

Le Morte Darthur for Children: Malory's Third Tradition

Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* is a book for adult readers, but one which most of them will already have encountered in a version for children. This was not always the case. Before the mid-Victorian period, there was a juvenile Arthurian literature in the form of short histories, chapbook romances, ballads, *Jack the Giant-Killer* and *Tom Thumb*, but it did not involve Malory, whom young people had to read straight or not at all. J. T. Knowles's *Story of King Arthur* (1862) is usually seen as beginning adaptations of the *Morte* for young readers, a category which has since grown very large. Malory's book remains today, as it was for Tennyson,¹ a notable link between youth and age, still perhaps one of the few narratives that people might encounter in some form throughout their whole reading lives. But since the mid-nineteenth century there has been a troubled double apprehension of the *Morte*: that it is somehow particularly suitable for children yet can only be made so by strenuous adaptation. It has been a text both loved and feared, deeply entrusted and distrusted with cultural labour. Through our double compulsion to give the story to children yet to change it radically for that purpose, Malory sets a revealing test for each generation, each writer, that adapts and retells him.

The test is the more intense since *Le Morte Darthur* (unlike the vaguer category of 'Arthurianism') cannot be considered timeless and infinitely malleable material. It is a singular and obsessive text, and has often proved tellingly resistant to its new employments, even to the most enthusiastic re-appropriations. The result has been a fascinating and long-running contest between originals² and retellings in which, despite Malory's 'classic' status, the patterns of change often betray how much rewriters have found the venerable

¹ See Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir*, 2, p. 128. quoted in Mancoff, p. 53.

² The idea of the 'original' *Morte* has altered also, with changes to Caxton (1485) by Wynkyn de Worde (1498) and the edition of 1634, and since the discovery of the Winchester manuscript in 1934 and the subsequent editions by Eugène Vinaver. For Caxton's edition see Meale. For Wynkyn de Worde's influence on visual presentation of the *Morte*, see Grimm.

book problematical or simply uncommercial. Conversely, for those readers who know it, the *Morte* continues to 'write back' to its adapters for children, as it did to Tennyson, spotlighting their own foibles, assumptions and preoccupations. The steady stream for the children's market has thus created a third tradition of cultural dialogue with *Le Morte Darthur*, in parallel with the traditions of its critical reception and of neo-Arthurian literature and film, yet frequently interacting with them. Moreover, like those other bodies of work this one has long since become self-referential and semi-autonomous, often responding to other adaptations as much as to the *Morte* itself. In what follows, I attempt to trace the contexts, the development, the outcomes, and some of the ideological implications of this third tradition of Malory.

There have been so many children's versions of various kinds that this study can make no pretence of completeness. Largely concentrating on the print tradition, I only give a guide to the main characteristics, noting trends, and offering some more extended comments on what seem the most important exemplars. Basically, the two strategies of revision are abridgement and retelling. Adapters always have to decide what to keep and what to cut, for no children's versions except those of Howard Pyle have approached Malory in length. They must also decide what elements in the *Morte* they especially want to preserve—the general *fabula*, the specific order of narrative events, or the actual words. That will determine whether they attempt a retelling, an adaptation, or a selection. The five main varieties can be described as: i) Abridged, censored and glossed editions for children, with mainly original text. ii) As i, but more modernised and altered in diction. iii) Books selecting Malory stories, but mainly retold for children. iv) As iii, with significant new events alongside or replacing Malory's. v) New works for children with some significant relation to the original *Le Morte Darthur*. These are not the only kinds of children's Malory, but they cover the

main trends of adaptation since 1862. Category (v) is the one most scanted here, for reasons of space.³

I have chosen to treat the material diachronically. Even though this means that sometimes rather disparate books are discussed together, it better allows for the analysis of cultural history. One of the problems of contemporary medievalist studies generally is that we have established all too strong an idea of the middle ages as reconstructed between 1800 and 1914, but become progressively vaguer and more purely descriptive on the subject as we approach the present. Everyone knows, rather too glibly, that the nineteenth century used Malory to underwrite nation and empire, chivalry and the gentleman. No comparably strong notions have yet emerged from the twentieth century's *Morte Darthurs*, partly because more recent neo-medievalism has not had the prestige of Scott, Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. Looking at the continuing Malory tradition within children's literature is a limited but concentrated test of continuity and change, a way to articulate important ideological differences within nineteenth-century medievalism, and to see if more has happened since then than a faint or ironised echo.

My study is divided into four rough periods: 1485-1861; 1862-1913; 1914-1970; 1971-2001. I start in 1485 because the process of censoring, repackaging, and moralising the text has been going on since Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde and the 1634 edition. It was no giant step in 1862 to Knowles's offer of a better *Morte Darthur* for youth than Malory himself had provided. The chronological divisions suggested here should not be given too much importance, since there has always been a strong continuity in the tradition, with numerous versions reprinted and commercially repackaged over many years. Knowles's, for example, had nine editions from 1862 to 1912, and has been reissued as late as 1995. Ideological eras are a lot harder to establish than changes in publishing 'look'. One observes overlapping parallel developments of fairly long duration rather than sudden

³ See Simpson, Taylor, Thompson and Lupack for broader surveys of neo-Arthurian

paradigm shifts. 'Victorian' censorship of Malory for children lasted long into the twentieth century and is not finished yet. The common notion that chivalric idealism lapsed markedly after the Great War is disputed by printings of Sidney Lanier's *The Boy's' King Arthur* in 1880 and 1920; U. Waldo Cutler's *Tales from Malory* in 1911, 1929 and 1933 (revised); Henry Gilbert's *King Arthur's Knights: The Tales Retold for Boys and Girls* in 1911, 1933 and 1934; and five editions of Beatrice Clay's *Stories of King Arthur* from 1901 to 1927.⁴ Howard Pyle's series still remains in print as a 'classic'. World War II was no absolute watershed either. Cecily Rutley's very Tennysonian *Stories of King Arthur's Knights* appeared in 1929 and 1951; Enid Blyton's versions in 1930, 1950 and 1963; Stuart Campbell's in 1933, 1935, 1938, 1941 (twice) and 1964. Roger Lancelyn Green's book (1953) and Rosemary Sutcliff's trilogy (1981) have both been reissued as recently as 1999. Such longevity is as noticeable as change in the tradition. It seems that a good or distinctive product can survive up to fifty years or more, especially with an updated format. N. C. Wyeth's action pictures gave Lanier's book another life,⁵ and Antonia Pakenham's [Fraser's] retelling of 1954 was transformed in 1970 by Rebecca Fraser's original illustrations. It remains to be seen which of the spate of large-format, colour-illustrated books of the 1980s and 1990s will last, what new emphases will appear, and how important Malory's text will be in their production.

I should point out also that though 'the *event* of children's literature lies in the chemistry of a child's encounter with it' (Hollindale: 49), my comparative survey is necessarily from an adult reader's perspective. I am interested in the traffic between these adaptations and their original, and their relation to each other and to broader cultural changes, things child readers will mainly ignore: 'for any book children encounter, the availability of pre-texts and intertexts is rather random' (Stephens: 88). So my discussion is not a window onto childhood

fiction.

⁴ Matthews, pp. 104-5, notes a similar post-war survival of Chaucer editions for children.

⁵ See Lupack, pp. 75-6.

(except insofar as reading may create the real condition of childhood) but an adult's investigation of textual 'childness', as Peter Hollindale calls it—'shared ground, though differently experienced and understood, between child and adult' (Hollindale: 47).

For the adult, childness is composed of the grown-up's memories of childhood, of meaningful continuity between child and adult self, of the varied behaviour associated with being a child, and the sense of what is appropriate behaviour for a given age, of behavioural standards. This compound of cultural and personal attitudes is articulated in a text of children's literature. (Hollindale: 49)

This is not objective territory. Because so many people have first read Malory's stories when young, and delighted as grown-ups in telling them again to children, cultural consciousness of *Le Morte Darthur* has become richly invested with adult 'childness', what we remember and imagine about childhood. Simultaneously, thanks to its idealist nineteenth-century revivers, the *Morte* itself, seen as the first chapter of children's literature in English, has come to stand for the beginning, the childhood of British culture. Adaptations of Malory for children are a marketplace where linked ideologies of childness and of the British medieval are displayed and negotiated, but also private places of memory where adult writers and readers ponder the structures of their development, and connect their lives. Each will guard a special third tradition.

I. Before the age of retellings: 1485-1861

Malory did not write for children. His book makes no concessions to a young audience, and never interpellates its audience as young. Where he discriminates, he appeals to the experience of age—smiling at Gareth and

Lyonet's indiscreet assignation (Vinaver: 205/25-27),⁶ explaining La Cote Male Tayle's greenness on horseback (287/3-13), and frequently stressing the value of long continuance, 'olde jantylnes and olde servyse' (649/5). When he suggests an audience it is gentle and adult—'all jantyllumen that beryth olde armys' (232/15-16), 'ye all Englysshemen' (708/34), or 'all jentyllumen and jentyllwymmen that redeth this book' (726/14-15). Nevertheless, the *Morte* may have always been 'children's literature' in the limited sense that what we would call children, or at least adolescents, probably knew it too, like Sidney's 'tale that holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner'.⁷ It is easy to imagine bright children rapt in reading or hearing someone read the stories, wondering, like Gareth, if they could ever withstand a proved knight (181/25) and following Launcelot as devotedly as young Elayne and Lavayne of Ascolat: 'she doth as I do, for sythen I saw first my lorde sir Launcelot I cowde never departe from hym' (639/13-14). Malory's younger contemporary readers, perhaps especially those whose families considered themselves 'gentle', must have found it easy to relate to this gripping romance in plain language, which had no competition from any children's books written for pleasure. As a vernacular narrative, it was open to the literate of all ages. Roger Ascham's famous denunciation shows how successfully he thought Malory had appealed to youth of both sexes:

Yet I know, when Gods Bible was banished the Court, and *Morte Arthure* receiued into the Princes chamber. What toyes, the dayly readyng of such a booke, may worke in the will of a yong ientleman, or a yong mayde, that liueth welthelie and idlelie, wise men can iudge, and honest men do pitie. (Ascham: 28)

⁶ All subsequent page and line references to Malory's original text are to this edition.

⁷ Sidney, p. 40. See Hollindale, p. 28: 'Children's literature does not denote a text but a reading event. Whenever a successful voluntary transaction takes place between any text and any one child, that text is for the moment "children's literature".'

The margin of *The Scholemaster* (1571) erupts into pointing hands around this passage. Other early assessments of Malory's effect on the young were obviously more positive. The *Morte* has been tentatively linked to the household culture of Edward IV, where the squires were expected after supper to be 'talking of chronicles of kings and other policies' (Barber: 152). Caxton, as was his habit, advertised the book as good 'doctryne' for future life, and simply advised readers, both men and women, to 'Doo after the good and leve the evyl' (Vinaver: xv). Whether or not Malory's stories were actually treated as exemplars for youth, many of them feature aspiring male youths, determined to make good in the adult world. With a few exceptions, the *Morte* is not much concerned with its heroes as children, but it returns repeatedly to their transition from youth to proven knighthood, often involving the assistance of experienced older figures like Governal or Launcelot. For the most part, youth and age cooperate willingly. So young Ywain explains his choice of an elderly guide: 'I am yongest and waykest of you bothe, therefore lette me have the eldyst damesell, for she hath sene much and can beste helpe me whan I have nede' (98/1-3). These are all success stories. In the early days at Camelot, Tor, sponsored by Arthur and Merlin, does wonderfully in his first quest, setting a pattern for Gareth and La Cote Male Tayle later on. Arthur, Tristram, Alexander the Orphan, Galahad, along with lesser protégés like Gryflet, Hebes and Lavayne, are followed from childhood or youth into their lives as knights. This preferred narrative shows how completely Malory's culture understands young people in terms of their future roles in maturity. Noble youth is spent in expectation, training and hero-worship of knights. Prince Tristram, of course, has a noble tutor, and gets a seven-year French education in 'the langage and nurture and dedis of armys', excelling in music and hunting, (231/43-232/4), but the supposed churls Tor and Beaumains seem able to train themselves—Gareth may have learned at home in Orkney, but Malory does not say how young Tor is otherwise ready to become a knight. His cowherd step-father explains that 'allwey he woll be shotynge, 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' (61/27-29). Gareth disguised as Beaumains is similar: 'ever whan he saw ony justyng of knyghtes, that wolde he se and he myght. And where there were ony mastryes doynge, thereat wolde he be, and there myght none caste barre nother stone to hym by two yardys' (179/9-15). The common emphasis on masculine emulation makes Galahad's rearing in a nunnery and his initial self-distancing from Launcelot and other knights more distinctive, but even he is brought to court by 'a good olde man and an awnciente' attended by 'twenty noble squyers', and commends himself to 'my grauntesyre, kynge Pelles, and unto my lorde kynge Pecchere' (518-19). Malory's children, like his women, are not expected to have legitimate interests independent of the male adult power group, and they seem impatient to join it. A child able to read the *Morte* in its own era would have found little difference from an adult in its basic ideological impact. This medieval version of the child as father of the man was a feature which Romantic, Victorian and Edwardian adapters would find very congenial to their own times. It has faded considerably over the last fifty years, as the rationale for children's literature has moved from instruction towards entertainment.

In the centuries following 1485, Arthur's doubtful historicity, a minor issue for Caxton, became a major one, weakening one aspect of his literary appeal. At the same time, the medieval fictions about him came to seem old-fashioned. The edition of 1634 had to apologise that 'In many places fables and fictions are inserted, which may be a blemish to what is true in his history' (Walker: xi). It appealed to readers' patriotism, asking them to lay aside contempt for the 'errors of our ancestors' for the sake of 'the immortal name and fame of our victorious Arthur' (Walker: xi). It also assured them that, although this was 'the best form and manner of writing and speech, that was in use in those times' (Walker xi), the text had been censored.

In many places this volume is corrected (not in language, but in phrase;) for here and there, King Arthur, or one of his knights, were declared, in

their communications, to swear prophane, and use superstitious speeches, all (or the most part) of which is either amended, or quite left out so that, as it is now, it may pass for a famous piece of antiquity, revived almost from the gulph of oblivion, and renewed for the pleasure and profit of present and future times. (Walker: xii)

The 1634 preface suggests a potential connection between the unrefined virtues of Arthur, the 'plain and simple' speech of Malory, and the bright childhood of the British nation, which would be developed enthusiastically by later readers. But by the time children's literature began in earnest in the mid-eighteenth century, there had been no further edition of the *Morte. King Arthur*, in a version very unlike Malory's, featured in children's histories rather than in their fiction. He now had increasingly less credence as a real figure than in the adult popular histories of the previous age. *The ... Most Renowned Christian Worthy Arthur* (1660) had protested that 'to explode one [Christian worthy] is to hisse all the rest from the stage of Christianity' (Renowned: 1). *Great Britain's Glory* (1680) claimed that only 'envious Aliens' doubted Arthur, 'to lessen the Credit of his great Exploits', and Nathaniel Crouch's *History of the Nine Worthies of the World* (1687) argued that just as it would be 'infidelity' and 'atheism' to doubt the truth of Joshua or David, so it would be 'incredulity and ingratitude' to reject Arthur, despite the accretion of incredible stories around his name (Crouch: 147).⁸ By the eighteenth century this was changing. Newbery's *A New History of England* (1763) dedicated 'To the Young Gentlemen and Ladies of Great Britain and Ireland', maintained the old distinction between true British hero and the creature of 'romances' (New History: 35-36), but in 1764 Oliver Goldsmith firmly relegated Arthur to political fiction, and to futility:

⁸ By the time of the Dublin reprint of Crouch's book by Richard Fitzimons in 1775, this passage had been excised from the preface.

At such a time as this a Christian hero was wanted to vindicate the rights of Christianity, and probably, merely for this reason, fiction has supplied us with a Christian hero. The British Champion is said to have worsted the Saxons in twelve different engagements, yet, notwithstanding all his victories, and whatever his prowess might have performed, it did not serve to rescue his country from its new persecutors. (Goldsmith: 33-34)

Arthur seems to have largely vanished from juvenile histories by the nineteenth century, and is no longer in books of 'Worthies',⁹ but for a long while the space vacated was not supplied by juvenile Arthurian fiction. *Le Morte Darthur* continued to be 'King Arthur', and tattered copies of the 1634 edition were still devoured by children. As a schoolboy, Southey 'possessed a wretchedly imperfect copy, and there was no book, except the Fairy Queen, which I perused so often, or with such deep contentment' (Southey: xxviii). The *Morte* must have been light reading to those painfully learning Latin and Greek. On the crest of the medievalist revival and the growth of romanticism, reissues by Walker and Edwards in 1816 and by Southey in 1817 not only made it newly available 'as a book for boys' (Southey: xxviii)¹⁰ but showed it had also become more praiseworthy in contemporary critical terms. The Walker edition freely admitted that Malory was not history, but added that

its merit, as a fiction, is very great. It gives the general reader an excellent idea of what romances of chivalry actually were; it is also written in pure English, and many of the wild adventures which it contains, are told with a simplicity bordering upon the sublime. (Walker: viii)

⁹ E.g., Yonge 1869; Adams.

¹⁰ For boys' reception of Walker's 1816 edition, see Exploits, p. 12: 'a writer in an old edition of Blackwood tells us:—"In one large public school a solitary copy in two disreputable little paper-bound volumes was passed from hand to hand, and literally read to pieces, at all hours, lawful and unlawful."

The potentially negative eighteenth-century connotations of 'wild adventures', echoing the definition of 'romance' in Johnson's *Dictionary*,¹¹ are redeemed by reference to the cult of simplicity and the sublime, whilst 'pure English' suggests an influence for both national and moral integrity. The value of the Arthurian story had changed from educational fact to imaginative resource.

Belief that the *Morte* in the original could be given to young readers persisted longer than is sometimes acknowledged. It perhaps explains why new editions and selected versions of Malory kept pace at first with outright retellings. So much has been written about Victorian censorship for children that it is interesting to note the attitudes of a staunch defender of Malory throughout her life, the best-selling novelist Charlotte M. Yonge (1823-1901).¹² In Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), the hero Guy Morville is cast in opposition to his worthy but overbearing cousin Philip. Masculine role modelling is a major issue. The eighteen-year-old Guy dismisses Sir Charles Grandison as a prig—'How could any one have any sympathy with such a piece of self-satisfaction?' (Yonge 1853: 1. 32)—and names Sir Galahad (Malory's rather than Tennyson's) as his favourite character in fiction. In their ensuing discussion of Malory, Philip's attitude reflects learned condescension—he is a classical scholar—and greater moral calculation. His accusation of 'sameness' in Malory is typical of nineteenth-century criticism.¹³ Guy, the true 'heir' of England's chivalric past, is a champion of religious idealism:

'Don't you know him?', said Guy. 'Sir Galahad—the Knight of the Siege Perilous—who won the Saint Greal.'

'What language is that?' said Charles.

'What! Don't you know the *Morte D'Arthur*? I thought every one did! Don't you, Philip?'

¹¹ See Johnson: *romance*: 'a military fable of the middle ages; a tale of wild adventures in love or chivalry'.

¹² For an account of Charlotte Yonge, see Avery 1965, pp. 104-118.

¹³ See Lynch 1999.

'I once looked into it. It is very curious, in classical English; but it is a book no one could read through.'

'Oh! cried Guy indignantly; then, 'but you only looked into it. If you had lived with its two fat volumes, you could not help delighting in it. It was my boating book for at least three summers.'

'That accounts for it,' said Philip; 'a book so studied in boyhood acquires a charm apart from its actual merit.'

'But it has actual merit. The depth, the mystery, the allegory—the beautiful characters of some of the knights.'

'You look through the medium of your imagination,' said Philip; 'but you must pardon others for seeing a great sameness of character and adventure, and for disapproving of the strange mixture of religion and romance.'

'You've never read it,' said Guy, striving to speak patiently.

'A cursory view is enough to show whether a book will repay the time spent in reading it.' (Yonge 1853: 1. 176-77)

As in Kenelm Digby's view of chivalry, Yonge makes the fervour of innocent boyhood the beginning of adult greatness—Guy has 'lived with' the *Morte* rather than frigidly 'looked into it', and even while swotting his Greek for Oxford makes 'a little refreshing return afterwards to the books which had been the delight of younger days' (Yonge 1853: 1. 358). He is likened throughout to a young Galahad, through his slight figure and stature, his modelling for a portrait of the knight, and the 'boyish epic about King Arthur' he has written. Guy inherits a fierce temper from the Morvilles; his battles to subdue it are his own version of chivalric virtue. Like Galahad, he is the youth whose conduct redeems the sins of his ancestors, in this case a grandfather who has recklessly practised duelling. Like Galahad also, he is the youth who cures the effects of sin in others, then dies the perfect death. Guy learns to overcome his passion for revenge when

Philip wrongly accuses him of vice, and dies at twenty-one, after heroically nursing his cousin through illness:

There was a sheet thrown over the coffin instead of a pall, and this, with the white dress of the widow, gave the effect of the emblematic whiteness of a child's funeral. (Yonge 1853: 2. 219)

Early death (leading to eternal punishment or reward) underlines the importance of childhood influences for Yonge. With salvation at stake, she required children to be morally and intellectually challenged by literature, and missed the days when they could read only adult books: 'real power was cultivated, and the memory provided with substantial stories, at the time when it was most retentive' (Yonge 1869: 1. 229). In the present, she complains, children 'are interdicted from the study of that which would stretch their minds lest they should meet with anything objectionable' (Yonge 1869: 3. 449-50). In Yonge's view, the struggle of young readers with a challenging book is a version of the romance hero's own formative aspiration to higher things and struggle against vice. Its importance overrides censoring caution:

Bring children as soon as possible to stretch up to books above them, provided those books are noble and good. Do not give up such books on account of passages on which it would be inconvenient to be questioned on. If the child is in the habit of meeting things without comprehension it will pass such matters unheeded with the rest. The only things to put out of its way are things that *nobody* should read, certainly not its mother. (Yonge 1869: 3, 456)

Yonge's scenario sounds comically gendered, but she mentions the 'mother', I think, mainly as the parent likely to be choosing books for children in the family. She is not suggesting, of course, that children can read anything, but that the whole family's literature should already be carefully chosen, not with a view to

avoiding all delicate subjects and mention of vice, but in an informed and conscientious way. Children's innocence will protect them from many temptations in reading; to keep young people in ignorance may be more dangerous. Laura, Phillip's secret betrothed, has her judgement damaged by his censorship of her reading, which we come to see as principally serving his own ends: 'You know he would never let her read novels, and I do believe that was the reason that she did not understand what it [their engagement] meant' (Yonge 1855: 2. 414). Adults and future adults are expected to avoid literature that endangers their particular temperaments or situations.¹⁴ Guy Morville, for example, has avoided Byron,

For who could have told where the mastery might have been in the period of fearful conflict with his passions, if he had been feeding his imagination with the contemplation of revenge, dark hatred and malice, and identifying himself with Byron's brooding and lowering heroes? (Yonge 1853: 2. 126)

Malory apparently fitted perfectly into Yonge's scenario. Boys, she argued, 'should have heroism and nobleness kept before their eyes; and learn to despise all that is untruthful or cowardly, and to respect womanhood' (Yonge 1887: 6); it is rather like a modern version of the Pentecost oath of Camelot.¹⁵ Like Malory again, and like Spenser, whom she frequently cites, Yonge always sees youth as in preparation for adulthood. Childhood reading is an essential part of the maturing process, the equivalent of young Tor's and Gareth's looking on at battles and tournaments, and always anticipates further reading. She recommended C. H. Hanson's *Stories of the Days of King Arthur* (1882), a broad-based Arthurian compilation, mainly as a precursor to the great originals:

¹⁴ See Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, Chapter 11, for Anne Elliot's advice on reading to melancholy Captain Benwick.

¹⁵ See Vinaver, p. 75. 'never to do outrage nothir morthir, and allwayes to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto him that askith mercy, ... and allwayes to do ladyes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes socour'.

Hardly to be called historical, but with the grand outlines of Sir T. Malory's great romance, and with excellent illustrations by Gustave Doré. Desirable as giving the genuine English heroic tale, noble in itself, and furnishing allusions. It is intended to prepare the way for Malory and Tennyson, and there is little said of the Quest of the Holy Grail. (Yonge 1887: 57)

For Yonge, reading Hanson is a step on the 'way', a quest which will lead children through the delight of the 'noble' tale on to the 'depth, the mystery, the allegory' of the *Morte* in its own words, complemented, not replaced, by Tennyson.

Shortly before the phase of adapted Malories began in the 1860s, Yonge involved the *Morte* freely in the finest Arthurian children's story of her century, *The History of Sir Thomas Thumb* (1855). Tom Thumb had been a chapbook subject in prose and verse since the earlier sixteenth century (Tom Thumb), always with adventures that included residence at Arthur's court, but never Malorian. Henry Fielding in the 1730s had turned it into mock-tragedy and political satire (Fielding). Yonge found these versions impoverished and offensive. She set out to redeem the story in the form of a fairy tale, 'free from the former offences against good taste' (Yonge 1855: iii). Her scholarly notes provide 'some of the choice passages of English fairy poetry', and 'give a few sketches from the romances of King Arthur's Court, often a subject of much youthful curiosity, not easily gratified' (Yonge 1855: iv). Besides Malory, there is reference to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Old French romances, the stanzaic *Morte Arthure*, Scots ballads ('True Thomas') and Percy's *Reliques*, together with Spenser, Shakespeare, Arnold and Tennyson. (This meant, inevitably, a class promotion for juvenile Arthuriana from the cottage chap-book to the nursery culture of privileged homes.)¹⁶ Half-imp, half-human by birth, like Merlin, Yonge's Tom has to battle the temptation of retreat to the fairy world regularly proposed to him by Queen Mab and Robin

Goodfellow. He is taken into fairyland by Mab, after receiving a wound from Mordred, and lives in melancholy pleasure there, but returns when Arthur's trumpet is heard at the Last Battle, in time to find his enemy dead and Arthur dying. The story moves at this point into Malory's majestic words, with Tennysonian notes strengthened by illustrations of Arthur's barge departing for Avalon and the last sight of Excalibur.¹⁷ Yonge employs Tom's unique blend of age and youth, experience and innocence, to make this a fable of growth towards moral maturity, the child's responsibility for the adult it becomes. After the battle, Tom lives on to embody the ideals inherited from the departed King. He returns to fight spiders in the deserted halls of Camelot, and dies there, refusing Puck's last offer of escape:

'Away, tempter!', cried the little knight. 'Better honourable death as a Christian than such life as thine.'

The word Christian had caused the Goblin to contort himself and vanish. A snow-white form flitted before the eyes of the helpless champion, and 'Faithful! Found faithful to thine utmost!' was sung in his ears; but he heard no more. (Yonge 1855: 87)

The Christian allegory of Yonge's *Tom Thumb* bridges the fairy tale and the hitherto adult Arthurian romance tradition, making the child and adult genres interact and deeply identify. In 'J. B.'s brilliant illustrations, Tom is made larger than the fairies, yet smaller than Puck, his adult would-be corrupter. Tom's young face wears an expression of near-tragic consciousness, whilst Mab and the fairy world are strongly sexualised, building on Yonge's references to Spenser's *Bower of Bliss* and *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and even with a hint of Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Yet fairy sensuousness is infantilising, as in Spenser,

¹⁶ See Avery 1994, p. 123, for the distinction.

¹⁷ Yonge seems even to anticipate Tennyson, whose *Enid and Nimue: The True and the False* was not published till 1857. Her Merlin warns: 'Choose the true, not the false. Beware of fairy glitter. Die rather bravely as mortal man than live vainly as weary elf.'

for it enslaves the mind and prevents the exercise of will in duty: "Your thankless office on earth is past," said Mab; from henceforth you are mine" (Yonge 1855: 71). Tom's return to Arthur saves his soul. By analogy, Yonge's return to Malory as a source signals her recovery of almost-forgotten chivalric virtues from the literary past.

Debra Mancoff has stressed the deficiencies of Galahad, the 'bright boy knight', in Victorian eyes:

He would obtain the Grail, but he would never know a woman. He would never lead a household and he would never lead other men. In short, to the Victorian mind, Galahad would never be a man. In stark contrast, Arthur's manly form and mature countenance assured his audience that he—like them—would follow a natural cycle of life. (Mancoff: 56)

Her assessment is truer for the late Victorian period, but rather underrates the positive effect of Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad' written in 1834, published 1842, which dominated early Victorian imagination (Tennyson: No. 234) Members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were expected to know it by heart. Despite the sentiments of some later paintings and illustrations, and Tennyson's eventual critique in 'The Holy Grail' (1869) and elsewhere (Mancoff: 121ff), the twenty-five-year-old's poem shows Galahad's idealism as vigorous and effective, serving a man for life. Young Tennyson's hero is a fiercer fighter than any other knight, just as in Malory (Vinaver: 521/13-17; 530/29-36; 533-36), where at fifteen he defeats all opponents, even Launcelot. The famous 'good blade' that 'carves the casques of men' is directly Malorian:

But at the last by aventure he [Galahad] cam by sir Gawayne and smote hym so sore that he clave hys helme and the coyff of iron unto the hede, that sir Gawayne felle to the erthe; but the stroke was so grete that hit slented downe and kutte the horse sholdir in too.

.... 'Now, be my hede,' seyde sir Gawayne unto sir Ector, 'now ar the wondirs trew that was seyde of sir Launcelot, that the swerd which stake in the stone shulde gyff me such a buffette that I wold nat have hit for the beste castell in the worlde. And now hit ys preved trew, for never ar had I such a stroke of mannys honde.' (Vinaver: 578/3-18)

Tennyson's link between Galahad's chastity and his knightly prowess—'My strength is as the strength of ten / Because my heart is pure'—is also Malory's: 'Sir Galahad is a mayde and synned never, and that ys the cause he shall enchyve where he goth that ye nor none suche shall never attayne' (Vinaver: 535/3-11). In following Malory, the early Tennyson credited youth with a strength and passion capable of dedication to the highest service, the 'mightier transports' of religious faith. Yonge obviously learned from both exemplars. With their authors' confidence in the *Le Morte Darthur* behind them, 'Sir Galahad', Guy Morville and Tom Thumb all display the perfected strength of Christian manhood, triumphing in life and looking bravely beyond death to the ultimate 'prize'. This too is like Malory's Galahad: 'Com forthe, the servaunte of Jesu Cryste, and thou shalt se that thou hast much desired to se' (Vinaver: 606/25-26). The socially deficient, 'ever-naive' adolescent pictured by Mancoff misrepresents the strong vision which the early Victorians derived from Malory. Only after 1860 did many lose faith in the original *Morte* as a bridge from youth to maturity, and require new versions, specially delimited for children.

II. Revision and dilution: 1862-1913

The explosion after 1860 of Malory adaptations, mainly for children, is a remarkable development. There is no simple explanation for it. The factors included: 'increasing awareness of multiple versions of Arthurian legends' (Taylor: 22), encouraging revision—there are numerous nineteenth-century

versions mixing Malory with tales from the *Mabinogion* or Chrétien de Troyes, Robert de Boron, Icelandic sagas, *The High History of the Holy Grail*, and Spenser; greater censorship and the associated belief that there should be a separate literature for children as a 'class', and for the poorer class as a kind of social children (Yonge 1869: 450; Matthews: 93-99); publishers' competition in the growing market for affordable children's fiction, often aiming at readers less literate than Southey and Guy Morville; the very strong influence of Tennyson; widespread disappointment with the original *Morte* as over-long, monotonous and too much devoted to fighting (Lynch: 82-83); above all, the belief that Malory was now especially boys' literature. Clearly, most of these causes were inter-related. They fed on the benign association of chivalric fiction with youth by Kenelm Digby, the early Tennyson, Yonge and others.¹⁸ These writers had raised rather misleading expectations of a half-symbolic, spiritual idealism in *Le Morte Darthur*, which others could not so easily find in its complex mass of narratives. Despite the later assertion that "children took them ['these stories'] over and made them their own .. forced their elders, indeed, ... to revise and recast them in suitable form",¹⁹ the first children's retellings follow contemporary adult taste, and correspond well with prevailing adult criticisms of narrative sameness and shapelessness in the original.

Taylor and Brewer suggest that 'Malory did not need to be translated: his fifteenth-century prose was sufficiently close to modern English, to the language of the Prayer Book and the Bible, to allow him to be read without difficulty in the nineteenth century' (Taylor: 2). This may well have been true, especially if we discount younger children, and there was new access to Malory through Wright's edition of the 1634 print (1858), and Conybeare's revised abridgement (1868). But the contemporary evidence about children's reception is mixed. Knowles (1862) suggested the *Morte* was too old-fashioned for children: 'in our time it has

¹⁸ See, e.g., Mulock, p. 59: 'Far higher than a dull life of perpetual selfish bliss, is that state of being which consists of temptation and triumph, struggle and victory, endurance and repose.' Later, Sidney Lanier found Malory 'singularly exemplary and instructive'. See Lupack: 79.

disappeared from the popular literature and the boys' bookshelves ... [because] since the days of cheap books, it has never been modernised or adapted for general circulation' (Knowles: 1). Contradicting him, an anonymous reteller of 1878 asserted that the earlier nineteenth-century vogue continued:

... the spell works to this day; boys fall upon the volumes still wherever they may fall in their way, and sit absorbed in them as did their forefathers. They tell you more of Sir Bagdemagus and King Pellinore in a week, than they can of Hector and Diomed at the end of a school half-year. The taste is a genuine one on their part, wholly independent of Mr Tennyson and his fellow-poets, explain it how we will. To the schoolboy the tale is one of infinite delight and wonder, and to those of mature age the exploits of Arthur have something akin to the interest aroused by the inimitable 'Punch' among the modern exhibitions. (Exploits: 12)

Why then make a new version? Evidently this one is for adults, given its Tennysonian touches—Launcelot is sent to bring Guinevere to Arthur (though at Morgan's instigation) (Exploits: 103), and the Queen muses that "'The King is too spotless pure—too high above me'" (Exploits: 202). Those whom Malory reminded of Punch and Judy could read this instead:

Her voice had a severe and commanding expression, her dark eyes glowed with revengeful fire, and every fibre of her ravishing form quivered through the robe of spotless white in which she was apparelled; a golden carcanet, studded with gems, encircled her fair brow, and her raven locks floated wildly upon the evening breeze. (Exploits: 25)

The nature of the adaptation shows where *Le Morte Darthur* did not satisfy Victorian popular adult taste. Firstly, its plot and thematics were not Tennyson's,

¹⁹ Henry Steele Commager, Preface to the first edition (1953), of Meigs, p. xi.

which were dominating medievalist imagination, especially with the prominence they gave to female characters. This soon passed directly into children's versions. Mancoff's comment that 'Women had little place in these books [Victorian children's Arthurian literature]' (Mancoff: 110) is quite misleading. In adaptations, retellings and their illustrations, figures such as Guinevere, the Lady of the Lake, Morgan, Vivien (often in place of Malory's Nimue), Lynette, and the two Elaines featured very prominently, and non-Malorian characters like Enid and the 'Lady of the Fountain' were frequently added. Female characters became far more important than in the original, which is not to suggest that they were empowered beyond traditional gender roles. The change may reflect a readership of girls as well as boys,²⁰ also the growing number of female adapters, starting in 1881 with 'Your Loving Granny' (Ballads), but Tennyson's *Idylls* are the main cause. Early versions like Knowles, Ranking (1871), Hanson (1882) and Farrington (1888) were openly influenced by it in their emphases and selections. Farrington, for instance, builds her courtship of Arthur and Guinevere on Tennyson, not Malory; her Gareth marries Lynette, not Lyones; her 'Fair Maid' story is strongly focussed through Elaine, and includes Tennyson's invention of the tournament diamonds; and this section and the 'Death of King Arthur' are framed by Tennyson quotations. Greene (1901) was really an Arthurian 'Tales from Tennyson', and Mary MacGregor's *Stories of King Arthur's Knights* (1905) had for contents: 'Gereint and Enid; Lancelot and Elaine; Pelleas and Ettarde; Gareth and Lynette; Sir Galahad and the Sacred Cup; The Death of King Arthur'.

Secondly, Malory's style was nothing like historical romance as influenced by Scott—full of character effects, learned 'colour' and Shakespearean metaphor—nor like the lush descriptiveness of Bulwer-Lytton. To many his prose seemed repetitive and undeveloped, a barrier to modern taste. The perceived necessity to make 'modernised' 'children's King Arthurs' barely concealed (as sometimes still happens) a hostility to the actual medieval text, a

²⁰ Yonge, 1887, p. 13, considered that boys' books 'may be read by girls also, but most boys

condescending distaste: only a child could really like (or a medieval 'child' have written) such stuff. Hanson, one of the most favourable of early adapters, refers only to 'preserv[ing] as much of Malory's quaint style as is consistent with perfect clearness' (Hanson: v). Morris's modernised version (1892) called the original 'not easy or attractive reading, to other than special students of literature' (Morris: Introduction).²¹ The most tolerant attitude saw it as 'free and childish language'. 'It is not only the words that are childish, but the mood, the quality of the storyteller's imagination is something like a child's. He sees things in vivid, simple pictures.' This was from an editor of actual Malory selections for schools (Macardle: xi). Those who wanted youth to read the medieval original commonly associated its paratactic prose, romance events and episodic narrative structure with childish taste, in a much weakened form of early Victorian chivalric idealism:

He writes with the simple straightforwardness of a child, he accepted the improbable with a child's unquestioning faith; like a child he was not only fond of repetition and the enumeration of high-sounding names, but he linked his sentences together with such words as 'and' and 'so', or 'for' and 'then'. He loved forests and their enchantments, marvellous combats, and fantastic adventures; and he was perturbed by nothing, however irrational. (Wragg: 13)²²

Thanks to the repetition of such opinions, Malory never gained Chaucer's adult and honorary modern status in the early days of 'English Literature', even though in narrative terms, of course, he is not at all simple to adapt. Every scene sets the new writer many subtle problems, and many a modernised version loses

will not read girls' books'.

²¹ In a revised edition of 1933, p. xv, Cutler spoke of 'the quaintness of the fifteenth-century English, a language rather difficult for modern readers'.

²² H. Wragg, ed., *Selections from Malory*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1912, 'for use in middle and senior forms'.

energy to cope with them after the first few pages. In the initial sword-drawing, for instance— Why has Arthur's parentage been disguised? How will that reflect on Igrayne? Does Ector know that Arthur is King? How deceptive, and for how long, is Sir Kay? How will Arthur take the news? Above all, how will they speak? In practice, the *Morte's* style was often too simple for Victorian and Edwardian taste, even with a young audience in mind. When Kay asks Arthur to fetch him a sword, he says only 'I wyll wel' (8/20). These are Arthur's first words, unbeatably positive and direct.²³ In Blackie and Son's version of 1910, 'prepared specially for school children' (Blackie: 3), they conform to an idea of 'medieval' eloquence: 'Right gladly will I do that ... Haste you on with our father. I will return to the town with all speed and will bring you your sword' (Blackie: 9). Both the medievalism and the direction towards children, with its burden of educational responsibility, usually meant, as here, separating the true spirit of medieval chivalry, what Malory *ought* to have written, from his inadequate textual medium.

Thirdly, Malory was either direct or silent on sexual matters, never carefully 'suggestive'. It was adult taste again that required the *Morte* to change in this respect, though the requirement was often projected on to the needs of a young audience. (Interestingly, Knowles's original edition was soon revised 'for a larger public than that of boys only' (Knowles 1868: vii)). Censorship became an important factor, evidently a selling-point, since adapters always drew attention to it in their prefaces. They wanted readers to be assured that their 'King Arthur' would do the cultural work specified by Tennyson, and that it could be freely given as a present or prize. Knowles 'endeavoured ... to follow the rules laid down in the "Idylls of the King" ... 'for the preservation of a lofty original ideal' (Knowles 1862); Conybeare (1868) cut 'coarse passages'; Hanson (1882) cut 'occasional allusions and episodes which make them unfit to be placed in the hands of juvenile readers.' Frith's modernised and abridged edition (1884)

²³ Green, p. 6, renders them as "Certainly I will".

found it necessary to expunge, and, in one instance at least, to alter the relationship of the characters as given in the old romance. We will not more particularly specify the places in which such alterations have been made. Those who are already well acquainted with the history of King Arthur will not need to search, and those who have not already read the romance will not miss the portions left out. (Frith: iii)

He seems concerned that a list of excisions would be used as a pornographic index to the original. This is all far from Charlotte Yonge's confidence in the child reader. The new attitude meant widespread intervention, because Malory is frank about the existence of sexual passion, and makes it a strong motive force, yet has his own reticence too, so censorship could never simply be a matter of cutting a few 'sex scenes' to hide the love intrigue. Frith (like many other censors) makes Launcelot marry Elayne of Corbenic—a far worse disloyalty to Guinevere than sleeping with her by mistake;²⁴ without the love-motive, he must suddenly introduce an 'enchantment' which sends Launcelot mad, and vague 'plots' 'laid against the Queen'; he has to exchange Ector's famous lament at Launcelot's death, which refers to 'the trewest lover, of a synful man, that ever loved woman' (Vinaver: 725/20-21), for a disingenuous evasion: 'When he awaked it was hard for any tongue to tell the lament he made for his brother' (Frith: 405). It was not hard for Malory at this great moment, only for Frith in his self-imposed predicament. This was a typical trade-off of narrative power for unimpeachable content. Farrington has similar trouble with continuity, allowing Launcelot and Guinevere to repent a guilty love which she has not actually brought herself to

²⁴ The marriage with Elaine is also a major problem for Pyle 1905 to explain, since he has claimed, p. 23, that Lancelot 'never had for dame any other lady except the lady Guinevere'. Clark, pp. 188-89, ingeniously solved both problems by having Launcelot drugged, so that he 'forgot all about King Arthur; and it seemed to him that Elaine was Guinevere, and that she was still at home in her father's castle, and that she was going to be married to him.' Several versions since have done similarly.

narrate. Leonora Blanche Lang (1902)²⁵ was far more skilled at censorship. She gives just enough of Merlin's conversation with Arthur to tell readers who his parents were without raising further questions, and to predict the mischief to be caused by Mordred, without revealing Arthur as the father. Unlike others who removed the sexual intrigue, she supplied a substitute. Violence, rather than sex, is the besetting sin of her Camelot, and ceasing to kill is Lancelot's way to 'forsake sin' in her Grail Quest (Lang 1902: 87). There are enough hints, building on Tennyson's story of the courtship, that Guinevere loves Lancelot too much, to make Aggravayne's plot credible and to motivate her final repentance, but not enough to convict them of deep wrong.

Mrs Lang's version shows how much the *Morte* can be changed in its events without quite losing Malory's effect. She found a plain, clear language that was not Malory but a good modern correlative. Here is her version of Arthur's speech when he draws the sword:

'If I am King,' he said at last, 'ask what you will, and I shall not fail you. For to you, and to my lady and mother, I owe more than to anyone in the world, for she loved me and treated me as her son.' (Lang 1902: 3)

This lacks the urgency of the original, with its play of emotions as Arthur moves from son to monarch:

'Els were I to blame,' said Arthur, 'for ye are the man in the world that I am most beholdyng to, and my good lady and moder your wyf that as wel as her owne hath fostred me and kepte. And yf ever hit be Goddes will that I be kynge as ye say, ye shall desyre of me what I may doo and I shalle not faille yow. God forbede I shold faille yow.' (Vinaver 9/28-30)

²⁵ Lang 1902, though published as by Andrew Lang, is apparently mainly the work of his wife Leonora Blanche Lang. See p. ix. The Grettir story was adapted from William Morris by another writer.

Nevertheless, few re-writers did as well.²⁶ Since nearly half of Malory is in direct speech, their more typical method of abridgement into summary third-person narration distanced readers from the action, and intruded the narrator more, so that the 'vigour and valour' Frith (iv) prized in the original was diluted. There was often no concern to maintain consistency with Malorian style. Farrington has a Guinevere with 'eyes as blue as the summer skies; her hair so gold-bright as to have stolen rays from the sun' (Farrington: 25). There was also very little humour. The King Arthur stage shows of the period are occasionally funny to read, and show knowledge of Malory as well as Tennyson, but they are adult 'burlesque extravaganzas' rather than children's pantomimes.²⁷

Despite more worries about character consistency than Malory had shown—Gawain troubled readers from Southey to Howard Pyle²⁸—his abridgers often left out the situational touches that make a scene in the *Morte* distinctive. For instance, although young Tor's achievement of knighthood was a favourite event in children's versions, these were more purely fixated on the issue of class promotion than the original; they never included Tor's touching reaction—that Merlin dishonours his peasant mother by revealing King Pellinore as the real father—or showed Malory's concern for the feelings of Aries the cowherd. Blandness of style and incident resulting from censorship and abridgement accompanied over-idealisation of character:

the gentle Percival, the patient Gareth, the brave Gawaine, the peerless
Launcelot, the merry Dinadan, the pure knight Galahad. All these strongly

²⁶ Pyle 1903, p. 25 is very stagey in this scene: 'Then, when Arthur heard that saying of his father's, he cried out in a very loud and vehement voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe!"—saying that word three times. And Sir Ector said, "Arthur, why art thou woeful?" And Arthur said, "'Because I have lost my father, for I would rather have my father than be a king!'" Campbell 1933, p. 21, is stuffy: "If I am indeed king", he told Sir Hector, 'I shall never forget my gratitude to you, and to the lady whom I have always believed to be my mother. Whatever you may ask of me, I will not fail to give it to you.'

²⁷ See, e.g., Brough. For the distinction, see Mander.

²⁸ See Southey, p. xv; Pyle 1903, p. 279; Meigs, pp. 281-82. Pyle's Gawain has not *really* killed Lamorack, and his liaison with Ettarde is only the result of 'enchantment'.

contrast the treachery and the wickedness of Queen Morgan Le Fay.
(Farrington: 7-8)

Gareth's impatient love for Lyones, Gawain's murderous vengefulness, Lancelot's disloyalty to Arthur, are all forgotten here. Exemplary characters were supposed to be Malory's strength, in the absence of enthusiasm for his style and narrative structure, but they really became a serious weakness. *Idylls of the King* had become the 'adult' version of the story, but retellers for children were unwilling to acknowledge the flaws that had made the *Morte's* heroes and heroines interesting to Tennyson, or to Morris and Swinburne. Instead they treated them like the stock figures of contemporary juvenile fiction, and often made them just as dull.

From about 1890 to the Great War, with the exception of some good school editions (Mead; Child; Bate), Malory for children became more a matter of retelling than of selection and adaptation. Whilst the adult reader was catered for by new editions of *Le Morte Darthur* itself, and there were still substantial adaptations like Lang's, Clay's and Cutler's, many children's versions became more childish, often aimed at younger readers, more open to girls, and even more distant from the original.²⁹ Edwardson (1899) changed Malory's names into 'easy' ones for children; MacGregor's book—'Told to the Children' and dedicated 'To Marie Winifred'—included a very young Gareth:

Gareth was a little prince. His home was an old grey castle, and there were great mountains all round the castle. Gareth had no little boys or girls to play with, for there were no houses near his mountain home. But Gareth was happy all day long. (MacGregor: 61)

Away from home, he finds it hard being a servant: 'as Gareth's mother had taught her little prince daintily, he did not like their rough ways; and at night he

²⁹ On the near-contemporary 'infantilization' of Chaucer in modernised versions see Matthews.

slept in a shed with dirty kitchen-boys' (MacGregor: 67). Galahad also is very boyish:

He was only a boy, but he had just been made a knight by Sir Launcelot, and the old abbey, where he had lived all his life, rang with the echo of his song.

Sir Lancelot heard the boy's clear voice singing in triumph. As he stopped to listen, he caught the words,

'My strength is as the strength of ten

Because my heart is pure.'

and the great knight wished he were a boy again, and he could sing that song too. (MacGregor: 88).

Why Lancelot wishes so is rather unclear, since his wrong-doing is barely visible. Arthur only goes to France because 'a false knight with his followers was laying waste the country across the sea' (MacGregor: 107). Tennysonian emphases have disciplined this version to the point where it cannot actually repeat Tennyson's story, but MacGregor can also choose carefully from the original when it suits her agenda. Gareth's over-protective mother is Tennyson's, but the nuns who raise Galahad are Malory's, and are used to motivate the boy's actions. He delays coming to court after knighthood because 'He would not grieve the nuns by a hurried farewell' (MacGregor: 89).

With the cohesive elements of Malory's plot subdued by censorship, late Victorian and Edwardian children's adaptations tended to become collections of unconnected 'tales', with a remote ending for the king in old age, rather as in the Robin Hood tradition. This accompanied an emphasis on stories and illustrations of youth. The Blackie edition of 1910 contains, e.g., Arthur drawing the sword, La Cotte Mal Taille, Gareth, and Galahad before a brief 'Passing of Arthur', suddenly introduced: 'The quarrel between King Arthur and Sir Lancelot became so bitter that Sir Lancelot left King Arthur's court and went to France, taking with

him all his followers' (Blackie: 119). In Dorothy Senior's version, *The King Who Never Died*, chapter-headings divided up the stories as separate fables: 'The Knight Who Lost His Temper' [Balin]; 'The Knight Who Served in the Kitchen'. ('The Knight Whose Armour Didn't Squeak' was not far off! (Milne)) Since the main goal of most adaptations after 1880 was to illustrate an idealised and exemplary 'chivalry' (Greene vii), Malory's narratives often lost both their integrity and their special status in children's versions. Sidney Lanier kept *The Boy's King Arthur* in a separate volume from his 'Boy's' Froissart, *Mabinogion* and Percy's *Reliques*, but Hanson, Farrington, Edwardson (1899), Greene, Lang, MacGregor and *The Children's King Arthur* (1909) mixed Malory with a wide variety of other Arthurian, romance and heroic material. To give one example, Lang's *Book of Romance* (1902) also contained stories of Roland, Diarmid, Robin Hood, Wayland, William Short Nose and Grettir.

It is not surprising that in the face of such fragmentation of the narrative, Tennysonian thematics, and general distaste for Malorian style, along with the huge growth of specialist children's literature, some feared that *Le Morte Darthur* itself would be lost to children. Clarence Griffin Child in 1904 defiantly brought out a school edition of some early 'books' (Merlin, Balin)—thinking it 'better to give a somewhat extended portion of Malory rather than a series of fragments culled here and there'. He spoke for 'those who know the earlier versions', and who 'cannot repress a certain impatience at times as regards Tennyson's alterations of the stories and his modernization of their intention, the symbolic, or, to use his own term, "parabolic" significance he gave them'. Above all, he stressed the different nature of Malory's prose and what it required of the young reader:

he must not expect to have the vitalizing elements of the narrative forced upon him and emphasized after the modern manner, so that he cannot miss them, however dense or indifferent he may be. He must pause to let

each simple, picture-making phrase deliver its full message. (Child: xii-xiii)

Child was mainly right, but in the minority, and against the tide of taste. Intense competition from a vastly expanded modern children's literature was inevitably changing the market for old favourites like Malory. Beatrice Clay could even claim that her adaptation of 1905 was needed because 'in spite of—perhaps, indeed, because of—the abundance of books for the young, there was a danger of children growing up in complete ignorance of those famous romantic tales that are part of the heritage of the ages' (Clay: viii). The confidence of the earlier Victorians in *Le Morte Darthur* itself as a guide for youth had changed into support for an increasingly diversified and diluted Arthurian children's literature. The original *Morte* now became more of an adult text in scholarly, popular and 'art' editions (e.g., Sommer; Dent; Simmons; Flint) and an English 'classic' to be read in schools.

Howard Pyle's self-illustrated Malorian stories, which appeared in four long books from 1903-1910, are a special case. Their reputation has often been very high,³⁰ and they remain in print, but they have also consistently been criticised for clumsy archaism and verbosity.³¹ Pyle can hardly be called an abridger. He often draws out speeches and descriptions to far greater length: eleven words in Malory—'Then wolde he have slayne hym for drede of his wratthe' (Vinaver: 25/34)—become 140 in his version. (Pyle 1903: 58-59). He goes further than anyone of his time in creating an entire, new textual environment for children out of Malory's material, with additions from other medieval sources, 'shaped ... and adapted ... from the ancient style in which they were first written so as to fit them to the taste of those who read them today' (Pyle 1910: iv). His highly-wrought landscape descriptions attempt a 'magic', 'Celtic' quality which many still think Malory himself should have—the reprint of 1992 calls Pyle's

³⁰ See Meigs, pp. 281-84, Lupack, pp. 80-92.

language 'appropriately medieval in flavour', 'a magical journey to a far-off time'. He also romanticises his own persona in addresses to the audience which seem to be modelled on Caxton's Prefaces, and, to a lesser extent, on Malory's occasional personal utterances. He virtually presents himself as a second Caxton. Frequent moral applications create an exemplary narrative quite unlike the *Morte*, though in line with contemporary attitudes to it:

Thus Arthur achieved the adventure of the sword that day and entered unto his birthright of royalty. Wherefore, may God grant His Grace unto you all that ye too may likewise succeed in your undertakings. For any man may be a king in that life in which he is placed if he may draw forth the sword of success from out of the iron of circumstance. (Pyle 1903: 35)

The diffuse narrative discourse suggests many possible influences: the abstract style of the Old French prose romances, which Pyle apparently knew; Caxton's grandiloquent prose; touches of 'scripture' language, perhaps from his Quaker background—he always writes 'exceedingly' for Malory's 'passing(ly)'; some antiquarian detail in the manner of Scott;³² a love of solemnity, often darkening to melancholy; and much outright wordiness—'Thus have I told you of this so that you might know thereof' (Pyle 1910: 130). The biggest virtue Pyle's narrative has is its sheer monologic distinctiveness. If young readers could get used to his ways, he offered a romantic textual 'world' in which they could fully immerse themselves.

For all the 'extraordinary pleasure' that Pyle claims in his work (1903: vi), his illustrations are sombre and static, mainly brooding portrait-studies, and often deeply introverted even when they depict action scenes. Lancelot, whose conduct Pyle carefully monitors at all times—he is never more than Guinevere's 'very dear friend' (1905: 23)—seems as withdrawn in the pictures as in the text:

³¹ See Meigs, p. 281; Townsend, p. 83.

³² E.g., the tournament in Pyle, 1903, pp. 13ff seems to draw on Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Chapter 12.

And the mystery of that place [Avalon] entered into the soul of Launcelot, so that thereafter, when he came out thence, he was never like other folk, but always appeared to be in a manner remote and distant from other of his fellow-mortals with whom he dwelt. (Pyle 1905: 9)

Even shown climbing a tree to rescue a lady's falcon, a comic episode from Malory's 'Noble Tale', Lancelot sits still and sad, as if apart from his own adventure. It is tempting to see this melancholia as an outcome of the text's intense self-supervision and sexual inhibition. Isolde lives with Tristram 'in all truth and innocence of life', but is shamed back to Mark, though not to his bed, by Arthur's question: 'Is it better to dwell in honor with sadness or in dishonor with joy?' (Pyle 1905: 255) Like other adapters, Pyle combines Malory's two Elaines (of Corbenic and Astolat) and marries the result to Lancelot, who still desires glory and the queen: 'Down, proud spirit, and think not of these things, but of duty' (Pyle 1907: 97). The couple go to Camelot, where Guinevere jealously lodges Elaine in a room next to her own and separately from Lancelot. Elaine falls sick and eventually leaves court before Galahad is born, but Lancelot remains in his unconsummated union with the queen, full of remorse. The effect of the plot changes is to keep him as much as possible from sexual contact with either woman, as Pyle's Isolde is kept from both Tristram and Mark. Tristram, even after drinking the poison and kissing Isolde, 'immediately put her away from him and he left her and went away by himself in much agony of spirit' (Pyle 1905: 181). Like Lancelot and Guinevere, these two only *seem* to be lovers, because of slanderous plots. Bors, similarly, is about to marry and settle down, but the Grail quest draws him away—'For duty lyeth before all the pleasures and all the glories of the world' (1910: 127). Perceval rejects Blanchefleur's advances because of his love for 'Yvette', but Yvette dies; he thinks of her 'in paradise', with 'a great passion of love and longing' (Pyle 1910: 127). Pyle's eternal vigilance allows little freedom to love between the sexes; he 'choose[s] to believe good of such noble souls as they, and not evil of them' (1905: 24), but the emotional price

of this high-mindedness is perhaps even higher. Love between brother knights, not to be suspected, is more open: 'Sir Tristram sits with Sir Lancelot' (1905: 160) shows the two celibate heroes brooding together at a table, their hands joined around a single cup. Perceval feels 'a great passion of love for Sir Lamorack, and a great joy in that love'. He 'loved him with such ardour that he could hardly bear the strength of his love' (1905: 282, 285).

Pyle has been called a democrat mainly on the strength of some episodes in which his knights are disguised as labourers (Lupack: 84-87) but structurally his politics are as authoritarian and hierarchic as Tennyson's and Malory's. Arthur's kingship is his 'birthright' (1903: 35); he is bound only by his own conscience; his political actions are naturalised as 'duty', like Pyle's own labours, finishing the 'work which [he] has set himself to perform' (1903: 97); all his enemies are villainised. Gareth's status as Beaumains is basically a disguise: 'think you that any kitchen-knave could have fought such a battle as you beheld him fight?' (1907: 96). Pyle's Geraint makes the Lord of the Sparrowhawk give up half his estate so that the former negligent earl 'may support the style of living befitting his rank' (1910: 22). Arthur, perhaps to clear him of marital coldness, is made to exile Guinevere's accuser Mador under threat of burning, where Malory's Arthur—'sworn unto knyghthode als welle as we be' (614/39)—admits him readily to the fellowship again. Physical force is fully sanctioned. Though the last book concludes with a prayer for universal peace, Pyle was unusual for his period in highlighting and inventing details of battle:

With that blow the brains of the Knight of the Sparrowhawk swam like water; the strength left his limbs; his thighs trembled and he fell down upon his knees and sought to catch hold of the thighs of Sir Geraint. But Sir Geraint avoided him, and reaching forward, he caught him by the helmet and snatched it from his head. (1910: 20)

and he deals out punishments with gusto:

Thus died that wicked man, for as King Arthur drave past him, the evil soul of him quitted his body with a weak noise like to the squealing of a bat, and the world was well rid of him. (1903: 129)

In such moments Pyle shows a narrative energy and creativity which lift him far above the general run of Malory retellers, but it is a pity that his greatest effort should have gone into literalising Caxton's vague statement that *Le Morte Darthur* was all 'wryton for our doctryne' (Vinaver: xv). This emphasis makes his Arthurian books too uniformly slow, solemn and decorous, both in style and content. They are casualties of idealism, forfeiting the adventurous pleasures of the original for the sake of making the heroes consistently blameless. In this, for all Pyle's distinctiveness, they typify the trend of late Victorian and Edwardian children's Malories.

III. From ideal to political adventure: 1914-1970

Alfred W. Pollard's abridgement of 1917, with memorable illustrations by Arthur Rackham, heralded a slow change in Malory reception over the next fifty years, as chivalric idealism turned more towards adventure and politics. Like all such previous developments, this one began from adult attitudes, and was a trend rather than a sudden new orthodoxy. With real wars at hand, Malory's main subject matter seemed less childishly improbable, and his readers could be interpellated again as lovers of adventure, old or young. Literary chivalry did not die suddenly in the trenches, since its political work was assigned far from the real battlefield. Rather, chivalry was now no longer necessarily a half-symbolic mirror for youth, teaching 'that highest type of manhood, the Christian gentleman' (Cutler: xix) in contexts other than war; it could be enthusiastically re-attached to ideas of martial virtue.

The ideological issues emphasised in Malory could also change, from ideals of moral probity to practical courage and group loyalty. Lanier's statement that 'A good deal of what is really combat nowadays is not *called* combat' (Lanier 1879: viii) can be contrasted with Pollard's 1917 preface, which highlights the 'violence, cruelty and luxury' of the old romances, and speaks of men 'carrying their lives in their hands and willing to lay them down lightly rather than break the rules of the game or be faithless to word or friend' (Pollard: vii). This was a move roughly in line with the 'Race-Life' theory of human development held by pre-war Arthurian Christians like William Forbush, who influenced Baden Powell (Watson: 402).³³ Forbush had seen Arthurianism as a means of harnessing the natural energies of working-class boys. After the feral state of infancy and the barbarism of early childhood, boys (and through them the still-young American nation) would be led towards adult responsibility by Christian training received in the adolescent years of chivalric adventurousness, *wanderlust* and gang spirit. Linking Arthurianism to early adolescence, seen as a 'stage' of human and civil development, Forbush spoke for a new era of trust in the potential of youth and freer allowance to young imaginations: 'If the man is to retain a wholesome heroism it must emerge from the joyous savagery of his own childhood' (Forbush: 18). Children's literature had to adapt:

It is the picturesque and vivid in biography that attracts attention from a boy. To him life is moving, adventurous, highly-colored. The reflective and the passive moods are not his. [he] awaits with surly suspicion and agonising self-consciousness the clumsy and blunt way by which his preceptor 'makes the application'. (Forbush: 110)

Influential wartime and post-war Malories seem to exemplify such attitudes in their overall change from moral *exempla* to exciting action narratives. In Hanson's

³³ William Forbush, *The Boy Problem*, New York, Westminster Press, 6th edition, 1907. Considering Pollard's edition as a book strictly for adults, his statement is regressive by

Stories of the Days of King Arthur (1882), Doré's dusky illustrations showed combats at a distance, overshadowed by craggy romantic mountains and turrets. N. C. Wyeth's cover for Lanier's second edition (1920) places a full-colour sword combat in the extreme foreground, looming above the viewer who feels almost in danger of being trampled by the excited near horse, mantled in a rich red. The effect is cinematic, even anticipating Technicolor and Cinemascope. The 1880 text, censored and skillfully abridged from Malory's own words, takes on a very different emphasis in this format, with larger print and pages, better margins, and without the cumbersome chapter divisions and hortatory preface of the first edition. There is less to interpellate its reader as a moral subject and a boy than before; something of the Malorian impression is restored of youth eagerly anticipating its future in adult adventure. This was a Malory who could co-exist, at a distance, with the tragic-heroic humanism of Hemingway, Steinbeck and Faulkner (Lupack: 135-209).

Colour illustration became normal. Philip Schuyler Allen's retelling of 1924 looks like a response to the new Lanier, with eight colour pages. Format and artwork often changed faster than the stories themselves. Elizabeth Lodor Merchant's *King Arthur and His Knights* (Philadelphia, 1928) silently put new illustrations to the text of Blanche Winder's *Stories of King Arthur* (London, 1925), a series of myth-like pageants, dominated by its 48 colour plates. Merchant changed chapter-titles and opening paragraphs, and provided a preface stating the new creed of children's literature: 'Action rather than reflection and a childlike directness enchain the attention of young imaginations' (Merchant: xv). Eleanor C. Price's *Adventures of King Arthur* (1931), originally in octavo, was soon re-issued in quarto (1933) with a bright colour 'action' cover and numerous illustrations of combat. It showed some signs of a loosened censorship, with a franker sex-plot, a large role for Morgan, and chapter epigraphs from Swinburne as well as Tennyson.

Forbush's standards. See Forbush p. 21: 'Loyalty is a much overestimated virtue. It means little

The Reverend J. Crowlesmith, author of 'Bible Stories for Young Folk' and 'Stories of Missionaries and Martyrs', made a steady, muscular version in 1927, reprinted 1931, for the cheap children's market. He too felt able to include more of the love story than in pre-war times, and consequently the book holds together much better. The religious element is emphasised, but Protestantized. In the Holy Grail section, Lancelot's humiliation at the ruined chapel is retained, but not his confession to the hermit, and Galahad's story ends with the healing of the wounded king, not his direct rapture into heaven. Crowlesmith has a knack of abridged exposition, and finds a reasonable correlative for Malory's way of progressing and focussing narrative through speech:

'And as for my londis, I would geff hit hym yf I wyste hit myght please hym, but he hath londis inow, he nedith none. But I shall sende hym a gyffte that shall please hym mucche more, for I shall gyff hym the Table Rounde whych Uther, hys fadir, gaff me.' (Vinaver: 60/8-11)

In Crowlesmith, Leodegraunce

thought within himself what his wedding gift should be. Of lands Arthur had already enough and to spare! Leodegraunce made up his mind at last to give him the Table Round, at which a hundred and thirty knights could sit together. (Crowlesmith: 29-30)

Enid Blyton's *The Knights of the Round Table* (1930) was another competent retelling, with a characteristic authoritarianism and relish for punishments: Her Balin is fully justified in killing the Lady of the Lake: 'As soon as he saw her, he rode straight at her and cut off her head, for he knew her to be a witch-woman and very wicked. She had caused his mother's death.' (Blyton: 109) Blyton's Galahad is happy to hear that the seven knights of the Castle of Maidens have been killed by Gawain: 'That is good news They will return no more to the

more than organized selfishness.' For full reference to Forbush's work, see Lupack, pp. 60-68.

castle.' (Blyton: 161) In Malory's version, the point of the story is a contrast—Galahad has delivered the maidens without bloodshed, because his 'lyvyng ys such that he shall sle no man lyghtly' (Vinaver: 535/15-16); his reaction to Gawain's deed is a wry comment on the older knight's bloodthirstiness: 'I supposse well' (534/3). The notion of Malory's 'simplicity' was often maintained by unobtrusive adaptations of this kind. Changing editions of her book show a typical shift from 'nursery' to 'adventure' format over a wide period. In 1930, as part of John O'London's Children's Library, the artwork featured a very young, curly-haired girl reading on the cover, a 'schoolboy' Arthur drawing the sword (though he mysteriously ages 20 years in a short space), and other youthful knights. In *Tales of Brave Adventure* (1963), as reprinted along with a Robin Hood selection, the illustrations mainly fit the new title.

The Edwardian era had a long Indian summer in children's King Arthurs. Despite the slow changes I have noted, virtually all the pre-war emphases reappeared in the inter-war period also, and sometimes beyond 1950. The vogue for very young Arthurs continued with John Lee's 1920 adaptation, 'Told for the Bairns'. Arthur's 'boyish form' (Lea: 23) drawing the sword from the stone is on the cover, and the selections are typically child-oriented, with Tor and Galahad prominent. Paul Creswick's *Story of the Round Table* (1925) is in a pseudo-archaic style influenced by Pyle, and pushes a shallow dualism that links Edwardian moralising with modern Hollywood 'action' films: 'the old eternal idea of Good warring with Evil Faith and Love battling with Doubt and Hate; Hope and Gentleness with Despair and Brute Strength' (Creswick: 1) His heavy emphasis on a unified narrative of moral consequences—'Modred, thou wert the black feather in my soul's wing' (Creswick: 402)—continued later Victorian attitudes and anticipated the critical emphases of the Lumiansky school of Malory critics in the 1950s and 1960s. Abridged and modernised versions continued also, with John Hampden (1930) and Stuart Campbell (1933, 1935 and reprints). Especially given the reissue of numerous pre-war editions, noted above, the period 1920-1945 mainly seems derivative. Books settled down comfortably in publishers'

lists with no major new literary intertexts, while at an ever greater cultural distance from the great Victorians, especially Tennyson, who still inspired them.³⁴ Arthurianism had often been a conservative trend. It was now in danger of becoming fully reactionary, enlisting children in an adult rejection of modernism. Even T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone* (1937), the keenest reply to late Victorian and Edwardian applications of Arthurian 'chivalry' for the young, is often nostalgic for the pre-modern.³⁵ That was hardly a 'children's Malory' like those discussed here, and too complex a book to deal with in this compass, but it came closest to providing what the post-Victorian children's tradition lacked, a major retelling that was fundamentally hostile to the *Morte's* militarism.

Brian Kennedy Cooke tried to explain the stagnant inter-war situation in his anti-Edwardian preface to *King Arthur of Britain* (1946):

a lamentable fashion arose towards the end of the last century of producing insipid special versions for children, illustrated with two-dimensional dummies in pasteboard armour, which kindly but undiscerning aunts and uncles could pick up without efforts on the Christmas bookstalls. It is to be hoped that we have now outgrown this strange habit of thinking that the story must be bowdlerised and rewritten in a manner compounded of mawkishness and whimsy before it can be presented to a child. the problem is to restore him [Malory] to the position in popular favour that he deserves, when so many people are alienated by the rubbish they were given in youth, or discouraged by the length of the real thing. (Cooke: 8)

Demanding a return to Malory's text as 'alone and supreme', he included only two illustrations, 'in the style of early English miniatures', and centred the book mainly on adventures concerning Arthur, to avoid overlength and

³⁴ See, e.g., *Stories* (1935). The frontispiece, 'Lady making a Shield', is in fact an unrecognised picture of Tennyson's 'lily maid' Elaine, making a cover for Lancelot's shield; the narrative emphases are heavily Tennysonian.

digressiveness. But the 'problem' remained, and although Cooke issued several new Malory selections and reprints up until 1961, they did not have the effect he seems to have wished. The post-war years saw no decrease, though an improvement, in retellings for children, and they have dominated abridged editions ever since.

The early 1950s was a vital period in Malory adaptation, probably because of renewed adult interest in his literary qualities caused by Vinaver's major edition of 1947, T. H. White's novels, and the rise of new medievalist fantasies as invigorating intertexts. There was also a greater openness to influence from popular culture. The recent war and the Cold War brought out strong political emphases. Motifs of invasion and national betrayal were common. Nearly all new versions stressed the need for supreme power to be used firmly by a central government against its enemies, without and within, to guarantee peace and unity. Roger Lancelyn Green (1953), Alice M. Hadfield (1953) and Antonia Fraser (1954) made three distinctive contributions at this time.

Green's *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* is now a standard version. Mainly based on Malory, it adopted Vinaver's recent model—'quite separate stories a certain coherence, but no fixed plot' (Green: ix)—to allow for the incorporation of many other medieval sources. As a devotee of Andrew Lang, Green believed that:

great legends, like the best of the fairy tales, must be retold from age to age: there is always something new to be found in them, and each retelling brings them freshly and more vividly before a new generation. (Green: xii)

In his post-war age, the 'something new' was military and political: 'chivalry and right striving against the barbarism and evil which surrounded it' (Green: ix), specifically 'the Saxons, who could never be contented with their savage, unfruitful homes in Germany' (Green: 4). On first drawing the sword (in the

³⁵ The same applies more strongly to Machen.

Coronation year of 1953) Green's Arthur pledges himself 'to the service of God and my people, to the righting of wrongs, to the driving-out of evil, to the bringing of peace and plenty to my land'. With this are mixed some fairy-tale elements (Avalon is peopled by 'elves') and a discourse of personal development that must have helped the implied audience, middle-class children facing high expectations, identify with the characters. Arthur and the knights are always learning or not learning important lessons for life—Green had formerly been a schoolmaster—and 'the darkness' awaits failure. Unlike most earlier didacts, Green has a sympathy for Malory's style which lets him bring out tactfully the exemplary patterns and comparisons of conduct already in the narrative. In sections such as 'Balyn and Balan', he keeps the directness and steady emotional effect of the original. He is necessarily more explicit sometimes in condensing events, but also manages to combine select phrases and scattered information into new sentences that match the original in consistency and poise:

'Go home to Northumberland', he said, 'and tell them what has chanced. I myself shall ride in search of King Ryon and slay him, or die in the attempt: for if I slay Ryon, then surely King Arthur will be my friend again.' (Green: 27)

Although events are much contracted, Green's prose makes them seem paced like Malory's, with an impression of narrative fullness and room for many stories within the overall framework. Space is made by combination and telescoping of events—the two Elaine episodes are told together, and the combat with Melliagraunce leads 'that same evening' to the assignation between Lancelot and Guinevere which Mordred surprises. International politics aside, Green's 'certain coherence' is based on the love story, presented in terms of sexual temptation which match both Tennyson's 'little rift within the lute' and the religious views of his friend C. S. Lewis:

the powers of evil seeking now more and more desperately to find some tiny loophole through which to climb into the stronghold of good, saw it, and set a cunning snare for Lancelot (Green: 216)

Green heaps added guilt on Lancelot through new ironies on top of Malory's—it is young Galahad who unknowingly finds his mad father; the healing of Urry fulfils a prediction of 'the passing of Logres' (Green: 295)—until both plots are joined. The spiritual powers of evil that prevail over Lancelot and Guinevere finally rematerialise in enemy invasion: 'For very soon the Saxons had conquered the whole of Britain and the Dark Ages descended upon all the western world' (Green: 327). Green's heavy emphasis on moral downfall leading to national disaster is old-fashioned and departs from *Le Morte Darthur's* own attitudes, but for literary qualities his book stands out above nearly all modern and earlier retellings. In Charlotte Yonge's phrase, it best 'prepares the way for Malory and Tennyson'.

Alice Hadfield, a noted scholar of Charles Williams, was also old-fashioned in her great reliance on Tennyson, but radical in the tone of spiritual warfare she gave to the stories: 'It is a religious world, where Jesus Christ is a real Person to the Knights, and His service is as clear and real as that of the King' (Hadfield: vi). Merlin is naturally of special interest to her:

All traffickers in spirits know that they are controlled by the Ruler of Spirits, the Holy Ghost, but Merlin's pride in himself, which betrayed him into Vivien's hands, took from him that reliance on the Holy Spirit which would have cleared his vision. Merlin is sealed up in the earth by his own folly and pride till all spirits come before their Ruler. (Hadfield: 101-02)

Hadfield reads the significance of Lancelot's sin and the Grail in ways that resemble Charles Williams's 'spiritual thrillers' and anticipated later critics. In an essay of 1996 Jill Mann (Mann 1996: 217) would echo the notion that 'Galahad

was to be the best knight in the world ... but in bringing him into existence Sir Lancelot lost all that he loved and honoured' (Hadfield: 110). Cooke's post-war patriotism had made Arthur central; Hadfield's was based on the Grail itself, as an allegory of the Christian life:

It is this approach, this appearance of heavenly things, and the failure to behave rightly towards them, that the famous history of Britain under King Arthur is really about. The fighting and the courage, the ladies and love affairs, the King and the knightly vows, are all part of the life which arose out of this. (Hadfield: 114-15)

Her version is also unusual in its incipient pacifism and Christian 'doctrine of equality' (Hadfield: 200). She envisages a 'new quiet intellectual type' of knights: 'Thinking and acting rightly were more important to them than fighting. This was very difficult for the older knights to understand' (Hadfield: 145-46). Lancelot finds that 'the things his son knew were more important than the quests and battles' (Hadfield: 147). The end comes after 'the Hallows were misused and withdrew', when 'the whole effort faltered through the clog and drag of sin' (Hadfield: 203). It is a bold attempt to re-spiritualise the story, probably unmatched in that vein since Tennyson's time. The major problem is an unintentionally comic quelling of dramatic effect by over-explication, such as at Lancelot's discovery he has spent the night with Elaine, not Guinevere—

Now he saw that he had broken his vow and lost both his love and the secret of his strength. 'Alas, that I have lived so long,' he said. He seized his sword and would have killed her, but long habits of the good life stopped him. (Hadfield: 109)

Nevertheless, Hadfield brought children's Malory back into contact with a contemporary literature, and pointed the way towards the later growth of fantasy versions.

The young Antonia Fraser's [Pakenham's] *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (1954) plays unpredictably and amusingly with the usual story, often for suspenseful and romantic effects. A Mordred is killed at the *start* of events; Sir Kay is cheerful and popular, Pellimore an 'evil traitor'. Interestingly, apart from Tennyson and (occasionally) Malory, Fraser's models are taken from popular culture—Georgette Heyer romances, film, low-brow adventure fiction. Dialogue is unashamedly stagey—'Set fire to the Round Table! Never, while I live.' (Fraser 1970: 171)—and the style often verges on 'True Confessions' parody: 'Guenevere found herself looking at the most handsome face in Britain—Sir Lancelot himself. "Oh, this is the romance of which I dreamt," she thought to herself' (Fraser 1970: 42). Heroes shout 'Take that! And that!' Weapons 'thwack!' (Fraser 1970: 57, 101). A Cold War invasion scenario matches the contemporary film of *Prince Valiant*: 'So the Vikings had disguised themselves as knights. That was the reason for their mysterious disappearance!' (Fraser 1970: 67). Especially given that the book was re-issued as late as 1985, its discourse seems surprisingly racist. Palomides is a lascivious stage blackamoor who blinds his captives and 'grin[s] evilly' (Fraser 1970: 106), and the Grail Quest becomes a Crusades-style recapture of the vessel 'from the hands of the enemies of Christ' (Fraser 1970: 136). The conclusion is 'Festival of Britain' patriotism: 'Today, over a thousand years later, we feel proud to remember that King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table are part of our national heritage' (Fraser 1970: 192). The joking, light-hearted side of the text was complemented when Rebecca Fraser's pictures appeared in the 1970 edition. It was the first time for a good while that a juvenile King Arthur had been well illustrated in the latest style of contemporary children's picture books. This too was an early pointer to subsequent developments, especially after 1980. In hindsight, the instability of Fraser's 1954 text, with its generic diversity, pop pastiche, and blend of 'heritage' with satirical elements, showed that 'King Arthurs' like Green's and Hadfield's, built on the neo-Tennysonian model, could not be written for very much longer. *Monty Python* was not that far away.

Another Malory print item from popular culture was the book of the 1954 MGM film *Knights of the Round Table*. It showed an interesting cross-influence from the film of Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1952), also starring Robert Taylor, especially in the plot of Guinevere's abduction. If Scott had based some of the abduction of Rowena and Rebecca on the doings of Meleagant in *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory now received them back from him through the movies. The print idiom for the film is 'adventure' fiction: 'Cantering along on his magnificent charger, Beric, Lancelot's thoughts were all on the adventures that lay ahead. Adventure was meat and drink, to him; he could not live without it' (MGM: 19). The 'Wild West' flavour is brought out further when Beric saves Lancelot by hauling him from a pool of quicksand, in the style of a Roy Rogers film. There is an emphasis on deterrent force—fighting to keep the peace—and unity, 'one England', symbolised by the 'ring of stones': 'If each stone keeps its balance then all will stand forever' (MGM: 16). (BBC-TV's *Legend of King Arthur* (1979) and John Boorman's *Excalibur* (1981) would employ very similar political symbolism.)³⁶ Beside Fraser and the MGM book, Barbara Leonie Picard's *Stories of King Arthur and his Knights* (1955) seems a very traditional Malory recounting, with the familiar additions of Gereint, Yvain and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. In clear and readable prose, it made a much more reliable introduction to the Arthurian stories, if less sensational.

After the cluster of publications in the earlier 1950s, little of note in juvenile Malories appears until around 1980, although the market was well supplied by re-issues. Academic interest in Malory grew strongly during this period, but in children's literature the *Morte* became overshadowed by Tolkien and his successors in medievalist fantasy, and the inventiveness which earlier post-war Arthurian retellings had shown was diverted into original Arthurian children's fiction.³⁷ No doubt this was also encouraged by the popular success of T. H. White's books, issued together in 1958 as *The Once and Future King*. Many of

³⁶ See Davies, p. 34: 'Sometimes the only way to root out evil is with the sword'.

the new children's novels were to have a Romano-British setting (Taylor: 290), sometimes inspired by archaeological programs. Arthur became historicised in a new way, very different from *Le Morte Darthur's* conceptions; the story was often refocalised through different characters, and re-assessed traditional motives and events. Those writers who adapted Malory himself look rather conservative by comparison. In Mary Cathcart Burns' *Tales of King Arthur* for school use (1961) 'the nobles knew that the king would allow no unfairness or cruelty to any of his subjects. He was the friend and protector of all his people, whatever their station in life'. (Burns: 6) Using Malory and Tennyson's *Idylls* together, Burns draws modern parallels through suggested class exercises: 'Do you know the names of any knights who are alive today? Perhaps a knight lives in your town or village?'; 'Keep your eyes open for an idyllic scene'. She attempts an effect of national cultural continuity, in which legendary history validates the contemporary social order: 'The word "Order" still means "a company". Sir Winston Churchill belongs to two Orders or glorious companies. What are they?' (Burns: 61-64). Clifton Fadiman's *Story of Young King Arthur* (1962) is similar, mixing historical information about medieval conditions with a ringing endorsement of concentrated power: 'Find us a king, Merlin. Only a strong and wise leader can defend us against our enemies, and give us happiness again' (Fadiman: 6-7). Around the period of the Cuban missile crisis, the message of this version was clear, but Malory's work was no longer necessarily the best means of propagating it, and indeed, national sovereignty and international politics are not really the main concern of most of *Le Morte Darthur*, especially in the children's tradition. Since the big issues were now power and unity, rather than chivalry, courtesy and knight-errantry, the fifth-century war-leader struggling against the Saxon tide made a better exemplar than Malory's late-medieval monarch and his knights, and also came a lot closer to recent war memories. As those memories faded, Merlin, a relatively minor figure in Malory, began to outrank his king and

³⁷ E.g., by Rosemary Sutcliff and Mary Stewart.

the premier knights in interest. Monarchical and aristocratic heroes had slipped further in relevance and mass appeal, and since the *Morte* was now more 'adventure' than a general guide to conduct, its ideals were harder to apply to all walks of life than they had been early in the century. Traditional conservative presentations of Malory—whose political attitudes are undisguised by Tolkien's fantasy, and lack easy bourgeois identification—were out of touch with the demand for greater social and personal freedoms which arose in the 1960s and 1970s. Gandalf or Frodo Baggins could belong on a school student's bedroom wall in a way that Arthur or Sir Lancelot could not. For all these reasons, while *Le Morte Darthur* was growing in academic reputation as a literary text, juvenile medievalism seemed to be leaving it behind.

IV. Psychology, fantasy, myth and history: 1971-2001

Appearing at an apparent lull in the appeal of *Le Morte Darthur* to adapters for children, Rosemary Sutcliff's trilogy (1981) is the high point of Malorian juvenile fiction. Sutcliff had already set stories in the Romano-British period, with great success, and perhaps for this reason was more relaxed in her eventual treatment of the *Morte* itself than some other modern Malory revisers have been. Despite her contemporary Celticism, she was unique in her intimate but independent relation to the original: 'I have followed Malory in the main, but I have not followed him slavishly'. In this she felt justified by his own way with sources (Sword: 8).³⁸ Readers who know *Le Morte Darthur* gain an extra pleasure from seeing Sutcliff's mind interact with it—drawing out possible implications, alert to humour, inconsistencies and cultural differences, supplying motivations, boldly combining different characters and events (as Malory did) for narrative economy. Her model is the humanist psychological novel, rather than the episodic romance of adventure, but, like a gifted director of Shakespeare, she

³⁸ Sutcliff was echoing Green, p. x, and so indirectly under Vinaver's influence.

knows how to work with the original text to find a modern correlative. Imagining what her characters would have felt, as Malory did in his own terms, she endows them with a self-conscious quality and unconscious motives which the original does not articulate, but which might plausibly be latent within it. Malory's Lancelot simply 'thought hymself to preve in straunge adventures' (Vinaver: 149/17). Hers is full of self-doubt, wounded by Kay's mockery of his ugliness, and tormented by love of the Queen (Sword: 85ff). Her Arthur 'pray[s], so deep down within him that he was not even aware of it, that nothing would happen that would force him to know' about Lancelot and Guenivere (Light: 26). This psychologises Malory's more political version: 'the kyng had a demyng of hit, but he wold nat here thereof' (Vinaver: 674/40-41). Minor characters like Bagdemagus' daughter are given inner life through sudden changes of narrative focus: 'And he [Lancelot] rode away, never knowing that the king's daughter stood looking after him with the salt taste of her own tears on his lips' (Sword: 97). Again, Sutcliff builds this on a technique of Malory's own: 'And as sone as he come thydir the doughter of kyng Bagdemagus herd a grete hors trotte on the pavymente, and than she arose and yode to a wyndowe, and there she saw sir Launcelot' (154/24-26). The impression Galahad can give a modern reader of coldness and inhumanity is tactfully conceded and broken down: 'And there were times when Galahad left his body behind for good manners' sake, while he went away into the solitude and the desert places within himself. But now Lancelot had learned to let him go; and so the bond between them grew very strong' (Light: 127). Strong human bonds are the most important elements in Sutcliff's story. Her Galahad sends his 'love' to Lancelot, not an injunction to beware the world, as a final message (Light: 145). Lancelot's Grail confession cannot be complete because 'the love between himself and the Queen was not his alone to confess (Light: 49). Because the love-plot was now easier to tell to children—her main audience was born in the 1960s—the Grail Quest could be better integrated than in most previous versions, and the ending is understood as Vinaver's 'human drama' (Vinaver: ix) rather than as punishment for sin.

Sutcliff's narrative still coheres around Lancelot's dawning perception that he cannot be both the best knight of the world and the lover of Guinevere (Light: 43), but in a more tolerant spirit than before.

The most Malorian feature in Sutcliff's books is her great liking, even love, for the major characters, especially Lancelot. His final 'repentance' and parting with Guinevere is one of many scenes at once sympathetic and perceptively ironised:

He smiled with great gentleness, the old twisted smile. 'But always my chief prayers shall be for you, that you shall find peace and your soul's-heal.' 'Pray for your own,' said Guinevere. 'Pray for your own.' (Road: 135)

Sutcliff's characters give the same impression as Malory's, that they and their deeds are enough in themselves, and do not have to be *for* anything else. But in her books, unlike his, the protagonists' chief qualities emerge against the grain of their practical roles in the story. The first of the trilogy, *The Sword and the Circle*, is marked by contemporary concerns for unity and right rule, but the books mainly lack Malory's depth of investment in his heroes' social and political functions. In Sutcliff, politics makes an intrusion on their realest being; the overarching plot of *Le Morte Darthur* is used to bring out their humanity under pressure, more than treated as an end in itself. The strongest political impression is of the horror of war, especially in the climactic Last Battle of *The Road to Camlann*, which draws on both Malory and Tennyson for its elevated diction and rhythms. When, at the very conclusion, Sutcliff gives Ector's famous lament for Lancelot in Malory's own words, it is an affectionate homage, but also a further sign of the textual fate that has overshadowed her society from the start. Through the old story already told and known, it was always on 'the road to Camlann'; human weakness would bring about total destruction by war. In the face of disaster, Sutcliff asserts an ideal of stoic gaiety, giving a hint to Marian Zimmer Bradley's appropriation of the story as a model of micro-political inner consciousness:

Avalon of the Apple Trees is not like to other places. It is a threshold place between the world of men and the Land of the Living. Here we are in the Avalon of mortal men. But there is another Avalon. The King is here, but he is gone beyond the mist. (Road: 137)

Is it too fanciful to think of Arthur's retreat to Avalon and the associated shift from confident action to an inner world as finding new meaning in the age of nuclear threat, and in the politically and economically weakened Britain of Sutcliff's times? That mood is more evident in Andrew Davies' *The Legend of King Arthur* (1979), also set in a Romano-British society facing its end: Arthur promises 'a blessed land, God's kingdom on earth' but only 'until the darkness falls again' (Davies: 25). A traumatised Morgan, furious with Uther for what he has done to her mother, devotes her life to destabilising the Pendragon regime: 'Kill Uther' becomes 'Kill Arthur'. The plot underlines the cycle of hatred caused by autocratic greed and military violence, and we see the struggle for power slowly annihilating traditional Arthurian idealism. Bors says, despairingly, 'I think that God forsook us all long ago. Strength and luck; that's all there is now. Perhaps that's all there ever was' (Davies: 104). It is the ethos of Tennyson's Last Battle, but now closer to historical circumstances, with the loss of England's empire, and the fear of nuclear holocaust.

Davies' book was tied in with his script for a BBC-TV series, another pointer to the growing influence of popular culture on children's Arthurianism. Film, television and video technology have often supplied the recent models, and have wedded themselves in turn to the tradition. Numerous Arthurian role-playing games now exist, some with loose links to the *Morte*,³⁹ which is treated as a 'fantasy' classic.⁴⁰ Ellen Kushan's 'Choose your own adventure' book, *Knights of the Round Table* (1988), echoes a contemporary existentialist critical response to

³⁹ See, e.g., those on <http://www.gamersattic.com/roleplaying/kapendragon.htm>, accessed June 2002.

⁴⁰ William Thompson, review, <http://www.sfsite.com/home114.htm>, accessed June 2002: 'the first novel of fantasy'.

Malory (Mann 1981), but uses it to trump tradition. The book is structured so that if the player-persona prefers to finish reading the old tome (presumably a version of the *Morte*) lent by the book-store owner/enchanter his story will end immediately, but he *can* choose to go to Camelot and 'take the adventure'. True adventure, it is implied, lies in choice and divagation, the thrill of personal discovery, and the chance to change the story. In effect, possibilities are limited by the very generic options on offer, no matter which road is taken. Another long-running influence from popular culture is the comic strip, recently used to good effect in *The Final Battle* (Barlow, 1999), a retelling of Malory's last book for slow readers. Marcia Williams (1996) has also given King Arthur her strip-cartoon treatment, in a series which includes his traditional children's literature company (Sinbad, Robin Hood, Greek Myths, *Don Quixote*), but also Shakespeare and Dickens. Interestingly, the fun of Williams' book centres mainly on Malory's familiar episodes of sword-drawing, the granting of Excalibur and Morgan's stealing of it, the establishment of the Round Table, and Lancelot. The combination of Malory's two Elaines into one is now so common that few children are likely to know the older version, but it is something new to make Galahad's begetting part of Lancelot's first quest. For a conclusion, Williams ignores the *Morte's* sad ending in favour of a Grail Quest freely mixing various traditions. Galahad asks the right questions and so saves Arthur's realm from devastating famine and plague. The climax is 'the crowning of a new Grail King and the restoring of Britain's prosperity' (Williams: 22). The satirical element in the drawings—Merlin appears prominently as a large shaggy cat—is not extended to the overall fable.

There are recent stage versions also, including a pantomime by Paul Reakes (1997), and John Chambers' *Tales of King Arthur: A Play* (1996). The increase of magic and fun over adventure in the children's tradition has re-awakened some theatrical possibilities. Chambers' play is substantial, a big improvement on the Edwardian 'pageants' of Arthur; it is situated in an anti-chivalric tradition of 'inner' heroism which goes back to Milton's 'better

fortitude'. He emphasises the vulnerability of the young protagonists (the milieu seems adolescent), but also their love and honest idealism. Comic temptation scenes from the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* story support the theme of forgiveness for failure. Pacifist and feminist applications comment on the received version. In a way now familiar, the intrigue arises from Merlin's traumatic snatching of Arthur from Igrayne, and concerns Morgan's revenge for her mother. Psychology takes causal precedence over Arthur's claim to power through birthright and the Sword in the Stone. Dintrane (Percival's sister has a name here) asks; 'Are only men permitted to undertake adventures?' (Chambers: 53). Elaine tells Lancelot, 'I have my own fate. My own destiny. It is tied up with my unborn child. Not with you' (Chambers: 40). Kay is a satirical portrait of an insecure braggart, but the real heroes admit fear and doubt. Even Galahad laments the restraints of his own perfection: 'I never make choices for myself. I do what is right. I am not half the man my fellow knights are for I don't have dilemmas' (Chambers: 59).

Unlike Chambers, most later adapters of Malory for children have not followed in Sutcliff's psychological vein. Those that do generally reflect the greater importance of Merlin, Morgan and Mordred in recent neo-Arthurianism. Robin Lister's *The Story of King Arthur* (1988) has a summary style unlike Malory's but mainly follows his incidents. The narrative is focussed through Merlin, and keeps him prominent throughout, as in many modern versions. Since Merlin does not have a large role in Malory, this usually necessitates also building up the roles of Morgan and Mordred as his opponents. Lister's Morgan, for example, drugs Arthur to make him think that Morgawse is Guinevere. This old device, once used to save Lancelot's fidelity to Guinevere, now saves the king's. (The Holy Grail itself is used to make Lancelot think that Elayne is Guinevere.) By contrast, Lancelot and Guinevere are simply having 'a love affair' (Lister: 94-95), which television and film will have made understandable to young readers. That problem has been solved, but if Guenevere is now less culpable, misogynist readings have another potential focus in Morgan.

Villainised as a witch by some, she has become the Arthurian feminist *cause célèbre*. In 1913 Beatrice Clay had to apologise for including Morgan at all: 'the difficulty of handling this somewhat unpleasant character was so great that, practically, she did not appear in the first edition' (Clay: vii-viii). Morgan's prominence today is part of a widespread trend to give more of the legend to its female figures, a restoration of the later Victorian feminine emphasis, but in the terms of William Morris rather than Tennyson. In *Women of Camelot*, Mary Hoffman voices each story through the woman who experiences it: 'Imagine how I felt! [says Guinevere]. Lancelot was my only comfort and joy. Without him, I was a loveless queen in a childless marriage' (Hoffman: 58).

Juvenile versions of the last twenty years have mainly emphasised magic, myth, legend and fantasy, and made their appeal through retold 'tales' in large format, fully integrated with numerous colour illustrations. Illustrators are now as important as authors. James Riordan's *Tales of King Arthur* (1992), with artwork by the influential Victor Ambrus, leans towards the model of 'myth and legend'. Riordan is another in the vein of Lang, taking Arthurian materials from multiple sources, including Geoffrey of Monmouth and *Gawain*, and augmenting his Malorian sections with the English prose *Merlin*, Swinburne and Tennyson, and 'ideas suggested by Roger Lancelyn Green's excellent book' (Riordan: 124). Ambrus, a noted illustrator of the *Iliad* and other battle stories, puts violence into children's Malory on a more epic scale than previously seen. Riordan's fine prose adaptation supports the giant illustrations with considerable battle detail. Nudity in the bedroom pictures is another novelty that aligns Malory with contemporary books of myth and legend rather than traditional romance or adventure. Not all recent versions are like this,⁴¹ but it may be that the children's *Morte Darthur* is becoming more archaic and mythic, rather than humanist and psychological, and that the post-1960s search for motives and inner meaning will become as outmoded as the Edwardian fetish for moral messages. At any rate, what these

⁴¹ E.g., Yeatman, Oliver, Crawford.

stories mean to children, and what adults *mean* them to mean, will certainly be changed by a new graphic technology which can dominate textual imagination. Rodney Matthews' recent artwork for the *Tales* by Felicity Brooks and Anna Claybourne (1999) shows a clear affinity with the role-playing, adventure-book and fantasy-novel genres, and the text has been shaped accordingly:

'He's just a kitchen boy,' put in the damsel hurriedly. But the Green Knight was staring at them in horror and fury.

'You've done *what*' he fumed. 'You've *killed my brother*? I'll pay you back for that! I'll KILL you. I'll RIP you to PIECES!' (Brooks: 136)

The Victorians played down the *Morte's* bloodshed to suit their idealisation of 'chivalry'. Now it is a fierce battle narrative again, reflecting the increased level of violence in children's culture generally, but with a more uncertain ideological application than before. Comparison between Doré's artwork in Hanson (1882), N. C. Wyeth's adventurous style for Lanier (1920), and Ambrus's physical and bloody illustrations for Riordan shows an increasing trend towards uncompromising violent affect, alongside an increasing dominance of immediate visual image over the text that describes causes and consequences and deals with the human cost. As digital technology spreads rapidly, it is hard to see this trend reversing. We are likely to see a stronger assimilation, probably a subordination, of complex and reflective print content to the norms of the 'hot' media. It is hard to know what the stories will be made to mean in this context; one hopes it will not just be another 'fantasy' (read 'fundamentalist') version of 'good against evil'.

The most recent children's Arthurianism also reflects the upsurge of scholarship, mythlore and popular history around Arthurian material. In a reversal of the Enlightenment trend, 'King Arthur' is now a historical sixth-century person to many again. The forthcoming Touchstone Pictures (Disney) film will help to cement a similar image in popular culture, along with Steven Spielberg's projected TV mini-series. Malory's book is not central to this interest,

but features within its 'myths and legends' category as part of the Arthurian 'world'. At present, it is hard to know whether popular film will invigorate interest in the book, as Tennyson and White did, or relegate it to the past. Children's Arthurianism is being historicised also in a more modest and scholarly way. Kevin Crossley-Holland's *The King Who Was and Will Be* (1998) is a lively gazetteer for the young, with information on places, characters, romances and various cultural traditions. (It precedes Crossley-Holland's Arthurian fictional trilogy, which is too recent for me to assess here.) Andrea Hopkins' *Chronicles of King Arthur* (1993) is not a children's book, but it could provide a model for introducing young readers to more of Malory's original text. Rather than offering yet another modern make-over, Hopkins tells a composite Arthuriad by letting 'the voices of the authors [be] heard in their own style, from the wit and precision of Chrétien de Troyes to the stark dignity of Malory' (Hopkins: 9). '[T]he most powerful and dramatic' passages, including many from the *Morte*, are given in the original (or translation) and linked by paraphrase and explanatory sections. Box-insets highlight major characters, places and cultural influences. Illustrations showcase the rich visual tradition from the twelfth century to Beardsley. There is no modern *Boys' King Arthur* using Malory's own text, and Lanier's concept is obviously old-fashioned; a new book like Hopkins's made specially for children would be an excellent idea.

As directed to the young, Malory has come through many phases since Caxton's time: history, spiritual ideal, model of conduct, political adventure, psychological study, myth and fantasy, and now history again. The children's *Morte Darthur* is flourishing, if popular retellings of familiar episodes are any guide. But in the long run, Malory's special value has been in his words, even more than in the favourite stories, and certainly more than in the 'timeless' fable of a man with a large sword. It may be that the words will be better supported as a guest-text in children's historical Arthuriana than in straight Arthurian children's adaptations, where they risk becoming superfluous to requirements, apart from a few fossil phrases. Will the hostility to the original *Morte* always

latent in making 'children's King Arthurs' finally silence its voice? And will children's writers no longer pay Malory the kind of attention that generates a distinctive friction with his style and values? Without Malory's strong contribution, as stimulus or irritant, to children's Arthuriana, will it suffer another period of decline, as in Edwardian times? Will *Le Morte Darthur* have to return to 'history' for a while before another dominant intertext, another Tennyson or White, maybe even a Spielberg, gives young readers a new purchase on it? The future is impossible to know. (Who could have predicted a mass market for long novels like the *Harry Potter* series?) The third tradition has always been subject to reductive commercial pressures, and periods of stagnation, yet unpredictably blessed by gifted lovers of Malory—from Charlotte Yonge to Rosemary Sutcliff and beyond. Adults make children's literature, and given that adult attention to *Le Morte Darthur* continues to grow, and popular Arthurianism for all ages is burgeoning, we may yet see the 'vigour and valour' of Malory return for the young, whatever it will mean.

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