

Instead there are forest-girt castles which offer hospitality, love and rest at the end of adventure-filled days, courts where the primary occupation is not government but entertainment, tournament grounds where knights contend to glorify lord and lady by winning personal fame. This is the world that imposes the standards by which the knight lives, a world filled with the images and symbols of terrestrial chivalry and the rituals of right conduct.

In the equally unrealistic Celtic world, the controlling ethic of the chivalric code is replaced by the morally ambiguous power of magic.<sup>3</sup> It, too, is ritualistic and the

---

brothers and had ransomed himself by promising that once a year he would deliver to them thirty of his maidens to perform labor." See Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), p. 133.

<sup>3</sup>In Magic, Science and Religion (Garden City, 1948), p. 90, Bronislaw Malinowski asserts that magic supplies man with a technique for solving problems that he cannot cope with by natural means. Although most critics attribute Arthurian marvels to Celtic sources, C. B. Lewis finds many analogues in the classics. See Classical Mythology and Arthurian Romance (Edinburgh, 1932). On classical sources of French Arthurian romance see also F. E. Guyer, Romance in the Making: Chrétien de Troyes and the Earliest French Romances (New York, 1954).

feeling of confidence which it engenders when practised by a beneficent agent is analogous to that produced by a courtly code. In the hands of a maleficent daemon the operation of magic produces fear which, along with wonder, is the emotion characteristic of Celtic myth-making. The moral ambivalence of Celtic myth is apparent in Merlin, the benignant son of a devil, Morgan le Fay, both healer and destroyer, and Nineve who imprisons forever Arthur's supernatural guide and then takes his place as protector of the king. The marvelous lacks the dualistic significances of the courtly and Catholic. In the Celtic world success or failure is fated rather than earned. Brambles, wild animals and dangerous waters obstruct the path of the questing knight; giants, witches, sirens, and invisible knights rather than castle garrisons and armoured challengers threaten his safety.

Even the mood evoked by the two environments is different. The tales of courtoisie are imbued with nostalgia, "the fragrance of an irretrievable past,"<sup>4</sup> while a sense of immanent doom hangs over the tales of Celtic magic. It is, in fact, atmosphere that chiefly distinguishes the Celtic from the courtly. "Magic is the word to insist upon," says Matthew Arnold in defining the peculiar quality of Celtic literature.<sup>5</sup> W. P. Ker is more explicit:

---

<sup>4</sup>A. B. Ferguson, The Indian Summer of English Chivalry (Durham, 1960), xiv.

<sup>5</sup>Matthew Arnold, On the Study of Celtic Literature (London, 1910), p. 122.

In Chrestien everything is clear and positive; in these prose romances, and even more in Malory's English rendering of his "French book" is to be heard the indescribable plaintive melody, the sigh of the wind over the enchanted ground, the spell of pure Romance.<sup>6</sup>

No stories better illustrate the differences between the two kinds of romantic setting than Balin le Sauvage or the Knight with the two Swords and The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney that was Called Bewmaynes.

The Book of Balin begins realistically with a retrospective chronology that fixes its events within the linear development of Arthur's history<sup>7</sup> and with a report of the political and military disturbances which beset the king. When the council of war is interrupted by a damsel from Avalon girt with a bewitched sword, we are transported from the real world of political upheaval to a world of romance where heroes are tried not by feats of arms but by magical tests devised by supernatural agents. Like the earlier test of the sword in the stone that proved the legitimacy of Arthur and the later test of the sword in the floating stone which proved the worthiness of Galahad, this test can only be achieved by

---

<sup>6</sup>W. P. Ker, Epic and Romance (New York, 1957), p. 335.

<sup>7</sup>The Book of Balin is the most prophetic in Morte Darthur. Thomas L. Wright's "The Tale of King Arthur" in Malory's Originality, ed. R. M. Lumiansky (Baltimore, 1964), shows how the prophetic motifs in this tale establish links with later episodes.

the knight fated to break the spell.<sup>8</sup> As often happens in fairy tales, the victorious contender is he who appears least likely to succeed:<sup>9</sup>

Than hit befelle so that tyme there was a poore knyght with kynge Arthure that had bene presonere with hym half a yere for sleynge of a knyght which was cosyne unto kynge Arthure. And the name of thys knyght was called Balyne. . . . And so he wente pryvaly into the courte and saw thys adventure whereoff hit reysed his herte, and wolde assayde as othir knyghtes ded. But for he was poore and poorly arayde he put hymselff nat far in prees (62-3).

Nevertheless after the failure of the other knights he easily draws the sword from its scabbard.

The peculiarly Celtic nature of the adventure is revealed in the sequel. Balin insists on keeping the sword despite the damsel's warning that with it he will slay the man he loves most. He decapitates the Lady of the Lake, who had killed his mother, and he is banished from court. As is shown by his Northern origins,<sup>10</sup> his poor appearance, his fated success, his adherence to the code of vengeance, and his condemnation by Arthur and the Round Table, he is no denizen of the courtly milieu but belongs to a mysterious world ruled not by

---

<sup>8</sup>The sword test was a familiar motif in Irish literature. Cf. Tom Peete Cross, Motif Index of Early Irish Literature (Bloomington, 1939), D1081.

<sup>9</sup>Other unprepossessing heroes in Arthurian legend are Gareth, Perceval, Torre, La Cote Mal Taille, and the young Arthur himself.

<sup>10</sup>The north, the region of Merlin's master Blaise, was associated with magic, violence, barbarism and treachery. Cf. Froissart's description of the Scottish knights in Northumbria.

the "virtuous" code of chivalry but by the inexplicable operation of fate. Balin's ultimate reward for succeeding in the sword test and in the quest for the invisible knight is not honour and acceptance but condemnation, rejection, and death. There is no accommodation between desert and destiny, no guarantee of success and a happy ending. Fate alone determines man's actions and end. Le chevalier mescheant is responsible for the deaths of Lanceor and his lady, of Berbeus and Peryne de Mounte, and of Garnish, all of whom he was trying to help. Defending himself against evil, he strikes the dolorous blow and accepting a strange shield, he kills his brother and is himself killed.

The temper of this tale is unchivalric. The Round Table knights are jealous and malicious (63, 65, 68), Arthur discourteous and ungrateful. King Pellam, though keeper of the hallows and Joseph of Arimathea's descendant, is neither pious nor courteous. He gives a feast to which a knight cannot be admitted "but he brynge hys wyff with hym othir hys paramoure" and both he and his brother ignore the laws of hospitality by attacking a guest in his hall. In the source,<sup>11</sup> Balin had been the first offender because he refused to eat in the hall where he had come as a guest. For this reason Garlon insults him.

The forces which oppose Balin are supernatural powers rather than human characters who can be overcome by prowess and valour. The Lady of the Lake and her damsel are malefi-

---

<sup>11</sup>Le Roman de Balain, ed. M. D. Legge (Manchester, 1942), p. 76.

cent water fays who "com never in felyship of worshipfful folke for to do good, but allwayes grete harme" (68). Garlon is a "traytoure knyght that rydith invisible" (81), killing silently or delivering wounds that can only be healed with his own blood. The forces which rive Pellam's castle, kill Balin's damsel and lay waste three countries have no rational explanation. Unlike the knights of courtly romance, Balin is opposed by powers which he cannot defeat without causing greater harm.

Malory omits many of the historical and courtly aspects of his source, La Suite du Merlin, the lyrical nature passages, battle scenes in the war against Rions, Merlin's counsel to Arthur about King Lot, scenes involving Arthur and his court, Morgan's courtly amours, and the friendships of various Arthurian knights.<sup>12</sup> This elimination of realistic material enables him to produce a powerful atmosphere of wonder, suspense, and doom. The magic sword, the marvelous spear in the table of gold, and the curiously wrought tombs with their golden letters and flickering tapers are wondrous elements of romance. Frightening and awesome are the prophecies and warnings of Merlin, the damsels and the dwarf.

Suspense is created by the interplay between the dire warnings of these supernatural creatures and the fated action of the human protagonist. As Balin rides, like Childe Roland,

---

<sup>12</sup>For a comparison of Malory's book with its sources, see L. H. Loomis, "Malory's Book of Balin," in Adventures in the Middle Ages (New York, 1962), pp. 51-65, reprinted from Medieval Studies in Memory of Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis (Paris and New York, 1927), pp. 175-195.

to his last rendezvous, the concatenation is overwhelming. First he comes to a cross, on which is written in letters of gold (Malory's addition): "'it is not for no knyght alone to ryde toward this castel'." Next there is the "old hore gentylman"<sup>13</sup> who calls the knight by name, admonishes him to turn back, then vanishes suddenly. The damsel, too, with her calling of Balin's name<sup>14</sup> and her warning about his shield, seems a supernatural messenger. Perhaps the most chilling effect is the sound of the hunting horn

blowe as it had ben the dethe of a best. 'That blast,' said Balyn, 'is blowen for me, for I am the pryse, and yet am I not dede.' (88, Malory's addition).

He is powerless to avoid his fate:

'Me repenteth. . . that ever I cam within this countrey; but I maye not torne now ageyne for shame, and what adventures shalle falle to me, be it lyf or dethe, I wille take the adventure that shalle come to me.' (89; Malory's addition).

Probably the most important character in the Celtic milieu is Merlin who combines the powers of metamorphosis and prophecy with the ability to create marvelous artifacts. The beneficent protection which guards Arthur is also extended to Balin whom he exonerates at Arthur's court (67) and rescues from the riven Grail castle (85). One of Merlin's chief functions in the story is to prepare for the Grail quest not only by means of prophetic utterances but also by ensuring that Ba-

<sup>13</sup>This is a familiar Otherworld character. Cf. the old man in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale.

<sup>14</sup>The fatal effect of "death naming" is also a ballad motif.



lin's sword and scabbard will be preserved for Galahad. In addition, he accomplishes Arthur's victory over King Lot and King Rions. Thus the most important figure in the milieu of Celtic romance is also the means of linking it with the historical and religious milieux.

The most significant places in the Tale of Balin, aside from the forest, are King Pellam's castle and the island guarded by the Red Knight. At first Pellam's castle seems part of the courtly setting and its lord one of those hospitable barons who delight in feasts, tourneys and the company of ladies. When Balin arrives at the castle he is received in the manner characteristic of courtly romance:

Balyne was well receyved and brought unto a chambir and unarmed hym. And there was brought hym robis to his plesure, and wolde have had Balyn leve his Swerde behynde hym (83).

Contrary to courtly practice, Balin keeps his sword with him. When he breaks it in his fight with Pellam, he runs through the castle, looking for another weapon<sup>15</sup>:

And at<sup>the</sup> last he enterde into a chambir which was mervaylously dyght and ryche, and a bedde arayed with cloth of golde, the rychiste that myght be, and one lyyng therein. And thereby stode a table of clene golde with four pelours of sylver that bare up the table, and uppon the table stode a mervaylous spere strangely wrought (85).

There is nothing to indicate that Balin has violated a Christian shrine. Malory mentions neither the Grail vessel nor the disembodied voices that in the French source warn Balin

---

<sup>15</sup> Neither Malory nor his sources explains why Balin did not use his second sword. See E. Vinaver, "The Dolorous Stroke," Medium Aevum, xxv (1957), p. 179, note 1.

— against the sin of touching the lance—"Nelà touchie, pechieriez!"<sup>16</sup> We have already been told (p. 72) that Balin is destined to strike the Dolorous Blow as punishment for failing to save Columbe rather than for committing sacrilege. The consequences of the Dolorous Blow--the collapse of the castle, the death of many occupants and the wasting of three countries--are not made to seem a divine punishment as they are in the Suite du Merlin. The atmosphere remains romantic rather than religious and moral; the chapel with its golden furniture and strangely wrought spear seems part of an Oriental palace or an Otherworld castle of Irish myth.<sup>17</sup>

Though the Otherworld aspects of the Grail Castle have attracted considerable attention, no critic seems to have noted the Otherworld character of the place which Balin guards. It is dominated by a castle where Balin is received more hospitably than ever before:

---

<sup>16</sup>Cambridge ms. of the Suite du Merlin f270 d. Cf. H. O. Sommer, The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances (Washington, 1909), vol. I, p. 290 (Lestoire del Saint Graal) where Brulans causes the Waste Land by striking Lambor with a sword that he has taken from Solomon's ship.

<sup>17</sup>On the resemblances between the Grail Castle and the Otherworld fortress, Curoi, see R. S. Loomis, Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance (New York, 1927), pp. 158ff and W. A. Nitze, "The Castle of the Grail--an Irish Analogue," in Studies in Honor of A. Marshall Elliott (Baltimore, 1911), pp. 19-51. Celtic analogues of the Grail Castle are also discussed in A. C. L. Brown's The Origin of the Grail Legend (Cambridge, Mass., 1943) 116ff and 358ff and in H. R. Patch's The Other World (Cambridge, Mass. 1950), p. 309ff.

Alone withal he sawe an honderd ladyes and many knyghtes that welcommed hym with fayr semblaunt and made hym passyng good chere unto his syght, and ledde hym into the castel, and ther was daunsyng and mynstralsye and alle maner of joye (88).

This castle by a river is ruled by a lady; its towers "stand ful of ladyes" during the battle between Balin and Balan. That it is derived from the Celtic Castle of Maidens, an Otherworld setting, is a reasonable assumption.<sup>18</sup> To meet his opponent, Balin and his horse must travel "in a grete boote" to an island. In Celtic mythology the location of the Otherworld on an island is common<sup>19</sup> while the association of boats and death is found also in Classical and Teutonic tradition.<sup>20</sup> The keeper of the island wears red armour and is mounted on a horse "trapped all reed"--an Otherworld colour. The joust on the island, like death, cannot be avoided by anyone "for ther may no man passe this way but he must juste or he passe," (88) and the victor is fated forever to defend the entrance, as Balan reveals to his brother:

---

<sup>18</sup>This is a common motif in Arthurian romance. For other occurrences see A. C. L. Brown, op. cit. pp. 109-117, 138-140, 153 etc.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. the Isle of Avalon, Bran's Island of Laughter and Island of Maidens, as well as the islands reached in the Voyage of Maelduin and the Voyage of the Hui Corr. See H. R. Patch, op. cit. Ch. 2 and A. C. L. Brown, op. cit. Ch. 11.

<sup>20</sup>Odysseus, Arthur, Bran and Saint Brendan all travelled by water to the Otherworld. Burning ships and buried ships formed an important part of Teutonic funerary customs.

for I had never grace to departe fro hem syn  
 that I cam hyther, for here it happed me to  
 slee a knyght that kept this iland, and syn  
 myght I never departe, and no more shold ye,  
 broder, and ye myght have slayne me as ye  
 have and escaped yourself with the lyf. (90)<sup>21</sup>

The compulsory service which the victor must render suggests that the tower on the island is analogous to the Doñorous Tower, frequently associated in Celtic myth with a Castle of Maidens.<sup>22</sup> Of the twenty motifs that Brown finds in Irish stories of the journey to the Otherworld, more than half occur in the scene under discussion.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the bridge of iron and steel "but half a foote brode" that Merlin builds and makes a test of virtue resembles in its narrowness the rope, sword, and thread bridges of Irish myth<sup>24</sup> and of Chrétien's romance as well as the allegorical bridges of the pa-

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Meraugis de port les guez which describes an Otherworld castle that no knight can leave unless another enters.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. A. C. L. Brown, op. cit., pp. 16, 46, 54, 59, etc.

<sup>23</sup>The hero is summoned to fairyland and sets out. He crosses water by boat. He is protected (i.e. warned) by a woman. On the island is a tower associated with tyranny. The hero is feasted and entertained in a Castle of Maidens. The feast is abundant. A battle has been arranged. The opponent is dressed in red. The hero conquers and slays the opponent. The return of the hero to his own country is impossible. Cf. Brown, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup>The bridge is one of the commonest Otherworld motifs. Cf. Patch, passim, and T. P. Cross, op. cit., F152.

tristic writers.<sup>25</sup> Despite the manner in which Malory and the authors of his sources Christianize the death of the brothers and the artifacts of the Isle de Mervilles, the atmosphere of wonder and fear which characterizes pagan Celtic romance is retained to the end.

Like the Tale of Balin, the Tale of Gareth begins at Arthur's court but the atmosphere is very different. Far from being an insecure tribal king harassed by enemies, Arthur is now an established king and emperor who holds the high feast of Pentecost with "the Rounde Table moste plenoure." These are the palmy days of chivalry before adultery, jealousy and family feuds have corroded the fabric. Arthur's court is a place of ritualistic ceremony and courteous conduct where the king must see a great marvel before he can "go to mete,"<sup>26</sup> where Lancelot "of his grete jantylesse and cürtesy" befriends le Bel Inconnu and where a desire for horse and armour is a sign of noble birth.

In this milieu the knights' motivations are love and chivalry not fate and vengeance. The controlling agents of French romance are not magicians, fays, and fate but those goddesses of courtly love, the ladies whom the knights serve. Gareth's relationship to the Lady Lyonesse and her sister

<sup>25</sup>E.g. Gregory the Great, Dialogues, ed. E. G. Gardner (London, 1906). Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks, ed. O. M. Dalton (Oxford, 1927).

<sup>26</sup>Cf. p. 293 and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The subject is discussed by J. R. Reinhard, The Survival of Geis in Medieval Romance (Halle, 1933), pp. 188ff.

Lynet illustrates the codes of courtly love and chivalric practice which permeate the romantic scene dominated by women.

The knight rides into the forest to rescue "a lady of grete worship and of grete londys" whose castle is besieged by a tyrant, The Red Knight of the Red Lands. Whether by taunts or entreaties, the hero's prowess is increased because of the ladies' presence (313,323). Both justice and mercy depend on feminine whim (307,310,314,325). It is the lady who defines the chivalric virtues and their rewards (327). According to the code of amour courtois,<sup>27</sup> her decisions must never be questioned. When the Lady Lyonesse decrees that the Castle Perilous will remain inaccessible to her champion until he has laboured "in worship this twelve-monthe," Gareth must obey. The arming of the castle against Gareth, the raising of the drawbridge and drawing of the portcullis may seem the precautionary measures conventionally taken to preserve the lady's virginity.<sup>28</sup> But Gareth, deprived of shelter, hospitality and the joys of love, is turned away to wander in the dark, trackless forest because his worthiness has not yet been proven. In chivalric society, prowess

---

<sup>27</sup>The code of courtly love was first systematized by Andreas Capellanus in De Arte Honeste Amandi (1174-1190). Its relation to Arthurian legend is well discussed by Gaston Paris in "Lancelot du Lac," Romania, xii (1883).

<sup>28</sup>Cf. the role of Shame, Danger, Fear and Malebouche who stand guard at the four gates of the castle in Guillaume de Lorris' Romance of the Rose. Similarly, Doubt, Delay and Danger protect Amoret in the Temple of Venus in Spenser's Faerie Queene (lv. x. 12,13,17).

must be coupled with high lineage. As Lyonesse tells her brother:

' . . .tyll that I know what is his ryght name  
and of what kynrede he is commyn shall I never  
be myrry at my herte' (328).

The good horse trapped in cloth of gold and the rich gear that set the court marveling (297) are not sufficient proof of nobility. But when his dwarf reveals that Gareth is a king's son, Lynet is not surprised:

'Truly, madam,' seyde Lynet unto hir sistir,  
'well may he be a kyngys son, for he hath many  
good tacchis: for he is curtyese and mylde, and  
the most sufferynge man that ever I mette with-  
all. For I dare sey there was never jantyll-  
woman revyled man in so foule a manner as I  
have rebuked hym. And at all tymes, he gaff me  
goodly and meke answrs agayne' (330).

Though Gareth exemplifies such conventional virtues of the courtly milieu<sup>29</sup> as gentility, prowess, humility, loyalty, devotion to his lady, and obedience, he is not given the conventional reward. A number of critics have suggested that the French doctrine of amour courtois based on adultery was uncongenial to Malory.<sup>30</sup> The hopeless devotion of the Red Knight is ridiculed instead of applauded by Gareth when his opponent cites the "many strange batayles" he has undertaken to win Lady Lyonesse:

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Lancelot's eulogy of Gareth 1088-1089.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. R. T. Davies, "Malory's Vertuose Love," Studies in Philology (North Carolina), vol. III (1956), pp. 459-69; Charles Moorman, "Courtly Love in Malory," ELH, XXVII (1960), pp. 163-70; P. E. Tucker, "Chivalry in the Morte," Essays on Malory, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), pp. 64-103. In his dislike of courtly love, Malory was probably in accord with English tradition. Cf. D. Van de Voort, Love and Marriage in the English Medieval Romance (Nashville, 1938).

'Geff thou so have done,' seyde Bewmaynes,  
 'mesemyth hit was but waste laboure, for she  
 lovyth none of thy felyshyp, and thou to love  
 that lovyth nat the is but grete foly. . .'  
 (322).

Magic is introduced to thwart the premarital consummation of Gareth's love, with Lynet acting as the supernatural agent.<sup>31</sup> For once the marvelous has a moral purpose, alien to its Celtic origin. Gareth must win his lady as the prize at a tournament instead of taking her in the castle hall and he must wed her at Arthur's court "with grete solempnyté."

In addition to revealing the interrelationships in the courtly milieu of love, nobility and prowess, the Tale of Gareth also presents the rituals of chivalric practice. He who is nobly born can receive knighthood providing he reveals his name and lineage (299). His fitness for the honour must be attested by appropriate array (297).<sup>32</sup> The refusal to reveal one's identity is sufficient excuse for a joust. Horse and harness are the victor's prize (304,341). The vanquished pays homage to the victor and offers him hospitality (307, 310,314). An insult to ladies and to good knights must always be avenged.

In chivalric romance, challenge is frequently conveyed

---

<sup>31</sup>Lucy Paton, op. cit., p. 70 and A. C. L. Brown, Iwain (New York, 1965), pp 144ff. interpret the Book of Gareth as a version of the fairy mistress theme. The events in Gringamore's castle involving the supernatural knight, the location of the castle at Avalon and Lyonesse's magic ring derive from this myth.

<sup>32</sup>Contrast Balin's insistence that "worship and hardynesse ys not in araymente" (63).



by means of setting. As Gareth enters the domain of the Red Knight of the Red Lands, the scene reveals both the power and the infamy of Beawmaynes' opponent:

They toke their horsis and rode thorowoute a fayre foreste. And than they com to a playne and saw where was many pavylons and tentys and a fayre castell, and there was mucche smoke and grete noyse.

And whan they com nere the sege sir Bewmaynes aspyed on grete trees, as he rode, how there hynges full goodly armed knyghtes by the necke, and their shyldis and gylte sporys uppon their helys (319).

The smoke, noise and hanged knights are demonic images that form an ominous contrast to the fair castle, gay pavilions and rich accoutrements. The closer Gareth comes to the castle, the greater is the impression of strength and wealth. Romantic convention demanded that an enemy must be worthy, for

'. . .the more he is of worship the more shall be my worship to have ado with hym' (311).

The double-diked walls, the noise of minstrelsy, the assembled allies, the pounding sea signify defiance.

And also there was faste by a sygamoure tre, and thereon hynges an horne, the grettyst that ever they sye, of an olyvauntes bone, and this Knyght of the Rede Launde hath honged hit up there to this entente, that yf there com ony arraunte knyghte he muste blowe that horne and than wolle he make hym redy and com to hym to do batayle (320).

To the Red Knight's material advantages is added the mythic characteristic of solar strength. Since Gareth refuses to withhold his challenge until high noon, even time becomes his enemy. But the hero of courtly romance differs from his real-life counterpart in being invincible.

The paramount ritual of romantic chivalry was the tournament<sup>33</sup> which, like a football game, combined team effort (often regional in basis) with individual feats. Furthermore, it enabled a knight to compliment his lady in the most public manner. The form of the tournament in the Tale of Gareth typifies the martial combats of romance. Convinced at last of Gareth's worthiness, the Lady Lyonesse, at her knight's suggestion, offers herself as the prize of a tournament. If the winner is already married:

he shall have a coronall of golde sette with  
stonys of vertu to the valew of a thousand  
pound, and a whyght jarfawcon<sup>34</sup> (341).

The date and place of the tournament having been cried throughout the land two months previously, the teams assemble at the appointed time. The entertainment is lavish

for this lady, dame Lyonesse, ordayned grete  
aray uppon hir party for hir noble knyghtys,  
for all maner of lodgyng and vytayle that  
cam by londe and by watir, that there lacked  
nothyng for hir party, nother for the othir  
party, but there was plenté to be had for  
golde and sylver for Kynge Arthure and alle  
his knyghtes (345).

---

<sup>33</sup>That real tournaments of the later middle ages were based on literary antecedents is evident from the title of a fifteenth-century manuscript: "La forme quon tenoit des tournoys et assemblees au temps du roy uterpendragon et du roy artus entre les roys et princes de la grant bretaine et chevaliers de la table ronde," ed. E. Sandoz, Speculum XIX (1944), 389-420. Cf. also R. H. Cline, "The Influence of Romances on Tournaments of the Middle Ages," Speculum XX (1945), 204-211 and Sidney Painter, French Chivalry (Baltimore, 1940), p. 52.

<sup>34</sup>Tournament prizes illustrate the combination in the Morte Darthur of materialism and romance: a circlet of gold (166), a gerfalcon and a white steed trapped with cloth of gold (176), a fair maiden and a gerfalcon (872), a diamond (1153).

After the celebration of mass each morning, the trumpets sound and the jousts begin. Disguise contributes to suspense and surprise. On each day Gareth's chameleon armour produces the mystification which inevitably attracts the attention of the assembly.<sup>35</sup> When his identity has at last been revealed and his prowess acclaimed, the hero is not content to rest on his laurels but withdraws into the forest to pursue other quests until the cycle of time and place brings him back to Arthur's court.

The land of romance in the Morte Darthur is the kingdom of Logres with its forests, castles and encircling seas. While the whole of Logres is a roiaume aventureux, certain areas within its bounds are particularly propitious for the questing knight. In the west is Morgan's land, the country of Gore with its strong castles and towns (152). It includes not only the Avalon of Celtic myth but the Glastonbury of Christian myth, with King Bagdemagus' abbey and the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea's son (1026). The marvelous atmosphere of Sir Gringamore's castle depends not a little on its location--the Isle of Avalon (342). Cornwall, the kingdom of Mark, and Wales with its witches and Perilous Forest (490) are also

---

<sup>35</sup>In Malory (Oxford, 1929), p. 3, Vinaver suggested, as Kittredge and Schofield also noted, that Gareth's exploits reflected a tournament at Calais when Richard Beauchamp sent three successive challenges to the French court. Wearing each time a different suit of armour, he defeated his opponents under the style of the "Green Knight" and "le Chevalier Attenant." In his second edition of The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, p.1440, Vinaver accepts R. S. Loomis' view that the wearing of a different disguise on three successive days was a conventional romantic motif. Cf. R. S. Loomis, "Malory's Beaumains," PMLA LIV (1939), 656-668.

places of adventure. When "a contraryous wynde" has blown Tristram onto the coast of North Wales, he tells Brangwain

' . . . in thys foreyste ar many strange adventures,  
as I have harde sey, and som of hem I caste to preve  
or that I departe. . . ' (481).

It is into this forest, too, that Arthur is lured by the sorceress, Auenowre, who is determined to have his love or his life (490). In the east is the country of Arroy, famous for "strange adventures" (162), as Marhault promises. After seven adventureless days, he rides with Gawain and Ywain into the forest of Arroy and encounters at once the epitome of romantic scenery:

And so they rode and cam into a depe valey full  
of stonys, and thereby they sawe a fayre streme  
of watir. Abouen thereby was the hede of the  
streme, a fayre fountayne, and three damsels  
syttynge thereby (162),

The topography of the romantic forest is designed to provide a maximum number of adventures if the knight-errant can find the right way. Chance, which we might call chivalric destiny, often provides a guide--a damsel, dwarf, inscribed cross, or countryman who will direct the hero to a well, a fountain, a defended ford, a crossroad or a besieged castle where his prowess will be tested. Ignorance of the way may lead to such difficulties as Gareth encountered in pursuit of his dwarf (329) but a knight is never lost for long. Paradoxically, the romantic forest combines vast expanses of wilderness with numerous habitations that fortuitously appear at nightfall. Lancelot's experience is typical:

And so he rode into a grete foreste all that day, and never coude fynde no hygheway. And so that nyght fell on hym, and than was he ware in a slade of a pavylyon of rede sendele (259).

Pavilions are a delightful feature of the romantic landscape. With their bright colours and rich materials they denote the chief chivalric pleasures--tournaments, adventures, hospitality and love.<sup>36</sup> As far as possible, however, Malory avoids associating the forest setting with a love idyll.<sup>37</sup> It is a place for love's victims, the heartsick Pelleas and Palomides who make the woods ring with their moans, the mad Lancelot and Tristram who run wildly through a disordered landscape that reflects their state of mind. When the Queen sends Bors, Ector and Lionel after Lancelot, they seek

in wyldirnessys and in wastys. . . a naked man  
in his shurte with a swerde in hys honde (808).

Merlin, besotted with love for Neneve finds in the forest his rocky tomb (126).

Hunting, an aristocratic pastime, often provides the knight with a motive for entering the forest where he may encounter violence and magic. King Meliodas, "a grete chacer of dere" (371), dies because of his passion for hunting, as does the father of La Cote Male Tayle (469). When Sir Palomides treacherously wins Isolde from Mark, Tristram cannot be

<sup>36</sup>Cf. Works, pp. 53, 169, 311, 314, 557, 698.

<sup>37</sup>In this respect, his treatment of the Tristan legend differs markedly from those of Marie de France, Beroul, Eilhart, Thomas, Gottfried, the Prose Tristan, and Swinburne.

summoned to rescue her "for he was in the foreste anhuntynge; for that was allwayes hys custom, but yf he used armes, to chace and to hunte in the forestes" (422).

Lancelot's encounters with hunters often prove hazardous. When he climbs a tree to rescue a lady's falcon, he is ambushed by her husband. A wound inflicted by a huntress is so severe that it keeps him from the tournament ground for several months. The vividly depicted boar hunt may associate Lancelot with an ancient Celtic tradition. According to Anne Ross,<sup>38</sup>

the sacred Celtic animal which was ritually hunted and slain was the boar. The animal seems then to have been symbolic of fertility (agricultural and sexual) and of war. In it were contained all the passions of the Celtic peoples--hunting, feasting, fighting. . . . It was an animal form appropriate to the gods, a food fitting for the Otherworld feasts of the Celtic heroic world.

Thus Lancelot's killing of the boar as well as being a realistic episode may adumbrate the triumph of a mythic hero and his wounding by the boar the suffering that a hero undergoes in order to benefit mankind.

The forest of romance contains many strange animals of which the strangest is the questing beast

that had in shap lyke a serpentis hede and a body lyke a lybud, buttokked lyke a lyon and footed lyke an harte. And in hys body there was such a noyse as hit had bene twenty couple of houndys questyng, and suche noyse that

---

<sup>38</sup>Pagan Celtic Britain (London, 1967), p. 321.

beste made wheresomever he wente (484).<sup>39</sup>

Early in his reign, Arthur pursues a great hart that leads him to a fountain where his horse drops dead. As the king sits "in grete thought" he sees coming to drink at the well "the strongeste beste that ever he saw or herde of." It is the questing beast with King Pellinor in hot pursuit. Arthur begs to undertake the quest but his wish is scornfully rejected:

'A foole! . . . hit ys in vayne thy desire, for  
hit shall never be encheved but by me other by  
my nexte kynne' (43).

While he is still pondering the meaning of the marvel, Merlin in the disguise first of a child then of an old man reveals to Arthur his parentage and the seeds of his destruction (44). The questing beast seems both a concrete manifestation of an impossible ideal (for the quest of the beast is never achieved) and a beast of ill-omen associated with the tragic destinies of Pellinor and Arthur. When Pellinor is murdered by Lot's family, Sir Palomides, a Saracen, inherits the quest. By swearing to achieve the quest before he will be christened he implies that the beast symbolizes the Christian virtues that he must acquire. He, too, is an unfortunate knight, his brain disordered by a hopeless love for Guenevere, his honour lost through a false deed done to Lancelot.

---

<sup>39</sup>Such composite mythological animals were part of the medieval bestiary tradition. Cf. the griffin (lion and eagle), bonnacon (bull and horse), leucrota (stag, lion, horse), manticora (man, lion, scorpion). Their allegorical significance is explained in T. H. White's Book of Beasts (London, 1954). Spenser includes the questing beast in his romantic forest, Faerie Queene, Books V and VI.

The recurrent appearance of the beast is a motif that accentuates the cyclic movement of romance. Arthur had seen it near Carleon in Wales (43); Palomides encounters King Mark while following the beast between Cornwall and Camelot (590). Tristram sees the strange animal near the Joyous Gard (683) and Sir Palomides follows it north until he reaches the Humber (711). The deliverance of the Red City turns him only momentarily from his quest. To the citizens he is "the good knyght that for the moste party he folowyth the beste glatys-saunte" (716). Even after he is baptized, the animal still eludes him (845). When the knights of the Round Table separate to pursue the Grail, two great knights eschew the quest. Tristram returns to Isolde at the Joyous Gærd "and sir Palomydes folowed aftir the questynge beste."

While the questing beast is linked to the Christian bestiary tradition, the lions in the Arthurian forest are classical in origin.<sup>40</sup> With little regard for differences of ecology and climate, they roam the Northern forests to devour unfortunate knights and ladies (118) or they escape from stone towers to frighten Guenevere (460).

Of Celtic origin are the white harts and hounds that often initiate magical adventures. They are commonly associated in Irish folklore with journeys to the Otherworld.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup>E. R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. W. R. Trask (New York and Evanston, 1963), p. 184 attributes Northern lions to epic stylization derived from the rhetorical school exercises of Late Antiquity.

<sup>41</sup>Cf. Tom Peete Cross, Motif Index of Early Irish Literature (Bloomington, 1939), Stith Thompson, Motif Index of Folk-Literature (Copenhagen, 1956), vol. I, 381; H. R. Patch, op. cit. 246ff, 256ff.



As we have seen, Arthur's wedding feast is marked by "a straunge and a mervailous adventure" involving a white bratchet and a white hart. On another occasion the pursuit of a hart in a great forest leads the king into one of his most perilous encounters, the joust with Accalon that Morgan arranges in an effort to destroy her brother. Like Arthur, Meliodas of Liones is lured by a hart into the hands of an enchantress and he, too, is delivered by a supernatural agent (371-3). The hart is evidently a messenger of a fairy mistress. While animals have a significant role in medieval romance, marvelous plants are of little interest to Malory. In Celtic myth golden trees and boughs that never fade are important Otherworld features. Only one example of Otherworld flora is retained in Morte Darthur. The apple tree under which Lancelot falls into an enchanted sleep is an Otherworld tree associated particularly with Avalon.<sup>42</sup>

Water is one of the important elements in the romantic setting for the fountains, wells, lakes, and streams are not only favorite meeting places but sometimes have magical associations as well. Arthur procures his famous sword Excalibur from "a laake that was a fayre watir and brode."

And in the myddis Arthure was ware of an arme  
clothed in whyght samyte, that helde a fayre  
swerde in that honde (52).

On the lake walks a water fay whose home is a fair palace in a great rock under the waves. Fountains were linked with the supernatural in Celtic and classical myth and in medieval geo-

---

<sup>42</sup>The Insula Pomorum of Vita Merlini vss. 908ff.

graphical lore.<sup>43</sup> When Accalon wakens from his magic sleep beside a marvelously wrought fountain with its pipe of silver and basin of marble, he knows at once that he has been put under a spell (140).

Not only wells and fountains but fords, lakes, and rivers, too, are portentous meeting places. At the Perelous Lake Mark, all in black on a black horse, ambushes Kay and jousts with him while "the moon shone as the bryght day" (148). A lady in distress or a knight seeking a joust waits by a well, certain that a champion will appear.<sup>44</sup> Giants lurk under trees (500), hapless lovers make moan or attempt suicide (485,689), and Tristram, putting off his helmet at a "burbely welle," sees the questing beast coming to drink (683).

The sea as well as the forest is Tristram's romantic milieu for he is a great voyager. He sails to France for his education, to an island for his battle with Marhaus, to Ireland for the healing of his wound, to Mark's court in Cornwall, to England by chance when he was sailing to Ireland, to Cornwall again with a bride for his uncle, to Brittany for war and marriage. The sea is a medium of adventure and escape.

---

<sup>43</sup>Cf. A. C. L. Brown, Iwain, pp. 126ff; C. B. Lewis, Classical Mythology and Arthurian Romance (Edinburgh, 1932), pp. 50ff; J. K. Wright, Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades (New York, 1925), p. 203; T. P. Cross, op. cit. D 926.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Works, pp. 481,484,492,500,553,588,720,776.

When a tempest drives Tristram's ship to the coast of England, he sets up his pavilion near Camelot, hangs up his shield and encounters Arthurian knights (403). Another forced landing in the Forest Perelous enables him again to enjoy the jousts and tourneys of the Round Table (441). Sentenced to death by Mark, Tristram escapes by jumping from a chapel window onto "the craggys in the sea" (432). The sea is a grave for the victims of the May Day massacre and for Lamerock's crew. Malory makes no effort to use this setting for atmospheric effects. The emotional and symbolic role that we attribute to it in the Tristram story comes from Thomas, Swinburne, Wagner, Masfield and Robinson, not from Malory.

Movement in the forest produces a cyclical rather than a linear effect. The river Humber and the encircling seas limit the milieu of the knights-errant to the realm of Logres. Circumferential movement is balanced by movement towards the symbolic centre Camelot. In this way circular motion in a timeless world is combined with linear movement towards a particular place at a particular time, Pentecost. Knights customarily set out from a particular place on the perimeter of a large circle--for example, Caerleon, Tintagel, London, Joyous Gard, Carlisle--where kings hold court and ladies wait for the knights' return. Within the large circle are smaller ones, centred on a well, a besieged castle, a hermitage. Since some knights move clockwise and others counter-clockwise, the meetings resemble those in the "allemande left" of a square dance, with one joust succeeding another until the hero is reunited with his original companion.

A series of incidents in The Book of Sir Tristram illustrates this kind of movement. Tristram is traveling from Brittany to Tintagel on the outer circle when he is projected by a storm into the Foreyste Perelus. Telling Brangwan and Governail to wait ten days, he rides off with Kehedin. They have gone only a mile within the forest when they see "a lykely knyght syttyng armed by a well" (481). He wounds Kehedin and fights Tristram to a draw before revealing that he is Sir Lamerok. Their chivalric interchange is interrupted by another pair of travelers on the circuit, the questing beast and Palomides:

And to breff thys mater, he smote down sir  
Trystramys and sir Lamarak bothe with one  
speare, and so he departed aftir the Beste  
Glatyssaunte. . . (484).

After taking Kehedin to a forester's lodge, Tristram and Lamerok ride off in opposite directions to look for Palomides. Lamerok meets, in succession, Meleagrance making "wofull complaynte" over Guenevere, two knights "hovying undir the woodshaw" to ambush Lancelot, and Lancelot himself. Moving on, he meets for the second time Meleagrance and then Lancelot (there is a pause while they all fight to prove the superiority of their ladies) and finally Arthur who has been enticed into the forest by the enchantress Annoure.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, in another part of the forest Sir Tristram encounters successively Kay, Brandelis, Tor, the Lady of the

---

<sup>45</sup>This episode is a late version of the fairy mistress motif. Cf. L. A. Paton, pp. 19-21. Sir Walter Scott's Bridal of Triermain is another version of the story.

Lake, Arthur whom he rescues from Annoure and her knights, and finally Ector.

And than at a day sette sir Trystramys and sir Lamerok mette at a welle, and than they toke sir Keyhydys at the fosters house, and so they rode with hym to the ship where they leffte dame Brangwayne and Governayle. And so they sayled into Cornuayle all hole togydys (492).

Although all may seem chance and confusion in the forest, a cyclic pattern similar to that described can often be discerned.

The device of sending knights in quest of a questing knight is commonly used. Ector, Bors and Lionel seek Lancelot (808). Messengers from Arthur's court hunt for Gawain, Ywain and Marhalt "wellnyghe a twelve-monthe thorowoute all Ingelonde, Walis and Scotlonde" (179). Sir Dinadan seeks Sir Tristram and Sir Tristram seeks Sir Palomydes "but off all that quarter of somer sir Trystram coude never mete with sir Palomydes" (784). The effect of the cyclic movement in space is increased by linking it to the seasonal cycle.<sup>46</sup>

The ships and horses which enable the knight to move from place to place are treated quite differently. Malory's horses are realistic. They neigh when they hear other horses approaching, drink at wells, and run away into the forest whenever they can. There seems no trace of the magical or mythic qualities common in romance.<sup>47</sup> The water transport,

---

<sup>46</sup>The cyclical time scheme will be discussed in Chapter III.

<sup>47</sup>See M. O. Howey, The Horse in Magic and Myth (New York, 1958).

on the contrary, is essentially romantic and frequently marvelous for ships have always been associated with strange adventures and supernatural journeys.<sup>48</sup> There is no more delightful description in the Morte Darthur than that of the little ship "all apparayled with sylke" that Arthur, Urience and Accalon find when they are hunting the "grete harte." Not only does it provide light and food (without human agency) and the company of beautiful women who call Arthur by name, but it is able to transcend the limitations of time and space. For, after sleeping "merveyulously sore all the nyght" in rich chambers on the ship, Urience wakes

in Camelot abedde in hys wyves armys, Morgan  
le Fay. And whan he woke he had grete mer-  
vayle how he com there, for on the evyn be-  
fore he was two dayes journey frome Camelot. (138)

King Arthur wakes in the prison of Sir Dinas and Sir Accalon finds himself beside a deep well "within half a foote, in grete perell of deth" (140). As Accalon quickly realizes, they are the victims of "false damysels that faryth thus with theire inchauntementes."

The fairy ship motif, again associated with Morgan, recurs at the end of the story when the queens come for the dying Arthur. Though it is provided with oars, a sign of human agency, the barge is destined for Avalon, the Celtic Otherworld (1240). Elaine's barge, also, has the character of an Otherworld vessel. Malory clearly localizes the scene through

---

<sup>48</sup> According to Thompson, op. cit. II, p. 141, magic boats are found in the folklore of Ireland, Iceland, Arabia, Persia, India, China, Greenland, Canada, Israel and the South Sea Islands.

which it moves down the Thames to Westminster, but the black samite hangings, the fair bed, the rich cloths of gold, the beautiful maiden, the single male attendant who will not speak are fairy-tale features.

In courtly romance, the hospitable castle is the desired alternative to the forest. Here the knight finds warmth and shelter, feasting and love-making, "all maner of gamys and playes, of daunsyng and syngynge" (331). The very names evoke "the mystery and the spell of everything remote and unattainable"<sup>49</sup>--the Castell Adventures, the Castell of Ladyes, the Joyous Gard, La Beal Regard, the Castell Blanke, the Castle of Maidens, Camelot. Although Malory describes no castle entertainments that can compare with those enjoyed by Gawain at the Green Knight's Castle or by Erec and Enid at their coronation, nevertheless Camelot, Kyng Kenadowne, Gringamore's castle, and Ettarde's castle with its pavilions outside the gate evoke an aura of joy and glamour.

When a castle is occupied by a lord or lady who refuses to acknowledge the authority of Arthur and the Round Table, it is a challenge to be captured and restored to the Arthurian order or to be destroyed. Morgan's Castell Charyot, Tarquin's castle and that of the Duke of South Marches, Tintagel in the hands of giants, the stronghold of Nabon le Nayre on the Ile of Servayge, the Castell Oryulus, the Castle of Maidens, the Red Cité, Pylounes, the Castle of Cartelloise and Meleagrant's residence only seven miles from Westminster are settings of

---

<sup>49</sup>W. P. Ker, Epic and Romance (New York, 1957), p. 321.

of this type. To test the hero's prowess, evil castles must seem impregnable and must ostentatiously display their strength and defiance. Morgan's castle, Le Beale Regarde, "fayre and ryche and also passynge stronge as ony was within this realme" was a gift from Arthur

the whyche he hath repented hym sytthyn a thousand tymes,. . . . And ever as she myght she made warre on kynge Arthure, and all daungerous knyghtes she wytholdyth with her for to dystroy all thos knyghtes that kynge Arthure lovyth. And there shall no knyght passe this way but he muste juste with one knyght other wyth two other with three. And yf hit hap that kynge Arthurs knyght be beatyn, he shall lose his horse and harnes and all that he hath, and harde yf that he escape but that he shall be presonere (597).

While the hall is the most important room in the hospitable castle the prison is more familiar to those knights who fall into evil hands. In Morgan's prison, Lancelot suffers from cold and lies "all nyght withoute ony comforte." Tarquin strips his prisoners and has them beaten with thorns. Navon le Noyre tears them limb from limb. Even King Arthur, as a result of Morgan's enchantment, finds himself in "a durke preson, heryng aboute hym many complayntes of wofull knyghtes" (138).

The evil associated with such castles may take the form of an inhuman or irrational demand--the "Custom" of the Castle. One castle requires of every passing maiden a dishful of blood for a sick princess. More than sixty virgins, including Perceval's sister, die before the spell is broken. Lascivious ladies demand love as the alternative to imprisonment. Lancelot, for instance, is to be kept in the Castle Charyot until he chooses one of the fays as his paramour.



The giants who captured Tintagel make their prisoners, three score ladies and damsels, work "all maner of sylke workys" even though they are gentlewomen. Having purged the evil by defeating the bad knights, enchantresses and giants, by emptying the prisons and by reinstating the rightful owners, the Arthurian knights make these castles hospitable harbours once more.

The social setting of romance, centred in castle life, is not just a glamorized form of the real social scene with the draughts, dirt, darkness, and dogs removed. Marvelous artifacts add excitements and dangers not found in real life. Mantles, drinking horns, and rich scabbards sent as gifts to kings and queens turn out to be magical tests or supernatural dangers. A ring increases a lady's beauty or ensures a knight's safety. A sumptuous banquet presages capture by a fay. A noble wine in a "lytyll flakette of golde" induces a love which will never depart in the "~~dayes~~ of their lyff." A castle bed brings its occupant supernatural encounters. The cloth of silk protecting a corpse is not a mundane cerement nor is the chapel in which a dead knight lies always a man-made shrine. It may be the Chapel Perelus, one of the most chilling scenes of Arthurian romance, designed by the enchantress, Hallewes, lady of the Castle Nygurmous, as a trap for Lancelot and Gawain. The chapel contains the body and sword of Sir Gilbert the Bastard who has been killed by a knight of the Round Table, Sir Meliot de Logres. During the battle Sir Meliot has received a wound that can only be healed by the

sword and cloth of the dead knight.<sup>50</sup> His sister begs Sir Lancelot to procure these from the chapel. Because the scene combines many elements characteristic of the romantic setting, it is worth quoting at length:

' . . . This is a mervelouse thyng,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'but what is your brothirs name?' 'Sir,' she seyde, 'sir Melyot de Logyrs.' 'That me repentys,' seyde sir Launcelotte, 'for he is a felow of the Table Rounde, and to his helpe I woll do my power.' Then she sayde, 'Sir, folow ye evyn this hygheway, and hit woll brynge you to the Chapel Perelus, . . . . ' Ryght so sir Launcelot departed, and whan he come to the Chapell Perelus he alyght downe and tyed his horse unto a lytyll gate. And as sone as he was within the chyrche-yerde he sawe on the frunte of the chapel many fayre ryche shyldis turned up-so-downe, and many of tho shyldis sir Launcelot had sene knyghtes bere byforehande. With that he sawe by hym there stonde a thirty grete knyghtes, more by a yerde than any man that ever he had sene, and all they grenned and gnasted at sir Launcelot. And whan he sawe their countenaunce he dredde hym sore, but so put his shyld before hym and toke his swerde in his honde redy unto batayle.

And they all were armed all in blak harneyse, redy with her shyldis and her swerdis redy drawyn. And as sir Launcelot wolde have gone thorow them they skaterd on every syde of hym and gaff hym the way, and therewith he wexed bolde and entyrd into the chapel. And there he saw no lyght but a dymme lampe brennyng, and than was he ware of a corpus hylled with a clothe of sylke (280).

As the ground trembles Lancelot cuts off a piece of cloth and takes Sir Gilbert's sword so that he may accomplish the healing of Sir Meliot. In the yard "all the knyghtes spake to him with grymly voyces and seyde,

---

<sup>50</sup> According to primitive belief, a wound establishes a relationship between a weapon and its victim. Healing can only be effected through the weapon and its owner. Cf. the use of this motif in the Tale of Tristram (p.384) and the Tale of Balin (82).

'Knyght, sir Launcelot, lay that swerde frome  
the or thou shat dye!'"

A second warning is uttered by a fair damsel:

'Sir Launcelot, leve that swerde behynde the,  
other thou wolt dye for hit.' 'I leve hit not,'  
seyde sir Launcelot, 'for no thretyng.' 'No,'  
seyde she, 'and thou dyddyste leve that swerde  
quene Gwenyvere sholde thou never se.' (281)

The damsel turns out to be Hallewes the Sorceress who explains her reason for making the chapel and demands a kiss of Lance-  
lot. ('Nay. . .that God me forbide' answers the hero.) Since he will not be unfaithful to the Queen, Hallewes has deter-  
mined to kill him and embalm his body so that

'dayly I sholde have clypped the and kyssed  
the, dispyte of quene Gwenyvere.'

Rejected by the knight, she dies of a broken heart within a fortnight (281).

Although the episode is probably derived from some ver-  
sion of the Perlesvaus,<sup>51</sup> many details are Malory's invention<sup>52</sup>  
and constitute, perhaps, his idea of a truly romantic scene.  
In the Perilous Chapel episode he combines many familiar mo-  
tives--the journey for a long time in a deep forest (278), the  
black bratchet that leads the knight through an ominous land-  
scape to an enchanted place, the lady in distress, the injury  
done to a knight of the Round Table, the creation of a setting  
by supernatural means, the good damsel who acts as guide and  
the evil temptress who demands his love or his life, demon

---

<sup>51</sup>See R. H. Wilson, "Malory and the Perlesvaus," Modern Philology, XXX(1932), 13-22 and Vinaver, Works, III, pp. 1423-1425.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. Works, III, pp. 1423-1425.

opponents of more than normal size, fearful threats and warnings and a marvelous sword. By means of setting, an atmosphere of wonder and terror is created and the chivalric virtue of the knight is tested. Love is the motivation for Hallewe's sorcery as it is for Lancelot's valor and loyalty which no power can overcome.

Chivalric romance naturally emphasizes such knightly accoutrements as swords, shields and heraldic devices. The tradition of naming a hero's possessions as if they were animate objects occurs in many cultures. The Mabinogion tale of Culhwch and Olwen, for instance, gives the names of Arthur's ship, Prydwen, his sword Caledfwlch, his spear Rhongomyniad, his shield Wynebywrthucher, and his dagger Carnwennan. In Morte Darthur, only the sword retains its personalization. Curiously, the name Excalibur<sup>53</sup> is applied to both the sword in the stone and, the sword obtained from the Lady of the Lake. Its life in the natural world coincides almost exactly with the temporal extent of Arthur's reign.<sup>54</sup> Its acquisition marks the beginning of his sovereignty and its relinquishment the end.<sup>55</sup> It first appears in the churchyard of St. Paul's Cathedral on the Christ-

---

<sup>53</sup>Other names are Caliburn and Mirandoise. The Lady of the Lake tells Arthur that Excalibur means Kutte Stele (65).

<sup>54</sup>In the myth of a solar hero, his fortunes depend on a sword made for him by a celestial artisan. The sword itself represents the rays of the sun. Its powers are both procreative and destructive.

<sup>55</sup>Cf. the Greek legend of Meleager whose life was tied to the life of a burning log.

mas following the death of Uther but its historical and Christian setting barely conceals its archetypal nature. When Arthur uses it in battle its brilliance, like the rays of the sun, dazzles the eyes of his enemies (19). Magic weapons are talismans that protect their owner and invariably injure his opponents. In enemy hands, the sword can be used against its master, as Arthur found in his battle with Accalon (142). The healing property of the sword has already been noted. When Lancelot touches the wounds of Sir Meliot with the sword from the Perilous Chapel, "anone an haler man in his lyff was he never."

For Arthur, the talismanic virtue of the scabbard surpasses that of Excalibur itself. When the king has acquired them from the hand in the lake, Merlin asks:

'Whethir lyke ye better the swerde othir the scawberde?' 'I lyke bettir the swerde,' seyde Arthure. 'Ye ar the more unwyse, for the scawberde ys worth ten of the swerde, for whyles ye have the scawberde uppon you ye shall lose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded' (54).

Twice Morgan steals her brother's scabbard; the power of her malevolence is well illustrated by her disposal of it. The first time, she gives it to Accalon as protection in the combat she has arranged against Arthur. The second time, when Arthur pursues her to regain it,

she rode unto a lake thereby and seyde, 'Whatsoever com of me, my brothir shall not have this scawberde!' And than she lete throwe the scawberde in the deppyst of the watir. So hit sanke, for hit was hevy of golde and precious stonys. . . '(151).

Gawain, like Arthur, a hero with solar attributes, also has a personalized sword, Galantine, with which he performs

many wonders in the Roman wars (210,230). His chief opponent, Priam, warns Gawain that he, too, has a magic sword "for who that is hurte with this blaade bleed shall he ever" (230). After their combat, both knights are miraculously healed by water from the rivers of Paradise, thus proving the superiority of Christian magic over pagan.

No talisman is more wonderful than the ring which Lady Lyonesse lends to Gareth:

' . . .that rynge encresyth my beawté much more than hit is of myself. And the vertu of my rynge is this: that that is grene woll turne to rede, and that that is rede woll turne in lyknesse to grene, and that that is blewe woll turne to whyghte, and that that is whyght woll turne in lyknesse to blew, and so hit woll do of all manner of coloures; also who that beryth this rynge shall lose no bloode. And for grete love I woll gyff you this rynge' (345).

Romantic in a courtly rather than a magical way are the armorial trappings of Arthur's knights--the tinctures of gold and silver, azure and green, the enigmatic blazons, the heraldic banners, the disguising armour and shields. Lancelot at the castle of Bleant calls himself Le Shyvalere Mafete and designs a shield

all of sable and a quene crowned in the myddis of sylver, and a knyght clene armed knelynge afore her (827).

The trouble-making Morgan le Fay persuades Tristram to carry at a tournament where Arthur will see it a shield that she has designed:

the fylde was gouldes with a kynge and a quene therein paynted, and a knyght stondynge aboven them with hys one foote standynge uppon the kynges hede and the othir uppon the quenys hede (554).

In both cases, romantic artifacts are related to aspects of plot and character.

Disguises effected by changes of armour are one of Malory's staple devices for varying the joust and tourney theme. At the tournament at Lonezep, for instance, Tristram appears on successive days in green (732), in red (737), and in black (750). Lancelot, in particular, makes frequent use of disguise for when his real identity is known, knightly encounters are hard to come by. Therefore, he often bears on his shield the arms of Cornwall, a country whose knights are not noted for prowess (516) or he exchanges arms with Kay and has a satisfying day knocking over attackers who think that he is the weaker knight (274ff). His most ingenious disguise is accomplished by wearing Elaine's "rede slyve of golde."

We must not assume that Malory's audience regarded the marvels as figments of the imagination. On the contrary, the medieval reader, like Lewis Carroll's White Queen, was capable of believing as many as six impossible things before breakfast for nothing was really impossible. Any concrete object might be a metaphor or sign of the supernatural. Even such important medieval scientists as Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus did not deny the magic properties of herbs, stones, metals, and other things.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, we should not conclude that the marvels are the most important aspect of Malory's setting. His practice was to rationalize them and normalize them whenever pos-

---

<sup>56</sup>Lynn Thorndike, A History of Magic and Experimental Science (New York, 1929), II, 664.

sible--to provide rudderless ships with oars and fairy mistresses with medieval castles and courtly retainers so that they might be acceptable to the reader.

The romantic milieu of Arthurian romance has to combine in a not too incongruous way elements derived from the two different worlds of Celtic mythology and French courtoisie. The actions of the knight-errant may be controlled by morally ambiguous power of magic or by the ethic of the chivalric code. The differences between the two kinds of romantic milieu have been illustrated by comparing "The Book of Balin" and the "Tale of Gareth." The former is not purely Celtic nor the latter purely courtly. Yet it is possible to differentiate between them in respect to atmosphere, agency, and locale. Celtic magic evokes an atmosphere of wonder, fear, and doom while courtoisie connotes the joys of courtly love and chivalric prowess. Celtic agents control the actions of the knight by means of magic and prophecy, courtly agents by means of the chivalric code. Celtic castles retain traces of their Otherworld origins, courtly castles combine the antithetical parallelisms of great hall and gloomy dungeon.

The pregnant world of romance in Morte Darthur is the kingdom of Logres with its forests, castles, streams, fountains and encircling seas. Within this environment the stimulus for chivalric action is provided by fabulous beasts, otherworld messengers, magic ships, enchanted chapels, strange artifacts, disguised knights and ladies in distress. The author of romance creates what Tolkien calls "a Secondary World which



your mind can enter.<sup>57</sup> If this world is well constructed, its elements will have a real and literal existence. It is a tribute to the storyteller's art that Malory's idealized romantic milieu conveys the impression of a real world, the nature of which has been described by Ernest Rhys:

In that charmed world, lying between Tintagel on the Cornish coast, and Joyous Gard on the coast of Northumberland, mapped out with many a sombre waste, stretch of forest, lonely hermitage, and haunted castle, romance seems to find its<sup>58</sup> most perfect circumstance and opportunity.

---

<sup>57</sup>J. R. R. Tolkien, Tree and Leaf (London, 1964), p. 36.

<sup>58</sup>The Book of Marvellous Adventures, ed. Ernest Rhys (London, 1906), p. xii.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ROMANTIC QUEST: THE JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE

As the previous chapter has indicated, the romantic world projects an impression of literal reality. In addition, it is imbued with mythic, allegorical and symbolic significances which reflect the duality of the medieval consciousness.

In the interests of realism and plausibility the chroniclers of the High Middle Ages removed from the Arthurian "history" many mythic elements. Higden, for example, discarded the stories of Vortigern's tower and Uther's magically facilitated amour with Igraine. He cast doubt also on Merlin's ability to move Stonehenge from Ireland. Even the mythic story of Arthur's withdrawal to Avalon was expediently rationalized by the twelfth-century "discovery" of Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury, an event that benefited not only the monks but their Angevin rulers as well.

The courtly romances, however, continued to perpetuate myths of class and time while the stories of Celtic origin preserved a myth of supernatural agency. By idealizing the aristocracy, separating its members from their political and economic responsibilities and motivations,<sup>1</sup> and endowing them

---

<sup>1</sup>Gower and Langland both treated the functions of the knightly class realistically. Cf. Gower, "Mirour de l'Omme," Works, I, ll. 23593-24180; "Vox Clamantis," Works IV, Liber V, Ch. I-vi, VI, xiii-xiv, VII, iiii; "In Praise of Peace," Works III, 480-492 and Langland's Piers Plowman B, Prol. ll. 117-122; VIII ll. 9-12; XI 285-288; C, VI, 72-75.

with the absolute authority of the chivalric code, the writers of romance projected a kind of social scene that fulfilled the reader's dream of bliss and that was quite unrelated to social history. In real life, for instance, knights protected ladies for political and economic reasons rather than through gallantry. Though Raymond Lull's Boke of the Ordre of Chyvalry asserted that "thoffyce of a knight is to mayntene and defende wymmen widdowes and orphanes,"<sup>2</sup> the experiences of Margaret of Anjou, Jacqueline of Holland and Margaret Paston illustrate the difference between the ideal and the real.<sup>3</sup>

In Arthurian romance the Order of the Round Table represents the exclusive pinnacle of the mythic society. Its members are knights destined by birth and chivalric virtue to success in feats of arms. Nobility is a sine qua non of the myth. A youth must be "of jantill strene" (62) in order to be accepted. As is evident in the cases of Torre and Perceval, environment cannot repress heredity. That noble blood will naturally turn to knightly pursuits is revealed when Aries the cowherd brings his youngest son to court:

'For I shall telle you, I have thirtene sonnes,  
and all they woll falle to what laboure I putte  
them and woll be ryght glad to do laboure; but  
thys chylde woll nat laboure for nothyng that  
my wyff and I may do, but allwey he woll be shot-  
ynge, or castynge dartes, and glad for to se  
batayles and to beholde knyghtes. And allwayes  
day and nyght he desyrith of me to be made knyght'  
(100).

---

<sup>2</sup>Ed. A. T. P. Byles, EETS, O.S. 168 (London, 1926), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>See Margaret A. Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances (Philadelphia, 1947).

The "unnatural" behaviour of the cowherd's son is understood when Merlin reveals that King Pellinor is Torre's real father.<sup>4</sup>

Only the nobly born male is worthy to seek adventure. Yeomen, dwarfs, foresters, countrymen, and fishermen can be no more than guides. The hero is mythic insofar as he deliberately seeks the dangers of the perilous forest and unfailingly returns to the social world with proofs of victory. The sense of renewal generated by the cycle of quest and return accounts for the acclaim and joy with which the hero is greeted. Through his feats, reported to the court at the springtime Feast of Pentecost, virtue and energy impregnate the Arthurian world.

The monster-killing property of such mythic heroes as Perseus, Heracles, Beowulf, and St. George characterizes the chief knights of romance. Arthur's epic battle with the giant of St. Michael's Mount purges Hoel's country (198). By killing the giants of Tintagel,<sup>5</sup> freeing the captive ladies, and restoring the castle to its rightful owner, Lancelot demonstrates his power of renewing the environment (271). Marhaut dispatches the giant Taulhurd who destroys the lands of Earl Fergus (175) and the mad Tristram kills Taulhurd's brother Taulus (499). An otherwise inconspicuous Arthurian knight,

---

<sup>4</sup>Other references to the importance of lineage occur in Works, pp. 131, 295, 328, 379, 810, 859, 865.

<sup>5</sup>Malory associates Tintagel with Igraine and her husband (272). His misreading of the Fr. Tintaguel creates a problem of identity since in the Tristram legend Tintagel is the seat of King Mark.

Sir Severeause, also has a reputation as a giant-killer (1148). Though in allegorical terms giants may be used to represent cruelty, bestiality, lust, cupidity, and other vices, Malory probably viewed the giants of the romantic cycle in a mythic sense, that is, as formidable opponents whose destruction increased the honour of his heroes.

The lady of romance occupies an important position in the myth of class. She is either a virgin to be delivered or a goddess to be served.<sup>6</sup> Like the knight, she is nobly born and socially isolated. She has no duties but those of presiding at tournaments or feasts, entertaining questing knights, inspiring chivalric virtue and rewarding chivalric devotion.

The myth of class is improbable morally as well as socially. Polarization within the class counterposes good kings and bad kings, good knights and bad knights but movement from the demonic to the heroic pole is frequent. With the exception of a few archetypal villains like Mark, Tarquin, and Brunys Saunze Pité, bad knights when defeated by heroes become good and are admitted to the Order of the Round Table. Thus the chivalric encounters are rites de passage that qualify a knight for membership. Priamus (241), Marhault (179), the Red Knight of the Red Lands (362), the Duke de la Rowse (363), Gauter, Gylmere, and Arnolde (275,1149), Sir Belyaunce le Orgulus (451,1150), Persaunt, Pertelope, and Perymones (362), Neroveus, and Plenoryus (475) have all been initiated

---

<sup>6</sup>Andromeda is the archetypal virgin, Guinevere the archetypal mistress. For an allegorical treatment of Andromeda, see Christine de Pisan's Épître d' Othéa. Chrétien de Troyes' Le Chevalier de la Charette is the locus classicus for Guinevere and the code of amour courtois.

in this way. The ideality of the class myth is not abrogated by the existence of knights who challenge the authority of the Round Table since the evil knights are ultimately absorbed. The catalogue of Round Table knights at the healing of Sir Urry contains the names of many who first appeared as opponents of Lancelot, Tristram, Gawain, and Gareth. It is only when the evil knights can no longer be defeated and absorbed, and when many Round Table knights themselves become vicious that romance gives way to chronicle and the myth of class to realism.

In courtly romance, the idealization of class generated a static idealization of time, since the knights and ladies seemed to live in a golden age of chivalry. Although the label "golden age" has been associated by Gautier<sup>7</sup> and Kilgour<sup>8</sup> with the twelfth century, by Coulton<sup>9</sup> with the thirteenth and by Lord Berners<sup>10</sup> with the fourteenth, it is difficult to believe that historical chivalry ever approached ideality. The "pure" chivalry praised by Gautier is described in other terms by Peter of Blois (ca. 1135--ca. 1205):

---

<sup>7</sup>Léon Gautier, Chivalry, ed. Jacques Levron, trans. D. C. Dunning (London, 1965), p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>R. L. Kilgour, The Decline of Chivalry (Cambridge, Mass., 1937), pp. 4-5.

<sup>9</sup>G. G. Coulton, "Knighthood and Chivalry," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed. (London, 1910), 15, 858. Coulton points out, however, that there was a great disparity between the ideal and historical reality.

<sup>10</sup>Jean Froissart, The Chronicles, trans. Lord Berners, selected, edited and introduced by Gillian and William Anderson (London, 1963).

In these days of ours the Order of Chivalry is mere disorder. For he is accounted stoutest and most illustrious among knights whose mouth is defiled with the most filthy language, whose oaths are most abominable and who most despises God, reviles him, and defies the Church.<sup>11</sup>

In the twelfth century, too, Chrétien de Troyes was already lamenting the passing of the good old days.<sup>12</sup> Joinville's description of the Crusaders' "chivalric" behaviour at Damietta in 1249<sup>13</sup> and the charges that brought about the downfall of the Templars<sup>14</sup> early in the fourteenth century dispel the illusion that the ideals of chivalry markedly affected the ethical conduct of medieval knights. No doubt, Lord Berners saw Froissart's fourteenth century as a golden age filled with "high enterprises, famous acts and glorious deeds."<sup>15</sup> Froissart himself cites the opinion of Gaston de Foix that

the history that I had begun should hereafter be more praised than any other, and the reason he said why, was this how that fifty year past there had been done more marvellous deeds of arms in the world than in three hundred year before that.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>Epistolae, No.94, cited by F. J. C. Hearnshaw, "Chivalry and Its Place in History," Chivalry, ed. Edgar Prestage (London, 1928), p.20.

<sup>12</sup>Yvain, ed. T. B. W. Reid (Manchester, 1942), ll. 1-33.

<sup>13</sup>The History of St. Louis, trans. Joan Evans (London, 1938), pp. 49-50.

<sup>14</sup>G. Legman et al., The Guilt of the Templars (New York, 1966).

<sup>15</sup>Preface to his translation of The Chronicles of Jean Froissart, ed. G. and W. Anderson (London, 1963).

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

In the fifteenth century, the note of despair and dejection which permeates secular literature<sup>17</sup> led men to envision a golden age of chivalry in an idealized past. They imagined a time when chivalry was not branded with the stigma of a lost cause, a time when knights did more than "go to the baynes and playe atte dyse."<sup>18</sup> Aristocratic nostalgia for an earlier time when the knight was an effective force politically, socially and militarily was combined with a middle-class determination to express social and economic successes by means of chivalric images. The fact that chivalry was no longer a practical institution made it all the more attractive as an "ideal of the sublime life."<sup>19</sup>

It was Caxton's view that the chief attraction of the Morte Darthur was its evocation of a golden age:

And I, accordyng to my copye, have doon sette it in enprynte to the entente that noble men may see and lerne the noble actes of chyvalrye, the jentyl and vertuous dedes that somme knyghtes used in tho dayes, by whyche they came to honour, and how they that were vycious were punysshed and ofte put to shame and rebuke; humbly bysechyng al noble lordes and ladyes wyth al other estates, of what estate or degree they been of, that shal see and rede in this sayd book and werke, that they take the good and honest actes in their remembraunce,

---

<sup>17</sup>J. Huizinga in The Waning of the Middle Ages (Garden City, 1954) p. 33 analyses the "impression of immense sadness" at the close of the Middle Ages.

<sup>18</sup>William Caxton, Epilogue to "The Order of Chyvalry," The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton, ed. W. J. B. Crotch, EETS, O.S. 176 (London, 1928).

<sup>19</sup>Huizinga, p. 31.



and to folowe the same, wherin they shall fynde many joyous and playsaunt hystories and noble and renommed actes of humanyte, gentylnesse, and chivalryes. For herein may be seen noble chyvalrye, curtosye, humanité, frendlynnesse, hardynesse, love, frendshyp, cowardyse, murdre, hate, vertue, and synne. Doo after the good and leve the evyl, and it shal brynge you to good fame and renommee.<sup>20</sup>

Hesiod's golden age was a time when men lived like gods with hearts free from care, untroubled by age or the necessity of earning a living.<sup>21</sup> The knights and ladies of Arthurian romance also enjoy good things in abundance in a timeless world immune to the onslaught of age and death. As Vida Scudder puts it:

The moment one tries to analyze, one is tempted to say, and be done with it, that ~~this~~<sup>22</sup> world of romance subsists in an eternal Now.

In tournament after tournament the knights fight with undiminished vigour. The ladies' beauty is untouched. Death itself is ineffectual. Carados and Tarquin are killed by Lancelot in Book III (266-267) yet participate in Lady Lyonesse's tournament in Book IV (346). Several knights who die during the quest of the Grail subsequently attempt the healing of Sir Urry.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Works, cxlv-cxlvii. In The Indian Summer of English Chivalry (Durham, 1960), A. B. Ferguson suggests that Caxton and Malory undertook to reaffirm chivalry as a living ideal applicable to their own time.

<sup>21</sup>On the classical golden age see Appendix A.

<sup>22</sup>Le Morte Darthur of Sir Thomas Malory (London, 1921), p. 215.

<sup>23</sup>Many a scholarly argument has been based on these temporal discrepancies. Vinaver considers them proofs of the separate nature of the tales. In The Book of King Arthur, p. 5, Charles Moorman calls them examples of retrospective narrative. They are probably the result of carelessness. The medieval view of time was quite different from ours (Appendix A) and neither Malory nor his contemporaries would have been troubled by such inconsistencies.

In creating the mood of a golden age, the opening and closing passages of the middle books are important. The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake begins with a statement that relegates the time of troubles to the past and affirms that Arthurian knights are no longer engaged in organized warfare. Through the peaceful violence of jousting and tourneying they increase their "worshyp" (253). The book ends with a great scene of exultation because goodness has triumphed and evil has been thwarted or converted (286-287). The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney that was called Bewmaynes, rejected by Vinaver as irrelevant,<sup>24</sup> is, in fact, the most important depiction of the halcyon days. Courteous conduct, chivalric prowess, the charm of magic and myth, the colour of heraldry, the symbolism of ritual, the joys of feast, tourney, and love contribute to the effect of "good things in abundance."

It is true that the third of the central romances, The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones, introduces the theme of treachery but it is associated chiefly with the court of King Mark, a setting placed in deliberate contrast to that of Arthur. Tristram is repeatedly attracted into the Arthurian milieu so that he may contribute to the glory of the golden age. Malory, like the author of his source, minimizes the effect of the Lot-Pellinore feud by delaying its climax until almost the end of the book and by making Lamerök's murder occur offstage.

It is a "historical" rather than a romantic event that

---

<sup>24</sup>Malory (Oxford, 1929), p. 94.

terminates the age of glory. The quest of the Grail will destroy the harmonious order, as Arthur realises:

'Alas!' seyde Kynge Arthure unto sir Gawayne,  
'ye have nygh slayne me for the avow that ye  
have made, for thorow you ye have berauffte  
me the fayrst and the trewyst of knyghthode  
that ever was sene togydir in ony realme of  
the worlde. For whan they departe frome  
hense I am sure they all shall never mete  
more togydir in thys worlde, for they shall  
dye many in the queste' (866).

Timor mortis projects us from romance to reality. Yet even after "slander and strife" have become rampant, Malory continues to idealize the past. Love in those days was not as it is now when

men can nat love sevennyght but they muste have  
all their desyres. That love may nat endure by  
reson, for where they bethe sone accorded and  
hasty, heete sone heelyth. And ryght so faryth  
the love nowadayes, sone hote sone colde. Thys  
ys no stabyltyé. But the olde love was nat so.  
For men and women coude love togydirs seven  
yerys, and no lycoures lustis was betwyxte them,  
and than was love trouthe and faythefulnes. And  
so in lyke wyse was used such love in Kynge Ar-  
thurs dayes. (1119-1120, Malory's addition).

And Ector's eulogy of Lancelot is a lament not only for a knight but for a time that has passed away (1259).

In addition to a myth of class derived from French romance and a myth of time which had classical origins, the Morte Darthur utilizes a myth of agency found in Celtic mythology. Magic affects the natural world through supernatural creatures.<sup>25</sup> Like the Greek gods, they are swayed by human passions; like the Norse deities, subject to fate. Merlin's magical powers enable him to foresee but not to escape the

---

<sup>25</sup>Angus Fletcher calls them daemoni, C. S. Lewis longaevi. See The Discarded Image, pp. 122-138.

doom engendered by love. Unlike the Elizabethan fairies, Celtic fays resembled humans in size but were superior in beauty and power:

. . .the fay of Arthurian romance is essentially a supernatural woman, always more beautiful than the imagination can possibly fancy her, untouched by time, unhampered by lack of resources for the accomplishment of her pleasure, superior to human blemish, contingency, or necessity, in short, altogether unlimited in her power.<sup>26</sup>

Morgan le Fay<sup>27</sup> is the chief source of baleful magic in the Morte Darthur. By means of such artifacts as the horn of chastity (429), the mantle (158), the magic ship (137), the counterfeit sword and scabbard (142), the allegorical shield (554), and the boiling bath prepared for Elaine (791), she attacks the foundations of courtly society. Morgan's magical powers enable her also to escape from her enemies by becoming part of the topography (151). Her final appearance as a tutelary goddess who conducts Arthur to Avalon to heal his wounds rather than as a malevolent enchantress who seeks to destroy the king suggests the ambivalence of Celtic myth. Her role as a destroyer-healer is exemplified also in the story of Alexander the Orphan whose "sixtene grete woundis" are first enflamed and then assuaged by the fickle fay (692). Traces of her original role as fairy mistress of the hero may be seen in her capture of Arthur, Lancelot, and Alexander, in

---

<sup>26</sup>Lucy A. Paton, pp. 4-5.

<sup>27</sup>Morgan is probably derived from the Irish war-goddess the Morrigan. See Paton, pp. 148ff. On the derivation of her name from Matrona, see R. S. Loomis, Wales and the Arthurian Legend (Cardiff, 1956), pp. 99ff.

her liaison with Accalon, her jealousy of Genevere, and her sojourn with Arthur in Avalon.<sup>28</sup> In fact, all the evil enchantresses of the Morte Darthur--the Queen of North Wales, the Queen of Estlond, the Queen of the Outer Isles, Hallewes the Sorceres, and Aunoure--play the unhappy role of thwarted fairy mistresses. The beneficent fay Nineve, in contrast, lives happily ever after with the Round Table knight, Pelleas.

Like Morgan, the Lady of the Lake and Nineve have ambiguous natures. Originally a water fay who reared Lancelot, la Dame du Lac appeared in the Prophecies of Merlin (lxxi) as an opponent of Morgan and the beloved of Merlin. In Malory, she is the donor of Excalibur and the friend of Arthur yet she is also the destroyer of Balin's mother and the victim of his vengeance. Her position as captor of Merlin and protectress of Arthur is transferred to Nineve<sup>29</sup> who is also the wife of Pelleas, a detail original in Malory. The association of the fay with a particular natural environment is evident in the description of her palace and in her ability to walk on the water of the lake (52).<sup>30</sup>

Nineve's tutelary capacity is evident during Arthur's battle with Accalon and his seduction by Aunoure. The role

<sup>28</sup>Cf. Paton, pp. 145ff.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Paton, pp. 204-227 and Vinaver's n. 65. 11-12, Works, p. 1306.

<sup>30</sup>Vinaver's contention in Malory, p.51, that the author "is indifferent to such obvious and universal aspects of romance as magic and the use of the supernatural" and for this reason eliminates the magic associated with the Lady of the Lake, is questionable.

of informant inherited from Merlin is exhibited in the Poisoned Apple episode (1059). Finally, she joins the malignant fays to escort Arthur to Avalon (1242).

The relation of Merlin to the romantic setting has already been suggested in the discussion of the Tale of Balin. He affects the spatial scene by creating crosses and tombs, a perilous bed and a perilous siege, by fixing marvelous swords in stones, by appearing suddenly in disguise then vanishing without a trace. He affects the apprehension of time by prophesying future events. He creates a mood of wonder and fear by marvelous craftsmanship, shape-shifting, enchantments and ominous utterances. He is the wizard par excellence of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.<sup>31</sup>

The dwarfs and damsels who act as messengers of supernatural agents have a number of strange qualities. In Celtic mythology, dwarfs were gifted with immortality, clairvoyance, and the ability to disappear.<sup>32</sup> The dwarfs of romance are generally ugly and malevolent like the messenger "with grete mowthe and a flatte nose" whom Morgan sends to Accalon (140) and the dwarf from Camelot who threatens Balin (70-71) or the servant of Phelot and Petipace who strikes Torre's horse (109). In contrast, the damsels are young and beautiful. Frequently,

---

<sup>31</sup>On Merlin's reputation during the seventeenth century, see R. F. Brinkley, Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century (Baltimore, 1932). In Journal of the Plague Year, Defoe reveals that Merlin's head was used as a sign by fortune tellers.

<sup>32</sup>V. J. Harwood, The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition (Leiden, 1958).

they act as deae ex machina who effect the hero's escape from the castle of an enemy.<sup>33</sup> Though they may perform realistic duties such as bringing food to the imprisoned knight, their employment as turnkeys is never explained in realistic terms and the ease with which they appear or disappear suggests supernatural powers. We are left with the impression that the dwarfs and damsels are not real characters but rather mythic agents intended to facilitate the pursuit of adventure by bringing the knight-errant to a challenging situation or releasing him from a restricting one.

As we should expect, Malory tends to displace Celtic myth and to associate its patterns with the world of human experience. This process had already occurred to some extent in his French sources. For example, the fay of Ulrich von Zatzikouen's Lanzelet had become in the Prose Lancelot "une 'Dame' parfait qui n'a nul besoin d'un fils adoptif pour délivrer son enfant tombé au pouvoir d'un enchanteur du reste son lac n'est qu'une apparence."<sup>34</sup> The four royal fays of the Morte Darthur, Morgan, the Queen of North Galys, the Queen of Eastlond, and the Queen of Oute Isles, become medieval ladies who ride abroad protected from the sun by a green silk canopy and attended by a retinue of knights (256). Though Lancelot is brought to the Castle Chariot under a spell, he

---

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Works, pp. 258, 465, 551, 643, 1136.

<sup>34</sup>Ferdinand Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en Prose (Paris, 1954), p. 169.

is realistically laid on his shield and carried by knights on horseback (257). He is imprisoned in a "chambir colde" that is the antithesis of the Otherworld castles where the hero enjoyed warmth, light, and delightful entertainment in the company of his fairy mistress.<sup>35</sup> Morgan's castles, originally Otherworldly, are rationalized in medieval terms. Twelve locks bar the prisoner's way in the Castle Chariot (259). La Beale Regarde is not immune to destruction by fire (644). Alexander the Orphan, another victim of the fairy mistress, is brought into her power through the realistic device of drugged wine. His wounds are first irritated then healed by means of mundane ointments (641-642) and he gains release from the castle because of a medieval siege (644). Finally, he repays the releasing maiden not with courtly dalliance but with feats of arms. Far from being an omnipotent fay, Morgan is never permanently effective against Malory's knights.

The displacement of Celtic myth also occurs through association with Christianity. This, too, Malory derived from his sources. No aspect of the Arthurian legend seems more truly mythic than the king's departure for Avalon yet the Noire Chapelle of La Mort Artu has an equal claim on Arthur. As Frappier puts it, "Artus est parti avec les feés. On croirait qu'il échappe à Dieu."<sup>36</sup> Another example of dis-

---

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Patch, pp. 55ff.

<sup>36</sup>Etude sur La Mort le Roi Artu (Paris, 1961), p.251.



placement occurs in the case of one of the most primitive motifs, Gawain's solar strength, which Malory describes as "a grace and gyffte that an holy man had gyvyn hym" (1216).<sup>37</sup>

Malory's preference for realistic treatment does not preclude the existence of allegorical implications.<sup>38</sup> The larger struggle between good and evil which is the basis of the tropology and anagogy is present in many episodes of the romantic quest.<sup>39</sup> Though Malory never directly states the didactic purpose which Caxton imputes to him, nevertheless his treatment of chivalry, probably the most original aspect of his work, supports Caxton's view that "al is wryton for our doctryne" (cxlvi).

The thematic basis of Malory's allegory is his con-

---

<sup>37</sup>In this case, the idea is derived from the Middle English Le Morte Arthur ll.2802-7 and the Mort Artu, ed. Frappier (Geneva, 1954), pp. 172-4, 198-9. See R. M. Lumiansky, "Gawain's Miraculous Strength: Malory's Use of Le Morte Arthur and Mort Artu," Études Anglaises X (1957), 97-100. The first reference to Gawain's strength in the Morte Darthur (161) is not rationalized.

<sup>38</sup>In this chapter, allegory means tropology, quid agas. A reading of Malory does not invite the kind of consistent allegorical interpretation propagated by D. W. Robertson, Jr. who views all medieval literature as an allegory of charity. See "The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens," Speculum xxvi, 24-49 and "Some Medieval Literary Terminology," Studies in Philology XLVII, 669-692. The difficulty of applying Robertson's approach to all medieval literature is discussed by Jean Misrahi, "Symbolism and Allegory in Arthurian Romance," Romance Philology XVII (1964), 555-569.

<sup>39</sup>For Joseph Campbell the quest is the monomyth underlying all mythologies and religions. Such modern allegorists as Kafka and Hesse also use it to reveal the testing of the hero and to criticize the contemporary world.

cept of chivalry, expressed through the archetypal patterns of quest and combat. In simplest terms, they represent the application of chivalric ideals to human problems. The former involves an episodic progress towards a desired goal, the latter a ritualistic exchange of blows. As in the historical quest, the progresses and battles of romance are symbolic actions, facilitated by mythic agents and expressed in cosmic images. The medieval ideals of aristocratic superiority and chivalric virtue were particularly suited to this kind of metaphorical expression.

The quest begins at court, the symbolic centre of the Arthurian world. It may be initiated by the granting of a boon, the banishment of a knight--Balin, Yvain, Tristram--for offending the king, or the appearance of a supernatural agent--a dwarf, a damsel, a deer--who may represent "the demiurgic powers of the abyss."<sup>40</sup> In any case, the hero leaves the familiar social environment and enters the mysterious, danger-filled forest. In romance "the perpetual sense of the forest, the absence of horizon"<sup>41</sup> suggest the limitless opportunities for adventure which await the questing knight. Beyond the forest that he traverses lies yet another forest. As Palomides found when he pursued the questing beast, the final goal

---

<sup>40</sup>Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces (New York, 1961), p. 52.

<sup>41</sup>Gervase Matthew, "Ideals of Knighthood in Late Fourteenth Century England," Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke (Oxford, 1948), p.362.

is never achieved, the forest never subdued, the enduring rest never earned. Sometimes the landscape seems crowded with castles, pavilions and hermitages, with belligerent knights and damsels in distress met at ford and fountain. At other times there is a sense of limitless, unoccupied space, deep shadow, and unseen presences. Like Chrétien's Broceliande, Dante's sinister forest at the foot of Purgatory, Spenser's "faerie land," the ominous wood of Comus, the enchanted grove in Dryden's King Arthur, and the mystical "sea-wood" of Charles Williams,<sup>42</sup> Malory's forests are places of magic and myth that can be given allegorical interpretation, though in Malory's case "doctryne" should not be pressed too far.

Perilous and mysterious, the forest continues to attract because it is the source of power and glory; like the fountain of youth it renews the vigour and fame of ageless knights by presenting them with the challenges that mark the stages of the quest. These differ from the challenges of the religious quest by being external confrontations only. By overcoming evil knights, giants, and sorceresses, the secular knight exhibits chivalric virtues which he already knows that he possesses. He does not gain greater self-knowledge. The forests reveal his strength, not his weakness. They enable him to progress socially but not spiritually.

Of particular importance in the allegory of the quest

---

<sup>42</sup>See Taliessin Through Logres (Oxford, 1938) and The Region of the Summer Stars (London, 1944).

is the discovery of the right way. Both Celtic<sup>43</sup> and classical tradition regarded the right hand way as the fortunate way. Christians adduced an interpretation that made right not only a direction but a moral condition. For the knight-errant the right way is the way which leads to adventure. The direction of the journey, seemingly a matter of chance, is actually controlled by a supernatural power. Merlin guides Arthur to the lake where he finds his talismanic sword. Marvelous deer lure heroes to fateful meetings. Damsels and dwarfs point out the right way and warn of its dangers. Naturally, the admonitions never deter the quester since the difficult way is the one that best reveals his prowess. The knights unquestioningly accept the offered guidance without considering whether it is good or evil. Sir Tristram trustingly allows a damsel of Morgan le Fay to lead him towards a trap because she promises him

that he sholde wynne grete worshyp of a knyght  
adventures that ded much harme in all that con-  
trei (510).

So governed by destiny is the knight that his intentions cannot subvert his fate. Take the case of Alexander the Orphan:

So was Alysaundir purposed to ryde to London,  
by the counceyle of sir Trystram, to sir Launce-  
lot. And by fortune he wente aftir the seesyde,  
and rode wronge (639).

The change of direction brings him to Morgan le Fay, one of Arthur's chief enemies. By encountering and overcoming her evil designs, Alexander is initiated into a daemonic world

---

<sup>43</sup>J. R. Reinhard, The Survival of Geis in Medieval Romance (Halle, 1933), p. 144.

that proves his powers and enables him to restore moral order. Palomides rides "as adventures wolde gyde him" (769) or "whereas fortune lad hym" (784), seeking Tristram or following the mysterious beast. Tristram more than once is buffeted by a fortuitous storm which blows his ship to a propitious place.<sup>44</sup> An obsessive reluctance to be diverted from the right way is exhibited by Lancelot when he refuses to accompany Tristram to his castle:

'Wyte you well,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'I may not ryde wyth you, for I have many dedis to do in other placys, that at this tyme I may nat abyde wyth you.' (778)

The progress in search of adventure may be facilitated not only by creatures whose intent is good or evil, but also by such symbolic artifacts as crosses and tombs, shields hung from trees, and challenging basins or horns. The symbol-studded landscape is one of the chief features of allegorical expression. When Bagdemagus leaves court in a rage, his squire finds a cross on which it is written that the knight shall never return to court until he has won a knight of the Round Table "body for body" (132). The words are a prophecy, a geasa and a challenge. The cross which warns Balin against riding alone to the castle actually spurs him to the completion of his quest (88). Gawain, with his guide, has only to wait at a cross in the forest to become involved in the plight of Pelleas (164). Obviously, in secular romance the cross has a chivalric rather than a religious significance. Similarly,

---

<sup>44</sup>Cf. the "chance" shipwrecks in Swift's allegory, Gulliver's Travels.

the sight of a copper basin hanging from the bole of a tree (255, 265), or an elephant's horn (320), or of great spears and shields outside a pavilion (109) enjoins a definite and preordained response. It is immaterial that one would not find such a profusion of crosses, tombs, horns, shields, dwarfs, and damsels in a real forest. In allegory, as Fletcher points out, "the progress need not be plausible as long as the momentum of symbolic invention is great."<sup>45</sup>

Just as the quest in secular romance is not spiritual, the jousts and tournaments are not necessarily psychomachiae.<sup>46</sup> The division of combatants is not always effected on moral lines. It is true that at Lonezep, Lancelot and his knights are opposed by "many knyghtes that hath envy to us," enemies of the Round Table (682). However, chivalric convention led great knights to fight on the side of Arthur's opponents so as to equalize the forces (735, 1107). This practice results in the discomfiture of Lancelot during the Grail Quest when the conventions of terrestrial chivalry no longer apply. The secular tournaments are ceremonial rituals that concentrate chivalric forces in one place so that they may publicly reveal their virtues. There public acclamation reaches its greatest intensity for the commons join the aristocracy in an act of mass worship sanctified by the presence of king and ladies.

---

<sup>45</sup>p. 153.

<sup>46</sup>On this type of allegory, see C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (New York, 1958), pp. 66-73.

Jousts lend themselves to allegorical interpretation when they are waged against evil knights. Malory's definition of a bad knight is worth noting:

'What?' seyde sir Launcelot, 'is he a theff and a knyght? And a ravyssher of women? He doth shame unto the Order of Knyghthode, and contrary unto his oth. Hit is pyté that he lyvyth!' (269)<sup>47</sup>

The victory of the hero purges the environment of evil. Archetypal villains such as Tarquin and Breuz Sans Pitié are killed; evildoers of a more pliable nature are converted. The reestablishment of order, politically, socially, and morally, results from the success of the quester. The change is symbolized by the opening of prisons, redistribution of lands, and holding of feasts. For instance, the story of La Cote Male Tayle concludes with the freeing of Sir Plenoryus' prisoners, the promise of the defeated knights to attend the next Pentecostal feast at Arthur's court where they will be "gyded and ruled" as Arthur and Lancelot require, and the bestowal of Castle Pendragon on La Cote Male Tayle. When the defeated knights are accepted as knights of the Round Table, the harmony and power of the Arthurian world are increased.

A great many of the jousts in the Morte Darthur involve encounters between fellows of the Round Table. Through their exhibitions of prowess, they provide "exemplary models"<sup>48</sup> of

---

<sup>47</sup>There is considerable irony in Malory's definition, if the subject of Hicks' biography is the author of Morte Darthur.

<sup>48</sup>The term is used by Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality (London, 1963), p. 8.

chivalric behaviour. That prowess was the quality most admired in the later Middle Ages may be inferred from the illustrations in manuscripts of the prose romances where jousts and tourneys far outweigh other subjects.<sup>49</sup>

The quest and the joust are ritual forms consisting of symbolic actions in symbol-studded environments. In the forest, "a fertile world of ritual,"<sup>50</sup> the knight encounters a number of similar obstacles. He overcomes each in the same way, by feats of arms, until a climactic victory enables him to return home. Gareth successively challenges and defeats the Black Knight, the Green Knight, the Red Knight and the Blue Knight before overcoming the Red Knight of the Red Lands who differs from the others only in being more powerful. After his release from prison, Tristram successively meets Sir Hemyson, King Arthur, Sir Uwayne, the knights of Sir Brunys Saunze Pyté, Sir Sagamore, and Sir Dodynas before his climactic encounter with Sir Launcelot (569). The "custom" of a castle, the refusal to reveal one's name, the hurling of insults, the blowing of a horn, are stock motifs for initiating combat. The revelation of identity, the opening of prisons, the abrogation of evil customs, and the acceptance of Arthur's authority ritually conclude the combat just as the recognition at Arthur's court ritually concludes the quest.

Ritual inhibits the effects of violence. The great

---

<sup>49</sup>See R. S. and L. H. Loomis, Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art, 2 vols. (London and New York, 1938).

<sup>50</sup>Northrop Frye, op.cit., p. 183.



wounds suffered by the heroes are accepted as part of the pattern. They arouse in the reader neither pity nor fear. In the world of romance they lack tragic implications. In fact, they often initiate another round of ritualistic action:

Than sir Launcelot and sir La Cote Male Tayle  
reposed them there untyll they were hole of  
hir woundis, and there they had mury chere  
and good reste and many good gamys, and there  
were many fayre ladyes (475).

The parallelism and repetition of episodic encounters which characterize the structure of romance are the distinguishing features also of Gothic art, architecture, and philosophy, all symbolic forms. Wylie Sypher proposes that all the arts in certain periods fall under the domination of the techniques of one art. In the Romanesque era, architecture was the controlling mode. As a result, sculpture, painting, and literature were dominated by the decorative patterns of monotonously repeated images arranged in a highly stylized series of units, a structural pattern which is particularly apparent in Malory's "Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones."<sup>51</sup> It is the "rhythm-pattern of recurrence" which makes possible the allegorical and symbolic content of literature and art.

The ritual nature of quest and combat is emphasized by conventionality of diction. Jousting knights are described in stereotyped similes of the epic tradition. Like Homeric heroes, they are as fierce as lions or rams or wild

---

<sup>51</sup>Four Stages of Renaissance Style (Garden City, 1955), pp. 30ff. See also Erwin Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (Latrobe, 1951), pp. 45ff.

bulls. Like Teutonic heroes, they rush together like wild boars and scatter the enemy as a wolf does sheep or a greyhound hares.<sup>52</sup> The conventionality of landscape descriptions and the paratactic method of narration also contribute to the rhythm of ritual form. Malory's formulaic descriptions of scenery, rarely enlivened by actual observation and particular detail, are semantic components of the symbolic actions. The examples will suffice to show how parataxis emphasizes the stylized nature of action and scene:

So Sir Trystram rode by a foreyste and than was he ware of a fayre toure by a marys on the tone syde, and on that other syde was a fayre medow, and there he sawe ten knyghtes fyghtyng togydys. . . . And than within a lytyll whyle he had slayne halff theire horsys and unhorsid them, and their horsys ran into the feldys and forestes (560).

And so the knyght cam to the well and there he alyght to repose hym. And as sone as he was frome hys horse this gyaunte Fauleas com betwyxte thys knyght and hys horse and toke the horse and leped uppon hym, and so forthewith he rode unto sir Dynaunte and toke hym by the coler and pulled hym afore hym uppon hys horse, and wolde have stryken of hys hede (500).

The landscape is marked by conventional images that denote the conflict of good and evil. In particular, the presence of evil forces is associated with the mistreatment of virtuous ladies and noble knights. The thorns with which Tarquin beats his prisoners, the spurting blood of the heroes, knights bound with the bridles of their own horses and carried

---

<sup>52</sup>The lion image occurs on pp. 32, 33, 111, 224, 323, 527, 734, 760; the boar image 209, 295, 323, 415, 486, 526, 641, 1070, 1193; the ram image 50, 382, 641; bulls pp. 267, 474; sheep and wolves, 238, 551, 668, 734, 1211; hares and hounds 210, 222, 525.

under the horse's belly, severed heads hanging from saddlebows, mutilated bodies in the forest, knights dangling by the feet from trees are recognizable modulations of the demonic world. Their symbolic significance requires no explanation.

The images are isolated, each relevant to a particular scene which forms a stage in a progress. They do not convey the impression of a single demonic power ranged against the Round Table as do the demonic images in the religious setting. The only exception is Morgan le Fay whose baleful artifacts form a recurring motif. Paradoxically, the images associated with the enchantress appear to connote joy, love, and luxury. The magic ship seems a paradisaal setting; the shield which Tristram carries to the tournament at Deure Rocke is an admirable accoutrement. It is only when they are tested that the demonic nature of Morgan's gifts become apparent. The gorgeous mantle set with precious stones reduces its wearer to a heap of coals. The "fayre horne harneyste with golde" spills its contents on the adulteress. The counterfeit sword and scabbard fail to protect Arthur. Clearly, in the world of magic as in that of religion, the moral significance of symbolic artifacts is not always clear to the participant.

The most constantly recurring images of the romantic setting are the arms and armour that symbolize chivalry. Knighthood is conferred and allegiance vowed with a sword. Lancelot's divided loyalty is attributed to the fact that Arthur knighted him while Guenevere gave him his sword (1058).

Tristram and Lancelot indicate their mutual regard by yielding their sword to one another (569). The naked sword that Pelleas lays across the throats of Gawain and Ettarde is a token of unfulfilled vengeance (170). Reversed shields like those hanging before the Chapel Perilous symbolize defeat and demand revenge (280). The victims of the Red Knight of the Red Lands hang from the trees with their swords and shields about their necks as a mark of dishonour (319). Tristram's shield outside his pavilion announces his desire to joust (403).<sup>53</sup> La Cote Male Tayle's acceptance of a dead knight's shield denotes his acceptance of the dead knight's quest. Each symbol can be depended on to evoke a ritualistic response.

No convention is more common than the use of heraldic devices as symbols of identity or disguise. The change from the age of heroism to the age of chivalry brought about a change in chivalric art:

. . .from the martial austerity of practical use it passed into the decorative richness of adornment and display. . .heraldry reached a new stage as the mark of the individual displaying his individuality.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup>The symbol of a shield of challenge hanging from a tree appears as the heraldic motto on the seals of Thomas, Lord of Holand and Wake (ca. 1353) and Thomas of Woodstock (1385).

<sup>54</sup>Joan Evans, English Art 1307-1461 (Oxford, 1949), p. 56.

Malory's descriptions of a green shield with a lion of gold (515), a shield of silver and black bands (587), a shield indented with white and black (536), a bended shield of azure (721) reflect a development of heraldic decoration that occurred historically.<sup>55</sup> When Lancelot sends Gaheris to release Tarquin's prisoners, he already knows their identity from their shields hanging on a tree outside the castle (268). At the tournament at Surluse, Palomides "disguises" himself by bearing the questing beast on his shield and trap-pings (656). Allegorical shields gave a more devious indication of a knight's identity.<sup>56</sup>

Heraldic symbolism was closely linked to the symbolism of colours which had hierarchic, religious, moral, and emotional values in the late Middle Ages.<sup>57</sup> Black was the colour of mourning. The King of France alone designated his rank and emotional state by wearing red in bereavement. The black shield of the Chevalier Mal Fait and the black samite

---

<sup>55</sup>The final development was the imitation in real life of literature. See "La forme qu'on tenoit des tournoys et assemblees au temps du roy urter pendragon et du roy Artus," ed. E. Sandoz, Speculum XIX (1944), 389-420, where line drawings of the one hundred and fifty shields belonging to the knights of the Round Table are reproduced. More than a hundred years earlier at Mortimer's Round Table at Dedford in 1328, the knightly participants had used devices attributed to Arthur's knights.

<sup>56</sup>Richard Beauchamp carried allegorical shields in the tournament at Calais in 1422.

<sup>57</sup>Ca. 1458 the herald Sicily wrote a manual on this subject, Le Blason des Couleurs. See Huizinga, pp. 264-273.

covers of Elaine's funeral barge have obvious emotional significance. Black was also the colour of evil. In black armour on a black horse King Mark lurks at the Perilous Lake. The black face of Garlon connotes his evil disposition. Black arms and armour are worn by the demon knights at the Chapel Perilous and by Palomides in his pagan state. Another ominous colour was red, a colour associated with death in Celtic myth.<sup>58</sup> Green could be not only the colour of life but the symbol of terror and decay.

Malory's most brilliant use of colour occurs in the Tale of Gareth where the vivid accoutrements of the hero's successive opponents in the quest for Lady Lyonesse and the magical colours of his own armour at the tournament form an important aspect of the aesthetic pattern. The colours have obvious symbolic implications. After Lancelot has knighted him, Beaumains rides with Lynet until darkness approaches.

So at the laste they com to a blak launde, and there was a blak hauthorne, and thereon hynge a baner, and on the other syde there hynge a blak shyld, and by hit stode a blak speare, grete and longe, and a grete blak horse covered wyth sylk, and a blak stone faste by. Also there sate a knyght all armed in blak harneyse, and his name was called the Knyght of the Blak Laundis (302-303).

---

<sup>58</sup>Cf. A. C. L. Brown, The Origin of the Grail Legend (Cambridge, Mass. 1943), p. 171: "An idea that the devil is red or perhaps black is very old, and the symbolism of these colours is wide spread. . . . Red more commonly than black is a symbol for the land of the dead." Anne Ross in Pagan Celtic Britain (London, 1967), p. 327 notes that in Celtic myth red horsemen are omens of disaster. Arthur Dickson finds that the red and black armour in the Dutch Lancelot are märchen symbols for death. See Valentine and Orson (New York, 1929), Studies in English and Comparative Literature, XCI p. 94.

The scene is intended to chill both the hero and the reader. The next opponent is "all in grene, both his horse and his harneyse." On a green horn he blows "three dedly motis" (305). The third opponent is all in red, the colour of blood, violence, and death. The fourth wears indigo; his pavilion and "all maner of thyng that there is aboute, men and women and horsis, trapped shyldis and sperys, was all of the coloure of inde" (311), a sign of evil. The final opponent is most terrifying of all:

Than the Rede Knyght of the Rede Laundis armed hym hastely and too barouns sette on his sporys on his heyls, and all was blood-rede: his armour, spere, and shyld. . . and than they brought hym a rede spere and a rede stede (321).

While evil knights or those who wished to disguise themselves generally wore black or red, white was a colour favoured by the heroes. Iwain's white shield, defiled though it might be by mud, marks him as one of the elect. The white shields of the Queen's knights (1121) indicate their chivalric promise. When Lancelot first meets Tristram, Guenevere's lover is "all in whyght" (568). In Ireland La Beal Isode provides Tristram with a white horse and arms, "and he cam so into the felde as hit had bene a bryght angell" (387).

The symbolism of colour was important in the code of love. Green signified new love or amorous passion, blue fidelity, grey and tawny sadness, and yellow hostility.<sup>59</sup> The four queens who try to seduce Lancelot are shaded by a

---

<sup>59</sup>Joan Evans, Dress in Medieval France (Oxford, 1952), pp. 42-43.

cloth of green silk (256). When the great lovers Tristram and Isolde go with their retinue to Lonezep, they are "arrayed all in grene trapurs" (732). Seasonal, hierarchical, and amorous symbolism are combined in the costumes that Guenevere decrees for the Maying party:

'And I warne you that there be none of you but  
he be well horsed, and that ye all be clothed  
all in gryne, othir in sylke othir in clothe'  
(1120).

A horse's colour had symbolic significance in literature and life. The descending order of colour, as symbols of prestige, was white, piebald, skewbald, horses with white faces and feet, horses of other colours.<sup>60</sup> However, war horses might be any colour since their size and purpose were significant indications of class. At the Tournament of Lonezep the fact that Tristram's party were all dressed alike in green makes it impossible for Lancelot, the captain of the opposing team, to differentiate them by means of their arms. He does so by reference to their horses. He will counter with the green knight on the white horse, Ector with the one on the dun horse, and Arthur with the rider of the grey horse (735). In this case, Malory's use of colour is realistic rather than symbolic. He does not follow the French source in mounting Tristram on a vert destrier. On the other hand, the white horses that Lancelot and Tristram often ride may belong to an allegorical mythic tradition. "To ride a white horse is to bring a new kingdom on earth of joy and wisdom."<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Leon Gautier, op. cit., p. 333.

<sup>61</sup> Gertrude Jobes, Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols (New York, 1961), p. 1678.



As an indication of class and occupation the medieval horse was analogous to the modern automobile. Eustache Deschamps illustrated the usage in verse:

Trois manières truis de chevaux qui sont:  
 Pour la jousté, les uns nommez destriers;  
 Haulz et puissans, et qui très grant force ont  
 Et les moyens sont appelez coursiers;  
 Ceuls vont plus tôt pour guerre et sont légiers,  
 Et les derrains sont roncins; et plus bas  
 Chevaux communs qui trop font de débas, <sup>62</sup>  
 Ceux labours vont, c'est de genre villain.

No symbol had greater importance for Malory than gold. He often adds to his sources the qualitative phrase "of golde" when describing an object. Celtic magic, French courtoisie, and British sovereignty could be related to the real world by this metal. The cloth of gold in which the infant Arthur is wrapped denotes royal lineage. The gold and purple of the Roman knights become symbols of "the Conqueror." Gold and precious stones decorate his magical sword and scabbard. The heraldic significance of gold is generosity, a virtue displayed by Arthur and Lancelot when they distribute the treasure-troves of giants. Lyonesse's ring and golden cup, Elaine's golden pall, the cushion of gold placed beside Sir Urry, and the golden tomb of King Lot <sup>63</sup> create the impression of a society which equated gold with wealth and beauty.

---

<sup>62</sup>Cited by Victor Gay, Glossaire Archéologique du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance (Paris, 1887), I, p. 364.

<sup>63</sup>The tomb of Edmund Crouchback constructed in Westminster Abbey ca. 1290 was also decorated with enameled gold and coloured images.

Gold, for Malory, is also an important element of the marvelous. Golden letters appear on Gareth's helmet to announce his identity. Prophetic writings are "endited" in gold on crosses and tombs. Golden letters appear on each seat at the Table Round to indicate who should sit there. The mysterious chapel in King Pelles' castle gleams with golden bedspreads (Malory's addition) and a golden table. Morgan's magical artifacts are generally made of gold.

In real life, medieval costume exhibited indications of class, vocation, and emotion which endowed it with "an almost heraldic significance of cut and colour, emblem and device."<sup>64</sup> In romance this symbolic role was utilized. There is often a definite relationship between dress and intention. When Merlin wishes to be incognito, he assumes the dress of a peasant. He approaches Uther "in a beggars aray" (18), waits as a poor man at the postern gate to receive the newborn Arthur and appears as a churl at the castle of Bedegraine. The latter disguise is an excellent example of Malory's realism:

. . .he was all befurred in blacke shepis skynnes, and a grete payre of bootis, and a boowe and arowis, in a russet gowne,<sup>65</sup> and brought wylde gyese in hys honde (38).

Isolde, desiring to seem both decorous and inconspicuous, wears the wimple of widow and nun when she attends the

<sup>64</sup>Joan Evans, Dress in Medieval France, p. 79.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. Eduard Wagner, Zoroslava Drobna and Jan Durdik, Medieval Costume, Armour and Weapons (1350-1450), trans. Jean Layton (London, 1962), P. 34 for pictures of peasant costume including the sheepskin garment.

Tournament at Lonezep (732). Guenevere, convicted of treason and led to the stake, is stripped of her smock as a sign of her degradation. Lancelot's first action on rescuing her is to have her clothed in the kirtle and gown of the upper class lady, a symbolic as well as a realistic gesture. The decision of Gareth and Gaheris to wear civilian rather than military garb when they have to escort the Queen to the stake signifies their disapproval of the King's judgment as well as their peaceful intent in a violent situation. La Cote Male Taille draws his name and his motivation from the cloth of gold overgarment, blood-stained and slashed, that his father had been wearing when he was murdered. "Thus to have my fadyrs deth in remembraunce, I were this coote tyll I be revenged" (459). Exotic garments are sometimes associated with evil characters. The beard-trimmed mantle of King Royance and the coat made by the giant of St. Michael's Mount "full of precious stonys, and the bordoures thereof the berdis of fyftene knyges" (201) are symbols of defiance and proofs of power. The most luxurious article of clothing in Morte Darthur, the mantle, is both emotive and hierarchic. Gowns and scarlet cloaks furred with ermine and miniver are worn by Malory's lovers (e.g. 333, 818, 1165) or distributed as a sign of joy on ceremonial occasions such as the knighting of King Pelles' nephew. It is when the mad Lancelot is dressed in a ceremonial robe of scarlet that his identity is revealed (823). On the other hand, his identity is concealed at the Winchester tournament by his wearing of the "sleve of scarlet, well embrowdred with grete perelles" (1068) a symbol of

passionate love and faithfulness. It was not his custom to admit publicly his amorous devotion.

In comparison with Chrétien de Troyes and some writers of English metrical romances, Malory may seem restrained in his use of aesthetic detail yet because his decorative touches are rarer, they are more memorable than the luxuriant compositions of the poets. When occasion demanded, he could compose a pageant as brightly coloured and ceremonially ordered as a scene in a miniature or a tapestry. The return of Guenevere to Arthur at Carlisle is an excellent example:

Than sir Launcelot purveyed hym an hondred knyghtes, and all well clothed in grene velvet, and their horsis trapped in the same to the heelys, and every knyght hylde a braunche of olyff in hys honde in tokenyng of pees. And the quene had four-and-twenty-jantill-women folowyng her in the same wyse. And sir Launcelot had twelve coursers folowyng hym, and on every courser sate a yonge jantylman; and all they were arayed in whyght velvet with sarpis of golde aboute their quarters, and the horse trapped in the same wyse down to the helys, wyth many owchys, isette with stonys and perelys in golde, to the numbir of a thousande. And in the same wyse was the quene arayed, and sir Launcelot in the same, of whyght clothe of golde tyssew (1196, Malory's addition).

The hierarchic symbols of velvet, gold, and precious stones are combined with the emotive symbols of white and green (purity and love). The pearl is a symbol of faith and innocence, the gold a symbol of sovereignty and generosity, the olive branch a symbol of peace. The numbers, too, are sig-

nificant.<sup>66</sup> A hundred and a thousand are multiples of ten, a symbol of unity. Twelve and twenty-four combine the symbol of spiritual things, three, with that of material things, four, and so represent the universe. Twelve was particularly valued because it was the number of the apostles. Ironically, in cabalistic lore it was the number of sexual passion. The procession, combining symmetry and progress, is highly ritualistic. The medieval relish for pomp and ceremony is coupled with the medieval practice of conveying ideas through concrete symbols.

A similar use of imagery occurs in the description of Guenevere's funeral procession, another of Malory's additions. Here religious icons are added to the hierarchical and emotive symbols of the secular world. The apocalyptic torches and frankinsense (denoting spiritual goodness), the sound of dirges and the Requiem mass, the "cered clothe of Raynes," "the webbe of leed," and "the coffyn of marbyl" denote the passing of a Christian queen. Nothing so clearly indicates Lancelot's changed condition as his mode of transportation. On the earlier occasion, he and his companions had ridden on richly-trapped coursers; now they go on foot. While Guenevere's funeral procession contrasts with her progress to Carlisle, it parallels closely the procession which escorts Lancelot's corpse to the Joyous Gard. The same horse-bier is

---

<sup>66</sup>On this subject see V. F. Hopper, Medieval Number Symbolism (New York, 1938), J. R. Reinhard, Ch. VIII, Emile Mâle, The Gothic Image p. 10ff., Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, Celtic Heritage (London, 1961), p. 92ff. Also see Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. W. H. Stahl (New York, 1952), pp. 99ff.

used, the hundred torches burn again, the requiems are sung and the cross-country journey made on foot. Though their bodies rested in different places, the symmetry of their final journeys may have philosophic as well as aesthetic implications, for the medieval mind regarded symmetry as an expression of inner harmony. So the parallelism of the funeral processions in the phenomenal world may adumbrate a world of the spirit where Lancelot and Guenevere dwell in perpetual harmony.

Each day's stage in the progress of the questing knight concludes, if possible, with his arrival at a hospitable castle. The frequency with which forest and castle are combined in medieval art suggests that they represented symbolically the antitheses between action and rest, danger and security, combat and peace, pursuit and achievement, primitivism and civilization, nature and society. While the hounds of the Hardwick tapestries sniff at the entrails of slaughtered deer and coursers paw at the flowers, ladies and gentlemen from the castles in the background indulge in amorous dalliance. The battlements of Vincennes in the Limbourg brothers' December miniature rise above the forest where hounds have run down a boar. Even the Triumph of Death at Palermo combines the two motifs. As Sacheverell Sitwell remarks, the castle walls

protect the only secular and non-religious arts of living. They symbolize, therefore, all the perfections on the one side of life, and, as an image of the different happinesses they stand for, a castle comes into the background whenever a painter or illuminator climbs from the deep ruts of religion into any suggestions of the more

material and more easily won beauties of the living.<sup>67</sup>

As symbols the castles are both hierarchic and emotive. They suggest the pleasures as well as the prestige and security of the aristocracy. The increase in civilized amenities which occurred in the fourteenth-century and the desire of the monarchy to suppress militant feudalism changed the castle from a primary symbol of defence to that of delight. Castles of Love from the tradition of courtly romance adorn the Luttrell Psalter (ca. 1340) and the tapestries which Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, had at his castle of Pleshey.<sup>68</sup> The Otherworld castles of Celtic romance are also paradisaal settings, with feasts, music, and beautiful ladies offering love. Such a combination of courtly and Celtic elements as we find in Arthurian romance characterized a number of allegorical poems of the later Middle Ages and prepared the way for Spenser.<sup>69</sup>

Malory's castles are usually ideal settings though in the hands of evil knights they become demonic. When Gareth comes upon a castle with machiolated towers, the pleasures associated with an ideal setting are conveyed by means of

---

<sup>67</sup>The Gothick North (London, 1950), p. 52.

<sup>68</sup>On allegorical castles in art see R. S. Loomis, "The Allegorical Siege in the Art of the Middle Ages," American Journal of Archaeology, second series, XXIII (1919), 255-269.

<sup>69</sup>An English example of this genre is William Nevill's The Castle of Pleasure, ed. Roberta D. Cornelius, EETS OS 179 (London, 1930) which combines the symbols of courtly love with such Otherworld features as the perilous passage and the crystal palace.

imagery:

So within a whyle they saw a whyght towre  
as ony snowe, well macchecolde<sup>70</sup> all aboute  
and double-dyked, and over the towre gate  
there hynged a fyffty shyldis of dyvers  
coloures and undir that towre there was a  
fayre medow, and therein was many knyghtis  
and squyres to beholde, scaffoldis and pav-  
ylons, for there, uppon the morne, sholde  
be a grete turnemente (308).

In contrast, the castle of the villainous Tarquin has deep dungeons where many knights make "grete dole" and walls so extensive that it takes Lancelot half an hour to ride around them (265). The mistreatment of a guest was prohibited, even in the castle of an enemy. The King of Ireland assures Tristram "'in so much as thou arte wythin my courte, hit were no worship to sle the'" (390). In addition to plentiful food, "passyng good wyne" and "myry reste" (116), the visitor might enjoy "all maner of gamys and playes, of daunsyng and syngyng" (331). The castle was also a place of healing. A knight languishing because of madness, wounds, or love might be restored to health with "good metys and good drynkys," as Lancelot was in the castle of Blyaunt (819).

The Romance of the Rose had established the hortus conclusus as the ideal setting of the courtly world. Malory uses it only to further the plot or to highlight the relationship between love and misfortune. Garnish commits suicide because Balin shows him his beloved in a "fayr lital gardyn,"

---

<sup>70</sup>Cf. the miniature for September in the Très Riches Heures de Duc de Berry and ll. 767-805 in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.



and under a laurel tre he sawe her lye upon  
a quylt of grene samyte, and a knyght in her  
armes fast halsynge eyther other, and under  
their hedes grasse and herbes (87).

The mad Lancelot escapes from Elaine by jumping from a bay window into a garden where he is scratched by thorns (806). Later, Elaine recognizes him as he lies asleep in a garden at Corbenic (823). Tristram, also mad with love, is lying in the garden at Tintagel when he is recognized by Isolde's bratchet (501). In the same garden Isolde had planned to kill herself by running on a sword that she had fixed in a plum tree (499).

For Malory, the castle garden is far less important than the tournament ground. The chief requirement of a hospitable host or hostess is a willingness to sponsor a tournament where the display of prowess can be combined with and proved of superior interest to feasting and dalliance. If the Castles of Lonezep, of Surluse, and of Lady Lyonesse are ideal, it is because they are the scenes of great tournaments.

The real purpose of the tournament is the exhibition in a social setting of chivalric virtue. At the Great Tournament which is also the last, Arthur explains to Gareth how a tournament tests the quality of a knight:

' . . . For ever hit ys,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'a worshypfull knyghtes dede to help and succoure another worshypfull knyght when he seeth hym in daungere. For ever a worshypfull man woll be lothe to se a worshypfull man shamed, and he that ys of no worshyp and medelyth with cowardise never shall he shew jantilnes nor no maner of goodnes where he seeth a man in daungere, for than woll a cowarde never shew mercy. . . .' (1114, original in Malory.)

Malory's love of tournaments reflects the attitude of his age which regarded these entertainments as "a living symbol of chivalric idealism"<sup>71</sup> rather than as a violent sport that perpetuated the kind of martial combat made obsolete by gunpowder and infantry. It was an activity independent of time. The Gawain who engages in the Great Tournament must have been almost seventy<sup>72</sup> yet he smites down, with undiminished vigour five times as many knights as his brothers do (1109). If we grow impatient with Malory's endless jousts and tourneys, we might consider the popularity enjoyed today by the equally conventional reiterations of the cowboy theme on movie and television screens.

After Camelot, Joyous Gard is probably the most important castle in Morte Darthur. Traditionally, it is a castle of delight for Tristram and Isolde and for Lancelot and Guenevere. It is "garnyshed and furnyshed for a kynge and a quene royall there to have suggeourned" (681). Yet Malory treats it chiefly as a point of departure and return for questing knights, a place where Sir Dinadin exposes the foolishness of courtly love and where Sir Palomides is so

---

<sup>71</sup>A. B. Ferguson, p. 17.

<sup>72</sup>He has come to court several years after Arthur's succession (41) but before the birth of Lancelot (125). Twenty years elapse between Merlin's visit to Benwick (125) and Lancelot's arrival at court (126, 180). Gawain tells Elaine of Astolot that he has known Lancelot for twenty-four years (1079). As the Great Tournament is a later event than the tournament at Winchester, about fifty years must have elapsed since Gawain first appeared in the story.

"ravished" by the sight of La Beall Isode that he can neither speak nor eat. When Lancelot is attacked by Arthur and Gawain, its military strength is emphasized. Yet there is little to suggest that Malory regarded it as a paradisaal setting. Pleasant castle life is quite inferior to that of chivalric quest. Ironically, Malory's views are spoken by Isolde who urges Tristram to attend Arthur's Pentecostal feast without her:

'Sir,' seyde dame Isode, 'and hyt please you, I woll nat be there, for thorow me ye bene marked of many good knyghtes, and that causyth you for to have muche more laboure for my sake than nedyth you to have.' 'Than woll I nat be there,' seyde sir Trystram, 'but yf ye be there.' 'God deffende,' seyde La Beall Isode, 'for than shall I be spokyn of shame amonge all quenys and ladyes of astate; for ye that ar called one of the nobelyste knyghtys of the worlde and a knyght of the Rounde Table, how may ye be myssed at that feste? For what shall be sayde of you amonge all knyghtes?' 'A se how sir Trystram huntyth and hawkyth, and cowryth wythin a castell wyth hys lady, and forsakyth us. Alas!' shall som sey, "hyt ys pyté that ever he was knyght, or ever he shulde have the love of a lady." Also, what shall quenys and ladyes say of me? "hyt ys pyté that I have my lyff, that I wolde holde so noble a knyght as ye ar frome hys worshyp." (839-840, Malory's addition).<sup>73</sup>

The most important ideal setting in the secular world of the Morte Darthur is Camelot. In his political and judicial role, Arthur holds court in London, Caerleon, or Carlisle. In his romantic role, he holds court at Camelot, the archetypal centre of the chivalric milieu.<sup>74</sup> Despite Malory's identification of it with Winchester, it has no place in the historical tradition.

---

<sup>73</sup>An analogy to Isolde's sentiments is found in Chrétien's Erec et Enide, ll. 2434-2506.

<sup>74</sup>The fact that one of the most romantic books, The Tale of Gareth, is set in Kyng Kenadowne rather than Camelot suggests that Malory was following a source. Had he been writing an original work, he would surely have chosen Camelot as the scene of the wedding feast.

English chroniclers do not mention it until 1580 when Stow cites Winchester and Camelot as two places where the Round Table was held. However, it was well established in French romance by the thirteenth century<sup>75</sup> and was referred to by a fourteenth-century Italian, E'azio degli Uberti, who claimed to have visited wasted, ruined Camelotto on an imaginary tour of Britain.<sup>76</sup>

In Arthurian romance it is a castle and a city, "la plus aventureuse vile qu'il eust et une des plus delitables," according to the authors of the Vulgate cycle. Malory's Camelot is very different from the enervated court of the Perlesvaus.<sup>77</sup> Not only is it the scene of feasts and tournaments, and of the making of knights; it is also the source of Logres' power and the vital centre of the chivalric world. We have already observed that the knight-errant's arrival at a hospitable castle or hermitage when day has ended provides an episodic conclusion to one stage of his progress. The final stage is not reached until the cycle of adventures has brought him back to Camelot, the beginning and end of his quest.

---

<sup>75</sup>Flutre, Tables des noms propres (Poitiers, 1962), cites a number of thirteenth-century French romances in which Camelot is the residence of Arthur; e.g. Artur, Claris, Florian, L'Estoire del Graal, prose Lancelot, Meliador, Meliadus, Estoire del Merlin, Mort Artu, Perceval, Perlesvaus, Prophecies of Merlin, prose Tristan, Le Roman de Balain, Histoire de Giglan, La Queste de Saint Graal.

<sup>76</sup>Il Dittamondo e le rime, ed. G. Corsi (Barri, 1952) 1, iv, 22, cited ALMA, 422.

<sup>77</sup>Ed. W. A. Nitze and T. A. Jenkins (Chicago, 1932), I, p. 25, ll. 67-77.

quest. Though every castle reached by the knight is an ideal setting, the hero's return to the "ultimate" centre is an essential part of the secular myth. The annual reunion of the Round Table knights at the Pentecostal feast in Camelot is the single, unifying event of romantic time and place.

Unlike the way through the perilous forest, which is difficult to find without a guide, the "brode way towards Camelot" (597) is open to all. Tristram and Mark have no difficulty reaching Camelot from regions of barbarism and treachery. Morgan, Morgause, Lyonesse and Elaine are visitors to court. Knights and ladies seeking boons know where to make their requests. At court, Arthur distributes largesse and justice, drawing his sovereign power from the successes of his knights.

Violence is inimical to this setting. Early in the romance, Balin is banished from court for killing the Lady of the Lake (66). Gawain is reprehended for his unchivalric conduct in slaying a lady and is enjoined to become the defender of the fair sex:

there by ordynauce of the queene there was sette  
a queste of ladyes uppon sir Gawayne, and they  
juged hym for ever whyle he lyved to be with all  
ladyes and to fyght for hir quarels (108).

Carlisle, not Camelot, is the court associated with rebellion, war, and disintegration. Camelot is never mentioned during the Roman Wars nor during the final period of strife, both of which belong to the "historical" rather than romantic milieu. The poisoning of Sir Patrise takes place in London. Morgause is lured away from Camelot before she is murdered. At Camelot even the treacherous Mark engages in a "love day"

with Arthur. Malory does not use the Mort Artu story that tells how King Mark destroyed Camelot and razed it to the ground after the death of King Arthur.<sup>78</sup> The city remains a symbol of wish fulfillment and timeless chivalric joys. In fact, joy is the emotion particularly associated with the symbolic centre. There is the "mirth and joy" of the feast, the joy of weddings and love, the joy of joust and tourney held in the great meadow by the river of Camelot, the joy at Palomides' christening and at the coming of Galahad, best of all, the joy at the return of the great knights:

And than there was made grete feystys, and grete joy was there amonge them. And all lordys and ladyes made grete joy when they harde how sir Launcelot was com agayne unto the courte (833).

Camelot is the ceremonial centre of the Arthurian milieu. The harmony of the court epitomises the harmony of the empire. It is a harmony reflected in ritual observances. Quests begin with the asking and granting of boons at court. Successful quests protect Camelot against external forces of evil and chaos, but the success must be publicly reported at court and the new-won knights ceremonially received before the ritual is complete.

The superiority of the Arthurian centre is stressed by comparing it with other courts. No knight of King Rions had virtue enough to break the spell of the damsel's sword (62) but only a knight at Camelot. The mother of King Urry

---

<sup>78</sup> Cited by Fanni Bogdanow, "The Suite du Merlin," ALMA, 334-335.

searched for seven years through all Christendom "and never coude fynde no knyght that myght ease her sunne" until she came to Arthur's court (1145). In particular, Tintagel with its giants, rocks, pounding seas and murderous king is the antithesis of Camelot. Unworthy boons are asked and granted there (396). Faithful retainers are threatened (419), widows and their children hunted down (634). The horn of chastity is diverted from Camelot to Tintagel because, according to Lamerak, "the honour of bothe courtes be nat lyke" (443). Cornish knights are consistently depicted as weak and cowardly<sup>79</sup> and defeat at their hands is regarded as shameful (404). Vinaver suggests that "the references to the weakness of Cornish knights are survivals of a remote past, and both Malory and the French prose-writer would probably have been at a loss to explain them."<sup>80</sup> But it is not unreasonable to suppose that a deliberate contrast is being made in order to increase the honour of Arthur's court.

The most potent artifact in the Morte Darthur is the Round Table. It is both real and symbolic. It comes to Arthur as a "ryche presente" from King Lodegraunce when his daughter marries the king (98). It holds one hundred and fifty knights<sup>81</sup> who sit in chairs blessed by the Archbishop

<sup>79</sup>Works, pp. 398, 488, 504, 505, 546, 580.

<sup>80</sup>N. 398. 26-27, p. 1460-1.

<sup>81</sup>Layamon says the table can seat sixteen hundred. Brut, ed. F. Madden (London, 1847), II, p. 539.

of Canterbury. The first Round Table in Arthur's court is attended by the hundred knights sent by Lodegraunce and twenty-eight found for Arthur by Merlin. When they have all gone to pay homage to Arthur

Merlion founde in every sege lettirs of golde  
that tolde the knyghtes namys that had sitten  
there but two segis were voyde (99).

One of these is the Sege Perelous. Destined for Galahad, it is the link between terrestrial and celestial chivalry. As new knights are created to fill empty places their names magically appear. When Tristram comes to court, the seat of Marhalt, whom he has killed, is endited with letters that say "This is the syege of the noble knyght sir Trystramys" (572). The table accompanies Arthur from place to place, serving both as a roll call of the order (732-733) and as a symbol of the secular court. While seated at the table on the Feast of Pentecost, each knyght is fed by the mystical Grail "such metis and drynkes as he beste loved in thys worlde" (865), an event which gives the Round Table religious significance as well.

In Arthurian literature the Round Table stands for a brotherhood of knights and for a courtly festival celebrated on some great feast, usually Pentecost.<sup>82</sup> Wace's fellowship consisted of knights permanently attached to Arthur's service.<sup>83</sup> Layamon's seems to have been an association of native

---

<sup>82</sup>See L. F. Mott "The Round Table," PMLA xx (1905), 231-264.

<sup>83</sup>Le Roman de Brut, l. 10553.



Britons against foreigners--uncuthe kempen.<sup>84</sup> The shape of the table assures equality in rank and service.<sup>85</sup> In L'Estoire de Merlin, the table is a theological symbol; with the tables de la cène et du graal, it signifies the Trinity.<sup>86</sup> Perceval's aunt tells him that

Merlyon made the Rounde Table in tokenyng of rowndnes of the worlde, for men sholde by the Round Table understande the rowndenes signyfied by ryght. For all the worlde, crystenyd and hethyn, repayryth unto the Rounde Table, and whan they ar chosyn to be of the felyshyp of the Rounde Table they thynke hemselff more blessed and more in worship than they had gotyn halff the worlde (906).

Yet for Malory the Round Table is social and moral rather than spiritual, tropological rather than anagogical. It stands for a harmonious relationship and unified purpose. Its value is well realised by Lancelot's supporters on the eve of his exile to France:

'For we all undirstonde, in thys realme woll be no guyett, but ever debate and stryff, now the fellyshyp of the Rounde Table ys brokyn.

---

<sup>84</sup>Brut, II, p. 534.

<sup>85</sup>Various sources are suggested to account for the Round Table. A. C. L. Brown, "The Round Table Before Wace," Harvard Studies in Philology and Literature (Boston, 1900) VII pp. 183-205, cites Posidonius' reference to Celts banqueting at round tables and notes that the primitive Irish house was round. L. H. Loomis, "The Round Table Again," Adventures in the Middle Ages (New York, 1962), pp. 86-94, draws on the evidence of illuminations, frescoes, mosaics, and ivories to show that from the end of the first until the twelfth century, the table of the Last Supper was depicted as round. L. F. Mott, pp. 249ff. prefers an anthropological approach and finds the features of the Round Table in "the mass of folk custom concerned with May day festivities."

<sup>86</sup>Sommer II, 54, ll. 20-21.

For by the noble felyshyp of the Rounde Table was knyge Arthur upborne, and by their nobeles the kynge and all the realme was ever in quyet and reste (1203-4; Malory's addition).

The strong moral tone of his comments on chivalry is one of Malory's chief contributions to the Morte Darthur.<sup>87</sup> Unlike the writers of the French romances, he sees the Order of the Round Table primarily as an ethical instrument. This he makes clear in a passage of his own composition:

Than the kynge stablysshed all the knyghtes and gaff them rychesse and londys; and charged them never to do outorage nothir mothir, and allwayes to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy, uppon payne of forfiture of their worship and lordship of kynge Arthure for evirmore; and allwayes to do ladyes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes socour: strengthe hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them, uppon payne of dethe. Also, that no man take no batayles in a wrongefull quarell for no love ne for no worldis goodis. So unto thys were all knyghtis sworne of the Table Rounde, both olde and younge, and every yere so were they sworne at the hyghe feste of Penticoste (120).

Though he cannot change the ending of his story, Malory emphasizes until the last possible moment the harmony and unity of the Order. The Healing of Sir Urry, which is not in his sources, is devised both to reveal Lancelot's absolute superiority and to provide a final and complete roll call of the Knights of the Round Table with a recapitulation of their noble deeds. The Great Tournament, another original episode, also glorifies the Round Table by showing how "he that was curteyse, trew, and faythefull to hys frynde was that tyme

---

<sup>87</sup>See P. E. Tucker, "Chivalry in the 'Morte'," Essays on Malory, pp. 64-103.

cherysshed" (1114). As a symbol of a moral order, then, Malory's Round Table was unique.

Temporally as well as spatially, the structure of Malory's romances is cyclical and endowed with symbolic significance. The alternation of day and night corresponds to the forest-castle dichotomy. The seasonal cycle affects the time scheme of the quest. The liturgical feasts of the Christian year mark the ceremonial round of chivalric festivities.

The diurnal cycle, like the cycle of place, gives the effect of two antithetical worlds. To daylight belong the exciting dangers of joust and tournament, to night the pleasant security of the hospitable castle or hermitage. The ancient fear of darkness makes the hero hurry towards shelter. The world of night belongs to evil spirits, to villains like Mark who strikes down his enemies at midnight, to the spies whom Pellinore hears plotting against the king "a litell tofore mydnyght" (118). It is a time for ambushes (75), lovers' meetings (430, 1131, 1161), magic and conspiracy. Sir Andret and his adherents surprise Tristram at midnight "nakyd a-bed with La Beale Isode" (431). Lancelot is lured at night to the castle of Case, "asoted" with wine, and taken to Elaine's chamber where he lies until "underne of the morne," for

all the wyndowys and holys of that chambir  
were stopped, that no maner of day myght be  
seyne. . .and anone as he had unshutte the  
wyndow the enchauntemente was paste (795).

The cycle of the day has particular significance for Gawain and the Red Knight of the Red Lands whose strength increases as the sun rises towards its zenith.

The use of conventional diction in relation to ritualistic actions applies to time as well as place. Combats generally last "two owres and more" before the participants stop for breath. They begin at "undern" or "nine of the klok" or "none" and do not continue after evensong. The numbers chosen to express duration of time often have symbolic significances that reflect ancient beliefs in their innate virtue for good or evil. The most favoured numbers are twelve and seven, the mystical symbols which expressed the harmonious relation of man to the universe. The time span of twelve months or a year and a day was allotted for the completion of a quest. So potent was this temporal geasa that knights like Marhalt and Iwain who completed their quests before the appointed time accepted the hospitality of a lady or earl for half a year before returning to Camelot at Pentecost. Seven was frequently used as a round number, much as we use a dozen.<sup>88</sup> "Sevennightes" were generally allowed for reaching a prearranged jousting place.

The symbolic use of seasonal imagery was a well-established convention in medieval literature and art.<sup>89</sup> A complex world of ideas lay behind the formulae of seasonal description. The cyclical progress from spring to winter, youth to age, growth to decay often utilised in medieval lit-

---

<sup>88</sup>Works, pp. 253, 272, 281, 382, 406, 1065, 1120, 1145, 1150.

<sup>89</sup>See Rosamund Tuve, Seasons and Months (Paris, 1933).

erature and art underlies the presentation of the three ladies whom Gawain, Iwain and Marhault meet at the fountain in the forest of Arroy:

And the eldyst had a garlonde of golde aboute  
her hede and she was three score wyntir of age  
or more, and hir heyre was whyght undir the  
garlonde. The secunde damselle was of thirty  
wyntir of age, wyth a cerclet of golde aboute  
her hede. The thirde damesel was but fiftene  
yere of age, and a garlonde of floures about  
hir hede (162).

Iwain, the youngest and weakest, chooses age and experience, Gawain, youth and beauty.

The episode of Guenevere's Maying party reflects the classical-Christian designation of spring as the season of joy, love, and rebirth.<sup>90</sup> Malory begins with the classical view of nature as a creative force<sup>91</sup> affecting plant, animal, and man for in May "every lusty harte begynnyth to blossom and to burgyne," to the improvement of human relationships:

for than all erbys and treys renewyth a man  
and woman, and in lyke wyse lovers callyth to  
their mynde olde jantylnes and olde servyse,  
and many kynde dedes that was forgotyn by  
neclygence (1119).

The green raiment of Guenevere's knights and their decorations of fresh herbs, mosses and flowers symbolize the fecundity of nature in spring, a theme familiar in classical and medieval descriptions of the goddesses Venus, Ver, and Natura.

---

<sup>90</sup>See Appendix A. The story of Guenevere's abduction during a Maying expedition does not occur elsewhere. A classical analogue is the myth of Persephone.

<sup>91</sup>The Pervigilium Veneris is the best classical expression of the theme.

In the third paragraph, Malory draws the familiar analogy between material and allegorical gardens:

Therefore, lyke as May moneth flowryth and floryshyth in every mannes gardyne, so in lyke wyse lat every man of worshyp florysh hys herte in thys worlde: firste unto God, and nexte unto the joy of them that he promysed hys feythe unto.

The second and fourth paragraphs reflect the awareness of instability and mutability which haunted and embittered the writers of the late Middle Ages.<sup>92</sup>

For lyke as wynter rasure dothe allway arace and deface grene summer, so faryth hit by unstable love in man and woman. . .for we may se all day, for a lytyll blaste of wyntres rasure, anone we shall deface and lay aparte trew love, for lytyll or nowght, that coste mucche thyng.

This passage and the parallel one that opens the "Slander and Strife" section are the only occasions when Malory makes the analogy between the seasons of the year and man's moral condition.<sup>93</sup> In the latter case, the contrasting imagery of May and winter is ironically reiterated as an introduction to the story of Agravain's plot against Lancelot:

In May, whan every harte floryshyth and burgenyth (for, as the seasons ys lusty to beholde and comfortable, so man and woman rejoysyth and gladith of somer commynge with his freyshe floures, for wynter wyth hys rowghe wyndis and blastis causyth lusty men and women to cowre and to syt by fyres), so thys season hit befelle in the moneth of May a grete augur and unhappe that stynted nat tylle the

<sup>92</sup>Cf. Thomas Hoccleve, Minor Poems, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS OS 61 (London, 1892), no. 67; Lydgate, Minor Poems, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London, 1840), 22ff., 193ff.; Dunbar, "Meditation in Winter," "At the Changes of Life," Poems, ed. John Small (Edinburgh and London, 1893).

<sup>93</sup>Tennyson, in The Idylls of the King, developed a complex pattern of allegorical imagery based on the seasonal cycle.

floure of chyvalry of alle the worlde was destroyed and slayne (1161).

In romance, May can fulfill its pristine function of engendering love; in "history" it is not immune to hatred and death.

While we might expect the liturgical cycle to have theological importance, the religious ritual is subordinated to the social in chivalric romance. The great feasts of the church are preeminently occasions for creating knights and holding tourneys. The Joust of the Diamond takes place at Christmas (1098), King Pelles' nephew is knighted at Candlemas on February 2nd (823) and the Great Tournament which is the last romantic assembly of Arthurian knighthood occurs on the Feast of the Purification of Our Lady (1103). Alexander the Orphan is knighted on Our Lady Day in Lent--March 25 (636). Dame Lyonesse's lavish tournament (341) is held on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady--August 15.<sup>94</sup> Her marriage at Michaelmas (September 29) is also celebrated with a tournament. The great tournament at Winchester between King Arthur and the King of North Galis is on Allhallowmas Day (November 1).

Aside from the symbolic significance of Pentecost as a feast of consecration, the habit of creating new knights in the spring was, perhaps, related to the fact that the period from Whitsuntide to Michaelmas was the most favourable time for quests. In winter the knights stayed at home occupying

---

<sup>94</sup>The numerous feasts associated with the Virgin Mary are an aspect of medieval Mariolatry, which Henry Adams investigated in Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres (Boston and New York, 1933).

themselves "with all maner of huntynge and hawkyng" (1098).

Since the ritual pattern requires a temporal as well as a spatial centre, the Pentecostal feast<sup>95</sup> is the most suitable focal point for it symbolizes both expectation and fulfillment. Sir Palomides is baptized and Sir Urry healed at Pentecost. Defeated knights submit to Arthur or Guenevere. Progress reports are made, oaths are renewed, the virtues of the chivalric code reaffirmed. The knights and the reader are restored to a recognizable point in the cycles of place and time. Pentecost precipitates by means of geis, boons, and challenges another cycle of quest and combat. And, finally, it combines the chivalric and Christian symbolism that characterized most Arthurian romance in the Middle Ages.

Analysis of the romantic milieu in Malory's Morte Darthur reveals that some of the characteristic elements in the literal scene have mythic qualities while others have symbolic and allegorical significances. The romance presents dramatically the activities of a mythic aristocratic society living in a chivalric golden age. It portrays the adventures of heroic knights whose prowess is inspired by idealized ladies and whose achievements are helped or hindered by such mythic agents as fays, magicians, damsels, giants, and dwarfs. The actions of the knights conform to a ritualistic pattern of quest and combat produced by stereotyped chivalric conven-

---

<sup>95</sup>Chrétien de Troyes seems to have originated the convention of beginning a conte with a reference to a high feast at Arthur's court. Cf. Yvain, ll. 1ff.; Lancelot, ll. 31ff.; Erec et Enide, ll. 27-29.



tions and performed in a symbol-studded environment. Colours, numbers, costumes, metals, arms, armour, and horses have symbolic significances which may be hierarchic, emotive or moral. Castles and perilous forests represent the antithetical values of security and danger, combat and peace, civilization and primitivism, love and enmity. In this antipodal environment occur encounters which often adumbrate a struggle between forces of good and forces of evil.

The allegorical image of the greatest importance in the Morte Darthur is the Round Table which symbolizes Malory's concept of chivalry as a moral order. The symbolic setting of the greatest importance is Camelot, the vital centre of the chivalric world. Malory contributes to the ideality of this locale by separating it from acts of violence and treachery, and by placing it in contrast to the demonic court of King Mark at Tintagel and the political courts of Arthur at Carlisle and London. At Camelot's celebration of the Pentecostal feast the cycles of time and place which control the movements of the knight-errant are combined. Then the Knights of the Round Table infallibly assemble to report at court their feats, to renew their oaths, and to accept new quests in a ritual which permits power to flow from Camelot through Logres and the realms beyond the sea.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELIGIOUS QUEST: THE WAY OF SALVATION

No matter what theory one holds regarding the origin of the Grail legends, there is no denying that the version of the legend found in Malory's source, the Vulgate Prose Cycle, was designed to promulgate Catholic doctrine. By using the ritual and imagery of chivalric romance, the author or authors gave a concrete representation of theological concepts and asserted the superiority of la chevalerie celestienne.

The Grail quest differs from the other quests of the Morte Darthur in combining history, romance, and continuous allegory. Here, in particular, we are aware of the dichotomous medieval view. Since the world of time and space was the work of God, everything in it was both reality and symbol. As Emile Mâle puts it:

All being holds in its depths the reflection of the sacrifice of Christ, the image of the Church and of the virtues and vices. The material and the spiritual world are one.<sup>1</sup>

Like Arthur's quest for Rome, the Grail quest occupies a specific place in the linear time scheme.<sup>2</sup> It begins on the Feast of Pentecost, four hundred and fifty-four years after the death of Christ. However, The Tale of the Sankgreal expresses the truths of Catholic faith and morality in the imagery of Celtic

---

<sup>1</sup>The Gothic Image, trans. Dora Nussey (New York, Evanston, and London, 1958), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>On the linear view of history see Appendix A.

and courtly romance. Again there are the questing knights, the embattled castles, the perilous forests, the supernatural ships, the kidnapped maidens and enticing pavilions, the marvelous swords and shields of secular romance but the sen is quite different.

The mythic agents are not fays and magicians, giants and solar heroes. They are angels and devils, God and the Devil. G. R. Owst suggests that no great gap separated the gods and heroes of classical and Teutonic myth from the supernatural presences of Christian story:

Where Hercules, Perseus or Beowulf do not actually reappear in person, duly moralized as the sign of their conversion to Christian usage, medieval preacher and sculptor make easy the transition of popular fancy from these mythological figures to an equally mythological Christ harrowing hell or, like a spiritual Hercules, rending the diabolic "Nemean" lion.<sup>3</sup>

The effort of medieval man to apprehend divinity was further complicated by two conflicting views of God:

The one God was the goal of the "way up," of that ascending process by which the finite soul, turning from all created things, took its way back to the immutable Perfection, in which alone it could find rest. The other God was the source and the informing energy of that descending process by which being flows through all the levels of possibility down to the very lowest.<sup>4</sup>

Both aspects are exemplified in our romance. The contemplative and contemplated God, "an apotheosis of unity, self-

<sup>3</sup> G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England, 2nd ed., (Oxford, 1961), p. 111. Cf. also Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods (New York, 1961).

<sup>4</sup> A. O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (New York, 1960), p. 83.

sufficiency, and quietude,"<sup>5</sup> is the object of the Grail quest, apprehended in part at Corbenic, achieved fully by Galahad in the spiritual palace of Sarras, a figura of Heaven. The energetic God through the agency of angels, hermits, virgins and disembodied voices intervenes in human life and creates the marvelous artifacts which arouse the sense of wonder.

At the summit of the celestial hierarchy is the Trinity. The iconography of medieval art has greatly influenced the depiction of Deity in romance. Until the twelfth century, the person of God was indicated by means of a hand or arm, a bright light, a fire or a sword.<sup>6</sup> In oral and written tradition a disembodied voice also betokened His presence. Several of these images are combined in the adventure of Ector and Gawain at the ruined chapel. As they sit talking, they see a hand and arm clothed to the elbow in red samite (the colour of fire). Within the bridled fist a great candle burns brightly. As the apparition vanishes into the chapel, a voice warns them that they can never achieve the Grail quest, for the bridle (abstinence) and the candle (right living) have failed them. The sword symbol is used to indicate the presence of God at Corbenic where Bors sees

a swerde lyke sylver, naked, hovyng over hys  
hede, and the clyernes thereof smote in hys  
yghen, that as at that tyme sir Bors was blynde.  
(802)

---

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>6</sup>See F. E. Hulme, Symbolism in Christian Art (New York, 1910), pp. 30ff.

At the same time, a disembodied voice orders him to leave the Grail chamber since he is not yet worthy. The sword image is powerfully used again when the weapon mended by Galahad rises up, great and marvelous and full of heat so that many men fall for dread. A voice then dismisses from the Grail feast all but the chosen knights.<sup>7</sup> A later aesthetic tradition is represented in Lancelot's vision of the old man with the company of angels who descends through an opening in the clouds to bless Lancelot's ancestors (928). The idea of God as an old man derives from the Biblical concept of "the Ancient of days." Finally, it may be the hand of God that appears at Sarras to take up the Grail and lance and carry them to heaven.

The iconography of Christ comprises a large number of symbols as well as representations in human form. The lamb, the lion, the pelican, the fish, the lily, the hart, the vine and the candle are familiar symbols and most of them are utilized by the authors of La Queste del Saint Graal, Malory's source. For example, Bors sees (on a dead tree) a pelican surrounded by young birds that had died of hunger. With the blood from its pierced breast the bird restores its young to life, dying in their place. The image symbolizes Christ, the Redeemer (956, 967). Christ with the four Evangelists appears to the Grail knights and Perceval's

---

<sup>7</sup>Vinaver attributes this use of the sword image to Malory's mistranslation of the French ung vent (a wind). In any case, it is an error that conforms to the Old Testament picture of "the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

sister who in a waste forest encounter "a whyght herte which four lyons lad." During the celebration of mass which follows, the hart becomes a man while the four lions appear as a man, a lion, an eagle and an ox.<sup>8</sup> After the consecration Christ reassumes the white skin of the hart (representing the Resurrection) and escapes through a glass window without breaking it (the paradox of the Incarnation) (998-1000).

Of great interest to the thirteenth century was the doctrine of transubstantiation which had been promulgated as official dogma by the Lateran Council in 1215. The iconographic representation of the dogma is an original feature of La Queste, which was probably written by Cistercian monks<sup>9</sup> between 1215 and 1230. In the Roman mass

the uttering of the words of the consecration signifies Christ himself speaking in the first person, his living presence in the corpus mysticum of priest, congregation, bread, wine, and incense which together form the mystical unity offered for sacrifice.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the hart in the wasteland chapel becomes a man, and the bread in the chapel of Corbenic becomes a flaming child that

<sup>8</sup>On the iconography of Christ and the four evangelists see Male, op. cit., pp. 7, 35-37.

<sup>9</sup>This theory of authorship expressed by Albert Pauphilet in Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal (Paris, 1921) is generally accepted. On the monastic spirit of La Queste see also Jean Frappier, "The Vulgate Cycle" in ALMA, p. 306. The theological background is elucidated by Etienne Gilson, "La Grâce et Le Saint Graal" Les Idées et Les Lettres (Paris, 1955), pp. 59-91.

<sup>10</sup>C. G. Jung, "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," Pagan and Christian Mysteries (New York, 1963), p. 93.

"smote hymselff into the brede, that all they saw hit that the brede was forumed of a fleyshely man" (1029). At Sarras the celebrant Joseph, son of Joseph of Aramathea, "had aboute hym a grete feliship of angels, as hit had bene Jesu Cryste hymselff." (1034) The transformation symbolism of the Catholic Mass is vividly utilized in this version of the Grail legend.

The most important image of Christ, however, is Galahad who is not a realistic character so much as a type of perfection. He is not a personification of Christ but a figura, one who shows in retrospect what Christ's life on earth was like.<sup>11</sup> Like Christ he is descended from David. He possesses a physical and moral purity that has never been tempted and cannot be defeated. He is protected by angels so that the devil is powerless against him (882). His coming has been prophesied far in advance by Merlin and a place at the Round Table prepared for him--the Sege Perilous which only he can occupy. That the events of his quest deliberately parallel the life of Christ is made clear by the author of La Queste.<sup>12</sup> By greatly reducing the exegetical commentary, Malory suppresses and obscures some of the correspondences. Nevertheless, he retains the Messianic concept and

---

<sup>11</sup>Similarly, Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon and Melchizedek were regarded as types of Christ. In medieval cathedrals their statues formed a via sacra leading to Christ. Cf. Mâle, pp. 152-157.

<sup>12</sup>H. O. Sommer, The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances (Washington, 1913), Vol. VI, p. 28ff.

the miracles as well as some parallels to Biblical history. The view of Galahad as a long-awaited liberator is apparent in the Castle of Maidens adventure, the healing of the blind King Mordrain (a Simeon type) and of the Maimed King, and in the restoration of the Waste Land--events which combine Christian allegory with Celtic myth.<sup>13</sup> The miracles which prove his supernatural powers include the healing of the cripple at Sarras and the release of souls from the burning tomb.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the crowning of Galahad in Sarras recalls Christ's triumphant entry on Palm Sunday as well as the historical fact of the Crusader Kings. Finally, the elevation of Galahad's soul to heaven "in the syght of hys two felowis" suggests the ascension of Christ as the apostles watched.

The analogy of Galahad as a type of Christ is evident not only in character and event but also in imagery. The crown of gold more often than the crown of thorns appeared in medieval depictions of the Crucifixion;<sup>15</sup> a crown of gold is on the bed on the Ship of Solomon where Galahad will lie to

---

<sup>13</sup>On Celtic sources and analogues cf. A. C. L. Brown, The Origin of the Grail Legend (Cambridge, Mass., 1943); R. S. Loomis, Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance (New York, 1927); R. S. Loomis, The Grail from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol (Cardiff and New York, 1963); Helaine Newstead, Bran the Blessed in Arthurian Romance (New York, 1939); H. R. Patch, The Other World (Cambridge, Mass.).

<sup>14</sup>The medieval belief in miracles is the subject of C. G. Loomis' White Magic (Cambridge, 1948).

<sup>15</sup>Cf. F. E. Hulme, pp. 44-45.



figure the sacrifice on the lectulus of the cross.<sup>16</sup> The lion image which represented the risen Christ<sup>17</sup> is applied to Galahad when his father reads a prophecy on the tomb at Corbenic:

'Here shall com a lybarde of knyges blood and he shall sle this serpente. And this lybarde shall engendir a lyon in this forayne contrey whyche lyon shall passe all other knights' (793).

Later the lion in Lancelot's genealogical vision is identified as Galahad (930).

The third aspect of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, is central to the concept of the Grail since both are instruments of grace. It is, therefore, of particular importance to the Grail knights. When Perceval's sister recounts the history of Solomon's Ship, she reveals that the Holy Ghost had prophesied to Solomon the coming of the Virgin Mary and Christ, "laste of youre bloode, and He shall be as good a knyght as deuke Josue" (991). This prophecy corresponds noticeably to those which are made to Lancelot about the coming of Galahad. It is the grace of the Holy Ghost that sustains Lancelot during his month on the supernatural ship (1011). The Holy Ghost "in the lykenes of a fayre and a mer-vaylous flame" falls between Bors and Lionel to prevent fratricide (974). Above all it is associated with Galahad by ritual and symbol. It is significant that Galahad appears

<sup>16</sup>On the medieval image of the Cross as a bed see F. W. Locke, The Quest for the Holy Grail (Stanford, 1960), p. 91.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. T. H. White, The Book of Beasts (London, 1954), pp. 7-8.

at court on the Feast of Pentecost. This is not only the high point of the chivalric year but also the day when the Church celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup> The young knight is dressed in red armour and a coat of red sandal--the colour of Pentecostal flame. Later the flame symbol of the Holy Ghost will be combined with the image of the red rose,<sup>19</sup> as King Mordrain's designates the nature of Galahad's power:

' . . . And thou arte the rose which ys the floure of all good vertu, and in colour of fyre. For the fyre of the Holy Goste ys takyn so in the that my fleyssh, whych was all dede of oldenes, ys becom agayne yonge' (1025).

The analogy to the Holy Ghost is further suggested when Galahad is described as "semely and demure as a dove." (854) The dove image, a traditional symbol of the Holy Ghost,<sup>20</sup> is also associated with the Grail. Both Lancelot and Bors see a white dove bearing a golden censer when they are entertained at supernatural feasts in the Grail castle (793, 798). The dove appears with the infant Galahad and the maiden carrying the Holy Grail. It is also the means of stilling the

---

<sup>18</sup>On the temporal and theological symbolism of Pentecost see F. W. Locke, pp. 40-64.

<sup>19</sup>The rose was a symbol of Virginity particularly associated with Mary, the Rosa Caeli or Mystic Rose. See Henry Adams, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres, p. 117. For Dante the Celestial Rose was also a symbol of Christ and, by extension, of union with God. See H. F. Dunbar, Symbolism in Medieval Thought and Its Consummation in the Divine Comedy (New York, 1961), pp. 3-4, 79-80. T. S. Eliot has made the "multifoliate rose" a significant symbol in modern poetry.

<sup>20</sup>It first appeared in Christian art of the sixth century, its source the gospel description of Christ's baptism.

terrible storm associated with the adventures of the Perilous Bed. The white and gold of the image, as well as the sweet scent, the food-giving property, and the power over the turbulent nature make it an apocalyptic symbol of considerable power. The author's development throughout La Queste of this image cluster--Holy Ghost, Galahad, fire, dove, and Grail--illustrates the manner in which the medieval mind used symbols to express something superhuman and only partly conceivable.

Below the Trinity in the celestial hierarchy are angels whose functions are to praise God, to act as his messengers, and to protect man against the devil.<sup>21</sup> Though the philosophers described them as pure minds unembodied, the artists gave them corporality pro captu nostro.<sup>22</sup> Both concepts are found in the Morte Darthur. Disembodied voices that explain, instruct, warn, and condemn are a favourite medium of allegory and prophecy. They also act as agents who control and direct the progress of the Grail knights in their quest. While praying in a ruined chapel, Galahad hears a voice that commands him to end the wicked customs of the Castle of Maidens (887). Lancelot is condemned for his sinfulness and ordered to leave holy places (895). Bors is directed to join Perceval at the seashore (974). On sev-

---

<sup>21</sup>The formative influence on medieval angelology was the Celestial Hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius. See C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image, pp. 70-75.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Dante, Paradiso XXVIII, 133-5.

eral occasions Malory increases the reliance on supernatural agency by attributing to celestial voices words that are spoken by human characters in La Queste (e.g. 998, 1003). One cannot always tell whether these voices are meant to be God Himself or God speaking through angels. Pseudo-Dionysus and Aquinas believed that God did nothing Himself that he could do through an intermediary.<sup>23</sup> It is evidently God Himself who directs the Grail knights to leave Corbenic:

'My sunnes, and not my chyeff sunnes, my frendis, and not my werryours, go ye hens where ye hope beste to do, and as I bade you do' (1031).<sup>24</sup>

Visible angels accompany Galahad on earth (882) and bear his soul to heaven (1035). The soul of Lancelot, too, is heaved up to heaven by more angels than the number of men that the Archbishop has seen in one day (1258).<sup>25</sup> Angels anoint the Ship of Solomon and write prophetic letters (993-4). A great fellowship surrounds the Grail both at Corbenic (1015) and Sarras (1034), combining the activities of protection, service, and adoration traditionally associated with them and illustrating the belief that angels are visible to men.

During the progress of the Grail quest, corporeal angels are analogous to the enigmatic damsels, dwarfs, and magicians of Celtic romance who appear suddenly and disappear

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol. III & Qv. XXX, art. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. also 1012, 1014, 1015, 1027-8.

<sup>25</sup>In medieval art angels are frequently depicted carrying souls to heaven. Cf. The Flowering of the Middle Ages, ed. Joan Evans, pp. 222-223.

into thin air after initiating an adventure or rescuing a knight. Such an agent is the white knight<sup>26</sup> who provides Galahad with his destined shield and reveals its history. His name cannot be revealed to Bagdemagus "nother none erthely man." Another celestial agent is the old man "clothed in a surplyse in lyknes of a pryste" who stands at the helm of the white ship that saves Perceval from the wilderness. When questioned about his identity, he replies, 'Sir, I am of a strange contrey, and hydir I com to comferte you' (915). Lancelot is visited by an old man who reprimands him for his wickedness and then vanishes so suddenly that the knight "wyst not where he become" (932). Such hortatory and protective figures influence the hero's progress in all quest myths.<sup>27</sup>

In the great chain of being that linked all creatures to God, the good knights and hermits of Arthurian romance were only a little lower than the angels. The myth of class which we noted in the secular romance is adapted to the religious milieu by practically excluding the courtly ladies and by enhancing the importance of the hermits. It is generally maintained that La Queste del Saint Graal was written to assert the superiority of la chevalerie celestienne and to denounce

---

<sup>26</sup>Angels in the armour of knights were familiar images in Cathedral art.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Joseph Campbell op. cit., p. 69ff. and Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 195.

the vain endeavours of la chevalerie terrienne.<sup>28</sup> However, Jean Frappier convincingly argues that the authors of the Vulgate Prose Cycle were condemning the errors of chevalerie terrienne but not the institution itself.<sup>29</sup> The knight alone represented for medieval man

l'homme moderne, l'homme "réel", "celui du milieu social alors vivant-et qui dans la perspective de l'oeuvre est la société prédestinée à qui est réservé de découvrir le secret du Graal."<sup>30</sup>

The belief that a knight was worthy to achieve the visions of mystic life through monastic virtue as well as to engage in active warfare had motivated St. Bernard's sponsorship of the Templars, whose order combined chivalry and religion.

In medieval didactic literature the knight is a familiar image of the ethical and spiritual ideal.<sup>31</sup> It is not surprising, then, that the elect of the Grail legend are de-

<sup>28</sup>On the two chivalries see Rosamund Tuve, Allegorical Imagery (Princeton, 1966), Chs 1, 3, 5 and Eugene Vinaver, Malory (Oxford, 1929), Ch. 6.

<sup>29</sup>Jean Frappier, "Le Graal et La Chevalerie," Romania LXXV (1954), pp. 165-210.

<sup>30</sup>Paul Zumthor, Merlin le Prophète (Lausanne, 1943), pp. 128-129, cited by Frappier, p. 193.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. The Ancrene Riwe, Langland's Piers Plowman and the sermon literature cited by Owst in Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England, passim.

picted as knights. According to Frappier,<sup>32</sup> the Church rejected the Grail legend because it attributed to knights the possibility of attaining a spiritual experience that should have been reserved for priests alone. As a result, the manuscripts of these romances have been preserved not in monasteries but in the libraries of the aristocracy.

As in the secular myth, lineage is an important means of establishing the elite. The old man who presents Galahad to Arthur announces:

Sir, I brynge you here a yonge knyght the whych  
ys of kynges lynage and of the kynrede of Joseph  
of Aramathy (859).

Guenevere confirms that Galahad's nobility is unquestioned:

'for he ys of all partyes comyn of the beste  
knyghtes of the worlde and of the hyghest lyn-  
age: for sir Launcelot ys com but of the eyghth  
degre from oure Lorde Jesu Cryst, and thys sir  
Galahad ys the nyneth degre from oure Lorde Jesu  
Cryst. Therefore I dare sey they be the grettist  
jantillmen of the worlde.' (865)

Most of this passage is original in Malory. The concept that the chosen knight is predestined by his genealogy is important also in Wolfram's Parzival, where considerable space is devoted to Perceval's family tree. In Morte Darthur, Perceval is King Pellennore's son. His worthiness is indicated by a miracle which occurs on the day when he is knighted by Arthur. A maiden of "high blood" who had never spoken a word leads him

---

<sup>32</sup>Op. cit., pp. 171ff. New Catholic Encyclopaedia grounds its rejection on the fact that "it claimed for the Church of Britain an origin well nigh as illustrious as that of the Church of Rome, and independent of Rome." The large infusion of pagan elements drawn from Celtic mythology, fertility rites, and so on, might also account for the Church's suspicion of the Grail legends. If Olschki's theory of Gnostic origins is correct (The Grail Castle, Manchester, 1966), heresy would be the cause of rejection.

to the Sege Perilous, announcing in a loud voice:

'Fair knyghte, take here thy sege, for that  
sege apperteyneth to the and to none other.'  
(611)

This incident does not occur in Malory's French source. The Grail knights, Lancelot and Bors, trace their ancestry, through their mother,<sup>33</sup> to King David, the ancestor also of Christ. Though the begetting of Galahad was "an irretrievable offence against courtly love,"<sup>34</sup> it provided the necessary link between the Grail hero and the "historical" tradition.

Aristocratic privilege characterizes the monks and hermits, too. Almost without exception they are former knights,<sup>35</sup> "men of worship and prowess" (1076). In the religious milieu they perform the function that Merlin had in Celtic romance--elucidating puzzling events, advising the hero, controlling his actions, and prophesying. The only representatives of the clergy to appear in the Grail romance, they are an elite who link the two chivalries:

Dans la personne de semblables ermites, la chevalerie est tirée elle aussi vers la chevalerie. On saisit de nouveau la tendance à les enfermer l'une et l'autre dans un système clos, ou très peu ouvert.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup>Cf. the prose Lancelot, Sommer, vol. III, p. 88 and Morte Darthur, pp. 929 and 991.

<sup>34</sup>Vinaver, Malory, p. 77.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. pp. 868, 885, 926.

<sup>36</sup>Frappier, op. cit., p. 204.



There are very few ladies in the mythic society of Grail romance. At the initiation of the quest, the knights are warned by a messenger from the hermit Nacien

that none in thys queste lede lady nother jantillwoman with hym, for hit ys not to do in so hyghe a servyse as they laboure in. For I warne you playne, he that ys not clene of hys synnes he shall not se the mysteryes of oure Lorde Jesu Cryste (869).

Only an occasional anchoress, Perceval's aunt, the Queen of the Waste Lands, and Perceval's saintly sister, a type of Virgin Mary, appear among the elect.<sup>37</sup>

Our discussion of the vertical myth would not be complete without the fallen angels. Corresponding to the celestial hierarchy is a diabolic hierarchy, a feudal order of evil spirits warring against God on the battlefield of the world. Again, iconography is an important influence on the demonic images of romance. In early Christian art the devil appeared as a serpent, the tempter of Eve, and this remained a traditional symbol in the Middle Ages.<sup>38</sup> On Lancelot's first visit to Corbenic he kills a serpent in a tomb, "an orryble and a

<sup>37</sup>On Perceval's sister as a type of the Virgin, see F. W. Locke, pp. 76-77 and Myrrha Lot-Borodine, Trois Essais sur le Roman de Lancelot du Lac et La Quete du Saint Graal (Paris, 1919), p. 54. Locke also discusses the significance of Perceval's aunt, p. 75. In "Malory and the Grail Legend," Selected Writings, ed. Anne Ridler (London, 1961), p. 160, Charles Williams sees the relationship between Perceval and his sister as "not so much the significance of kinship in blood as of kinship in spirit. . . it is conjoined love, but love conjoined in the Grail."

<sup>38</sup>The dragon and dragon-slayer motif appears in many mythologies to symbolize the struggle between two antithetical principles; cf., for example, the Greek myth of Perseus, the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf, the Babylonian Tiamat, the mythical dragons carved on slabs at Persepolis and Nineveh, the legend of St. George, and the Hindu myth of Krishnu.

fyendely dragon spyttyng wylde fyre oute of hys mowthe." As a reward for delivering the people of Corbenic from the fiend, he is granted a sight of the dove and the Grail, symbols of divine grace (793). Bors also encounters a dragon at Corbenic. In this case, too, its destruction is followed by the appearance of the apocalyptic images. (801). Perceval kills a serpent that is fighting with a young lion. Later the old man on the ship explains that "the serpente betokenyth a fynde" and the lady who had upbraided him for killing her serpent is the devil himself (915, 938).

In medieval literature and art the physical depiction of devils followed two modes. They might be presented with every attribute of grotesque horror, as they are in the Winchester Psalter's miniature of Hell Mouth or in the paintings of the Last Judgment commonly found in cathedral art of the late middle ages. It is this kind of devil that Galahad banishes from the tomb in the churchyard (882). A hermit expels from the tomb of a pious monk a fiend so hideous "that there was no man so hardeherted in the worlde but he sholde a bene aferde" (925). In addition, a devil might take the form of various terrestrial creatures. The great steed, blacker than any berry, that carries Perceval a four day's journey in less than an hour is a demonic creature.<sup>39</sup> When the knight saves himself from destruction in the roaring water by making the

---

<sup>39</sup>Cf. the Celtic tradition of Otherworld horses that have the ability to travel at great speed and to cross rough water, as they carry the hero to fairyland. Anne Ross, Pagan Celtic Britain (London, 1967), p. 327, cites the Fenian story of Gille Deacair and Finn.

sign of the cross, the devil's true nature is revealed:

Whan the fende felte hym so charged he shooke  
of sir Percivale, and he wente into the watir  
cryynge and rorynge and makying grete sorowe,  
and hit semed unto hym that the watir brente.  
Than sir Percivale perceyved hit was a fynde,  
the whych wolde have broughte hym unto perdi-  
cion (912).

Frequently, medieval writers and preachers present the devil in the form of a seductive female. The demon women combine elements of malevolent Celtic fays with those of the treacherous daughters of Eve denounced in patristic literature. Beauty, love, and all sensual delights are used to tempt the hero from the path of virtue. Bors is led to a castle, welcomed by knights and ladies, unarmed, decked out in a rich mantel furred with ermine, entertained with "delytes and deyn-tees," and offered the love of "the rychyst lady and the fayryste of the worlde." In secular terms, it is an ideal situation. The beautiful lady uses all her wiles to tempt his chastity, finally threatening to throw herself with her twelve attendants from a high battlement. Piously concluding that it is better for them to lose their souls than he his, Bors remains steadfast. The demonic origins of the tower and ladies are revealed when they disappear with a terrible noise and cry "as all the fyndys of helle had bene aboute hym" (964-966).

The temptation of Perceval is conducted with a similar appeal to carnal desires. He has been abandoned in the heat of summer on a rocky shore with nothing to eat or drink. Suddenly a black ship traveling at supernatural speed brings him a beautiful lady dressed in rich clothes. After telling

him lies calculated to arouse his pity and fear, she orders her damsel to set up a pavilion on the gravel. Perceval is disarmed and set to sleep in the shade. When he wakes, there is a marvelous feast with a great variety of meats and the strongest wine he has ever drunk.<sup>40</sup> It is the fairy mistress theme adapted to moral allegory. Again, only the sign of the cross saves the hero. The pavilion turns upside down and vanishes in smoke while the lady departs on her ship with the wind roaring about her and the water burning behind (919).

In addition to presenting the mythic agents as characters in a drama, the writers of romance also suggested their presence by means of symbols. Light and darkness, white and black, calm and storm are the anagogic symbols that usually represent the absolute antithesis of God and the devil.<sup>41</sup> Dante employed a well-established, universal image when he chose the life-giving, light-giving, heat-giving sun as the dominant symbol of the Divine Comedy. Dunbar explains its centrality: "He who plunges at any point into the symbolism of the Middle Ages will find himself as it were in a solar vortex."<sup>42</sup> By analogy, the burning candle, the flaming torch, the fiery sword, white, red, silver and gold are recurrent apocalyptic images in the Grail romance. Specifically, the

---

<sup>40</sup>Cf. the supernatural banquets offered by the fairy mistress in Partonopeus and the ballad of Thomas the Rhymer.

<sup>41</sup>For the patristic sources of this symbolism see Pauphilet, op. cit., p. 106ff.

<sup>42</sup>Dunbar, p. 24.

burning candle represents Christ and the fiery sword God. Silver symbolizes the wisdom of God and the humanity of Christ, gold the brightness of God and the royal power of Christ. White signifies purity and divinity, red sacrifice. Red and white together are the colours of Christ and of Galahad whose armour and coat are red, whose shield is white with a red cross made from the blood of Josephé. Whenever there is a concentration of these images associated with light--in descriptions of the Grail chapel, for instance, and in the mystical visions--we understand an allusion to the spiritual world.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the light-giving marvels of Christian myth from those of Celtic romance, for light was associated also with the pagan supernatural. For instance, the burning spear that threatens Bors in the Perilous Bed<sup>43</sup> is a pagan weapon that has been assimilated into the spear of Longinus and the Spear of Vengeance.<sup>44</sup> At Corbenic it appears in the Grail procession flanked by children who carry light-giving tapers.

Light and a sweet scent are constantly associated

---

<sup>43</sup>On Irish analogues of the threatening spear and Perilous Bed see R. S. Loomis, The Grail from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol, pp. 49, 74-79, 153-155. A survey of scholarship dealing with the Celtic origins of the lance is found in Rose Peebles, The Legend of Longinus (Baltimore, 1911), pp. 166ff.

<sup>44</sup>On the lance of Longinus as a Christian symbol see Peebles, pp. 56ff. In the Vulgate Prose cycle the Lance Vengeresse is described as the lance that pierced Christ's side and that wounded Bors and Gawain in the adventure of the Perilous Bed. It is also the lance with which Balin delivered the dolorous stroke. Cf. Sommer II, 334-45; IV, 344-45; 298.

with the Grail. From its chamber in Corbenic shines a "grete lyght as hit were a somers lyght" (801). It is kept on an altar of silver over which hangs a silver sword so bright that it blinds Bors (802). When Lancelot makes his final visit to the Grail castle he sees through the open door of the chamber "a grete clerenesse, that the house was as bryght as all the tourcheis of the worlde had bene there" (1015). When it goes abroad it glimmers in the forest (816). It appears at Arthur's court covered with white samite and lighted by a sunbeam seven times brighter than any daylight (865). Lancelot sees it in a ruined chapel on a silver table lighted by six great candles in a silver candlestick (893-4). Fire was particularly associated with communication between earth and heaven.<sup>45</sup>

Orthodox theology treated God's enemy negatively. Darkness was absence of light, evil absence of good. Yet the devil in popular sermon, legend, art and drama became an almost Manichean power who duplicated God's celestial society with demonic counterparts.<sup>46</sup> Black smoke, burning heat, cacophony, tempest and evil smells indicated the presence of demons. Percival's demon horse and demon mistress vanish in fire and smoke, leaving a trail of burning water. The exorcised devil in the churchyard tomb is preceded by a foul smoke. The demon ship moves over the sea "as all the wynde of the worlde had dryven

---

<sup>45</sup>Cf. the burning bush of the Old Testament, the burning animal of ritual sacrifice, the phoenix as a symbol of new life in Christ, the Pentecostal flames that marked the descent of the Holy Spirit and the flames of funeral torches which represent the soul's ascent.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Owst, op. cit., pp. 80-84, 92-97, 512-515.

hit" (915), and the devil who recounts the miracle of the old monk disappears in a great tempest (927).<sup>47</sup> Devils lurk in the darkness of tombs (793, 882). They wear black armour and ride about on black horses or in ships hung with silk blacker than any berry. But although the visible world is an expression of the invisible, it is not always easy to distinguish the celestial from the demonic. Even the white-black antithesis is not foolproof, as Bors discovered. In a vision he sees a swan and a raven who demand that he choose between them. A man in religious "weeds" (a demon in disguise) explains that the white bird is a beautiful lady who will die if her love is rejected. Later a bona fide abbot reveals the true significance of the images. The black bird is the Holy Church and the white bird the fiend

whyght withoutefurth and blacke within; hit ys ipocresye, which ys withoute yalew or pale, and semyth withouteforth the servauntis of Jesu Cryste, but they be withinfurthe so horrible of fylth and synne, and begyle the worlde so evyll (967).

The Quest of the Grail is very different from those of secular romance.<sup>48</sup> The ritual pattern of progress and combat

<sup>47</sup>On the popular association between demons and bad weather see C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image, p. 118.

<sup>48</sup>A different opinion is held by Vinaver, who contends that Malory's Grail quest is just another Arthurian adventure and that "his one desire seems to be to secularize the Grail theme as much as the story will allow" (1535). Some objections are expressed by C. S. Lewis in "The English Prose 'Morte'," Essays on Malory, pp. 14-20. Vinaver is undoubtedly correct in asserting that the two chivalries did not represent in Malory antithetical concepts, one of which was to be condemned.

is used again but with a completely different significance. This quest is not a nebulously ethical exhibition of chivalric prowess but an allegory of the soul's pilgrimage through life to eternity. Its purpose is not the acquisition of "much erthly worship" (955, Malory's addition) though that too may come to the successful knight. It is the acquisition of divine grace and the enjoyment of the beatific vision that motivate the Grail Questers. That even the noblest of the Arthurian knights has jeopardized his soul by fighting for the wrong reasons is revealed to Lancelot by the voice of God:

'I have loste all that I have besette in the,  
for thou hast ruled the ayenste me as a warry-  
oure and used wronge warris with vayneglory  
for the pleasure of the worlde more than to  
please me, therefore thou shalt be confounded  
withoute thou yelde me my tresoure' (929).

The significant passage from "used" to "me" is Malory's addition to his French source.

The chief enemy of the Grail knight is not a giant, fay, or evil knight but the sins of lust, pride, avarice, self-indulgence, anger, and instability--the enemy within. When he resists the wiles of seductive damsels or refuses to joust against his brother, despite great provocation, the real victory is spiritual rather than material.

Like many Arthurian adventures the Grail Quest begins at the court of Arthur on the Feast of Pentecost, or more exactly, on the Vigil of the Feast when a maiden sent by King Pelles summons Lancelot to a nunnery in the forest. There he knights a young squire, Galahad, and returns to



court by the hour of undern. According to custom, Arthur and Guenevere with their nobles go first to services in the cathedral and then gather in the great hall. The health and vitality of the court in Morte Darthur are in contrast to the impotence which characterizes it in several French romances. In Chrétien's Perceval, for instance, the Red Knight has no difficulty in carrying off the cup which symbolizes imperial power. The Perlesvaus opens with a picture of Arthurian chivalry demoralized and decimated by the slothfulness of the king. But Malory's king and queen rejoice in the vitality of the Round Table and are passing glad at the return of Bors and Lionel and Lancelot. So overjoyed, in fact, at their return "hole and sounde" that Arthur forgets his "olde custom" of refusing to begin the feast until he has seen some marvel.<sup>49</sup>

This is to be a Pentecostal Feast very different from those of secular romance. As had happened at the first meeting of the Round Table, letters of gold have appeared on the seats. On this day "four hondred wynter and four and fyffty acomplyvysshed aftir the Passion of Oure Lorde Jesu Cryst" the Sege Perelous will be fulfilled. The verb indicates more than mere physical occupation. The appearance of Galahad will complete the Round Table; it will also precipitate the knights into a kind of experience unlike anything they have encountered before. The problem of the geasa is solved by the fortuitous appearance of Balin's sword floating down the river. It is fixed in the red stone of Merlin's making to awaith "the

---

<sup>49</sup>Malory adds to his French source the cause of Arthur's forgetfulness (855).

beste knyght of the worlde."<sup>50</sup> As often happened in secular romance, the arrival of a new knight precipitates a marvelous adventure. All the doors and windows of the palace shut automatically, as they had when Christ appeared to his disciples on Resurrection Sunday.<sup>51</sup> Galahad is presented to the court not by a relative or patron knight but by a celestial agent "clothed all in whyght, and there was no knyght knew from whens he com" (859). The revelation of the new knight's lineage establishes his worthiness--but, again, it is a kind of worthiness not found in secular romance. Furthermore, the arming of this knight is only accomplished through the fulfillment of prophecy. His sword is a symbol of divinity, his shield a symbol of faith. Like all new knights he must prove his worth by engaging in a tournament. For the first and last time Arthur will see the knights of the Round Table "all hole togydirs." Galahad is armed with a spear, a Crucifixion symbol that reminds us once more that he typifies Christ. Only Lancelot and Perceval are not overthrown.

Throughout these introductory scenes it is evident that the author of La Queste is following the conventional chivalric pattern but each event is endowed with spiritual significance.

---

<sup>50</sup>Locke, p. 59, cites a passage in Lactantius, Divinae Institutiones, P.L.6, col. 797, where a sword signifies the Second Coming of Christ. Since Galahad is a type of Christ, the allusion is not irrelevant.

<sup>51</sup>John 20, 19.

Galahad's withdrawal of the sword in the stone establishes his superiority in the religious milieu as Balin's success had established him in the world of Celtic magic and Arthur's in the political sphere. Symbolic, also, are his filling of the Sege Perelous and of Arthur's bed. The significance of the former act is suggested by Charles Williams:

The sitting of Galahad in the Siege is the condition precedent to all achievement; and Tennyson's phrase may serve for the moment--that he cried, "If I lose myself I find myself."<sup>52</sup>

By lying in Arthur's bed, Galahad shows that the spiritual takes precedence over the temporal. The Keeper of the Grail Castle long before had prophesied that the spiritual symbol would destroy the finest symbol of earthly power:

'When this thyng gothe abroad the Rounde Table shall be brokyn for a season' (793, Malory's addition).

Now "there lies in the King's bed that which is the consummation and the destruction of the Table."<sup>53</sup>

The Grail Quest is initiated not by the granting of a boon or the appearance of a magical emissary but by a mystical experience. As the court prepares to enjoy the customary feast after the tournament, the palace is shaken by a violent storm.

Than anone they harde crakyng and cryyng  
of thundir, that hem thought the palyse sholde  
all to-dryve. So in the myddys of the blast  
entyrde a sonnebeame, more clerer by seven  
tymys than ever they saw day, and all they

---

<sup>52</sup>Charles Williams, Selected Writings, ed. Anne Ridler (London, 1961), p. 158.

<sup>53</sup>Williams, p. 159.

were alyghted of the grace of the Holy Goste. Than began every knyght to beholde other, and eyther saw other, by their semyng, fayrer than ever they were before. Natforthan there was no knyght they myght speke one worde a grete whyle, and so they loked every man on other as they had bene doome.

Than entird into the halle the Holy Grayle coverde with whyght samyte, but there was none that myght se hit nother whom that bore hit. And there was all the halle fulfyllled with good odoures, and every knyght had such metis and drynkes as he beste loved in thys worlde (865).

The passage is worth quoting in full because it exemplifies Malory's ability to improve on his sources by the additon of vivid descriptive phrases.<sup>54</sup> To the French author's skill is due the felicitous combination of a chivalric feast, the Biblical account of the first Pentecost,<sup>55</sup> and medieval mysticism. As a result of the Grail's presence, the very appearance of the knights changes "and eyther saw other, by their semyng, fayrer than ever they were before." One knows that the illumination is not only external, that the meat and drink are not merely material. The desire and fulfillment that mark a Christian's relations with God are symbolized in this Pentecostal feast.

It would seem that the mystical experience might have ended at Arthur's court. Since the Grail had already appeared to all the knights at the centre, why ride off into the perilous forest to seek it? The answer is that the Grail has not appeared openly, its full meaning has not been understood. It

---

<sup>54</sup>See Works, p. 1547 n. 865 for a comparison of Malory and La Queste.

<sup>55</sup>Acts 2, 1-4.

is covered in white samite to protect it from the eyes of the world. Gawain makes a vow that is taken up by all the knights:

I shall laboure in the queste of the Sankgreall,  
and. . .I shall holde me oute a twelve-month and  
a day or more if nede be and never shall I re-  
turne unto the courte agayne tylle I have sene  
hit more opynly than hit hath bene shewed here  
(866).

The vow and the time-span allotted for the quest are conventional; Arthur's despair at the departure of the knights is not. From secular quests they always returned triumphantly; from this many will not return and of those who do, only one will have succeeded. It is Lancelot who applies the worldly standard:

'A, sir,. . .comforte yourself! For hit shall  
be unto us a grete honoure. . . .' (867).

The knights of secular romance rode "by chance," accepting any adventure they encountered though they seldom knew where it would end. They moved in a cycle of time and place unrelated to reality. The Grail knights, on the contrary, move in the stream of historical time (their quest takes place four hundred and fifty-four years after the Crucifixion) and make for a particular place, the castle of Corbenic. Yet their journey is essentially psychological, though it is projected into an external landscape. They ride together to the castle of Vagon; "than every knyght toke the way that hym lyked beste" (872).

The allegory is unmistakable. The author uses situations and images with accepted theological significances. In addition, a host of perceptive hermits, holy ladies, old men, white knights and disembodied voices explain correspondences.

The difficulties of the spiritual life are symbolized by the hostile landscapes through which the heroes must pass.<sup>56</sup> Wild and strange are the waste forests, steep mountains, dark valleys, desert islands, rocky shores, and tumultuous rivers. Supernatural ships are driven by tempests along barren coasts. This is how Ferdinand Lot describes the differing effects produced by the prose Lancelot and La Queste:

Comparée au merveilleux jardin d'amour du Lancelot propre, la Quête du Graal, qui en forme la suite et la contre-partie, nous apparaît comme un désert aride: rien qu'un grand ciel brûlant au-dessus d'une terre morte, où ne s'épanouissent ni le parfum des fleurs, ni le chant des oiseaux.<sup>57</sup>

Citing the authority of Raban Maur,<sup>58</sup> Pauphilet suggests that the trees of the Waste Forest signify evil desires, and adds,

Comme le désert, la forêt est un lieu sans ressources, lieu d'erreurs, lieu de mort.<sup>59</sup>

In the romantic forest no knight-errant was ever at a loss for a guide and he seldom travelled far without meeting another knight. In this forest only the chosen few receive direction or encounter testing adventures. Instead of riding companionably together, they travel alone, each seeking salvation in his own way. Galahad rides far ahead, appearing only when Perceval, Bors, or Lancelot needs help and comfort. The

---

<sup>56</sup>This idea has had a long history from Deguileville's Pèlerinage de la vie humaine and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress to Eliot's Waste Land and Golding's Pincher Martin.

<sup>57</sup>F. Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en Prose (Paris, 1954), p. 418.

<sup>58</sup>P.L. CXII, 865.

<sup>59</sup>Pauphilet, p. 113.

worldly knights wander vainly through trackless wastes. Gawain's fate is typical:

. . .he rode longe withoute ony adventure, for he founde not the tenth parte of adventures as they were wonte to have. For sir Gawayne rode from Whytsontyde tylle Mychaellmasse, and founde never adventure that pleased hym (941).

Even when he is told the way that Galahad has taken, he is unable to follow (890-1) and though he had found Corbenic in the secular milieu (792) its location now eludes him.

Finding the right way is more than a matter of geography. The laws of secular romance no longer apply. When Melias with the bravado of terrestrial chivalry ignores the cross's warning against taking the left hand way, he nearly loses his life. A monk explains the meaning of the two ways:

the way on the ryght hande betokenyd the hyghe-way of oure Lorde Jesu Cryst, and the way of a good trew lyver. And the other way betokenyth the way of synnars and myssebelevers (886).

Furthermore, the hospitable castles, manor houses, and pavilions that were so prominent a feature of the secular world are difficult and dangerous to find. Even the wells and fountains become allegorical images. In Ector's vision, Lancelot is unable to drink from a fair well and must go away thirsty. The well represents the grace of God which recedes from a sinner (947). Lancelot's failure at the well of grace contrasts with Galahad's success at the boiling well in the perilous forest. "A sygne of lechory that was that tyme muche used" (the temporal allusion is Malory's), it is instantly cooled by Galahad's virginity (1025).

Evidently the pleasures of courtly life have a different

sen in the spiritual quest. No longer are welcoming lords, beautiful ladies, silken pavilions and delicious food and drink rewards for prowess. On the contrary, they are the devil's lures, as Perceval and Bors discovered. The quester seeks a night's lodging and a meal of water and worts at austere hermitages. Unable often to find a shelter, he sleeps outside at the foot of a cross, beside a rock or under an apple tree.

Hermitages, abbeys of white monks<sup>60</sup> and ruined chapels are particularly associated with the allegorical landscape. At a white abbey near Camelot Galahad acquires the shield of King Evelake which has been preserved there for the destined knight. At a white abbey Bors learns the significance of his adventures, Lancelot finds the tomb of King Bagdemagus, and the Maimed King waits for Galahad. After he has been healed he yields himself "to a place of religion of whyght monkes" (1031). These abbeys are not only shelters for the Grail knights but also the places that preserve the Grail tradition.

Eighteenth-century novelists, artists, and landscape gardeners regarded the ruined chapel as a romantic image that filled the mind with a pleasurable melancholy and fear.<sup>61</sup> For

---

<sup>60</sup>Pauphilet's theory that the Vulgate Prose Cycle was the work of Cistercian monks has already been mentioned, cf. Etudes, p. 54ff. F. Lot in Romania XLIX (1923), 433-441 expresses reservations regarding the authorship of the Lancelot. Jean Frappier in Etude Sur La Mort Le Roi Artu (Paris, 1961), 219ff. admits Cistercian influence but notes a curious lack of theological disquisition in La Mort.

<sup>61</sup>Cf. A. O. Lovejoy's citation of William Chambers' "Dissertation on Oriental Gardening" (1772) in The History of Ideas (New York, 1960), p. 122 ff.



medieval man also it suggested mutability and marvels. Completely unrealistic is the discrepancy between the decayed exteriors in their wild setting and the marvelously preserved interiors with rich artifacts, mystical visions and other-world voices. Riding through a wild and pathless forest, Lancelot comes to a stone cross by an old chapel. Inside he sees a fair altar richly arrayed with a silken cloth, and a silver candelabrum with six great candles. Although the chapel door is "waste and brokyn" he can find no place to enter. While he sleeps, the altar and candelabrum leave the chapel without human agency and join the Grail to heal a sick knight. It is Lancelot's sin that deprives him of power to go where he likes (893-895). His failure in this adventure contrasts sharply with his success in entering the Perelous Chapel of secular romance. At an ancient wasted chapel Gawain and Ector see strange visions and hear disembodied voices that reveal the inadequacies of worldly knights. Unlike Lancelot, they refuse to profit from their instruction.

The knight's relationship to his horse takes on a new meaning. In secular romance the loss of a mount was an accident soon mended by prowess, command, or courtesy. In the Grail quest it is a moral test or spiritual symptom. When Perceval loses first his horse and then a borrowed palfrey, he accepts from a devil woman a demon horse that attempts to carry him to hell. Only the sign of the cross saves him. The knight healed by the Grail takes Lancelot's helm, sword and steed while the hero sleeps, numbed by the "dedly synne whereof

he was never confessed" (895). When the hero discovers his loss, "than he called hymself a verry wrecch and moste unhappy of all knyghtes." Deprived of arms and steed, he cannot achieve adventures. Realising that he is being punished for his sinful state and worldly motives, he sets out on foot for a hermitage. It is only when he has repented, confessed, forsworn the queen's company and done penance that he is promised the restoration of his horse and arms (895-897). Ector's vision of Sir Lancelot falling from his horse and riding on an ass betokens his newfound penitence and humility (947).

Knights who are in a state of grace have no difficulty finding horses. When the Grail heroes board the Ship of Solomon, they take their saddles and bridles but leave their horses behind (983). Landing near the castle of Cartelois in the marches of Scotland, they seize the horses of their attackers "for they had no horse in that contrey, for they lefft their horsys whan they take their shippe" (996). The explanation is Malory's--another example of his realistic approach. When Galahad concludes his journey on the barge of Perceval's sister, a white knight (that is, a divine agent) presents him with a white horse on which to ride to Corbenic (1013).

In the religious allegory, arms and armour have a new significance. The basic metaphor is derived from St. Paul:

Let Christ<sup>62</sup> Jesus himself be the armour that you wear. Put on all the armour which God

---

<sup>62</sup>Romans 13, 14.

provides, so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil. . . . Buckle on the belt of truth; for coat of mail put on integrity; let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you firm footing; and, with all these, take up the great shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take salvation for helmet; for sword, take that which the Spirit<sup>63</sup> gives you,--the words that come from God.

The monks and hermits are knights who have clothed themselves "in a relygious wede and in the armour of oure Lorde" (999).

Bors puts off his secular armour and wears a scarlet coat symbolizing penance, faith, and a rejection of violence (955).

Galahad's swords, as we have seen, signify his Messianic role while his red armour further develops his figuration of Christ.

—Perceval is saved from the devil by the sight of his sword with its cross-shaped pommel. Lancelot's reliance on his secular sword rather than on the sword of faith marks him as one who cannot reject the values of la chevalerie terrienne even at the threshold of Corbenic (1014). But when he has atoned for his twenty-four years of sin in a penitential swoon, he is clothed in a robe of scarlet, fresh and new, as a symbol of his new spiritual state (1018). The broken sword in the Grail castle<sup>64</sup> is a folkloric weapon which has been given a Christian history. Originally the creative symbol of a vegeta-

---

<sup>63</sup>Ephesians 6, 11-17.

<sup>64</sup>For a discussion of the broken sword motif in French romance see A. E. Waite, The Holy Grail (New York, 1961), pp. 70-73. R. S. Loomis describes its Celtic analogues in The Grail from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol, passim, and Jessie L. Weston writes of its significance in fertility rites.

tion myth, it is now the weapon that smote Josephé when he endeavoured to convert a heathen king. The failure of Bors and Perceval to mend the sword and Galahad's subsequent success confirms the latter's position as the paramount Grail hero.

Isolated from the everyday world and from human contact, his apprehensions sharpened by fasts and prayers, the Grail knight perceives with unusual clarity and freshness.<sup>65</sup> Whether waking or sleeping, he has splendid visions of the beauty touched with strangeness that for Pater was the essence of romance and for the medieval mystics was the attribute of divinity. No other books of Morte Darthur are so aesthetically rich as the pageant of the Grail. The imagery of the visions is generally Scriptural and patristic yet Celtic magic must have contributed touches of the marvelous. Since it was believed in the middle ages that dreams might be divinely inspired to reveal the future or impart knowledge,<sup>66</sup> these visions of romance and religion are patently didactic.

The allegorical landscape through which the knights travel gives continuity to the quest. In contrast, the allegorical images in the landscape of the human mind produce a sense of isolation and individuality. Each knight's visions

---

<sup>65</sup>Wilderness and dream are combined also in Dante's Divine Comedy and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, both of which are concerned with a spiritual quest.

<sup>66</sup>See Constance B. Heatt, The Realism of Dream Visions (The Hague-Paris, 1967).

are fitted to his particular spiritual state. Lancelot's sinfulness is symbolized by stone, bitter wood, and a barren fig tree (895). But because he is not hopelessly lost, he sometimes sees angels. Gawain, who typifies the worldly knights of the Round Table, sees a fertile meadow filled with proud black bulls that go to seek better pasture and return so thin they cannot stand (942). Bors, who strives with conscious effort to attain grace, dreams of confusing the choices to be made between a swan and a raven, a lily and a rotten tree (968). Perceval, the naive man who is saved by inherent grace, dreams of ladies and beasts that symbolize the Old Law of the devil and the New Law of Christ (913-915). Galahad alone enjoys the full mystical vision of "the spirituall thynges" (1034). By means of visions the concrete, historical and personal are brought into contact with the abstract, timeless and universal. Thus the cycle of waking and dreaming life experienced by the questers is both realistic and transcendent.

Battles in the religious milieu are spiritual conflicts undertaken to assert moral principles but not to inflict death. Homicide was condemned by the authors of La Queste,<sup>67</sup> except when the enemies were pagans. From the time of Prudentius the opposition of good and evil had been expressed in literature, art, and sermon through the Psychomachia,<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup>Pauphilet, pp. 41-43.

<sup>68</sup>Cf. C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (New York, 1958, pp. 66ff; E. Mâle, pp. 102ff; G. R. Owst, pp. 79ff.

generally presented in the form of a battle between good and evil knights for possession of a castle. The Castle of Maidens adventure in the Morte Darthur belongs to this tradition. In the secular romance, this castle on the Severn<sup>69</sup> had been the scene of a great tournament where Tristram had won renown. It is now "a cursed castle. . .for all pité ys oute thereoff, and all hardynes and myschyff ys therein" (887). Ignoring the conventional warning, Galahad attacks and defeats the castle's defenders, seven brothers who represent the seven deadly sins. The delivery of the castle becomes an allegory of the Harrowing of Hell<sup>70</sup> for when Galahad opens the gates, he is greeted by a great crowd of people who cry,

'Sir, ye be wellcom, for longe have we abydyn  
here oure delyveraunce!' (888).

Galahad does not kill the evil brothers. Murder is left to the worldly knights, Gawain, Gareth and Iwain. The Grail knight's participation in this event illustrates St. Bernard's dictum that the practice of good works should precede the holy quiet of contemplation, as the blossom precedes the fruit.<sup>71</sup>

The tournament of black and white knights in which Lancelot engages is another psychomachia. Following the ritual of la chevalerie terrienne, he joins the black knights,

<sup>69</sup>Sommer VI, 34. Such specificity of location is unusual in La Queste.

<sup>70</sup>Cf. the use of this motif in Piers Plowman.

<sup>71</sup>In cant. cant. XLVI, 5.

the weaker party, in order to increase his "shevalry." For the first time in his life he suffers a humiliating defeat. More clearly than any homily this event makes him realize that in the religious quest there is a relationship between success and one's spiritual condition:

' . . . And now I am shamed, and am sure that I am more synfuller than ever I was (932).<sup>72</sup>

The significance of the tournament is explained by a recluse:

'A, Launcelot,' seyde she, 'as longe as ye were knyght of erthly knyghthode ye were the moste mervayloust man of the worlde, and most adventurst. 'Now,' seyde the lady, 'sitthen ye be sette amonge the knyghtis of hevynly adventures, if adventure falle you contrary at that turnamente yet have ye no mervayle; for that turnamente yestirday was but a tokenynge of oure Lorde. . . the erthely knyghtes were they which were clothed all in blake, and the coveryng betokenyng the synnes whereof they be not confessed. And they with the coverynge of whyght betokenyng virginité, and they that hath chosyn chastité' (933).

Not only were the white knights sustained by their virginity but, Malory adds, they were also assisted by the appearance of the Grail (a source of grace).

The adventure at the Castle of Corteloise with its dispossessed lord, ravished maiden, evil defenders and Arthurian avengers seems to follow the conventional pattern of secular romance. By killing a great multitude of people ranged against them, the heroes restore political and social order. Yet this, too, is a psychomachia in which the virtu-

---

<sup>72</sup>P. E. Tucker in "Chivalry in the 'Morte'," Essays on Malory, p. 86 points out that in La Queste this adventure is an allegorical recapitulation of Lancelot's spiritual progress while in Morte Darthur it is a real event that teaches a moral lesson.

ous Grail knights defeat the vicious pagans. The violence is approved by a priest and a celestial voice who affirm that the questers have been engaged on God's behalf against the devil's forces (996-998).

Malory's treatment of the two chivalries differs from his source in the emphasis that he puts on virtuous character rather than on religious dogma as a means of attaining grace.<sup>73</sup> In Malory's view, it is a virtuous character that ensures success in both the terrestrial and the celestial sphere. For personal as well as aesthetic reasons, he greatly reduces the homiletic content of his source. At the same time, he attributes failure in the Grail quest to weakness of character rather than to theological aberrations.<sup>74</sup> While Lancelot's virtue in the chivalric milieu is underlined by the addition of several original passages,<sup>75</sup> his failure in the religious milieu is attributed to the moral faults of pride, sensuality and instability.<sup>76</sup> These faults are reveal-

---

<sup>73</sup>On the importance of dogma in La Queste, see L. A. Fisher, The Mystic Vision in the Grail Legend and in the Divine Comedy (New York, 1966); Etienne Gilson, La Grace et le Saint Graal, F. W. Locke, The Quest for the Holy Grail, Albert Pauphilet, op. cit. pp. 27-84.

<sup>74</sup>On the efficacy of intercession, abstinence, divine favour and faith in La Queste, see Pauphilet, p. 27ff, 64ff.

<sup>75</sup>Cf. 863, 28-31, 930, 14-18.

<sup>76</sup>On Lancelot's character see Moorman, "The Tale of the Sankgreall," Malory's Originality, pp. 192-196; and P. E. Tucker, pp. 85-93.



ed by his reaction to aspects of the environment. The French Lancelot attempts to close his mind to the material world and gain mystical union with God. The sights and sounds of the spring morning with its shining sun (a divine symbol) and its singing birds only increase his sense of shame. Malory's Lancelot, on the other hand, is comforted by the birds (896) and after a month aboard ship he is glad "to play hym by the watirs syde, for he was somewhat wery of the shippe" (1012). Even after his penance and asceticism have brought him to Corbenic, he still reacts to danger as a worldly knight and draws his sword against the lions instead of trusting in God (1014). His behaviour contrasts with that of Perceval who had helped a lion against a serpent with the result that "the lyon wente allwey aboute hym fawnyng as a spaynell,<sup>77</sup> and than he stroked hym on the necke and on the sholdirs and thanked God of the feliship of that beste" (912-913). Percival has the faith that Lancelot lacks.

While the treatment of the two chivalries involves moral allegory (tropology), the treatment of Scripture is typological and anagogic. It provides another kind of patterning, one that utilizes movement in the stream of time rather than a psychomachia. The basis of typology in La Queste is the progress from the Old Law to the New. As we have already seen, Galahad is presented as a Christ-figure who exorcises devils, frees souls from bondage, heals the sick and blind, and revives the Waste Land. He represents the New Law which

---

<sup>77</sup>The simile is Malory's.

has delivered God's people and revealed divine truth. The tension between the two laws is introduced at several points. The white knight tells Galahad that King Evelake had been saved from defeat and death by his conversion to the new way (879). Perceval's dream of the serpent ridden by an old lady and the lion ridden by a young one is an allegory of the enmity between the devil and Holy Church (913-915). When Bors abandons his brother Lionel in order to help the kidnapped damsel, he is aiding "the newe law of oure Lord Jesu Cryst and Holy Chirche" (967). His rejection of the beautiful temptress foils "the olde lawe and the fynde which all day warryth agenst Holy Chirch" (961-67).

Other characters in the romance may possibly be regarded as types of Biblical characters. Locke interprets Guenevere and the Queen of the Waste Lands as Eve-types while Perceval's sister represents the Virgin Mary.<sup>78</sup> Hennessey<sup>79</sup> compares Lancelot with Solomon, Samson and Absalom while Perceval is a new Jonas and Daniel. She further suggests that typology affects the structure of romance through "the sense it gives of perpetual recurrence, of an endless repetition of an eternally ordained pattern."<sup>80</sup> Wallace Stevens' comment on echo technique may well be applied to

---

<sup>78</sup>F. W. Locke, pp. 75-78.

<sup>79</sup>Helen Hennessey, "The Uniting of Romance and Allegory in *La Queste del Saint Graal*," Boston University Studies in English IV (1960), p. 193.

<sup>80</sup>Op. cit., p. 193.

Biblical typology and medieval romance:

It is not too extravagant to think of resemblances and of the repetitions of resemblances as a source of the ideal.<sup>81</sup>

The Ship of Solomon image is a powerful embodiment of Biblical typology. In recounting to the Grail knights the history of the ship and its artifacts, Perceval's sister links contemporary history (the Grail quest) to universal history.<sup>82</sup> The mystic vision which Galahad achieves at Sarras climaxes a train of events that began with the Fall. Solomon's Ship provides the necessary transition. Many intervening events are recalled in the account--the murder of Abel, the reign of Solomon, the Passion of Christ, the coming of Grail and lance to Logres, and the wasting of the land which still awaits deliverance. The literary function of the Ship is explained by Pauphilet:

Le mythe de la Nef est comme la synthèse des moyens employés par l'auteur de la Queste pour réaliser ce que nous avons appelé la transcription romanesque de son sujet religieux: interventions divines, scènes allégoriques, symboles mystiques, légendes hagiographiques y sont accumulés et mêlés à des souvenirs de thèmes celtiques.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup>Wallace Stevens, The Necessary Angel (New York, 1951), p. 81.

<sup>82</sup>From Rupert of Deutz's De glorificatione Trinitatis P.L.169, col. 18, Locke cites a relevant remark on the unity of all history: Omnis quippe Scriptura sacra, Scriptura canonica, unus liber est, qui ad unum tendit et ab uno Deo profecta, uno eodemque spiritu conscripta est.

<sup>83</sup>Op. cit., p. 155. For a detailed analysis of the Ship's symbolism see Hennessy, pp. 196-198 and Locke, pp. 82-85.

Like the fairy ships of Celtic romance, it is free from the temporal and spatial limitations of the real world. It is a sacred place which isolates the Grail knights and allows them to concentrate on spiritual matters. It is the Ship of Faith which can be boarded only by those "in stedefaste beleve" (984). And it is a treasure-house of symbolic artifacts. There is the blood-red sword of David destined for Galahad as token of his lineage and election. There are three spindles made from the Tree of Life<sup>84</sup> --one white as snow, a symbol of paradisaal purity, one green as grass, a symbol of procreation, one red as blood, a symbol of violence. There is a rich bed in which the last knight of Solomon's kindred shall rest and a wonderful girdle for the sword, made from the hair of Perceval's sister. Locke aptly defines the Ship of Solomon as "the ingathering of the images."

The Grail quest proceeds from Camelot (the familiar world) through wastes and over waters to Corbenic and, finally, to Sarras. As we have seen, the knight's progress is impeded by settings and situations which test his moral and spiritual worth. His journey is

a rite of passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to divinity. Attaining the center is equivalent to a consecration, an initiation, yesterday's profane and illusory existence gives

---

<sup>84</sup>The middle ages had evolved a complicated symbolism whereby the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden was also the Tree of Death from which the Cross was made. Mâle, *op.cit.*, pp. 106-109, 165-166, discusses the use of the tree metaphor in medieval art. On the tree as a universal symbol see also Gérard de Champeaux and Dom. Sebastien Sterckx, Introduction au Monde des Symboles (Saint-Leger-Vauban, 1966), pp. 297-321.

place to a new, to a life that is real, enduring and effective.<sup>85</sup>

Poulet's comments on centrality in the Divine Comedy may also be applied to Corbenic since the latter is both the material destination of the literal quest and the spiritual destination of the human soul:

Because God is an immense sphere of which the plenitude is contained in a center everywhere present, the soul is a center that contains this sphere.<sup>86</sup>

The true direction of the mystical quest is inward. The Round Table which was set in a meadow of humility and patience (946) failed because its knights--all but three--"turned into waste contreyes: that signifieth dethe" instead of seeking the centre.

The spiritual quest is also upward. The Grail castle built on a rock has the symbolic significance of a sacred mountain:

Sur elle se fixe irrésistiblement le regard de l'homme saisi par l'appel de l'en haut. Elle est l'escalier fabuleux qui offre à ses rêves un commencement de réalisation. . . Son sommet est le point où la divinité descend et rencontre l'homme qui monte vers elle.<sup>87</sup>

In Corbenic the sword of God, the dove of the Holy Ghost and the human image of Christ are present.

<sup>85</sup>Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (New York, 1958), p. 18.

<sup>86</sup>Georges Poulet, The Metamorphoses of the Circle, trans. Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman (Baltimore, 1966), xviii.

<sup>87</sup>Champeaux and Sterckx, p. 165.

Corbenic is a mystifying castle.<sup>88</sup> When we first visit it in The Tale of Balin, its invisible knight and vengeful lord make it seem a demonic setting. Balin's wild chase through endless rooms, his striking of the Dolorous Blow, the shattering of the castle and the wasting of three kingdoms are events in a nightmare. In contrast, the description of Lancelot's first visit evokes the image of a real medieval town with its bridge, castle, tower and crowd of villagers (791). The impression is reinforced when Lancelot returns in his madness. He is stoned and beaten by the village boys, bedded on straw under the castle gate, thrown meat from a distance because he is regarded as dangerous. And since he is a part of castle life, he is decked in a scarlet robe to celebrate the knighting of Pelles' nephew.

The Corbenic which Bors visits seems a different kind of place again. It combines domesticity (Elaine with her child in her arms) and mysticism (the Grail procession)

---

<sup>88</sup> Loomis suggests that the name is a corruption of corbenoit (blessed horn). Cf. Helaine Newstead, Bran the Blessed in Arthurian Romance (New York, 1939), p. 89ff. and R. S. Loomis, Wales and the Arthurian Legend (Cardiff, 1956), p. 41ff. A summary of recent scholarship dealing with the origins of the Grail castle is to be found in Leonardo Olshchki's The Grail Castle (Manchester, 1966), pp. 61-63. Celtic, Christian, Byzantine, Judaic, Persian and Catharist influences are adduced in addition to the anthropological theories advanced by Victorian scholars. On descriptions of the Grail Castle in various French romances, see A. E. Waite, The Holy Grail (New York, 1961), pp. 75-78. On the whole subject see also J. D. Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance (Gloucester, 1958), Vol. I, pp. 219-362.

with the perilous adventures of an Otherworld fortress<sup>89</sup> and the visionary allegories that prophesy historical events.

Directed by his aunt, Perceval visits Corbenic, looking for Galahad. *Camelot* ad. He finds it to be "an house closed well with wallys and depe dyches" (907). Associated with it is a monastery where he sees the Maimed King on a rich bed behind the altar.

While Camelot is specifically identified with Winchester, the geographic location of Corbenic is not made clear. It may not even be in Logres, for King Pellès introduces himself as "kyng of the forayne contré" (793). It is part of its mystery that, like the Grail itself, it seems almost to move about, as elusive as the spiritual state that it represents. In the early visits of Bors and Lancelot, Corbenic seems not far from Camelot. When Elaine leaves Arthur's court, the king and a hundred knights bring her on her way through a forest (807), as if her home were located just on the other side. Yet the Grail knights traverse endless forests and wastelands and are borne far across the sea before they reach their destination. A sense of slowly passing time and of almost limitless space is conveyed by the description of Lancelot's journey on the ship with his son:

---

<sup>89</sup>For Celtic analogues of the Perilous Bed and threatening lance see A. C. L. Brown, The Origin of the Grail Legend, p. 132ff.; R. S. Loomis, Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance, p. 158ff; Jean Marx, La Légende Arthurienne et Le Graal (Paris, 1952), pp. 117-139. The adventure of the Perilous Bed is associated with Gawain in the prose Lancelot. His adventures in the Grail quest have been translated by J. L. Weston under the title Sir Gawain at the Grail Castle (London, 1903).

So dwelled sir Launcelot and Galahad within that shippe halff a yere and served God dayly and nyghtly with all their power. And often they aryved in yles ferre frome folke, where there repayred none but wylde beestes, and ther they founde many straunge adventures and peryllous which they brought to an end (1013).

Lancelot's final visit to Corbenic adds several details to our conception of the castle. After a month's journey over the sea, the marvelous ship carrying Perceval's dead sister brings Lancelot at midnight<sup>90</sup> to a castle "on the backe syde whiche was ryche and fayre" (1014).<sup>91</sup> Bright moonlight reveals on the seaward side an open gate guarded by lions. Though sometimes a symbol of Christ, the animals here may signify the devil who "walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."<sup>92</sup> Directed by a celestial voice, Lancelot leaves the ship and safely passes the lions by making the sign of the cross,<sup>93</sup> though he had at first tried to protect himself with his sword. He crosses the courtyard and enters the keep where everyone is asleep. From room to room

---

<sup>90</sup>The arrival at night is a convention of Grail literature. See R. S. Loomis, Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance, p. 171.

<sup>91</sup>Marx, op. cit., p. 140, points out that in Celtic myth the Otherworld castle was generally situated by the sea.

<sup>92</sup>On the symbolism of the lion in Christian art see Hulme, pp. 171-176. The lion was traditionally used as a sentinel at the door of sacred places.

<sup>93</sup>In the French source, the lions lie down quietly. Malory's lions "made sembelaunte to do hym harme." Malory is perhaps trying to excuse Lancelot's drawing of the sword. A dwarf, not a flaming hand, knocks it away.



he passes, finding every door open until he reaches one that cannot be forced. Beyond it Lancelot hears "a voice whych sange so swetly that hit semede none erthely thyng" (1015).

Essentially, Corbenic exists to enshrine the Grail and to permit the observances appropriate to it. Loomis believes that the Grail castle of La Queste retains five traces of the old pagan traditions about the entertainment of a hero in the mansion of a god:

the setting is not a chapel but a castle hall; there is the bleeding spear, recalling the spear of Lugh; there is the dish which provides the food one most desires; the castle is named Corbenic, which can most plausibly be explained as a corruption of corbenoit, "blessed horn," that is, the magic drinking horn of Bran; there is the Maimed King, whose prototype was the wounded Bran.<sup>94</sup>

Into this pagan setting the authors of the Vulgate Prose Cycle introduced a celebration of the Christian mass which combined three contemporary theological concepts--the Divine Liturgy, the Apostolic Communion, and the miracle of Transubstantiation.<sup>95</sup> Naturally, they minimized the importance of the pagan motifs--the asking of the question, the mending of the sword, and the healing of king and kingdom.

The Grail chamber is a richly furnished Christian shrine containing a silver altar, a chalice covered with red samite, brightly burning candles, a cross and other sacramental objects. It has, however, many unusual attributes.

---

<sup>94</sup>The Development of Arthurian Romance (London, 1963), p. 106.

<sup>95</sup>See C. G. Jung, pp. 83-99, Pauphilet, 94-102, and Fisher, 9-28.

It is filled with angelic presences, disembodied voices, unearthly music, supernatural light.<sup>96</sup> A geasa forbids the entry of all but the elect when a mass is being celebrated. Because Lancelot disregards the warning and hurries forward to assist the priest, he is struck down by a fiery breath (1015-1016). Before the twelve Grail knights can re-enact the Apostolic Communion of the Last Supper, the place must be cleared of all but "verry knyghtes."

The Grail Chamber sometimes seems not a chapel but a castle hall in the midst of which there is set the bed of the Maimed King. This is where Pelles had entertained Lancelot on his first visit and again on his recovery from his swoon. The Grail provides "all manner of meates and drynkes" that they desire.<sup>97</sup> The Grail procession always forms part of the entertainment, the holy vessel still carried by a woman, as it had been in the earliest versions.<sup>98</sup> In its final appearance at Corbenic there is a procession of angels, two bearing candles of wax, a third with a towel, a fourth with the bleeding spear (1029). Bors had seen the dove and the golden Grail,

---

<sup>96</sup> Olschki attributes the Grail's miraculous powers to its resplendent light which he interprets as a Gnostic symbol adopted by the Cathars, op. cit., p. 20ff.

<sup>97</sup> On the analogy between feasting in the hall of the Grail Castle and in the Otherworld castles of Irish myth see Jean Marx, p. 108ff. In both cases the castle is "un monde ouvert" where a chosen hero can visit and receive entertainment before returning to the real world. Often the visit to the Otherworld castle is motivated by a desire to acquire some treasure.

<sup>98</sup> On the Grail Procession in various texts see the Appendix to Jessie L. Weston's The Quest of the Holy Grail, 2nd ed. (London, 1964).

Balin a golden bed and the marvelous spear on a table of gold with silver legs, Perceval the bed of the Maimed King and the altar which found its way to the Ship of Solomon. None of these knights had found difficulty in entering Corbenic. Yet when Ector bangs on the front door and shouts "Undo!" the King sticks his head out the window and warns him away because he is "one of them whych have servyd the fyende, and haste leffte the servyse of oure Lorde" (1019).

The inconsistencies matter not at all for the Grail Castle's nature is determined by the needs and deserts of each who finds it. Whether the refreshment is physical or spiritual, the imagery is richly sensuous and supernaturally suggestive. Lancelot must endure the lions and the fiery breath yet is rewarded by a partial vision, a scarlet robe and a feast provided by the Grail. The "verrey knights" see the image of Christ Himself and are fed with "swete metis that never knyghtes yet tasted" (1029).

The magical food-producing dish of Celtic myth, the platter of the Paschal Lamb, the chalice of the Last Supper, the Vessel in which Joseph caught Christ's blood and the luminous source of healing power become in La Queste and in the Morte Darthur primarily a symbol of grace. Gilson defines the controlling ideal as "la vie de Dieu dans l'âme par sa charité, qui est la grâce."<sup>99</sup> The words of a modern Catholic philosopher illuminate the concept of the two chivalries by which the Vulgate authors presented their theology:

---

<sup>99</sup>Etienne Gilson, "La Grace et le Saint Graal," Les Idées et les Lettres, p. 61.

Mystical language knows only two terms, life according to the sense and life according to the spirit; those who sleep in their senses are those who wake in the Holy Spirit. . . . Man has a spiritual soul, but which informs a body. If it be a question of passing to a life wholly spiritual, his reason does not suffice; his tentatives toward angelism always fail. His only authentic spirituality is bound to grace and to the Holy Spirit.<sup>100</sup>

It is grace that gives man the power he has lost in the fall by restoring to him free will:

*Libera voluntas nos facit nostros, mala diaboli, bona Dei. Sane diabolo nostra nos mancipat voluntas, non eius potestas. Deo subijcit ejus gratia, non nostra voluntas.*<sup>101</sup>

The secular knight reacts conventionally and even thoughtlessly to stereotyped situations. The Grail knight must make choices and seek to distinguish the divine will from the phantasmagoria of appearances.

As Gilson notes, the properties of the Grail are those which the Cistercians associated with grace.<sup>102</sup> It appears at Pentecost in conditions which suggest the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. It covers the table with food and

---

<sup>100</sup>Jacques Maritain, Art and Poetry (New York, 1943), p. 47.

<sup>101</sup>St. Bernard, De Gratio et libero arbitrio, cap. VI, art. 18.

<sup>102</sup>E. Gilson, p. 62ff.

drink suited to each taste.<sup>103</sup> It sustains the sick and wounded. Its attributes appeal primarily to the senses--bright light, sweet scent, gold and samite, delicious flavours--for the Augustinian mystics described the beatific vision in sensuous rather than intellectual terms.<sup>104</sup> The heightened aestheticism of the Grail book in comparison with other tales of the Morte Darthur can be attributed to the two-fold influence of mystical theology and the iconography of religious art.

The Grail quest is not completed at Corbenic. Despite the achievement of the Grail by Arthurian knights, Logres is doomed. The Grail must be taken out of Arthur's kingdom because it

Ys nat served nother worshipped to hys ryght  
by hem of thys londe, for they be turned to  
evyll lyvyng, and therefore I shall disherite  
them of the honoure whych I have done them  
(1030).

The questers must journey on with the Hallows until they reach Sarras where Galahad will enjoy a mystical vision more complete than that of Corbenic. Historically, Sarras is Jerusalem,<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup>Cf. St. Bernard, In. Cant. Cant. Sermo XXXI, Art. 7: oportet namque pro variis animal desideriiis divinae gustum praesentiae variori, et infusum saporem supernae dulcedinis diversa appetentis animi aliter atque aliter oblectare palatum.

<sup>104</sup>Cistercian mysticism, including that of St. Bernard, was profoundly Augustinian, a mysticism of charity, in contrast to that of the Thomists who believed that God should be apprehended first by means of the intellect.

<sup>105</sup>On medieval views of this city see Appendix B.

the centre of the medieval world, won from the pagans by Crusaders and provided with a Christian ruler. Symbolically, it is the New Jerusalem through which Galahad passes on his way to the City of God. The events in Sarras confirm what has already been suggested; namely, that the Grail quest is ultimately not horizontal but vertical. Vertical movement has been evident throughout the tale. From the subterranean world of hell devils rise to infest tombs or to tempt knights on the battlefield of the world. Re-enacting the harrowing of hell, Galahad descends into a cave that flames like the fiery pit (1026). Angels descend from the celestial regions to the sub-lunar world. The Three Persons of the Trinity are present among men. But if God is to triumph, man's final journey must be heavenward. For this reason the symbolic objects of the quest and the quester himself are borne up to heaven by a divine hand and multitude of angels.

Unlike the secular quests whose heroes return to court victorious, the Grail quest defeats all but the chosen few. This failure is symptomatic of those to come. The ordered and harmonious society established by the Round Table is no longer secure, as Galahad's parting message for Lancelot indicates:

. . .bydde hym remembir of this worlde unstable  
(1035, Malory's addition).

Bors' report to the court contains an irony uncharacteristic of these occasions in the past. A pervasive note of sadness underlies the "grete joy" felt by the court "of the remenaunte that were com home" (1045). What did the Grail mean to Malory?

Pelles tells Lancelot:

"this is the rychyst thyng that ony man  
hath lyvyng, and whan this thyng gothe  
abrode the Rounde Table shall be brokyn  
for a season" (793, Malory's additon).

Undoubtedly, "richest" has more than material connotations. Some critics believe that Malory's "originality" in his treatment of the Grail legend lay in his failure to understand its real meaning.<sup>106</sup> Though he may not have accepted the Cistercian view of the two chivalries, it is obvious that he did understand the nature of grace, the controlling motif of the French romance. Furthermore, he did not restrict the operation of grace to the Tale of the Sank Greal but carried it into the final books of the Morte Darthur, endowing them with a seng that is perhaps his most original contribution.

That Malory interprets grace as a pervasive power accessible to all that truly desire it is illustrated in many original passages, as well as in his treatment of character. He attributes Percival's fortuitous glance at his sword to "adventure and grace"<sup>107</sup> (918; the reference to grace is not in the French). A similar addition occurs when Galahad asks the other knights where they had found the Ship of Solomon:

'Trewly,' seyde they, 'ye wote as well as we,  
but hit com of Goddis grace' (984).

The Bernardine doctrine that God's grace makes it possible

<sup>106</sup>See Vinaver's comments pp.lxxxix-xciii and pp.1534-1542; P. E. Tucker, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>107</sup>Edmund Reiss' interpretation of "grace" as fate is not necessarily correct. Sir Thomas Malory (New York, 1966), p.144.

for man to enjoy the beatific vision underlies Galahad's faith:

I wote well, whan my body ys dede, my soule  
shall be in grete joy to se the Blyssed  
Trinité every day and the majesté of oure  
Lorde Jesu Cryste (1032, Malory's addition).

Only the knights who reject the claims of the flesh enjoy the ecstasy of the Grail.<sup>108</sup> Lancelot's failure is attributed specifically to the fact that he loves God less than he loves the queen, for whose sake he undertakes battles whether right or wrong (847, Malory's addition). After his return to court, he rather bitterly tells Guenevere:

And if that I had nat had my prevy thoughtis  
to returne to youre love agayne as I do, I had  
sene as grete mysteryes as ever saw my sonne  
sir Galahad, Percivale, other sir Bors (1046).

So important is this point that Malory opens "The Poisoned Apple" incident with an original comment:

had not sir Launcelot bene in his prevy thoughtes  
and in hys myndis so sette inwardly to the quene  
as he was in semyng outewarde to God, there had  
no knyght passed hym in the queste of the Sank-  
greall (1045).

The idea is repeated again during the final meeting of the lovers when Lancelot says:

For in the queste of the Sankgreall I had that  
tyme forsakyn the vanytees of the worlde had not  
yours love bene (1253).

In the final books of Morte Darthur, it seems to me, the distinction is not between two kinds of chivalry, as it was in La Queste, but between two kinds of love. All the suc-

---

<sup>108</sup> On conditions of divine union, see Etienne Gilson, The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard, trans. A. H. C. Downes (London and New York, 1940), p. 101ff.



successful Grail knights belong to la chevalerie terrienne.

Even Galahad kills pagans, restores the dispossessed to their lands in Logres, suffers imprisonment, establishes political order in the country of Sarras, and wears a terrestrial crown. Bors is specifically directed to continue the life of a chevalier terrien after Galahad and Perceval have died in Sarras and as Frappier points out, "il semble brusquement atteint d'amnésie,"<sup>109</sup> so markedly does he depart from the discipline of the Grail Quest. Worthiness is always expressed in the images of terrestrial chivalry as Sir Ector's great eulogy of Lancelot illustrates:

'A, Launcelot!' he sayd, 'thou were hede of al Crysten knyghtes! And now I dare say, 'sayd syr Ector, 'thou sir Launcelot, there thou lvest, that thou were never matched of erthely knyghtes hande. And thou were the curtest knyght that ever bare shelde! And thou were the truest frende to thy lovar that ever bestrade hors, and thou were the trewest lover, of a synful man, that ever loved woman, and thou were the kyndest man that ever strake wyth swerde. And thou were the godelyest persone that ever cam emonge prees of knyghtes, and thou was the mekest man and the jentylllest that ever ete in halle emonge ladyes, and thou were the sternest knyght to thy mortal foo that ever put spere in the reeste' (1259, not in Malory's source).

Even the rejection of terrestrial life is couched in chivalric imagery:

And soo their horses wente where they wolde,  
for they toke no regarde of no worldly ryches-  
ses (1255, Malory's addition).

---

<sup>109</sup>Jean Frappier, Etude sur La Mort le Roi Artu (Paris, 1961), p. 224.

The religious interest which Frappier notes in La Mort Artu<sup>110</sup> is even more apparent in the final books of Morte Darthur where earthly and heavenly love contend in the character of Lancelot.<sup>111</sup> Of all the Grail questers, Lancelot alone has been changed by his experience; as he tells the queen:

wyte you well, madam, hit may nat be yet  
lyghtly forgotyn, the hyghe servyse in  
whom I dud my dyligente laboure (1046,  
Malory's addition).

By absenting himself from court and undertaking quests for other ladies, he tries to break away from "the terrible woman."<sup>112</sup> Banished from court by the jealous Guenevere, he withdraws not to his own Joyous Gard or to one of the other hospitable castles of secular romance but to a hermitage, the conventional shelter of the religious milieu. After the tournament of Winchester, he again takes refuge in a hermitage. The terrible wound which he endures may be a form of expiation for the sins of the flesh since it is inflicted by the Grail knight Bors. It may also be an intervention of divine grace to keep him from the vices of adultery and homicide. From Our Lady Day in mid-August until Allhallowmass he is hors de combat and his return to the chivalric milieu is still further delayed by the reopening of his old wound and

<sup>110</sup>Op. cit, Ch. III.

<sup>111</sup>On carnal love in Malory see R. T. Davies, "Malory's Vertuose Love," Studies in Philology, vol. I-III (1956), 459-69.

<sup>112</sup>C. S. Lewis' phrase, "The English Prose ('Morte')," Essays on Malory, p. 19.

by the infliction of a new wound during his involuntary encounter with the huntress. He himself perceives that his inactivity seems fated:

'A, mercy Jesu!'. . . 'I may calle myselff the moste unhappy man that lyvyth, for ever whan I wolde have faynyst worshyp there befalllyth me ever som unhappy thyng' (1106, Malory's addition).

He does not return to the lists until Candlemas (February 2) and then only at the command of Guenevere.

One of Malory's longest additions is "The Healing of Sir Urry," an episode for which there is no source. Undoubtedly, it was devised by Malory to show that the power of divine grace, gained through suffering and humility, has not been withdrawn from Lancelot. His healing of Sir Urry is an act of charity made possible by grace. His belief that miraculous powers can only come through God is evident in the prayer which he makes, kneeling before the wounded knight:

And than he hylde up hys hondys and loked unto the este, saiyng secretely unto hymselff, 'Now Blyssed Fadir and Son and Holy Goste, I beseche The of Thy mercy that my symple worshyp and honesté be saved, and Thou Blyssed Trynyté, Thou mayste yeff me power to hele thys syke knyght by the grete vertu and grace of The, but, Good Lorde, never of myselff' (1152).

The hero's prayer and tears suggest that this test is very different from the magical trials of secular romance with their swords, mantles, goblets, and boiling baths.

His success in this adventure through God's grace contrasts markedly with his success in the adventure of the cart, another episode which shows Malory's originality. While Chrétien's Chevalier de la Charrette glorified the devotion of the courtly lover, Malory's treatment of the story, mark-

edly realistic in detail, shows the moral limitations and the sordidness of the situation. Lancelot undertakes a wrongful quarrel and compromises his virtue. At a nod from the queen, he slays Meleagant despite a plea for mercy.

Yet divine grace continues to assist the hero. He attributes his escape from the trap set by Agravain and Mordred to the providence of Jesus (1171). God's grace enables him to defeat Sir Gawain (1218). And all the time through penitence and expiation he is drawing further away from terrestrial values. He repents that by rescuing the queen from burning he must do much harm (1172). In remorse at the accidental slaying of Gareth and Gaheris, he offers to make a pilgrimage barefoot in his shirt and to endow houses of religion (1199-1200). The reasons which he gives interestingly reflect the change in his attitude:

And thys were fayrar and more holyar and more  
perfyte to their soulis than ye, my moste noble  
knyge, and you, sir Gawayne, to warre uppon me,  
for thereby shall ye gete none avayle' (1200).

In preparation for an ascetic life, he strips himself of temporal wealth and power by giving away his property in Logres and France (1203-4). Christian forbearance and a desire for conciliation mark his relationship with Arthur and Gawain at the siege of Benwick, though his knights condemn him for sleeping overlong and suffering overmuch (1215). On his return to Logres, he soon seeks a hermitage though the Lancelot of La Queste had engaged in lengthy wars against Mordred's sons.

Malory's conception of Guenevere also differs from

that found in his sources. In the French romances, Guenevere's withdrawal to a nunnery is ~~not~~ an act motivated by fear and accomplished in pride.<sup>113</sup> In the Morte Darthur, on the contrary, she is truly penitent and as confident of salvation as Galahad had been:

And yet I truste, thorow Goddis grace and  
thorow Hys Passion of Hys woundis wyde,  
that aftir my deth I may have a syght of  
the blyssed face of Cryste Jesu (1252).

Thus we see that the most important motifs of the Grail quest--grace, penitence, and charity--recur in Malory's treatment of the Morte Darthur as do various forms of religious observance. Malory's additions to his source include Lancelot's request that Guenevere pray for his soul if he is slain by Agravain and Mordred (1166); his appeal to Christ to be his shield and armour--an image obviously derived from the Grail quest (1167); a further request for Guenevere's prayers and a promise to pray for her when they are separated (1202); Lancelot's prayer that Jesus will protect Arthur (1218); Gawain's dying request that Lancelot will pray at his tomb (1231); Guenevere's fasting, prayers, and alms-deeds (1243); Bors' prayer that Jesus will have mercy on the soul of Gawain (1249); the funeral observances of Gawain (1250-1); Guenevere (1256) and Lancelot (1258-9); the holy vision charging Lancelot to hasten to Almesbury for the remission of his sins (1255); and Lancelot's insistence that the last rites be administered without delay because he has had a warning that

---

<sup>113</sup>Jean Frappier, p. 226, cf. Sommer VI, 353-355.

death is near.

By such additions, Malory greatly expands the religious emphasis in the final books; at the same time he continues to acknowledge the potency of earthly love. The Lancelot of La Mort Artu hears of Guenevere's death as soon as he lands in England but Malory's lovers have a final meeting during which the queen expresses her belief that Lancelot will turn again to the world and the hero again lays the blame for his worldliness on her (1253). She refuses to give him a final kiss, admonishing him to "absteyne you from suche werkes." Yet she understands so well the weakness of the flesh that she prays to her dying day that she will never see him again with her worldly eyes (1255). For his part he mourns her death with such an excess of emotion that he soon follows her to the grave (1255-57). Nevertheless, his penitence, worthiness, and expiation have endowed him with sufficient grace for salvation. Angelic hands carry his soul to heaven while a sweet savour comes from his corpse as evidence of his sanctity.<sup>114</sup> By the use of religious motifs and the development of characterization, Malory makes the taking of vows more than a conventional ending.

Yet the final setting of Morte Darthur is not the religious house but the battlefield. Neatly combining the historical, the religious and the chivalric, Malory depicts the last of the Arthurian knights as Crusaders who "dyd many bataylles upon the myscreantes, or Turkes" in the Holy Land until

---

<sup>114</sup>On the odour of sanctity given off by medieval saints both alive and dead, see C. G. Loomis, White Magic (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 54-5 and 171-173.

they died "upon a Good Fryday for Goddes sake." (1260).

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation has been twofold. In general, it has attempted to define the nature of the milieu in medieval Arthurian romance. Specifically, it has analyzed the elements of myth, allegory, and symbolism in Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur.

The medieval romantic milieu consisting of castle and perilous forest could only have been devised by the kind of society that regarded the castle as a symbol of security and power, and the forest as a symbol of aristocratic privilege and recreation. The proletarian, oppressed by the lord's soldiers and foresters, would have had little reason to idealize the real castle and forest. However, when poets had sublimated these elements into an aristocratic myth, they became an essential part of a wish-fulfilling dream world in which every listener might be a questing knight or an adored lady.

While the reason rejected the image of ageless knights relentlessly pursuing the quest for adventure, the senses responded with wonder, nostalgia, admiration, and pleasurable fear to Celtic marvels, imperialistic wars, forests and tournaments and lovers' meetings. In romance, the character of the hero was revealed less through his relationships with other people than through his actions in a particular kind of setting.



Furthermore, the ideality of romance made it eminently suited to the representation in dramatic form of those qualities most highly regarded in the Middle Ages. The genre could provide edification as well as delight. Arthur, embodying justice, imperial power, dignity, and devotion to his knights, was the ideal sovereign. Lancelot, with his prowess, generosity, and devotion to his lady, was the ideal knight. Galahad, with his purity, piety and devotion to God, was the ideal Christian. The values of sovereignty, chivalry, and Catholicism were made manifest by means of knightly rituals in a symbol-studded milieu.

In analyzing the world of Malory's Morte Darthur and showing how it reflected these medieval ideals, we have considered elements belonging to three traditions; namely, the historical, the romantic, and the religious. For each of these, the quest motif was used as an organizing principle. The historical quest for the crown of Rome revealed Malory's view of sovereignty and presented the ideal of the good king. The romantic quest for fame and fair ladies revealed his view of chivalry and presented his ideal of the good knight. The spiritual quest for the Grail (a symbol of saving grace) revealed his view of religion and presented the ideal of the good Christian. The first kind of quest was pursued in a "real" world with a specific historical and geographical context, the second in an unreal world of castle and perilous forest, the third in an allegorical world that reflected the moral and spiritual condition of man. In each case, the controlling imagery was derived from the chivalric milieu.

The quest motif was a means of relating the hero to his environment and motivating his action. It was also an important structural principle since it envisaged a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning and end of a quest was Arthur's court where challenges were accepted and acclaim granted. There the Knights of the Round Table enacted the Pentecostal rituals that asserted the triumph of good over evil. The middle was a strange world of adventure, studded with symbolic artifacts and peopled by mythic agents and questing knights who facilitated or hindered the knight's progress towards a symbolic goal. Castle and forest represented the antithetical components of chivalric life--security and danger, acceptance and challenge, peace and violence, culture and barbarism, pleasure and pain. In the religious milieu, abbeys and hermitages often replaced castles as the desired shelter.

Malory's King Arthur combined attributes of the mythic hero with those of the Christian king and conqueror depicted in British chronicle. With the myth were associated the hero's conception by means of enchantment, the sword test, both magical and miraculous, that revealed his election as sovereign, the marvelous Otherworld gift Excalibur, the military successes facilitated by Merlin, the encounters with fays and giants, and the final journey to Avalon. In the context of "real" history and geography, the hero realized an imperialistic dream of continental supremacy that had existed since at least the twelfth century.

In his treatment of the historical theme drawn from the alliterative Morte Arthure, Malory reduced the rhetoric, the pageantry, the descriptions of setting and the brutal realities of war. Instead, he emphasized the chivalric and the nationalistic by presenting Arthur not only as a British king and conqueror supported by an order of Knights, but also as a chivalric hero in his own right. The latter role was also enacted by Arthur in other books of Malory's work where the king undertook quests and participated in jousts and tournaments.

The story of Arthur's Roman wars simulated the progress of a quest. The challenge offered and accepted during a great feast at Arthur's court, the movement from the familiar world into an unknown and hostile environment, the episodic confrontations with enemies whom the hero defeats, the climactic victory, recognition, and return, were elements of a ritualistic pattern commonly found in romance and allegory. The encounters with the mythic giant of St. Michael's Mount and with the unhistorical Emperor Lucius adumbrated a cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. The use of allegorical imagery contributed to the effect of polarization.

Malory's most original contribution to the history of Arthur was his alteration of the ending. Instead of relying on the Wheel of Fortune motif to effect Arthur's tragic return to Britain, Malory allowed the quest to culminate in the triumphant coronation at Rome, an event that had no parallel in British history and only one parallel in the chronicle literature. By purging the environment of evil in the form of the

giant and the Roman army, by showing mercy to conquered peoples, by distributing treasure and lands and by restoring a stable political and moral order, Arthur symbolically enacted the role of hero and ideal king.

With the exception of the Roman expedition and Tristram's voyages, the adventures of secular chivalry were generally confined to Logres, the roiaume aventureux of Arthurian romance. The forest with its giants, dwarfs, invisible knights, portentous fountains and haunted lakes was largely a Celtic milieu. Summoned by such otherworld messengers as a white hart or brachet, a dwarf or mysterious damsel, the knight encountered in the forest adventures which proved his heroic nature. Here he might meet such helpful agents as Merlin and Nyneve who protected him from evil and guided him on his way. He might also encounter maleficent fays, bent on seduction and mischief-making. By overcoming the manifestations of evil in the perilous forest, the knight gained power and glory for himself, and contributed to the stability of Arthur's realm. Even the most powerful agent of evil in the Celtic Arthurian world, Morgan le Fay, was never permanently successful against Arthur and his knights.

In his treatment of the Celtic elements of romance, Malory often normalized the magic. Rudderless boats were provided with oars, Otherworld castles became feudal fortresses, fairy mistresses rode abroad as medieval queens escorted by a retinue of knights. Some magical aspects, such as Gawain's solar strength and Arthur's apotheosis, were given religious explanations derived from the Vulgate Prose Cycle. Closer to

undisplaced myth were Gringamore's castle at Avalon, the castle of King Pellam, the island defended by Balan, and the Perilous Chapel. Malory retained a sufficient number of mythic agents and supernatural settings to evoke the aura of wonder and fear that characterized Celtic romance.

In contrast to the Celtic world, the milieu of courtoisie was devised to reflect not the impact of magic on the individual knight but the control effected by the rituals of chivalry and courtly love. The hospitable castle with its great hall and tournament ground was the desired goal of the diurnal quest; it was a place where the knight-errant might enjoy the delights of feasting, love, joust and tourney. A hostile castle, with its thick walls and cold dungeons, provided another kind of pleasure, that of defeating evil knights and restoring order. The absorption of defeated knights into the Fellowship of the Round Table renewed the power of the mythic aristocracy for whose benefit the courtly milieu existed. Jousts and tournaments among members of the fellowship established valorous precedence and provided exemplary models of ritualistic behaviour.

In the course of an episodic progress which ended at Arthur's court, the quester engaged in ritualistic combats which were often initiated by such symbolic devices as basins, horns, reversed shields, or prophetic crosses. Ritual inhibited the effects of violence, producing feelings of satisfaction, curiosity--or even boredom rather than pity and fear. The idealized setting provided the knight with an inexhaustible supply of challenging situations.

In Malory's treatment of the courtly world, chivalric adventure, expressed in joust and tournament, was of far greater importance than devotion to the demands of love. Malory apparently disapproved of amour courtois and, for that matter, of courtly ladies. In practice, his Knights of the Round Table were motivated chiefly by a desire to exhibit prowess and to maintain order in Logres, though the fiction of feminine inspiration was maintained, particularly in the cases of Lancelot, Tristram, Gareth, and Padomedes.

The Round Table was the most significant artifact in the Morte Darthur. An actual table at which Arthur and his knights feasted, it denoted the presence of the king, the fellowship of the knights, the roundness of the world, and the power that maintained moral and political order in the empire. When the fellowship began to disintegrate, the sovereign's power waned. Although Malory knew that the Arthurian society was doomed, he emphasized until the last possible moment the harmony and unity of the order. Two original episodes, "The Healing of Sir Urry" and "The Great Tournament," were devised to glorify the Round Table.

Malory's idealization of setting was apparent particularly in his conception of Camelot, the vital centre of the chivalric milieu. Here the prowess of Arthurian knights was publicly revealed, justice was administered, boons were granted, quests assigned, feasts enjoyed, vows renewed. From Arthur's court power flowed through Logres to subdue the forces of chaos. Episodes of rebellion, war, treachery and disintegration were associated with London and Carlisle, or with King Mark's court

at Tintagel; Camelot remained the symbol of wish fulfillment and timeless joys.

That the ceremonial aspects of courtly life had a considerable appeal for Malory is suggested by such episodes as Gareth's wedding, Guenevere's return to Arthur at Carlisle, and the funeral processions of Lancelot and Guenevere. Arms and armour, colour, costume, and number were facets of the architectonic structure created to assert by symbolic means the hierarchical, emotive, and philosophical significances relevant to the exclusive society of romance.

The allegory of the Grail adopted elements of secular romance for the particular purpose of expressing in concrete images the truths of Catholic faith and morality. The religious quest was not a nebulously ethical exhibition of prowess but an allegory of the soul's search for God. The object of the quest was not the acquisition of a lady or "earthly worship" but the achieving of grace and the enjoyment of a beatific vision. Now the questing knights, embattled castles, perilous forests and marvelous artifacts had a significance imposed by the allegorist and ruthlessly explained by omniscient hermits or saintly ladies.

Angels and devils, God and the Devil replaced Merlin and the fays as the mythic agents who assisted or impeded the progress of the quest. The mythic society of the Round Table was no longer omnipotent; the elite was reduced to three or four knights whose prowess resulted from piety rather than from courtly love or a desire for glory. In this milieu the potent mythic society consisted of hermits, though a connec-

tion with secular society was maintained by making them former knights. As in the secular world, genealogy was an important determiner of election.

Situations that would have challenged a knight's skill or rewarded his prowess in the secular world were now tests of his virtue. Allegorical imagery was more vivid and explicit. Light and darkness, white and black, calm and storm, sweet scents and foul smells were anagogic symbols representing apocalyptic and demonic powers. Chivalric images acquired new significances. Landscape reflected the moral and spiritual condition of man and the difficulty of the Christian way. Psychomachiae utilized such staples of secular romance as the joust with hostile knights and the attack on evil castles. Another kind of aesthetic patterning was provided by the use of Scriptural typology with its structure of recurrences and its view of history as a progress from the Old Law to the New. The Ship of Solomon was the polysemous image that provided the transition from the contemporary and historical to the universal and ideal.

Corbenic replaced Camelot as the desired centre; from there power flowed through Logres by means of the mystical Grail, a symbol of grace. Ubiquitous and elusive, the Grail Castle where many knights had been entertained in the course of secular quests became in the religious allegory a goal reached only by the elect. The "historical" quest of the Grail was not complete until the two greatest Grail knights and the Hallows had been taken up from Sarras to heaven, an event indicating that the Grail quest was not merely horizontal and temporal but



vertical and transcendent. The failure of Round Table knights in the religious milieu foreshadowed their failure in the secular milieu.

In his treatment of the religious material, Malory retained the allegory of the spiritual quest along with its characteristic imagery but reduced considerably the exegetical commentaries of his source, La Queste del Saint Graal. Since he utilized a different interpretation of the two chivalries than that found in the Vulgate Prose Cycle, it was not necessary for him to reject completely the values of la chevalerie terrienne. At the same time, he extended into the final books the main theme of the Grail quest, that is, the striving for grace through prayer, asceticism, and charity.

After the return to the world of secular romance, divine grace continued to influence the behaviour of Lancelot so that he gradually drew away from terrestrial chivalry. In the end he exchanged the symbols of secular knighthood for those of la chevalerie celestienne. As a result, the character of Lancelot was ennobled still further and his ultimate salvation justified to a far greater extent than in the Mort Artu of the Prose Cycle or the stanzaic Le Morte Arthur.

The linear movement through time and place in the "historical" quests for Rome and Corbenic was balanced by the cyclical movement about Camelot of the romantic quests. Though events were described as occurring in real time, the quest motif imposed on both history and romance a symbolic time scheme that contributed to the aesthetic appeal of Malory's work.

In the story of Arthur's Roman wars, the events of the historical quest which occupied seven years in the linear time scheme were linked to the seasonal and liturgical cycle in a way which seemed to encompass them within the span of a single year. In the milieu of romance, the diurnal and seasonal cycles affected the time scheme of the quests, with the hero riding forth at Pentecost, seeking each day an adventure, each night a shelter, until the cycle of space and time restored him to court for the Pentecostal feast. The symbolic use of seasonal imagery was apparent in two of Malory's original passages--the episode of Guenevere's Maying party and the introduction to "Slander and Strive." The liturgical cycle had social rather than theological significance; the feast days of the church were preeminently occasions for creating knights and holding tournaments.

Malory did not give a photographic representation of the external world in secular romance. He seldom described in detail the local scene. The sense of milieu was conveyed by such impressionistic means as isolated images, ritual actions, and the paratactic narration of recurrent situations. In the account of the Grail quest, on the contrary, the imposed allegory which Malory derived from La Queste del Saint Graal required a continuous pattern of imagery and a more specific evocation of scene. Arms and armour, dress and colours, animals and plants had symbolic significances adumbrated in Biblical exegesis and Christian art.

Like the age in which we live, the Middle Ages was one in which ideas were communicated largely by means of visual im-

ages. Whereas we are stimulated by billboards, movies, psychedelic media, and television screens, medieval man gained ideology and sense impressions from tapestries, murals, illuminated manuscripts, religious dramas, and the plastic forms of Gothic architecture. For this reason, iconography contributed many allegorical images to such a derivative work as the Morte Darthur. Ideals associated with mythic states, supernatural forces, and ultimate destiny were expressed through the kind of apocalyptic and demonic imagery that gives Malory's idealized world not only a concrete existence but also a meaning beyond that apprehended by the senses.

Malory might well have considered himself a realist. The parts of the Morte Darthur that constitute his original contribution frequently tended towards physical and psychological authenticity. He rationalized much of the magic, criticized the unnatural code of courtly love, and omitted a great deal of the strained Catholic exegesis. Yet it is as a romanticist that he has endured. For Spenser and Milton, Dryden and Scott, Tennyson, Arnold and Swinburne, Charles Williams and T. H. White, for the artists Rossetti, Beardsley, and David Jones, not least of all for the common reader, Malory's world conveys an aura of ideality, an "atmosphere of strange enchantment, beheld through which the inhabitants have a propriety of their own."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance (Columbus, 1964), p. 2.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Editions of Malory and his Sources

Malory, Sir Thomas. The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugène Vinaver. 2nd ed., 3 vols. continuously paginated. Oxford, 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Mort d'Arthure compiled by Sir Thomas Malory Knt. ed. from the text of the edition of 1634 [W. Stansby] by Thomas Wright, London, 1865.

\_\_\_\_\_. Le Morte Darthur, by Syr Thomas Malory, The Original Edition of William Caxton, ed. H. Oskar Sommer. 3 vols. London, 1889-91

\_\_\_\_\_. Le Morte Darthur, ed. Sir Edward Strachey. London, 1868 and later.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Book of Marvellous Adventures and Other Books of the Morte D'arthur, ed. Ernest J. Rhys. London, 1893.

\_\_\_\_\_. An Introduction to the Morte D'Arthur, ed. Nellie Slayton Aurner. New York, 1938.

La Mort le Roi Artu, ed. Jean Frappier. Geneva, 1954.

Morte Arthur, ed. J.D. Bruce, EETS, E S, 88. London, 1903.

Morte Arthure, ed. Edmund Brock, EETS, OS, 8. London, 1871.

\_\_\_\_\_, selections ed. John Finlayson, York Medieval Texts. London, 1967.

La Queste del Saint Graal, ed. Albert Pauphilet. Paris, 1949.

Le Roman de Balain, ed. M.D. Legge, Manchester, 1942.

Le Roman de Merlin or the Early History of King Arthur, ed. H. Oskar Sommer. London, 1894.

The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, ed. H. Oskar Sommer. 7 vols. Washington, 1909-1913.

### Other Primary References

An nales Cambriae, ed. J. Williams. London, 1860.

Asser. Life of King Alfred, ed. W.H. Stevenson. Oxford, 1904.

St. Augustine. City of God, trans. George E. McCracken. Cambridge, Mass., 1957

- \_\_\_\_\_. Confessions, ed. with trans. William Watts. London, 1919.
- Bede. A History of the English Church and People, trans. with introd. Leo Sherley-Price, Penguin Classics. Harmondsworth, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Opera de Temporibus, ed. Charles W. Jones. Cambridge, Mass., 1943.
- Bernard of Clairvaux. Opera Omnia, Patrologiae cursus comtus. ed. J.P. Migne. vol. 183-185. Paris, 1878.
- Boethius. The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. Richard Green. New York, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy, ed. H.F. Stewart and E.K. Rand. London, 1918.
- Caxton, William. Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton, ed. W.J.B. Crotch, EETS, OS, 176. London, 1928.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Complete Works, ed. F.N. Robinson. 2nd ed. Boston, 1957.
- Chrétien de Troyes. Arthurian Romances, trans. 2nd ed. W.W. Comfort. London, 1928.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Yvain, ed. T.B.W. Reid. Manchester, 1942.
- Christine de Pisan. The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyvalrye, trans. and printed by William Caxton, ed. A.T.P. Byles, EETS, OS, 189. London, 1932.
- Davies, R.T. ed. Medieval English Lyrics. London, 1963.
- A Documentary History of England I (1066-1540), ed. J.J. Bagley and P.B. Rowley. Harmondsworth, 1966.
- Dunbar, William. Poems, ed. W.M. MacKenzie. London, 1932.
- Faral, Edmond. La Légende Arthurienne, Études et Documents. 3 vols. Paris, 1929.
- Froissart, Jean. The Chronicles, trans. Lord Berners, selected, edited, and introduced by Gillian and William Anderson. London, 1963.
- Geoffrey of Monmouth. Historia Regum Britanniae, ed. Acton Griscom, trans. R.E. Jones. London, 1929.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Geoffrey of Monmouth Historia Regum Britanniae: A Variant Version Edited from Manuscripts by Jacob Hammer. Cambridge, Mass., 1951.

- \_\_\_\_\_. History of the Kings of Britain, trans. Sebastian Evans. New York, 1958.
- Gibbs, A.C. ed. Middle English Romances, York Medieval Texts. London, 1966.
- Giles, J.A. ed. Chronicles of the Kings of England. London, 1847.
- Giraldus Cambrensis. The Itinerary Through Wales and the Description of Wales, ed. Ernest Rhys. London, 1908.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Opera, ed. J.S. Brewer and J.F. Dimoch. 8 vols. London, 1861-91.
- Gower, John. The English Works, ed. G.C. Macaulay. 2 vols. EETS, ES, 81-82. London, 1900.
- Hawes, Stephen. The Pastime of Pleasure, ed. W.E. Mead, EETS, OS, 173, London, 1928.
- The High History of the Holy Grail, trans. Sebastian Evans. London, 1907.
- Hoccleve, Thomas. Minor Poems, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS, ES, 61. London, 1892.
- Jean, Sire de Joinville. History of St. Louis, ed. Natalis de Wailly, trans. Joan Evans. London, 1938.
- John of Salisbury. Policraticus, trans. John Dickinson. New York, 1927.
- Langland, William. Piers Plowman, ed. George Kane. London, 1960.
- Layamon. Brut, ed. Sir Frederic Madden. 3 vols. reprint of the edition of 1847. Osnabrück, 1967.
- Letters of the Crusaders Written from the Holy Land. Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, I, 4. ed. D.C. Munro. London, 1896.
- Loomis, Roger Sherman and Laura Hibbard ed. Medieval Romances. New York, 1957.
- Lull, Raymond. The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry, trans. and printed by William Caxton, ed. A.T.P. Byles, EETS, OS, 168. London, 1926.
- Lydgate, John. Minor Poems, ed. H.N. MacCracken. 2 vols. EETS, OS, 192; ES, 107. London, 1910-1934.
- Mabinogian, trans. G. and T. Jones. London and New York, 1949.
- Macrobius. Saturnalia, ed. Henri Bornecque. Paris, 1937.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. W.H. Stahl. New York, 1952.

- Mandeville, Sir John. Mandeville's Travels, ed. M.C. Seymour. Oxford, 1967.
- Marie de France. Lays, trans. Eugene Mason, French Medieval Romances. London, 1924.
- Nennius. Historia Britonum, ed. J. Stevenson. London, 1838.
- Nevill, William. The Castle of Pleasure, ed. Roberta D. Cornelius, EETS, OS, 179. London, 1930.
- Pageant of the Birth, Life, and Death of Riachard Beauchamp Earl of Warwick, ed. Viscount Dillon and W.H. St. John Hope. London, 1914.
- Perlesvaus, ed. W.A. Nitze and T.A. Jenkins. 2 vols. Chicago, 1932.
- Plotinus, The Enneads, trans. Stephen Mackenna. London, 1956.
- Richard of Haldingham. The World Map by Richard of Haldingham in Hereford Cathedral circa A.D. 1285; with memoir by G.R. Crone. London, 1954.
- Ross, Woodburn O. ed. Middle English Sermons. EETS, OS, 209. London, 1940.
- Siege of Jerusalem, ed. E. Kölbing and Mabel Day, EETS, OS, 188. London, 1932.
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, 2nd ed. revised by Norman Davis. Oxford, 1967.
- Sir Gawain at the Grail Castle, trans. Jessie L. Weston. London, 1903.
- Six Old English Chronicles, ed. J.A. Giles. London, 1848.
- The South English Legendary, ed. Charlotte d'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill. 2 vols. EETS, OS, 236. London, 1956.
- Spenser, Edmund. The Works of Edmund Spenser, A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, C.G. Osgood, F.M. Padelford. 9 vols. Baltimore, 1932-49.
- Stow, John. A Survey of London, ed. Henry Morley. London, 1890.
- Wace. Le Roman de Brut, ed. Ivor Arnold. 2 vols. SATF 82 Paris, 1940.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Le Roman de Brut in Arthurian Chronicles, ed. Ernest Rhys, trans. E. Mason. London, 1912.

Waddell, Helen, trans. Medieval Latin Lyrics, Penguin Classics.  
Harmondsworth, 1952.

William of Malmesbury. Chronicles of the Kings of England, ed.  
J.A. Giles. London, 1847.



### Secondary References

- Adams, Henry. Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres. Boston and New York, 1933.
- Aristotle. Works, trans. and ed. Philip Wheelwright. New York, 1951.
- Arnold, Matthew. On the Study of Celtic Literature. London, 1910.
- Ashe, Geoffrey. From Caesar to Arthur. London, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. King Arthur's Avalon: The Story of Glastonbury. London, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. The Quest for Arthur's Britain. London, 1968.
- Auerbach, Erich. Dante Poet of the Secular World, trans. Ralph Manheim. Chicago, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Mimesis, The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton, 1953.
- Aurner, Nellie Slayton. "Sir Thomas Malory--Historian?" PMLA, XLVIII (1933), 360-391.
- Baker, Sister Imogene. The King's Household in the Arthurian Court from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Malory. Washington, 1937.
- Baldwin, C. S. Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic. New York, 1928.
- Barber, R.W. Arthur of Albion, an Introduction to the Arthurian Literature and Legends of England. London, 1961.
- Barnes, Harry Elmer. A History of Historical Writing. New York, 1962.
- Beazley, C. R. The Dawn of Modern Geography. 3 vols. Oxford, 1906.
- Bennett, J.A.W., ed. Essays on Malory. Oxford, 1963.
- Bevan, W.L. and H.W. Phillott. Mediaeval Geography: an essay in illustration of the Hereford Mappe Mundi. London, 1873.
- Blair, Claude. European Armour. London, 1958.
- Bloch, Marc. Feudal Society. 2 vols. trans. L.A. Manyon. Chicago, 1966.

- Bogdanow, Fanni. "The Suite du Merlin and the Post-Vulgate Roman du Graal," Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R.S. Loomis. Oxford, 1959, pp. 325-338.
- Bolgar, R.R. The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries. Cambridge, 1954.
- Bradbrook, M.C. Sir Thomas Malory. London, 1958.
- Brewer, D.S. "the hoole book," Essays on Malory, ed. J.A. W. Bennett. Oxford, 1963, pp. 41-63.
- Brieger, Peter. English Art 1216-1307. Oxford History of English Art, 4. Oxford, 1957.
- Brinkley, R.F. Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century. Baltimore, 1932.
- Brodeur, Arthur G. "Arthur, Dux Bellorum," University of California Publications in English, III, 7. 237-284.
- Bromwich, Rachel. "Scotland and the Farliest Arthurian Tradition," Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne, XV (1963), 85-95.
- Brown, A.C.L. Iwain, A Study in the Origins of Arthurian Romance. 2nd ed. New York, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Origin of the Grail Legend. Cambridge, Mass., 1943.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Round Table Before Wace," Harvard Studies in Philology and Literature, 7. Boston, 1900.
- Bruce, J.D. The Evolution of Arthurian Romance from the beginnings down to 1300. 2nd ed. 2 vols. Gloucester, Mass., 1958.
- de Bruyne, Edgar. Études d'Esthétique Médiévale. 3 vols. Brugge, 1946.
- Bryant, Arthur. The Age of Chivalry. London, 1963.
- Burleigh, J.S. The City of God. London, 1949.
- Calin, William. The Epic Quest. Baltimore, 1966.
- Campbell, Joseph. The Hero with a Thousand Faces. New York, 1961.
- Carey, George. The Medieval Alexander. Cambridge, 1956.

- Cartellieri, Otto. The Court of Burgundy. London, 1929.
- Cawley, R. R. Unpathed Waters; Studies in the Influence of the Voyagers on Elizabethan Literature. Princeton, 1940.
- Chambers, Edmund K. Arthur of Britain. 2nd ed. Cambridge, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages. Oxford History of English Literature, vol. 2, II, Oxford, 1945.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Essays. London, 1933.
- Champeaux, Gérard de and Dom. Sebastien Sterckx. Introduction au Monde des Symboles. Saint-Léger-Vauban, 1966.
- Cline, Ruth Huff. "The Influence of Romances on Tournaments of the Middle Ages," Speculum, XX (1945), 204-211.
- Cohen, Gustave. Histoire de la Chevalerie en France au Moyen Age. Paris, 1949.
- Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History. New York, 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Roman Britain and the English Settlements. Oxford, 1937.
- Cosman, Madeleine P. The Education of the Hero in Arthurian Romance. Chapel Hill, 1966.
- Coulton, G. G. "Knighthood and Chivalry," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed. 29 vols. Cambridge, 1910-11, vol. 15, 851-860.
- Cross, Tom Peete. Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature. Bloomington, 1939.
- Curtius, Ernst R. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask. New York and Evanston, 1963.
- Danto, Arthur C. Analytical Philosophy of History. Cambridge, 1965.
- Davies, R.T. "Malory's Vertuous Love," Studies in Philology, LIII (1956), 459-469.
- Davis, C.T. Dante and the Idea of Rome. Oxford, 1957.
- Denholm-Young, Noel. "The Tournament in the Thirteenth Century," Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke, ed. R.W. Hunt, W.A. Pantin, R.W. Southern. Oxford, 1948, pp. 240-268.

- Dichmann, Mary E. "'The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius': The Rise of Lancelot," Malory's Originality, ed. R.M. Lumiansky. Baltimore, 1964, pp. 67-90.
- Dickson, Arthur. Valentine and Orson, Studies in English and Comparative Literature, XCI. New York, 1929.
- Doskow, George. Contrasting Narrative Forms in the Works of Thomas Malory: A Critical Study of "The Tale of King Arthur" and "The Death of King Arthur," University of Connecticut doctoral dissertation 1965. University Microfilm 66-839, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Dunbar, H. Flanders. Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its Consummation in the Divine Comedy. New York, 1961.
- Durant, G.M. Discovering Mediaeval Art. London, 1960.
- Easter, de la Warr Benjamin. A Study of the Magic Elements in the Romans d'Aventure and the Romans Bretons. Baltimore, 1906.
- Eliade, Mircea. Cosmos and History; the myth of the eternal return, trans. Willard R. Trask. New York, 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Images and Symbols, trans. Philip Mairet. London, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Myth and Reality, trans. Willard R. Trask. New York, 1963.
- Evans, Joan. Dress in Medieval France. Oxford, 1952.
- \_\_\_\_\_. English Art, 1307-1461. The Oxford History of English Art, 5. Oxford, 1949.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. The Flowering of the Middle Ages. London, 1966.
- Everett, Dorothy. Essays on Middle English Literature, ed. Patricia Kean. Oxford, 1955.
- Ferguson, Arthur B. The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism. Durham, N.C., 1960.
- Finlayson, John. "Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael's Mount," Medium Aevum, XXXIII (1964), 112-120.
- Fisher, L.A. The Mystic Vision in the Grail Legend and in the Divine Comedy. 2nd ed. New York, 1966.

- Fletcher, Angus. Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode. Ithaca, 1964.
- Fletcher, Robert Huntington. The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, especially those of Great Britain and France, 2nd ed. New York, 1966.
- Flutre, Frenand. Table des noms propres avec toutes leurs variantes figurant dans les romans du moyen age, écrits en français ou en provençal et actuellement publiés ou analysés. Poitiers, 1962.
- Fox, Marjorie B. "Sir Thomas Malory and the 'Piteous History of the Morte of King Arthur,'" Arthuriana, I. Oxford, 1928; reprinted London, 1966..
- Frappier, Jean. Étude sur La Mort Le Roi Artu. Paris, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Le Graal et La Chevalerie," Romania, LXXV (1954), 165-210.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Vulgate Cycle," Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R.S. Loomis. Oxford, 1959, pp. 295-318.
- Fraser, J.F., ed. The Voices of Time. New York, 1966.
- Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism. New York, 1966.
- Gautier, Léon. Chivalry, ed. Jacques Levron, trans. D.C. Dunning. London, 1965.
- Gay, Victor. Glossaire Archéologique de Moyen Age et de la Renaissance. 2 vols. Paris, 1887-1928.
- Gerould, G.H. "King Arthur and Politics," Speculum, II (1927), 33-51.
- Gibbon, Edward. Autobiography. New York, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, abridg. D.M. Low. London, 1960.
- Gilson, Étienne. Les Idées et Les Lettres. Paris, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard, trans. A.H.C. Downes. London and New York, 1940.
- Gist, Margaret A. Love and War in the Middle English Romances. Philadelphia, 1947.
- Guerin, Wilfred L. "'The Tale of Gareth': The Chivalric Flowering in Malory," Malory's Originality, ed. R.M. Lumiansky. Baltimore, 1964, pp. 99-117.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "'The Tale of the Death of Arthur': Catastrophe and Resolution," Malory's Originality, pp. 233-274.

- Gurteen, S.H. The Arthurian Epic, 2nd ed. New York, 1965.
- Gregory the Great. Dialogues, ed. E.G. Gardner. London, 1906.
- Gregory of Tours. History of the Franks, ed. O.M. Dalton. Oxford, 1927.
- Guyer, F.E. Romance in the Making: Chrétien de Troyes and the Earliest French Romances. New York, 1954.
- Hanning, R.W. The Vision of History in Early Britain from Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth. New York, and London, 1966.
- Harwood, V.J. The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition. Leiden, 1958.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. The Blithedale Romance. Columbus, 1964.
- Heer, Friedrich. The Intellectual History of Europe, trans. Jonathan Steinberg. London, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Medieval World: Europe 1100-1350, trans. Janet Sondheimer. London, 1962.
- Hennessey, Helen. "The Uniting of Romance and Allegory in La Queste del Saint Graal," Boston University Studies in English, IV (1960), 189-201.
- Henryson, Robert. The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson, ed. H.H. Wood. 2nd ed. London, 1958.
- Hicks, Edward. Sir Thomas Malory, His Turbulent Career. Cambridge, 1928.
- Hieatt, Constance B. The Realism of Dream Visions. The Hague-Paris, 1967.
- Hinks, Roger P. Myth and Allegory in Ancient Art. London, 1939.
- Honeg, Edwin. Dark Conceit, the Making of Allegory. Evanston, 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "In Defense of Allegory," Kenyon Review, XX (1958), 1-19.
- Hopper, V.F. Medieval Number Symbolism. New York, 1938.
- Hoskins, W.G. The Making of the English Landscape. London, 1960.
- Houstin, Mary G. Medieval Costume in England and France. London, 1950.
- Howey, M.O. The Horse in Magic and Myth. New York, 1958.
- Huizinga, J. The Waning of the Middle Ages. Garden City, 1954.
- Hulme, F.E. Symbolism in Christian Art. New York, 1910.

- Jackson, Kenneth H. "The Arthur of History," Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R.S. Loomis, Oxford, 1959, pp. 1-11.
- Jobe, Joseph, ed. The Art of Tapestry, trans. P.R. Oberson, London, 1965.
- Jobes, Gertrude. Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols. 3 vols. continuously paginated. New York, 1961.
- Johnston, Arthur. Enchanted Ground. London, 1964.
- Join-Lambert, Michel. Jerusalem, trans. Charlotte Haldane, London and New York, 1958.
- Jones, Thomas. "The Early Evolution of the Legend of Arthur," Nottingham Medieval Studies, VIII (1964), 3-21.
- Jones, W. Lewis. King Arthur in History and Legend. Cambridge, 1933.
- Jung, C.G. "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," Pagan and Christian Mysteries, ed. J. Campbell. New York and Evanston, 1963.
- Kennedy, Elspeth M. "King Arthur in the First Part of the Prose Lancelot," A Medieval Miscellany Presented to Eugene Vinaver, ed. F. Whitehead, A.H. Diverres, F.E. Sutcliffe. Manchester and New York, 1965, pp. 186-195.
- Ker, W.P. The Dark Ages. New York, 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Epic and Romance. New York, 1957.
- Kilgour, R.L. The Decline of Chivalry. Cambridge, Mass., 1937.
- Kingsford, C.L. Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth Century England. Oxford, 1925.
- Lawlor, John, ed. Patterns of Love and Courtesy. London, 1966.
- Legman, C. et al. The Guilt of the Templars. New York, 1966.
- Lewis, C.B. Classical Mythology and Arthurian Romance. Edinburgh, 1932.
- Lewis, C.S. The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition. Oxford, 1936.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Discarded Image, an introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature. Cambridge, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The English Prose 'Morte'," Essays on Malory, ed. J.A.W. Bennett, Oxford, 1963, pp. 7-28.
- Lewis, Wyndham. Time and Western Man. New York, 1928.
- Locke, Frederick W. The Quest for the Holy Grail, a Literary Study of a Thirteenth Century French Romance. Stanford, 1960.
- Loomis, C.G. White Magic. Cambridge, 1948.

- Loomis, Laura Hibbard. Adventures in the Middle Ages. New York, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Miniatures: Medieval Vista. New York, 1953.
- Loomis, Roger Sherman. "The Allegorical Siege in the Art of the Middle Ages," American Journal of Archaeology, second series XXIII (1919), 255-269.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance. New York, 1927.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Development of Arthurian Romance. London, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast," Speculum, XXVIII (1953), 114-127.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Grail from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol. Cardiff and New York, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Malory's Beaumains," PMLA LIV (1939), 656-668.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Wales and the Arthurian Legend. Cardiff, 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. , ed. Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages; a Collaborative History. Oxford, 1959.
- Loomis, R.S. and L.H. Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art. 2 vols. New York and London, 1938.
- Lot, Ferdinand. Étude sur le Lancelot en Prose. 2nd ed. Paris, 1954.
- \_\_\_\_\_. rev. of A. Pauphilet, Étude sur la Queste del Saint Graal attribuée à Gautier Map (Paris, 1921), Romania XLIX (1923), 433-441.
- Lot-Borodine, Myrrha. Trois Essais sur le Roman de Lancelot du Lac et La Queste du Saint Graal. Paris, 1919.
- Lovejoy, A.O. The Great Chain of Being, A Study of the History of an Idea. New York, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The History of Ideas. New York, 1960.
- Lumiansky, R.M. "Arthur's Final Companions in Malory's *Morte Darthur*," Tulane Studies in English, XI (1961), 5-19.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Gawain's Miraculous Strength: Malory's Use of *Le Morte Arthur* and *Mort Artu*," Études anglaises, X (1957), 97-100.
- \_\_\_\_\_. , ed. Malory's Originality, A Critical Study of *Le Morte Darthur*. Baltimore, 1964.
- Maile, Émile. The Gothic Image, trans. Dora Nussey, New York, Evanston, and London, 1958; first published as Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century. London, 1913.



- Malinowski, Bronislaw. Magic, Science, and Religion. Garden City, 1948.
- Maritain, Jacques. Art and Poetry. New York, 1943.
- Marx, Jean. La Légende Arthurienne et Le Graal. Paris, 1952.
- Matthew, Gervase. "Ideals of Knighthood in Late Fourteenth Century England," Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke, ed. R.W. Hunt, W.A. Pantin, R. W. Southern. Oxford, 1948, pp. 352-362.
- Matthews, William. The Ill-Framed Knight: A Skeptical Inquiry into the Identity of Sir Thomas Malory. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Tragedy of Arthur--A Study of the Alliterative 'Morte Arthure'. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960.
- Miller, Konrad. Mappaemundi, die Ältesten Weltharten. 6 vols. Stuttgart, 1895-98.
- Misrahi, Jean. "Symbolism and Allegory in Arthurian Romance," Romance Philology, XVII (1964), 555-569.
- Moorman, Charles. The Book of King Arthur: the Unity of Malory's Morte Darthur. Lexington, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Courtly Love in Malory," ELH XXVII (1960), 1963-170.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Internal Chronology in Malory's Morte Darthur," JEGP, LX (1961), 240-249.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Malory's Tragic Knights," Medieval Studies, XXVII (1965), 117-127.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "'The Tale of the Sankgreall': Human Frailty," Malory's Originality, ed. R.M. Lumiansky. Baltimore, 1964, pp. 184-204.
- Morton, A.L. The Matter of Britain. London, 1966.
- Mott, L.F. "The Round Table," PMLA, XX (1905), 231-264.
- Myers, A.R. England in the Late Middle Ages, revised ed. Pelican History of England 4. Harmondsworth, 1963.
- New Catholic Encyclopaedia, ed. Catholic University of America, 15 vols. New York, 1967.
- Newstead, Helaine. Bran the Blessed in Arthurian Romance. New York, 1939.

- Nitze, W.A. "The Castle of the Grail--an Irish Analogue,"  
Studies in Honor of A. Marshall Elliott. Baltimore,  
1911, pp. 19-51.
- Olschki, Leonardo. The Grail Castle and its Mysteries, trans.  
J.A. Scott. Manchester, 1966.
- Olstead, Myra. "Morgan le Fay in Malory's 'Morte Darthur'," Bulletin Bibliographique de la Societe Internationale  
Arthurienne, XIX (1967), 128-138.
- Owings, Marvin. The Arts in the Middle English Romances. New  
York, 1952.
- Owst, G.R. Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected  
Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English  
People. 2nd ed. Oxford, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Preaching in Medieval England. Cambridge, 1926.
- Painter, Sidney. French Chivalry. Baltimore, 1940.
- Panofsky, Erwin. Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism. Latrobe,  
1951.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Studies in Iconology, Humanistic Themes in the Art of the  
Renaissance, New York, 1962.
- Paris, Gaston. "Lancelot du Lac," Romania, XII. (1883).
- Parks, George B. The English Traveller to Italy. 2 vols. Stanford,  
1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "King Arthur and the Roads to Rome," JEGP, XLV (1946),  
164-170.
- Patch, H.R. The Goddess Fortuna. Cambridge, Mass., 1927.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Other World According to Descriptions in Medieval  
Literature. Cambridge, Mass., 1950.
- Paton, Lucy Allen. Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian  
Romance. 2nd ed. New York, 1960.
- Peebles, Rose. The Legend of Longinus. Baltimore, 1911.
- Pauphilet, Albert. Études sur la Queste del Saint Graal. Paris,  
1921.
- Pickford, C.E. L'Evolution du Roman Arthurien en Prose vers la fin du  
Moyen Age. Paris, 1960.
- Pirenne, Henri. Medieval Cities., trans. F.O. Halsey. Garden City,  
1956.

- Poole, R.L. Chronicles and Annals. Oxford, 1926.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Medieval Reckonings of Time. New York, 1921.
- Poulet, Georges. The Metamorphoses of the Circle, trans. Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman. Baltimore, 1966.
- Prestage, Edgar. Chivalry, Its Historical Significance and Civilizing Influence. London, 1928.
- Prescott, H.F.M. Jerusalem Journey. London, 1954.
- Raglan, Lord. The Hero. London, 1936.
- Rees, Alwyn and Brinley. Celtic Heritage. London, 1961.
- Reinhard, John Revill. The Survival of Geis in Medieval Romance. Halle, 1933.
- Reiss, Edmund. Sir Thomas Malory. New York, 1966.
- Rickard, P. Britain in Medieval French Literature 1100-1500. Cambridge, 1956.
- Robertson, D.W., Jr. "The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach through Symbolism and Allegory," Speculum XXVI (1951), 24-49.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Some Medieval Literary Terminology with Special Reference to Chrétien de Troyes," Studies in Philology, XLVIII (1951), 669-692.
- Rogers, Samuel. The Italian Journal, ed. J.R. Hale. London, 1956.
- Ross, Anne. Pagan Celtic Britain. London, 1967.
- Rumble, Thomas C. "'The Tale of Tristram': Development by Analogy," Malory's Originality, ed. R.M. Lumiansky. Baltimore, 1964, pp. 118-183.
- Runciman, Steven. Byzantine Civilisation. London, 1933.
- Russell, Bertrand. A History of Western Philosophy. New York, 1945.
- Saklatvala, Beram. Arthur: Roman Britain's Last Champion. Newton Abbot, 1967.
- Sandoz, Edovard. "Tournaments in the Arthurian Traditions," Speculum, XIX (1944), 389-420.
- Sayles, G.O. The Medieval Foundations of England. London, 1966.
- Schoepperle, Gertrude. Tristan and Isolt. 2 vols., 2nd ed. New York, 1960.

- Scudder, Vida D. Le Morte Darthur of Sir Thomas Malory. London, 1921.
- Sebeok, Thomas A. ed. Myth: a Symposium. Bloomington and London, 1965.
- Seznac, Jean. The Survival of the Pagan Gods. New York, 1961.
- Sitwell, Sacheverell. The Gothick North: A Study of Medieval Life, Art, and Thought. London, 1950.
- Skelton, R.A., Thomas E. Marston, George D. Painter. The Vinland Map and the Tarter Relation. New Haven and London, 1965.
- Smith, G. Gregory, ed. Elizabethan Critical Essays. 2 vols. London, 1937.
- Stevens, Wallace. The Necessary Angel. New York, 1951.
- Stewart, G.R. "English Geography in Malory's Morte D'Arthur," MLR, XXX (1935), 204-209.
- Sypher, Wylie. Four Stages of Renaissance Style. Garden City, 1955.
- Tatlock, J. S. P. The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae and its early vernacular versions. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950.
- Taylor, A.B. An Introduction to Medieval Romance. London, 1930.
- Thompson, Stith. Motif Index of Folk-Literature. rev. ed. 6 vols. Bloomington, 1955-58.
- Thorndike, Lynn. A History of Magic and Experimental Science. 8 vols. New York, 1923-58.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. Tree and Leaf. London, 1964.
- Toynbee, Arnold J. A Study of History. Abridg. D.C. Somervell. London and New York, 1947.
- \_\_\_\_\_. trans. and ed. Greek Historical Thought. New York, 1952.
- Treharne, R.F. The Glastonbury Legends. London, 1967.
- Trevelyan, G.M. Clio, A Muse. London and New York, 1930.
- Tucker, P.E. "Chivalry in the 'Morte'," Essays on Malory, ed. J.A.W. Bennett. Oxford, 1963, pp. 64-103.
- Tuve, Rosemond. Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity. Princeton, 1966.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Seasons and Months. Paris, 1933.
- Van Ghent, Dorothy. The English Novel, Form and Function. New York, 1961.
- Van Goudoever, J. The Bible Calendar. Leiden, 1961.
- Van de Voort, D. Love and Marriage in the English Medieval Romance. Nashville, 1938.
- Vasiliev, A.A. History of the Byzantine Empire. 2 vols. Madison and Milwaukee, 1964.
- Vinaver, Eugène. "The Dolorous Stroke," Medium Aevum, XXV (1957), 175-180.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Malory. Oxford, 1929.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "On Art and Nature: A Letter to C.S.Lewis," Essays on Malory, ed. J.A.W. Bennett, Oxford, 1963, pp. 29-40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sir Thomas Malory," Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R.S.Loomis. Oxford, 1959, pp. 541-552.
- Vorontzoff, Tania. "Malory's Story of Arthur's Roman Campaign," Medium Aevum, VI (1937), 99-121.
- Vryonis, Spiros. Byzantium and Europe. London, 1967.
- Wagner, Edvard, Zoroslava Drobna and Jan Durdik. Medieval Costume, Armour and Weapons (1350-1450), trans. Jean Layton, London, 1962.
- Waite, A.E. The Holy Grail. New York, 1961.
- Wedel, O. The Medieval Attitude Toward Astrology, Particularly in England, Yale Studies in English, LX (1920).
- West, C.B. Courtoisie in Anglo-Norman Literature. Oxford, 1938.
- Weston, Jessie L. The Quest of the Holy Grail. 2nd ed. London, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Sir Gawain at the Grail Castle. London, 1903.
- White, Lynn. Medieval Technology and Social Change. Oxford, 1962.
- White, T.H. Book of Beasts. London, 1954.
- Whitehead, A.N. Adventures of Ideas. Harmondsworth, 1948.

- Whitehead, F. "Lancelot's Penance," Essays on Malory, ed. J.A.W. Bennett. Oxford, 1963, pp. 104-113.
- \_\_\_\_\_. and A.H. Diverres, F.E. Sutcliffe ed. A Medieval Miscellany Presented to Eugène Vinaver. Manchester and New York, 1965.
- Williams, Charles. Arthurian Torso. ed. C.S. Lewis. Oxford, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Malory and the Grail Legend," Dublin Review 429 (April, 1944), 144-153; reprinted in Selected Writings, ed. Anne Ridler. London, 1961, pp. 151-162.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Taliessin through Logres. Oxford, 1938; The Region of the Summer Stars. London, 1944.
- Wilson, R.H. Characterization in Malory; A Comparison with His Sources. Chicago, 1934.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "How Many Books did Malory Write?" Studies in English, XXX (1951), 1-23.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Malory and the Perlesvaus," Modern Philology, XXX (1932), 13-22.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Malory's Early Knowledge of Arthurian Romance," Studies in English, XXIX (1950), 33-50.
- Wölfflen, Heinrich. Principles of Art History, trans. M.D. Hottinger. New York, 1925.
- Wright, J.K. The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades; a study in the History of Medieval Science and Tradition in Western Europe. New York, 1925.
- Wright, Thomas L. "'The Tale of King Arthur': Beginnings and Foreshadowings," Malory's Originality, ed. R.M. Lumiansky, Baltimore, 1964, pp. 9-66.

## APPENDIX A

### MEDIEVAL VIEWS OF TIME AND HISTORY

Pieter Brueghel's sixteenth-century painting, "The Triumph of Time" contains many of the images that medieval man used to portray in concrete form what was for him a philosophical concept and a metaphysical reality. In the centre of the picture the Cronus-Saturn-Father Time figure<sup>1</sup> devours the child which his right hand grasps while his left hand brandishes a serpent with its tale in its mouth, symbol of the endless cycles of time imagined by ancient cultures. Drawn by the sun and moon, the chariot of time holds both the god and the globe of the world, the latter adorned with zodiacal signs and the Tree of Life hung with the scales of the Last Judgment. In its branches rests a weight-driven clock which with the hourglass marks the diurnal passage of time. The seasonal cycle is suggested by the contrast between the leafy shade-trees on the right and the barren woods on the left of the chariot. Dominating the village square are the Church, which asserted a linear view of time, and the Maypole, which symbolized in the circular performance of

---

<sup>1</sup>Ancient images of time (e.g. the Greek KAIROS and the Orphic PHANES) were characterized as winged and youthful. Symbols of decay--hourglass, scythe or sickle, crutches, advanced age--were derived from KRONOS, the Roman Saturn, the confusion of whose name with the Greek word for time, Chronos, led Plutarch to identify the two. "Half classical and half mediaeval, half Western and half Oriental, this figure illustrates both the abstract grandeur of a philosophical principle and the malignant voracity of a destructive demon." Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology (New York, 1962), p. 81.

pagan rites the cyclical rebirth of nature. Beneath the wheels of Time are crushed the perishable artifacts of civilization--tools, musical instruments, swords, urns, books, all destined to be scattered by the horse which bears Death<sup>2</sup> and his scythe.<sup>3</sup> The procession is completed by an apocalyptic angel sounding the last trump.

Another motif in the iconography of time is the signum triceps. In his Saturnalia, Macrobius describes a statue of Serapis whose hand rests on such a beast--a combination of lion, wolf, and dog, to be interpreted as the three aspects of ravening time. The lion, violent and sudden, expresses the present. The wolf, dragging off its victims, is the past. The fawning dog is the future that beguiles us with hope.<sup>4</sup>

A French miniature (ca. 1400) shows Temps not only with three heads but four wings (the seasons) and twelve feath-

<sup>2</sup>Revelations, 6, 7.

<sup>3</sup>Death with his scythe may be seen in the miniature "Death and the Lady" from the Hours of Philippe le Bel, a late fifteenth-century Flemish manuscript. In a sixteenth century woodcut for Geiler von Kaisersperg's Sermons and in a wall painting, The Triumph of Death (ca. 1445) in Palermo's Palazzo Sclafani, Death carries a bow and arrows in addition to a scythe. Towards the end of the Middle Ages representations of Death borrowed Time's hourglass.

<sup>4</sup>Macrobius, Saturnalia, ed. Henri Bornecque (Paris), I, XX, 15: Ergo leonis capite monstratur praesens tempus, quia condicio ejus inter praeteritum futurumque actu praesenti valida fervensque est. Sed et praeteritum tempus lupi capite signatur, quod memoria rerum transactarum rapitur et aufertur. Item canis blandientis effigies futuri temporis designat eventum, de quo nobis spes licet incerta blanditur.



ers (the months).<sup>5</sup> A feathered figure is also depicted by Stephen Hawes who wrote a literary description of Time that complements Brueghel's painting:

Aged he was with a berde doubtles  
Of swallowes feders his wynges were longe  
His body fedred he was hye and stronge  
In his lefte hande he had an horology <sup>6</sup>  
And in his ryght hande a fyre brennyng

The abstract theorizings behind medieval man's embodiments of time were derived chiefly from two sources--Graeco-Roman philosophers and Hebrew-Christian theologians. Man's need to find temporal order in "the body of this chaos"<sup>7</sup> must have had its origins in the primordial age. In the view of Bertrand Russell

The sight of day and night, months and years  
has created knowledge of number and given us  
the conception of time and hence came philosophy. <sup>8</sup>  
This is the greatest boon we owe to sight.

Lucretius imagined the effect on early man of the diurnal cycle:

a parvis quod enim consuerant cernere semper  
alternò tenebras et lucem tempore gigni,  
non erat ut fieri posset mirorier unquam  
nec diffidere ne terras aeterna teneret  
nox in perpetuum detracto lumine solis<sup>9</sup>

That there were practical advantages for ancient man in the accurate reckoning of physical time is obvious. From early times religious observances were linked to the seasonal

<sup>5</sup>Panofsky, p. 79 and fig. 50.

<sup>6</sup>The Pastime of Pleasure, EETS.OS, 173 (London, 1928), p. 215.

<sup>7</sup>Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man (New York, 1928), p. xi.

<sup>8</sup>A History of Western Philosophy (New York, 1945), p.145.

<sup>9</sup>De Rerum Natura, V, ll. 977-981.

cycle.<sup>10</sup> That the theoretical aspects of time had an equal hold on his consciousness many philosophers have doubted.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Greek philosophers propounded two antithetical theories, the one represented by Heraclitus, the other by Plato. The former perceived existence as a state of perpetual flux, where, like flame in a fire, each thing is born from the death of something else.<sup>12</sup> Refusing to accept the theory of an existence persisting through endless time, Plato countered with a theory of eternity outside time. The transience of world and time is mitigated by the permanence of an eternal god who created time:

Now the nature of the ideal being was everlasting, but to bestow this attribute in its fulness upon a creature was impossible. Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity, and this image we call Time.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>Hesiod's Works and Days was primarily a calendar to be used in ascertaining favourable times for various occupations. See J. Van Goudvever, The Bible Calendar (Leiden, 1961) on the Jewish accommodation of the lunar to the solar cycle and J. R. Reinhard, The Survival of Geis in Medieval Romance (Halle, 1933), Ch. VIII, on Celtic tabus relating to days and seasons.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Bergson: "For the ancients, indeed, time is theoretically negligible, because the duration of a thing only manifests the degradation of its essence," cited by Wyndham Lewis, p. 163.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Marcus Aurelius, trans. Arnold J. Toynbee, Greek Historical Thought (New York, 1952), p. 149: "Human life! Its duration is momentary, its substance in perpetual flux, its senses dim, its physical organism perishable, its consciousness a vortex, its destiny dark, its repute uncertain."

<sup>13</sup>Timaeus 37D. trans. Russell, p. 166.

In Plato's cosmography, the planets determine the numbers or fixed intervals of time.<sup>14</sup> Aristotle, too, associated time with motion but he could not ascribe to it an origin. "If time is eternal, motion must be eternal too," he declared.<sup>15</sup> More relevant to early medieval thought was the philosophy of Plotinus since it was through his writings that Platonism entered the philosophy of St. Augustine. Plotinus' assertion that time, the image of eternity, resides in the movement of the Soul has an obvious relationship to the Christian view:

Would it then be sound to define Time as the Life of the Soul in movement as it passes from one stage of act or experience to another?<sup>16</sup>

St. Augustine agreed that it would. Like Plato, the Bishop of Hippo perceived time as the creation of God, who Himself stands outside time. But the apprehension of time he saw as a process of the human mind:

praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus ~~contuitus~~<sup>17</sup>, praesens de futuris expectatio.

According to St. Augustine, there would be no time without the

<sup>14</sup>Timaeus 46C--47B. The Timaeus, which had been translated by Cicero, was the only Platonic dialogue known directly in Western Europe during the Middle Ages.

<sup>15</sup>Aristotle, trans. and ed. Philip Wheelwright (New York, 1951), p. 49.

<sup>16</sup>Plotinus, The Enneads, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London, 1956), II, p. 252.

<sup>17</sup>Confessions, ed. with trans. William Watts (London, 1919), II, p. 252. Time and eternity are discussed in Bi. II, Ch. 14-30.

existence of a created being. There was no time before the Creation and after the Last Judgment time will cease. This was the view that Western Christendom inherited.

Another philosophical work relevant to medieval thought must be mentioned, Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy. "To acquire a taste for it is almost to become naturalised in the Middle Ages," says C. S. Lewis.<sup>18</sup> Its Platonism is exemplified by Poem 9, Bk. III which begins with a paraphrase of the Timaeus:

O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas  
Terrarum caelique sator qui tempus ab aevo  
Ire iubes stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri,  
Quem non externae pepulerunt fingere causae.<sup>19</sup>

The distinction between time and eternity is explicated in Book V, prose 6 where the transience of temporal things is contrasted with the eternity of God. Boethius denies Aristotle's belief that anything which is subject to time can be thought eternal. He corrects the misinterpretation of Plato which attributed to the universe the same kind of eternal existence as God's:

Itaque, si digna rebus nomina velimus imponere,  
Platonem sequentes deum quidem aeternum, mundum  
vera dicamus esse perpetuam.<sup>20</sup>

It is Boethius who writes for the Middle Ages the classic definition of eternity, "Interminabilis vitae tota simul et

<sup>18</sup>The Discarded Image (Cambridge, 1967), p. 75.

<sup>19</sup>The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy, ed. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (London, 1918), p. 262.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 402.

perfecto possessio" (V,6).<sup>21</sup>

While the scholar and philosopher developed concepts and pursued metaphysical speculations, the poet and peasant created myths. The endless cycles of time were symbolized by the serpent biting its tail. The recurrent cycles in nature inspired the myth of Apollo driving the chariot of the sun, the myth of Persephone and her seasonal withdrawal and return, the myth of the dying god--Attis, Adonis--who is re-born in the spring. Larger cycles were envisioned by astronomers and mathematicians--the lunar cycle of nineteen years (called the Golden Number), the solar cycle of twenty-eight years, the annus magnus of five hundred and thirty-two years, and, finally, the Great Years, estimated by Greek astronomers as the thirty-six thousand year period required for one complete cycle from golden age to golden age.

The best known classification of the ages of man is that of Hesiod who saw the human race as progressively degenerating from a Golden Race made by Chronos to a Silver Race made by the Olympians. The Race of Bronze made by Zeus, delighting in war, is followed by a Homeric race of heroic men. Last comes a Race of Iron--contemporary man--"wretches who know not the visitation of the Gods."<sup>22</sup> The ancients looked back nostalgically to a golden age in the past when men

<sup>21</sup>P. 400.

<sup>22</sup>The cyclic view of history underlies many classical works. Cf. Plato's Politicus and Timaeus (21E-23C) and Lucretius' De Rerum Natura. In the latter, the cycle begins with man in a state of bestiality and gradually emerging by reason and technology.

lived like Gods with hearts free from care,  
 without part or lot in labor and sorrow.  
 Pitiful old age did not await them. . . the  
 grain harvest was yielded by bountiful Earth  
 of her own accord--abundantly, ungrudgingly--  
 while they, in peace and goodwill, lived  
 upon their lands with good things in abundance.<sup>23</sup>

When Augustus established the pax Romana, the poets hailed the approach of a new golden age under the aegis of a new Apollo.<sup>24</sup> The myth of the golden age persisted through Roman times and was absorbed by the Judeo-Christian tradition into the myth of Eden.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Virgil's ideal of a new golden age inaugurated by a temporal ruler recurs in numerous national chronicles of the Middle Ages.

Graeco-Roman historical thought conceived of history as a cyclical process the study of which could provide example and warning. According to Diodorus of Agrigum (ca. 90-20 B.C.):

History is able to instruct without inflicting pain by affording an insight into the failures and successes of others. History also has the power of conferring immortality: All other memorials are transitory and exposed to destruction in many circumstances but History, whose power

---

<sup>23</sup>Hesiod, "Works and Days," ll. 111ff. in Greek Historical Thought, p. 126. In A Study of History, abridg. D. C. Somervill (London and New York, 1947), p. 505, Tonybee uses the term "archaism" to describe "an attempt to get back to one of those happier states which, in times of troubles, are regretted the more poignantly and perhaps idealized the more unhistorically, the further they are left behind." Accounts of the golden age, similar to Hesiod's occur in Ovid, Metamorphoses I, ll. 89-112; Virgil, Aeneid VIII, ll. 313-328; Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, Bk. II, poem 5.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. the Centennial Hymn of Horace, Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, and Aeneid, Bk. VIII.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus with its description of the golden age restored by the Virtues and agents of Natura.

extends to the limits of the world, has found in Time, the grand destroyer, a guardian of her everlasting tradition . . . .<sup>26</sup>

It is the opinion of R. G. Collingwood that Greek historiographers refused to treat history as a science because it dealt with transitory events of a dateless past only momentarily perceived and lacking in explicable cause:

This recognition of the necessity of change in human affairs gave to the Greeks a peculiar sensitiveness to history . . . a consciousness of violent peripeteia, catastrophic changes from one state of things to its opposite, from smallness to greatness, from pride to abasement, from happiness to misery.<sup>27</sup>

It was this aspect of Greek historical thought which in the Middle Ages was personified by the Goddess Fortuna,<sup>28</sup> a deity inherited from the Romans.

Hellenic historiographers fathered two kinds of historical writing. There were the local and specific accounts like those of Herodotus and Thucydides, based on eye-witness reports, a kind of writing that reappears in medieval annals. There were also the universal histories which came into being with the conquests of Alexander and the rise of Rome. To this tradition belong the universal histories of such monastic<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Greek Historical Thought, trans. and ed. Arnold J. Toynbee, (New York, 1952), pp. 48-49.

<sup>27</sup>The Idea of History (New York, 1956), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup>See H. R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna (Cambridge, Mass., 1927).

<sup>29</sup>Friedrich Heer, in The Intellectual History of Europe, trans. Jonathan Steinberg (London, 1966), p. 32 attributes to the orderly existence of monastic life the rationalism which affected the development of much Western thought.

historiographers as St. Jerome, Isidore of Seville, Gildas, Bede, Florence of Worcester, Hugh of St. Victor, and Matthew Paris, to name only a few. Compilation of materials drawn from "the authorities" rather than the collecting of eye-witness accounts was the method required for writing world history.

In addition to the new view of sources, the Romans adopted a new view of motivation. History was no longer lacking in aetiology, the hero no longer the victim of inexplicable fate.<sup>30</sup> It was the record of a nation predestined through the superiority of its great men to unify and rule the world. Roman history was world history, the record of "the only genuinely historical reality."<sup>31</sup>

The Jewish nation also held a view of unique historical destiny but it differed from that of the Romans in attributing the fulfillment of its purposes to God rather than to man. Furthermore, the Hebraic tradition regarded the progress of history as linear rather than cyclical. Time and history had begun with the Creation; they would end with the Last Judgment. Guided by the commemorative and prophetic utterances of the Prophets, the Jews perceived past, present, and future as con-

---

<sup>30</sup>Through their concepts of hubris and compensation, the Greeks tried to explain the downfall of the mighty. But Thucydides could find no acceptable explanation for the Athenian plague which man was helpless to control or resist.

<sup>31</sup>Collingwood, p. 37. For Roman views of time and history see E. R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. W. R. Trask (New York and Evanston, 1963), p. 252.



tinuous, uninterrupted progress from the Garden of Eden to the gates of Paradise or the jaws of Hell.

St. Augustine vehemently denied the cyclical view.<sup>32</sup> He believed that Christian history was unique, providential, apocalyptic, periodized. It was the working out by man of God's will. Civilizations rose and fell according to God's design. Great Rome itself was not an eternal verity but a transient vehicle for the establishment of law and order, peace and unity:

Deus unus verus et iustus Romanos secundum  
quondam formam terrenae civitatis bonos  
adiuverit ad tanti imperii gloriam conse-  
quendam.<sup>33</sup>

But the standard of the earthly city was to be condemned, that of the city of God to be pursued. Each man's choice between the civitas terrena and the civitas Dei constituted the central fact of his own history and determined its end.

The life of Christ was the central and unique event of history, exemplifying the pattern to be followed by man in his relationship to his fellow man and to God. Christ was the new Adam, the events of whose life were prefigured in Old Testament history and predicted by Old Testament prophets.<sup>34</sup> The devel-

<sup>32</sup>De Civitate Dei, XII, xx.

<sup>33</sup>Confessions V, XIX. In The Vision of History in Early Britain (New York and London, 1966), p. 20, R. W. Hanning points out that the historical imagination of Christianity had to expand beyond Biblical history to include Roman history because Rome was a fact that the early Christians could not ignore. The synthesis of Christianity and Rome produced medieval historical thought.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. De Civ. Dei XVII, 1 where St. Augustine discerns in Old Testament history "the shadow of the future."

opment from this concept of Christian typology as a basis for Christian teaching, preaching, and controversy was not one of the least important elements in medieval thought--and it spawned an inordinate amount of nonsense. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (ca. 314-339) was probably the first Christian historiographer to treat contemporary events as fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies. The system of correspondences which identified Constantine with Moses was applied by the Fathers to the writings of pagans, as well, in order to justify their use.<sup>35</sup> Because of this pattern of recurrences, a cyclical aspect was introduced into the linear view.

The linear view was given a universal chronology in the seventh century by Isidore of Seville who made the birth of Christ the central point of reference for historical events. Adapting the universal chronology of Eusebius--Jerome, he fitted into his six ages such diverse events as the rise of Greece, the invention of writing (by the Hebrews, naturally), and the beginning of rhetoric in Rome. Popularized by Bede in his treatise De temporibus<sup>36</sup> and in his Historia Ecclesiastica, the method of dating events from the birth of Christ was transmitted by St. Boniface to the continent where it was adopted by the Frankish kings and finally, in 1048, by the Vat-

---

<sup>35</sup>See R. R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 53-58.

<sup>36</sup>In Opera de Temporibus, ed. Charles W. Jones (Cambridge, 1943), Bede summarized classical and Christian views of time and history, related the theological and universal aspects of time to a chronicle of historical events devised from the Vulgate and Josephus, and defined the nature of eternity.

ican.

The historical genius of the Dark Ages "muffled in Latin prose"<sup>37</sup> produced more often such works as the long-winded sermonizing of Orosius than the lively narratives of Paulus Diaconus or Einhard's life of Charlemagne. As the barbarians overran the West, Christian historiographers tried to reconcile the earthly disasters and a Providential plan. After the disintegration of the Western Empire into successor states, a new order of national historians<sup>38</sup> recounted a past independent of Roman imperialism and a present controlled by a particular nation, the destined inheritor of Rome's political power. Bede's Saxons, for instance, had been selected by God to replace the depraved Britons and to unite Britain with the universal Roman Church. In the field, piety was rewarded by military success. In Gregory of Tours' Historia Francorum, Clovis, like the emperor Constantine, gained political supremacy as a reward for his conversion. Bede's Oswald, a type of christianissimus rex, was granted his earthly kingdom as a token of the heavenly crown awaiting him.

Along with the "creative myth of nations,"<sup>39</sup> there developed an impulse to write the biography of a Christian leader

---

<sup>37</sup>W. P. Ker, The Dark Ages (New York, 1958), p. 33.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. Gregory of Tours (Historia Francorum), Jordanes (Getica); Gildas (De excidio et conquestu Britanniae), Bede (Historia ecclesiastica), Paulus Diaconus (Historia Langobardum).

<sup>39</sup>Erich Auerbach, Dante Poet of the Secular World, trans. Ralph Manheim (Chicago, 1961), p. 19.

who was frequently linked genealogically through a mythical ancestor to the Hebraic or Trojan--Roman past. In the Historia Brittonum, for example, the Britons traced their origin to Brutus (son of Silvius, son of Aeneas) who conquered Britain for Rome; to Dardanus, the builder of Troy; and to Britto, a descendant of Noah. The ethnogenic fables of Merovingian scholars made the Franks descendants of a Trojan prince, Francus.<sup>40</sup>

The hero of a Vita illustrated in his life a pattern of exemplary conduct which formerly had been found only in the Bible or in the writings of the ancients.<sup>41</sup> Suger's Life of Saint Louis and Asser's Life of King Alfred depict their subjects as model Christian kings, protectors of their people, and incarnations of justice. The hero's biography is a part of world history, since each man participates in the universal drama of salvation.

The dominant historical thinking up to the twelfth century was theological and universal. Even the chronicles and

<sup>40</sup>The legend of Trojan descent attained its fullest exploitation in the sixteenth century when Jean Le Maire des Belges in his Illustrations de Gaule et singularities de Troie assigned Trojan ancestors not only to the Franks and Germans, but also to the Bretons, Spaniards, Italians, Brabantians, and Tuscans.

<sup>41</sup>That the classics still served as models and sources is evident in William of Poitiers's panegyric of the Conqueror (shades of Sallust!); in William of Malmesbury's Gesta Regum Anglorum (1125) which draws material from Caesar, Livy, Pliny and Suetonius, and in the opening of Gesta Treverorum where information about the tribe is derived from Caesar's Bellum Gallicum.

annals where the local and contemporary predominate have a wider frame of reference.<sup>42</sup> Lambert of Hersfeld began his annals in 1078 with the Creation and the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers of Worcester and Peterborough sketched the history of man from the Incarnation. The interpretation of world history, however, was influenced by two antithetical attitudes, the one viewing it as a process of development and enlightenment, the other as an unceasing battle between the corpus Christi and the corpus diaboli. The optimism with which the national historians of the early Middle Ages had recorded the rising fortunes of their peoples was replaced in the later Middle Ages by a mood of pessimism. Though the year 1000--and 1033--passed without the appearance of Anti-Christ, fear and melancholy weighed on people's souls. Images of violence characterized literature and art. Hildegard of Birken employed animal symbolism to express man's degeneration from the age of the fiery hound (crude power), the age of the tawny lion (war), the age of the dun horse (frivolity and luxury) and the age of the black swine (corruption and schism) to the age of the grey wolf when Anti-Christ would rule the world. The twelfth-century Cistercian, Otto of Freising, described three stages of world history--primus miser, secundus miserior, tertius miserrimus, but asserted the belief that as the regni mundi declined, the civitas Dei would rise. The historical mode became increasingly symbolic and eschatological.

---

<sup>42</sup>See Reginald L. Poole, Chronicles and Annals (Oxford, 1926).

The end of time seemed imminent. An iconography of doom confronted medieval man on every side. The spiritual aspirations of the early Christians and the dignified hopefulness of Thomas of Celano's Dies Irae declined into such such dreadful visions of Hell's mouth as that painted in the Winchester Psalter (mid twelfth-century).

In contrast to the ecclesiastical approach which had dominated historical writing from Eusebius and Orosius to Ordericus Vitalis and Henry of Huntingdon was the development in the twelfth century of secular history. Based chiefly on national legend rather than on theological and classical treatises, such works as Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia regum Britanniae and Geoffrey Gaimar's L'Estorie des Engles led into "the rich world of late medieval and humanist genealogical poetic history."<sup>43</sup> History merged with romance to produce the legends of Arthur, the romances of Alexander, and the chronicles of Thebes and Troy.

From the Graeco-Roman tradition the "matter of Britain" derived the wheel of Fortune, the golden age, the imperium, the cyclical rise and fall of realms, the pattern of recurrent event within an age, the withdrawal and return of the mythic hero, and the interest in story for its own sake. From the Judeo-Christian tradition it derived the linear, Providential, eschatological view of history, the type of christianissimus rex as national hero, the concept of barbarian nation raised by God to become the inheritor

---

<sup>43</sup>Friedrich Heer, The Intellectual History of Europe (London, 1966), p. 81.

of Rome, the enthusiasm for genealogy and Biblical exegesis, and the dualism of civitas terrena and civitas Dei.

Geoffrey of Monmouth shared with many medieval historiographers that failure to distinguish between fact and fiction and lack of objectivity which has been likened to the observations of a child. Histories were more likely to be based on "authorities" and on orally diffused tales retained in the folk memory<sup>44</sup> than on genuine scholarly research. Tradition seemed more important than truth. Geoffrey shared, too, that failure to maintain historical perspective that characterized historians from Herodotus to Gibbon.<sup>45</sup> The classical, the Biblical, the contemporary and the eternal were viewed with the same eye. Hence the medieval mind saw no incongruity in Geoffrey's story of a sixth-century British king arrayed in the panoply of a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman court, nor did the addition of thirteenth-century dogmas like transubstantiation, fourteenth-century dress and armour, and fifteenth-century commercial interests disturb Malory's contemporaries.

In medieval reckonings of time, the vagueness which we have noted in the apprehension of the past applied also to the daily round. Until the appearance of clocks in the

---

<sup>44</sup>On this aspect of the Arthurian legends see E. K. Chambers, Arthur of Britain, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 205-232.

<sup>45</sup>According to G. M. Trevelyan, "History in Fiction," Clio, a Muse (London and New York, 1930), p. 89, Sir Walter Scott was the first to take account of changes in clothes, weapons, thought, and morals.

fourteenth-century, medieval man was poorly equipped, in spite of water-clocks, hourglasses, and sundials, to measure the passing hours. King Alfred carried candles that took an hour to burn.<sup>46</sup> Western Europe followed the Roman custom of dividing both day and night into twelve equal parts varying in length from forty to eighty minutes, depending on the time of year. The hours of the divine offices, marked by the ringing of monastic bells, followed the variable hours of the day--Matins before dawn, Prime at sunrise, Tierce at the third hour of daylight, Sext at the sixth, Nones at the ninth, Vespers or Evensong at the eleventh, Compline after sunset. Eventually, the office of Nones came to be sung with that of Sext, about mid-day; hence our designation "noon."

The cycle of the liturgy marked the passing of weeks and seasons, reaching a festal climax at Easter.<sup>47</sup> The Christian assimilation of pagan celebrations led to the coincidence of the Feast of the Nativity, the Teutonic festival of the winter solstice, and the Roman festival of Sol invictus. The celebrations of St. John's Eve were intended to counter the attractions of pagan midsummer rites. The progress of the agricultural year was likewise related to the calendar of

---

<sup>46</sup> Asser, Life of King Alfred, ed. W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904), p. 104.

<sup>47</sup> On the relationship of religion to the calculation of time see R. L. Poole, Medieval Reckonings of Time (New York, 1921), introduction to Bede's Opera de Temporibus, ed. Charles W. Jones (Cambridge, 1943), and J. Van Goudvever, Biblical Calendars (Leiden, 1961).



Church feasts. For instance, the feast of St. Peter-in-Chains, on August 1, was in England called Lammass and was celebrated as an early harvest thanksgiving when loaves made from the new wheat were blessed. In courtly circles, Holy Days came to be associated with feasts and tourneys, as Arthurian romance indicates.

In contrast to the felicitous Holy Days were the days of ill-omen. One must be wary on the anniversaries of disastrous events--April 1 (the birth of Judas), August 1 (the fall of Lucifer), December 1 (the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah) and, most fateful, Friday the thirteenth, assigned by Christian tradition to the expulsion of Adam and Eve, the beginning of the Deluge, and the Crucifixion. That unlucky days also resulted from the malign influence of the stars was an idea firmly established in the Middle Ages.<sup>48</sup>

Medieval man, living close to nature, his activities governed by the progress of the solar cycle, was far more aware of seasonal change than we in our concrete cities, with our central heating and air-conditioning. Yet the dominant seasonal traditions in medieval literature and art are not conscious representations of reality but metaphysical schematizations of a unified cosmology where the physical, moral, and spiritual worlds were one and inseparable. The

---

<sup>48</sup> See Lynn Thorndike, A History of Magic and Experimental Science (New York, 1923-58), I, 3, II, 4 and 5; O. Wedel, "The Medieval Attitude toward Astrology, Particularly in England," Yale Studies in English LX (1920). There are no astrological allusions in the Morte Darthur.

earth reborn in spring is analogous to the world remade by Christ's resurrection. The cycle of the seasons illustrates the immutable law of mutability in a world where God's might

"attempreth the variauntz sesouns of the yer,  
so that Zephirus, the debonere wynd, bryngeth  
ayen in the first somer sesoun the leeves that  
the wynd that hyghte Boreas hath reft away in  
autumpne.<sup>49</sup>

In the encyclopaedists' complex world of correspondences, the four seasons are associated with the elements, ages of man, humours, winds, temperaments and states of the spirit.<sup>50</sup> The twelve months were linked to the signs of the zodiac, the labours of the months, and the twelve apostles.<sup>51</sup> Not the least attractive accomplishments of the medieval artist were the exquisite illustrations of the labours of the months and of seasonal feasts to be found, for example, in the Book of Hours of Joan, Queen of Navarre (ca. 1330), in the Tres Riches Heures (1488) painted by Jean Colombe for Charles I of Savoy, and in the Limbourg brothers' Tres Riches Heures (1413), for the Duc de Berry. Horae and Psalters, sculptures and stained glass, accounted for the late persistence of a tradition which, in the opinion of Rosamund Tuve, was

---

<sup>49</sup>Chaucer, Boece, Bk. I, Metre 5. Cf. also Bk. I, M. 2, and Bi. IV, M. 6.

<sup>50</sup>An encyclopaedic scheme containing many of these appeared as early as 844 in the De universo of Rabanus Maurus of Fulda.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. the combination of correspondences on the Portail Royal at Chartres.

far from being "popular" in origin, but by now it had been made so through its conservation in mediums accessible to everyone.<sup>52</sup>

The reckoning of time was inevitably associated with the transience of earthly things. Every moment brought closer the end of life's journey and the moment when one would be weighed in the archangel's scales. There was no denying the Triumph of Time or the principle of immutable mutability:

Do not I tyme cause nature to augment  
 Do not I tyme cause nature to decay  
 Do not I tyme cause man to be present  
 Do not I tyme take his lyfe away  
 Do not I tyme cause dethe take his say  
 Do not I tyme passe his youth and age  
 Do not I tyme every thyng aswage?<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup>Seasons and Months, p. 179.

<sup>53</sup>Stephen Hawes, The Pastime of Pleasure, p. 215.

## APPENDIX B

### MEDIEVAL VIEWS OF PLACE

A fourteenth-century Italian, Giovanni de'Dondi, spent sixteen years constructing a clock that was not only a timepiece but, with its sun, moon, and five planets set in concentric spheres about a spherical earth,<sup>1</sup> a model of the medieval universe as well.<sup>2</sup> Only a few years later Nicholas Oresmus, Bishop of Lisieux, compared the universe to a mechanical clock created and set running by God (thus anticipating Paley's analogy by four hundred years). For medieval man, God the Creator was the architect of the universe. A miniature in a thirteenth-century French Bible shows Him, compass in hand, tracing the limits within which were enclosed the firmament in the midst of the waters, the sun, moon, stars and earth.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>A belief in the earth's sphericity was held by Plato and the Pythagoreans on the ground that the earth must have perfect mathematical form. For a medieval proof of the earth's sphericity, see John of Holywood, Tractatus de Sphaera i, 5, in J. J. Bagley and P. B. Rowley, ed., A Documentary History of England, vol. I (1066-1540), (Harmondsworth, 1966), pp.138-144. The implications of the spherical world were pursued scientifically by Vincent of Beauvais, Speculum Naturale VII, vii, when he propounded the results of dropping a stone in a hole bored through the earth, and aesthetically by Dante whom Virgil guided down the body of Lucifer to his waist then up to his feet (Inferno XXXIV, 70-111).

<sup>2</sup>In addition to indicating the time of day, the clock provided a perpetual calendar of all religious feasts, both fixed and movable.

<sup>3</sup>A similar image was used by Milton in Paradise Lost VII, 225-231, where the King of Glory marks out the spherical outline of the universe with a golden compass.

The medieval world for us is a "discarded image."<sup>4</sup>

The stable world was thought to be surrounded by a series of hollow and transparent spheres, each with its fixed and luminous body and its appropriate rank of angelic presences and astrological influences.

Ranged in their order were the moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn; the *Stellatum* of fixed stars, propelled by bands of angels; and the primum mobile, mysterious and unknowable.<sup>5</sup> Beyond, where Aristotle found no place no void nor time, the Christians located caelum ipsum, described by Dante as

ciel, ch'e pura luce;  
luce, intellettual piena d'amore,  
amor di vero ben pien di letizia  
letizia che transcende ogni dolzore.<sup>6</sup>

The ordered progress of the fixed stars represented the regular, unchanging cycles of time; the haphazard courses of the planets, in contrast, affected the uncertain fortunes of man in matters of love, war, sickness, health, earthly prosperity, fame and death. A thirteenth-century Yorkshire scholar, John

<sup>4</sup>C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (Cambridge, 1967).

<sup>5</sup>Ptolemy's universe was the Aristotelian universe adapted to fit observed astronomical facts. Christian theologians correlated the classical universe with the account of Creation in Genesis. Among medieval theologians who speculated on the attributes of the universe were Peter Abelard, Hugh of St. Victor, Hildegard of Bingen, Peter Lombard, Peter Comestor, Bernard and Theodoric of Chartres, Bernard Sylvester and Alexander Neckam. For a concise account of their views, see John Kirtland Wright, The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades (New York, 1925), pp. 88-106.

<sup>6</sup>Paradiso XXX, 39-42.

of Holywood, described the correspondences between macro-cosm and microcosm produced by the movements of the celestial circles:

Be it understood that the "first movement" means the movement of the primum mobile, that is, of the ninth sphere or last heaven, which movement is from east through west back to east again, which also is called "rational motion" from resemblance to the rational motion in the microcosm, that is, in man, when thought goes from the Creator through creatures to the Creator and there rests.

The second movement is of the firmament and planets contrary to this, from west through east back to west again, which movement is called "irrational" or "sensual" from resemblance to the movement of the microcosm from things corruptible to the Creator and back again to things corruptible.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike twentieth-century man for whom space is limitless darkness and silence (Pascal's "le silence éternel des espaces infinis"), thirteenth-century man inhabited an enclosed universe, classically proportioned and mathematically imaginable, a universe which Dante and Milton could treat poetically as a great aesthetic, scientific, and religious symbol. The distances were vast but, nevertheless, comprehensible. A man travelling forty miles a day would take eight thousand, seven hundred years to reach "þe heilost hevene þat ze aldaȝ iseop,"<sup>8</sup> according to the estimate of Marmonides.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Bagley and Rowley, p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> The South English Legendary, EETS OS, 236, ed. Charlotte d'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, II (London, 1956), p. 418.

<sup>9</sup> The Guide of the Perplexed, Bk. III, Ch. 14, cited by A. O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (New York, 1965), p. 100. In his estimate of the time-distance factor, Marmonides suggested that "the distance between the centre of the earth and the summit of the sphere of Saturn is a journey of about eight thousand seven hundred years of 365 days, assuming that one walked forty leagues a day."

Looking up, a man would sense far beyond the dark shadow of earth's night or the pallor of day, realms of endless light with

every planet in his proper sphere  
In moving makand harmony and sound.<sup>10</sup>

Looking down, as Dante and Africanus Minor did from the sphere of the fixed stars and as Chaucer did from sublunary space,<sup>11</sup> one might see the disc of the world as it appeared in the Hereford mappamundi<sup>12</sup> with the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa arranged to fit the symmetrical wheel of the T-O map. In the centre was Jerusalem, equidistant from the Pillars of Hercules and the mouth of the Ganges, the two extremities of the orbis terrarum. Southward lay the torrid zone, its land mass uninhabitable because of its closeness to the sun. Northward was the uninhabited land of the frigid zone and the Northern Ocean which thrust an arm (the Caspian Sea), south into Asia. Around them all was Dante's deep, illimitable main.<sup>13</sup> The Antipodes, not visible to our spaceman, were inhabited, in the view of Macrobius, Capella, Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon, although St. Augustine had considered it incredible that

<sup>10</sup>Henrøyson, Fables, II, 1659. The music of the spheres was a common image in Medieval and Renaissance literature, cf. Dante, Paradiso, I, 78; Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde V, 1812; Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice V, i, 60-65.

<sup>11</sup>Paradiso XXVII, 81-3; Somnium Scipionis VI, XI; House of Fame II, 846-903. Cf. also Troilus and Criseyde and Kingis Quair.

<sup>12</sup>This world map in Hereford Cathedral was painted by Richard of Haldingham ca. 1285 as an illustration of Orosius' universal history.

<sup>13</sup>Inferno XXVI, 114.

people might live in the Antipodes, walking with their feet towards ours.<sup>14</sup>

The Oikoumene had shrunk since classical times. The expansive voyages of discovery were still two centuries away, the journeys of Marco Polo, Friar Odoric, Marignolli and Carpini not yet begun. Ptolmaic maps had shown great lakes and mountains in east-central Africa, a mighty westward flowing river, the Niger, habitations in the equatorial zone.<sup>15</sup> When copies of these maps were brought to Italy in the fifteenth century after the fall of Constantinople, they introduced new geographic concepts, especially for the Indian Ocean and its environs. The mind of the map-maker of Latin Christendom had been more occupied with matters of Christian theology than classical knowledge.<sup>16</sup> The new information gained by Norse rovers<sup>17</sup> in the Western Ocean or by diplomats, missionaries, and traders in the heart of Asia was seldom incorporated into

<sup>14</sup>City of God XVI, 9.

<sup>15</sup>Pliny (Hist. nat. II, 108) estimated the distance from the southernmost limits of the habitable world to Meroe in Ethiopia as a thousand miles. Cf. Wright, p. 42 and p. 257ff.

<sup>16</sup>Greek geographic knowledge was retained and expanded by the Moslems who were scientifically much more advanced than the Christians at this period. See C. R. Beazley, The Dawn of Modern Geography (Oxford, 1906).

<sup>17</sup>The Vinland Map (ca. 1440), the earliest known cartographic representation of any part of the Western Hemisphere, included the Western Ocean, Iceland and Greenland. A table of the principal world maps of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is found in R. A. Skelton, Thomas E. Marston, George D. Painter, The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation (New Haven and London, 1965), p. 113.



the world picture.<sup>18</sup>

Mythical and legendary sites, generally of classical and Biblical derivation, proliferated in geographical works, particularly in the areas beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire. Marvels of every description enlivened the travelers' tales and maps of the Middle Ages and were, indeed, their most characteristic feature. One of the major Biblical contributions was the Terrestrial Paradise with its fountain of life and its four rivers. It was generally located on an island at the eastern limit of the world, in accordance with the description in Genesis, "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden." Mandeville's Travels, "one of the most endearing monuments of medieval civilization,"<sup>19</sup> presents the conventional picture which had developed from the Biblical account and from the loci amoeni of Latin poets.<sup>20</sup> Though denying first hand knowledge of the place, Mandeville was not re-

---

<sup>18</sup>The discoveries of Carpini, Rubruquis, and Marco Polo did not receive full recognition until they appeared in the fifteenth-century map of Fra Mauro.

<sup>19</sup>Mandeville's Travels, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford, 1967), p. xx.

<sup>20</sup>See E. R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. W. R. Trask (New York, 1963), p. 200, n. 31 and 32.

luctant to accept the reports of "wyse men beyonde:"<sup>21</sup>

Paradys Terrestre, as wise men seyn, is the highest place of erthe thát is in alle the world<sup>22</sup> and it is so high that it toucheth nygh to the circle of the mone. . . . And this Paradys is enclosed alle aboute with a walle, and men wyte not whereof it is, for the walles ben covered alle over with mosse . . . and it hath not but on entree that is closed with fyre brennyng, so that no man that is mortalle ne dar not entren.<sup>23</sup>

From a well at the highest point of Paradise ran the four rivers that watered the world<sup>24</sup>--Phison (the Ganges), splendid with precious stones and golden gravel, Gyson (the Nile), flowing through Ethiopia and Egypt, the Tigris that runs "more faste than ony of the tothere" through Assyria and Armenia, the Euphrates, "wel Berynge, for there growen many godes upon that ryvere, as cornes, frutes, and other godes ynowe plentee."<sup>25</sup> Given the medieval facility for detecting correspondences, we are not surprised to find that the four rivers symbolized the four evangelists who spiritually watered the world, and the four virtues which irrigated the garden of the

---

<sup>21</sup>Many of Mandeville's details were to be found in De Imagine Mundi (Migne, Pat. lat. clxxii, col. 115-188) and in Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae XIV, 3. Other descriptions of the Earthly Paradise occur in Higden, Polychronicon i, 10 and Gervase of Tilbury, Otia Imperialia i, 10, i. St. Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram viii, i, regarded Paradise as allegorical rather than real. Journeys to Paradise were a favourite theme of medieval story. See H. R. Patch, The Otherworld (Cambridge, Mass., 1950).

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Dante who puts Paradise on the top of the mount of Purgatory, the antipodes of Sion.

<sup>23</sup>Op. cit., p. 220.

<sup>24</sup>Genesis 2, 10.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. the celestial stream in The Pearl, ll. 73-84.

church.<sup>26</sup> During an encounter in the course of the Roman Wars, Malory's Gawain and Priamus wound one another so severely that "every man had wondir they myght sitte in their sadyls or stonde uppon erthe." But Priamus has a sovereign remedy:

'Now fecche me. . . my vyall that hangys by the gurdyll of my haynxman, for hit is full of the floure of the four good watyrs that passis from Paradyse, that mykyll fruyte in fallys that one day fede shall us all. Putt that watir en oure fleysh where the syde is tamed, and we shall be hole within four houres' (234).

The difficulty of entering Paradise was increased, not only by the wall and fire, but also by the dangerous wasteland around it, a landscape analogous to the wildernesses of the Grail legend.

Much of the geographic lore concerning Asia was associated with the legend of Alexander,<sup>27</sup> the only great conqueror of the Graeco-Roman tradition to have ventured as far as India. To his romance were attached the legends of Gog and Magog, and of Prester John<sup>28</sup> whose kingdom, variously located in Asia or Africa, was so liberally supplied with "merveyles" that Mandeville found it "to combrous and to long to putten it in scripture of bokes."<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Neckam, De nat. rer. II, 2.

<sup>27</sup> See George Carey, The Medieval Alexander (Cambridge, 1956).

<sup>28</sup> On the origins and significance of this legend, see Wright, pp. 283-6.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, p. 196.

Balancing the fabled regions of the east were mysterious western lands in the Sea of Darkness. There were the *Insulae Fortunatae* which combined aspects of the Elysian Fields, the Isles of the Blest, and the Earthly Paradise and which were analogous to the Celtic Isle of Avalon whose winterless clime was mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth.<sup>30</sup> The Hereford map bears the legend "Fortunati Insule; sex sunt: insule Sancti Brandani." During his seven years' voyaging, that peripatetic Celt visited an isle full of brilliantly coloured birds, a rocky northern isle of sheep, and fiery islands set in icy seas, locales that might well reflect knowledge gained from the voyages of early explorers to the Canaries, the Faroes, and to the volcanic island of Iceland.<sup>31</sup>

More relevant to Arthurian romance than the marvelous lands of Alexander or the unpathed waters of St. Brandan was the world of the Roman empire for Arthur was depicted in the chronicle tradition as the British king who conquered the Roman province of Gaul and defeated the massed powers of the empire. The routes followed by Arthur and his army, like those of the medieval Crusaders and pilgrims, were the land routes that had been established by Roman soldiers and traders. It is the opinion of G. R. Crone that until the late middle ages, the distribution of towns marked on maps and de-

---

<sup>30</sup>Vita Merlini, p. 908ff. On Geoffrey's sources, see E. Faral, La Legende Arthurienne (Paris, 1929), vol. II, pp. 301-4.

<sup>31</sup>See R. R. Cawley, Unpathed Waters (Princeton, 1940).

scribed in travel literature and chronicles was practically identical to that of the second-century Antonine Itinerary.<sup>32</sup> Pilgrimages, crusades, and wars against the infidels on the northern and southern frontiers must have disseminated regional knowledge. Chaucer's knight had ridden far "as wel in cristendom as in hethenesse" and Margery Kempe, like the Wife of Bath, "koude muchel of wandrynge of the weye." One would conclude that many Western Europeans were more cosmopolitan and better informed than the contemporary maps and chronicles would indicate.

Aside from the portolani,<sup>33</sup> the typical maps, with its complex iconography, remained more an illustrated romance than a source of accurate information. The Hereford Map, for instance, pictorially located Mt. Ararat topped with the Ark, the Tower of Babel, the Labyrinth of Crete, the Colossus of Rhodes, St. Patrick's Purgatory, and the central African region of the men with four eyes but Samarkand was the only contemporary name added to the map of Asia and none was added in Africa. In Europe, some important ecclesiastical names appeared--Compostella, Mont St. Michel, Augsberg, and Prague, for example--but not the great trading centres. In Arthurian legend Mont St. Michel was associated with Arthur's giant-

---

<sup>32</sup>The World Map by Richard of Haldingham (London, 1954), pp. 18-19.

<sup>33</sup>Medieval scientific cartography began in the thirteenth century with delineations of the Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts made by Italian, Provencal, and Catalan seamen as navigational aids. See C. R. Beazley, pp. 518ff.

killing exploit, an event going back to "very remote mythical antiquity."<sup>34</sup>

The representations of the British Isles were typically inaccurate.<sup>35</sup> Scotland was an island, or almost so, most coastal features were obliterated in order to fit the area into the circular frame. On the Hereford map, thirty towns were identified in England, only six in Scotland and four in Ireland. The best regional maps of Britain were those of Matthew Paris,<sup>36</sup> interesting not only for their cartography but also for their legends which reflected some contemporary views of Britain. Britain, including Scotia, Galloway, and Wales, is now called England; the length of the island from St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall to Caithness is eight hundred miles; the breadth from St. David's to Dover three hundred miles;<sup>37</sup> the main rivers are the Thames, Severn, Humber, and

---

<sup>34</sup>R. H. Fletcher, The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles (New York, 1966), pp. 90-91.

<sup>35</sup>The only mappamundi that represents the British Isles in recognizable outline is the early Cotton map. See J. K. Wright, op. cit., p. 335; Konrad Miller, Mappaemundi, die ältesten Weltkarten (Stuttgart, 1895-1898), vol. II, pl. 10.

<sup>36</sup>Karl Miller, vol. III, pp. 74-77.

<sup>37</sup>Orosius, Hist. Adv. pag. I, 2, 37, had given the breadth as two hundred; Gervase of Tilbury, Otia imperialis I, i, 96 quotes Orosius but adds that more recent authorities give its length as twenty days' journey and its breadth as ten days' journey. This method of measuring distance is also used by Malory.

Avon;<sup>38</sup> the highlands are wild and boggy, inhabited by an uncivilized pastoral people;<sup>39</sup> beyond lies the "immense and trackless sea."

Like the maps, the literary accounts were a mixture of fact and fancy. Bede's Ecclesiastical History opens with a description of "the situation of Britain and Ireland" obviously based on the traditional authorities--Pliny, Caesar, Orosius, and Gildas. Bede alludes to such characteristic features as the varied species of sea birds; the varieties of shell fish with pearls of red, purple, violet, green, and white; the beautiful scarlet dye derived from cockles; the hot springs; and rich veins of copper, iron, lead, silver, and black jet which sparkles in the firelight and drives away snakes, the lingering summer twilight and long winter nights.<sup>40</sup> By far the most original and informative commentator was Giraldus Cambrensis whose Topographia Hiberniae, Itinerarium Cambriae, combined topography and folklore with the purpose of making the prodigies of the West as well known as those of the East.<sup>41</sup> His use of local legend, including much Arthurian material,

<sup>38</sup>Malory uses these rivers as points of geographical reference.

<sup>39</sup>Cf. Malory's view of the north pp 63, 682, for example.

<sup>40</sup>A History of the English Church and People, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth, 1955), pp. 37-40.

<sup>41</sup>See, for example, his description of Lake Breckeinoc in Itinerary Through Wales (London, 1908), pp. 30-34.

anticipates the kind of geographical writing found in Drayton's Poly-Olbion.

The geographic material in Geoffrey's History combined traditional information, local legends, and personal knowledge. Geoffrey was familiar with Lincolnshire, London, southern England, parts of Cornwall, Wales, and Brittany but had little specific information about the north. Celtic regions were often ignored in favour of places which had Roman ruins or Norman castles.<sup>42</sup> Lack of geographic specificity characterized romance, as opposed to chronicle and epic. In the works of Chrétien de Troyes, Arthur's court had no political, ethical, and historical significance; hence it lacked the explicit localization of Geoffrey's Carleon-on-Usk or Malory's Camelot which was identified with Winchester.<sup>43</sup>

In the treatment of landscape, medieval writers generally differed from the Latin authors who were able to convey a subjective love of the countryside,<sup>44</sup> and from the Anglo-Saxon poets who could communicate the atmosphere of a particular setting.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps because many medieval writers were

---

<sup>42</sup>J.S.P. Tatlock, The Legendary History of Britain (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950), pp. 7-115.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, H.R.B., iii, 10; iii, 12; iv, 19; ix, 12; Malory, p. 92, 832, 1050, 1055, 1065-6, 1069, 1077, 1080-3, 1085, 1092, 1227.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Virgil's Eclogues and Georgics, Horace's Odes I, 4, 9; III, 13; IV, 7; Ausonius' Mosella.

<sup>45</sup>Cf. the Storm Riddles, The Ruin, The Seafarer, Beowulf, ll. 1408-41.



city-dwellers engaged in affairs of state or monks engaged in saving souls, the subjective expression of experience was overlaid by conventional phraseology and allegorical significances.<sup>46</sup> The classical poet's creation of a locus amoenus,<sup>47</sup> one of the principal motifs of all nature description, became the stereotyped May morning sequence,<sup>48</sup> the philosophical-allegorical Earthly Paradise, and the sensuously imagined Heaven<sup>49</sup> of the middle ages.

In romance, the forest setting of the questing knight often contains elements of the locus amoenus. Birds sing in the pine trees beside the spring in the Forest of Broceliande where Iwain meets the Knight of the Fountain. The "Joy of the Court" episode in Erec and Enid occurs in a place where

All through the summer and winter, too,  
there were flowers and ripe fruit there  
. . . . And there is no flying bird

---

<sup>46</sup>Unusual in their realism are the poacher's description of the river bank setting in The Parlement of the Thre Ages, Prologue, ll. 1-37, and the wilderness descriptions in Gawain and the Green Knight. Yet even here conventional rhetorical diction and allegorical significances occur.

<sup>47</sup>The ideal landscape consisted of flowing waters, singing nightingales, leafy shade trees gently stirred by zephyrs, fragrant flowers, and mossy banks. Cf. Petronius, *carm.* 131; Tiberianus, "A Woodland Scene" in The Oxford Book of Latin Verse, ed. H. W. Garrod (Oxford, 1921), pp. 372-3. See E. R. Curtius, pp. 197-8 on the locus amoenus as a topos of landscape description.

<sup>48</sup>Cf. Chaucer, Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, the French "marguerite" poems of Froissart, Deschamps, and Machant, numerous chansons d'aventure, The Kingis Quair, and The Flower and the Leaf.

<sup>49</sup>See, for example, the Anglo-Saxon Phoenix, a paraphrase of Lactantius, and the Middle English alliterative poem, The Pearl.

under heaven, pleasing to man, but it  
sings there to delight and to gladden  
him.<sup>50</sup>

Describing the environs of twelfth-century London, William Fitzstephen seems to have been influenced by the classical tradition, perhaps with a view to making the English capital seem a kind of Earthly Paradise:

Also, there are, on the north side, pastures and a pleasant meadow land, through which flow river streams. . . . Very near lies a great forest, with woodland pastures, coverts of wild animals, stags, fallow deer, boars, and wild bulls. The tilled lands of the city are not of barren gravel but fat plains of Asia, that make crops luxuriant, and fill their tillers' barns with Ceres' sheaves.<sup>51</sup>

Clairvaux anticipated Wordsworth by six hundred years in suggesting that the contemplation of nature might be more beneficial than the reading of books. "The trees and the rocks will teach you that which you cannot hear from the masters."<sup>52</sup> The drawing of analogies between aspects of nature and theological or spiritual concepts was a common device of the medieval preacher<sup>53</sup> and the didactic writer. Cistercian authors made great use of the symbolic landscape in the Queste del

<sup>50</sup>"Erec et Enide" in Arthurian Romances by Chrétien de Troyes, trans. W. W. Comfort (London, 1928), p. 75.

<sup>51</sup>John Stow's translation in A Survey of London, ed. Henry Morley (London, 1890), p. 23.

<sup>52</sup>"Epistola CVI ad Magistrum Henricum Murdach," Migue, Pat. lat. clxxxii, col. 242, cited by Wright, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>53</sup>See G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Oxford, 1961), passim.

Saint Graal, "with a hermit waiting at every road-side to expound the symbolism in the bitterest detail," as Sir Edmund Chambers complains.<sup>54</sup>

The combination of classical and Christian influences also affected the medieval presentation of flora and fauna. Lions, olives, vines, palms, and cedars, exotic ornaments of northern forests, may have found their way into Western literature as a result of the Crusades or as a legacy from classical rhetoric.<sup>55</sup> Yvain and Perceval showed no surprise at coming across literary descendants of Androcles' lion so far from their native climes. Frequently, the flora and fauna were separated from landscape and given the independent symbolic significances of Christian typology. The lily, rose, and flowering branch, for instance, were types of the Virgin Mary, the pelican, unicorn, lion, and panther types of Christ, while the whale, dragon, monkey and serpent symbolized the Devil.<sup>56</sup>

That people much better acquainted with animals than

---

<sup>54</sup>Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Essays (London, 1933), p. 32.

<sup>55</sup>E. R. Curtius, pp. 183-5, gives relevant allusions and sources.

<sup>56</sup>A useful reference is T. H. White's Book of Beasts (London, 1954). Cf. the use of the bestiary tradition in the Ancrene Riwe and in the medieval sermon literature, Middle English Sermons, ed. W. O. Ross (London, 1940).

are most of us<sup>57</sup> should have swallowed the pseudo-zoology of the bestiary is but another illustration of the differences in attitude between medieval and modern man. We seek absolute truth in this world; they knew that it existed only in the next. We inhabit a world that is material and perceptible; they recognized, in addition, a supernatural world that might assume material form in order to demonstrate a moral or spiritual lesson. Phoenixes and unicorns, roses and cherries flourishing out of season, manifested a divine power which did not have to be explained in terms of the world of common experience.

If nature for medieval man was a reflection of God, the city was a reflection of man. The soaring vaults and spires of Gothic churches symbolized his spiritual aspirations, the splendid guild halls and merchants' houses his material success, the busy markets and wharves his pursuit of a better standard of living. His attitude to his native city or to the city of his adoption was one of extravagant pride.

"London, thou art the flour of cities all," sang William Dunbar, a Scotsman. William Fitzstephen believed that

Among the noble cities of the world that  
Fame celebrates, the City of London of the

---

<sup>57</sup>Frederick II's De Arte venandi cum avibus contained not only traditional material from Greek and Moslem manuscripts but also a great deal of information gained from actual observation--analyses of migratory habits, experiments on artificial incubation, the operations of vultures, and anatomical drawings.

Kingdom of the English, is the one seat that pours out its fame more widely, sends to farther lands its wealth and trade, lifts its head higher than the rest.<sup>58</sup>

This hyperbolic praise is one aspect of the nationalistic fervour which impelled the British to create in Arthur a leader of sufficient stature to become one of the Nine Worthies and to claim continental possessions:

The City of London has brought forth some men who made many kingdoms and the Roman Empire subject to themselves; and many others, lords over the world, whom virtue lifted to the skies, as was promised in Apollo's oracle to Brutus.<sup>59</sup>

Three cities of the medieval world had a significance apart from their geographic location or nationalistic importance. These were Rome, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. The view of Rome was, as a rule, romantic or religious rather than historical. Giraldus Cambrensis, Walter Map, and Dante<sup>60</sup> might complain that the violence, greed and corruption of papal Rome made it unworthy of its role as centre of the Western world and seat of God's vicar, but this was not the concept of Rome which generally occupied the medieval mind. Rome was the un-

<sup>58</sup> Stow, p. 22.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>60</sup> C. T. Davis, Dante and the Idea of Rome (Oxford, 1957), p. 34, summarizes Dante's conception which one may regard as the typical medieval view:

Dante's Rome united the pagan and Christian cities, imperial and papal in perfect fusion. Dante believed Rome was the instrument of God's providence, the heir of Troy, the mother of the Empire, the creator of the Latin civilitas, the unifier of the genus humanum, the seer of Peter, the centre of the ecclesia universalis. In her present corruption she was the monster of the Apocalypse; her name could symbolize Paradise.

equaled symbol of power and glory, the capital of the greatest empire that had ever existed, "absolute power under the guidance of virtue and wisdom," in Gibbon's phrase,<sup>61</sup> the home of the martyrs, the victim of mutability that paradoxically remained eternal.<sup>62</sup> The fourth-century poet, Ausonius, described it as "Prima urbes inter Divum domus, aurea Roma." Fifty years later, after it had been sacked by Alaric's horde, a man from Gaul, Claudius Rutilius Namatianus, composed an Augustinian panegyric as a farewell to Rome, "regina tui pulcerrima mundi":

Fecisti patriam diversis gentibus unam:  
Profuit invitis te dominante capi;  
Dumque offers victis proprii consortia iuris,  
Urbem fecisti quod prius orbis erat.

Pilgrims streaming to Rome for the celebrations of A.D. 1300 sang at the first sight of the city:

O Roma nobilis, orbis et domina,  
Cunectarum urbium excellentissima.

The impression Rome made on a twelfth-century English traveller known only as Master Gregory was not so very different from the reactions of his fellow-countrymen, Gibbon, Byron, Samuel Rogers, and Hobhouse, six hundred years later:<sup>63</sup>

I was overwhelmed and remembered Caesar's

<sup>61</sup>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, abridg. D. M. Low (London, 1960), p. 1.

<sup>62</sup>Of great antiquity is the proverb quoted by Bede, "quando cadet Roma cadet et mundus."

<sup>63</sup>See Gibbon, Autobiography (New York, 1961), p. 152; Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage IV, LXXVIII; Samuel Rogers, The Italian Journal, ed. J. R. Hale (London, 1956), p. 207.

view of it. . . . This beauty passing understanding I long admired, and I thanked God, who, though great in his manifestations throughout the earth, yet magnified there the works of man to immeasurable beauty. For even if Rome falls into complete ruin, yet nothing that is intact can be compared to it. The ruin of Rome shows clearly, I think, that all temporal things are near their end, when the centre of all worldly things, Rome, daily languishes and decays.<sup>64</sup>

But Rome was a phoenix. A Carolingian poet summarized the glory of Charlemagne's empire in these words, "Aurea Roma iterum renovata renascitur orbi." And as we have seen, the national historians of several western monarchies, including England, claimed for their rulers the sceptre of Rome whose aura was more prestigious than that of the Gothonic nations. As late as the fifteenth century, Rome was the only European city marked on the Vinland map where it was designated by the legend, "Roma capud mundi tenet orbis frena rotunda."

Malory's treatment of Rome reflects several of these aspects. King Arthur laid claim to Rome's power because it had previously been held by his ancestors, Sir Belyne, Sir Bryne, and Constantine. His ally, the Duke of West Wales, sought vengeance on Rome because his complaint to the Pope about an attack made on him and his knights while they were engaged in a pilgrimage to the holy city of martyrs brought him "nothyng e llys but plesaunte wordys" (189). The Roman

---

<sup>64</sup>Cited by George B. Parks, The English Traveler to Italy (Stanford, 1956), p. 251. The note of pessimism sounded by Master Gregory had greatly increased by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (New York, 1954), p. 31ff.

legates carried olive branches,<sup>65</sup> symbolizing the pax Romana that St. Augustine had praised. The climactic moment of Arthur's career was his coronation in Rome.

As Rome symbolized power and glory, Constantinople stood for culture and luxury. "A blend of Imperial Rome and Christian Greece," as Steven Runciman describes it,<sup>66</sup> it was for Western Christendom an object of wonder and envy. The purple and porphyry, the marble, silver, and precious stones, the "golden tree which sheltered a multitude of birds warbling their artificial notes, and two lions of massy gold,"<sup>67</sup> were not yet the aesthetic and philosophic symbols that they were to become for twentieth-century poets.<sup>68</sup> Rather, they represented a wealth that the Crusaders were only too willing to plunder when they captured Byzantium in 1204.<sup>69</sup> This was

<sup>65</sup>This detail was not in Malory's immediate source but did occur in Geoffrey's HRB, IX, XV.

<sup>66</sup>Byzantine Civilisation (London, 1933), p. 60.

<sup>67</sup>E. Gibbon, Decline and Fall, Ch. 53, p. 707.

<sup>68</sup>Cf. W. B. Yeats, "Byzantium" and "Sailing to Byzantium;" Charles Williams, "The Vision of the Empire."

<sup>69</sup>In the view of Runciman, p. 54:

It is hard to exaggerate the harm done to European civilisation by the sack of Constantinople. The treasure of the city, the books and works of art preserved from distant centuries were all dispersed and most destroyed. . . . The conquests of the Ottoman were made possible by the Crusaders' crime.



the world's commercial centre for the greatest part of the middle ages--the only realm with a stable currency. Malory's knights used besauntes (175, 12, 41), gold coins struck in Byzantium. Chrétien's Alexander, the son of the Byzantine Emperor, was sent off to Arthur's court with two barges full of gold and silver because "largess makes the gentleman."<sup>70</sup> The tales told by travelers<sup>71</sup> about the city's wealth and comfort make it "a fairy-tale city of which men dreamed in France, in Scandinavia, in England."<sup>72</sup>

Many of the travelers who came to Byzantium were on their way to another golden city, Jerusalem, "the herte, and the myddes of all the world."<sup>73</sup> It was the geographic centre because it was the spiritual centre. Here the Lord had set his compass when drawing the limits of the universe. This was the City of Peace, symbol of the ideal city and the perfect society. On medieval maps the site was marked by an immense church or castle or walled town with circular battlements.<sup>74</sup> Medieval miniatures also depicted a walled town with bulbous domes and minarets<sup>75</sup> added as symbols of the

<sup>70</sup>Chrétien de Troyes, Cliges, ll. 169-234.

<sup>71</sup>See Mandeville, pp. 6-14. <sup>72</sup>Runciman, p. 277.

<sup>73</sup>Mandeville, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup>See Karl Miller, Mappaemundi, vol. III, fig. 14.

<sup>75</sup>See the ms. illustrated for Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy in a translation (1455) of Descriptio Terrae Sanctae by Burchard du Mont-Sion (1283). The miniature of Jerusalem is reproduced as a frontispiece in Michel Join-Lambert's Jerusalem (London, 1958).

Moslem power that had put an end to the Mediterranean common-wealth created around mare nostrum.<sup>76</sup> Both materially and spiritually it was "a city built on a hill that cannot be hid."<sup>77</sup> From the fourth century it had been an object of Christian veneration and solicitude. An elaborate system of typological correspondences related its geographic features to the Biblical tradition. For instance, the fifteenth-century Franciscan, Felix Fabri, wrote of the rock of Calvary:

Adam, our first father, died here; Abraham was blessed here by Melchisedeck; Isaac was brought hither by his father to be sacrificed. The brazen serpent was set up here; the Lord Jesus was crucified here.<sup>78</sup>

As a historico-geographic site it was familiar to pilgrims and crusaders; as a spiritual concept it represented the aspirations of all Christians--the city of God promised after Christ's Second Coming. The two ideas were combined in a thirteenth-century Venetian miniature which depicted a golden city of towers and battlements attacked and defended by medieval knights while from a trefoil canopy behind and above the city walls, Christ raises his hand in blessing.<sup>79</sup> A four-

---

<sup>76</sup>See Henri Pirenne, Medieval Cities, trans. F. O. Halsey (Garden City, 1956), pp. 14-15.

<sup>77</sup>Matthew 5, 14.

<sup>78</sup>Cited by H. F. M. Prescott, Jerusalem Journey (London, 1954), p. 125.

<sup>79</sup>Joan Evans ed., The Flowering of the Middle Ages (London, 1967), p. 30.

teenth-century metrical romance, The Siege of Jerusalem, described the city with the rich sensory imagery traditionally used in descriptions of heaven<sup>80</sup>--the Temple of Solomon adorned with great rubies, pearls, and glittering gold; the doors studded with diamonds, treasures more brilliant than tongue could tell, silk by the cartful. Perhaps the tales of Byzantium's splendour influenced these visions, the radiant beauty of the earthly city typifying the joys of a paradise that the medieval mind could best imagine as a place rather than a state.<sup>81</sup>

The earthly Jerusalem of St. Paul, St. Augustine and William Blake was also the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse, the object of man's hope, a "continuing city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God."<sup>82</sup> Malory's Sarras, with its "spiritual palace" and pagan king may well represent the earthly city which Galahad, like Godfrey of Bouillon, rescued and ruled. It is also the entrance to Heaven.

Physically, the concept of space in medieval thought was patterned concentrically. Philosophically and theologically it was also patterned vertically. At the highest level was the City of God with its Trinity, worshiped by the hierarchy of the heavenly hosts. In the sublunar realm were the

<sup>80</sup>Cf. Pearl, ll. 985-1080.

<sup>81</sup>The idea that the gate to Heaven is built in Jerusalem's wall was used by Blake in Jerusalem, ll. 77-80.

<sup>82</sup>Epistle to the Hebrews ll, 10. Cf. Pearl, ll. 925-960.

daemons, or longaevi<sup>83</sup>--the classical nymphs, Celtic faeries, witches, dwarf, giants and equivocal damsels of the Arthurian scene, often unclassifiable in a moral sense. Attached to the earth were mortal creatures, each holding its peculiar place in the great chain of being. Finally, in the very centre of the concentric universe and on the lowest level of the vertical scale were the fiery pit of Hell and its denizens. As C. S. Lewis remarks, "Few constructions of the imagination. . .have combined splendour, sobriety, and coherence in the same degree"<sup>84</sup> as did the medieval model of the universe.

---

<sup>83</sup>See Lewis, Discarded Image, p. 216.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 216.