



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

*“Now es that tyme for ever gone”:
Exploring Memory in Select Middle English
Arthurian Romances c. 1300- c.1500*

Drew Maxwell

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

October 2021

Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which memory was understood, explored, and deployed in the Middle English Arthurian romance corpus. Drawing on a broad range of texts, from the so-called “popular” romances on the one hand, to the most writerly of compositions on the other, the thesis examines memory in relation to some of the central thematic concerns and preoccupations of the form: the intermingling of oral and written storytelling traditions, truth/honour in word bonds, grief-madness, and death. This thesis argues that the diversity of ways in which memory was used in these romances opens up new perspectives from which to understand the texts themselves, and the society in which and for which they were composed.

Chapter one of this thesis explores memory’s use in relation to those oral and written compositional traditions which these romances repeatedly and insistently invoke. Each of the texts discussed in this chapter contains references to both oral and written traditions, reflecting the diverse cultural and literary practices in late medieval England, where oral, memorial storytelling interacted in a variety of ways with more writerly modes. Chapter two builds from chapter one’s discussion of how oral, memorial traditions were still prevalent in – and relevant to – late medieval culture, by exploring the role of “treuth” and oral word bonds in the genre. In the aristocratic social world of these texts, fidelity to one’s oral promises and oaths is a key marker and determiner of personal honour, and chapter two explores how the keeping and breaking of one’s word is expressed and understood through the language of remembering and forgetting. Memory, and faulty memory, are therefore understood to have an ethical dimension, which

frequently complicates these texts' exploration of personal morality. Chapter three looks at depictions of grief-madness, and the interconnectedness between grief-madness and memory. This chapter argues that portrayals of grief-madness help to shape how readers and audiences respond both to narratives and characters, as well as exploring the literary and narrative effects which the portrayal of grief madness produces. The final chapter of this thesis explores the relationship of memory to death in the Arthurian romance corpus. Focusing on those romances that represent the death of Arthur and the fall of his court, chapter four argues that remembering the dead in these texts brings into play a variety of religious, ethical, social, and indeed emotional considerations, which in turn shape readers' responses. This chapter also argues that the realistic representation of funereal and other religious practices, and the religious and ethical imperative to remember the dead which these ceremonies fostered, creates a variety of heightened literary effects, which brings to audiences the immediacy of death, and in so doing, elicits from those audiences strong, affective responses.

Lay Summary

Memory is hard to define because it encompasses all facets of life and forms the basis for an individual's relationships with others, as well as an individual's sense of self. Memory can refer to the mental faculty through or by which the mind stores and remembers information, but it also refers to that information which the brain has remembered and stored. In this way, memory can be understood in terms of both form and content, for it simultaneously describes the mental processes of remembering ("I have a good memory"), and the things which are remembered by those processes ("my memories of early childhood are quite happy"). And because these two different aspects of memory – the capacity to remember, and the content that is remembered – are both central to the Middle English Arthurian romances of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this corpus of texts proves to be particularly fertile territory for investigating the memorial culture of the later Middle Ages.

Middle English Arthurian romance is commemorative in the sense that it records the cultural or collective memory of the legend of Arthur and his court, an epoch which was regarded as one of the great triumphs of Christian civilization. But these romance texts also record and reflect – in Prologues, in authors' asides, and in narrative episodes – how culture in late medieval England understood memory to function. Numerous separate acts of individual memory are portrayed. The authors of these romances frequently focus on their own memories, describing how their texts are formed from narrative material and past sources, which they claim to have drawn from memory. The characters' memories are also important; what they remember and what they

forget form a recurring theme in these romance texts. Moreover, Middle English Arthurian romance is preoccupied by– and shines a revealing light on– what we would now call institutional memory, most notably, perhaps, the rites, rituals, and ceremonies which surrounded the commemoration of the dead.

This thesis investigates the complex and multifarious ways in which Middle English Arthurian romance represents, engages with, and responds to late-medieval ideas about memory. This thesis explores the ways in which Middle English Arthurian romance uses memory in relation to things which were of significant cultural importance to people in the late Middle Ages, such as the shift from oral to written record, the value of ‘treuth’ (keeping one’s oaths and promises), madness, and death. In these texts, memory is seen to be inextricably bound up with notions of selfhood and identity and is shown to be implicated in the ways in which individuals negotiate their relationship with society. The growth in literacy which occurred over the course of the later Middle Ages, and which resulted in a shift from a predominantly memorial to a documentary culture, is inflected in subtle ways in the romance corpus. The more archaic, oral forms of transmitting the past based on memory – as opposed to written record – are often invoked in the romance corpus. The importance of the need to remember one’s spoken oral oaths and promises is repeatedly registered in a range of different contexts and is largely bound up in upholding one’s honour to keep one’s spoken pledge. In addition, the religious and ethical imperative of remembering the dead – a duty which lay at the heart of late-medieval Christianity– is reflected in these romance texts, and the authors’ uses of memory in these narratives in regulating the relationships between the living and the dead is highly revealing.

In recent decades, memory has become the subject of increasing interest across many fields of study, particularly Medieval Studies. This thesis draws on the insights of this academic domain

in order to enhance our understanding of the Middle English Arthurian romance corpus, while at the same time deploying an analysis of Middle English Arthurian romance as a way of contributing to the developing field of Memory Studies.

Acknowledgements and Dedication

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. David Salter, for his support and guidance through the completion of my PhD thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Salter for helping to arrange various leaves of absences for me while I underwent three years of chemotherapy after my Leukemia diagnosis, while I was recovering from multiple injuries from a serious car accident, and while I was grieving the sudden passing of my Dad.

Special thanks to my Mom, who is my best friend and who is a continuous source of support and encouragement. I would also like to thank Tom for his unwavering support and confidence in my ability to succeed.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Dad, who was always my biggest fan.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Lay Summary

Acknowledgements and Dedication

Introduction	1
Chapter One:	14
“Of tham na mare have I herd tell, nowther in romance ne in spell”: Oral and Written Records of Remembrance within Medieval English Romance and Culture	
Chapter Two:	73
“He had forgeten his leman!”: Remembering and Forgetting Promises and Oaths in Medieval Romance and Culture	
Chapter Three:	109
“For wa he wex al wilde and wode”: Memory and Madness in Medieval English Romance and Culture	
Chapter Four:	156
“And munge me with matens and masses in melle”: Remembering the Dead in Medieval English Romance and Culture	
Conclusion	214
Bibliography	221

Introduction

Recent scholarship¹ has explored the relationship between the culture of memory and the culture of written record in the late Middle Ages, and even though this shift from memory to written record – to borrow the title of M. T. Clanchy’s pioneering study – was well under way by the fourteenth century, the process did not proceed in a linear and straightforward fashion. Indeed, as Clanchy himself helpfully points out, “There was no straight and simple line of progress from memory to written record.”² Therefore, the profound and far-reaching changes in social, cultural, and legal practice which accompanied the growth in literacy in England inevitably affected in complicated ways the mentality and the worldview of those people who were caught up in this transformation. The older, vestigial norms and ways of seeing and understanding the world which were associated with the culture of memory continued to exercise a hold over the imagination – and to command the loyalty – of the population, at the very same time that they were being slowly displaced by more modern ideas brought about by the increasing prestige of

¹ See, for example, the seminal works done on the importance of memory in medieval culture written by Mary Carruthers, Jan M. Ziolkowski, M. T. Clanchy, and Elizabeth Van Houts: Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Elizabeth Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900-1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307, 3rd edition* (Chichester, Malden, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

² Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 295.

the written word. This thesis argues that the genre of Middle English Arthurian romance is very well placed to register these shifts in attitude, understanding, and mentality. This thesis also argues that the use of memory in these texts – the ways in which ideas about, and understandings of memory were deployed in them – necessarily shapes and influences readers’ responses to them. Memory’s use and representation in Middle English Arthurian romance deserves more scholarly attention, for it can cast a light on the authors’ and their audiences’ cultural beliefs and practices. Numerous scholars have already attested to the fact that medieval romance texts, while exciting and enigmatic creations in their own right, do in fact embody the cultural practices, as well as the social and political contexts, of their authors and audiences.³ Helen Cooper asserts that medieval romance is the product of identifiable and specific changes in social practices, and therefore becomes closely modelled on the immediate conditions of contemporary life.⁴ Middle English romance, therefore, does connect with real life and cultural practices and cultural changes helped to create romance.⁵ Middle English romance was arguably the dominant secular literary genre in late medieval England (and the romances concerning the Arthurian legend were

³ While romance texts can be viewed as fantastical narratives, it has become a critical commonplace to view romances as reflecting contemporary mentalities, social practices, and customs. I will provide here a list of a few of the studies that I have found to be the most helpful in outlining this argument:

Derek Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA; Oxford, UK; Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003).

Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Cooper, “When Romance Comes True,” 13-28.

Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012).

⁴ Cooper, “When Romance Comes True,” 16.

⁵ Cooper, “When Romance Comes True,” 13-14

the most famous romance matter of all),⁶ and while scholars have argued that romance became a means by which cultural values and ideals were recorded, preserved, and promulgated,⁷ the ways in which and the extent to which Middle English Arthurian romance represents, engages with, and responds to late-medieval ideas about memory has not received the critical attention it deserves. Middle English Arthurian romances use memory in a variety of interesting ways, and the various uses of memory in these romances helps to shape their narratives and their meanings, and this in turn shapes and influences how readers understand and respond to them.

This thesis will explore the representation and use of memory within a variety of Middle English Arthurian romance texts with composition dates spanning from the early fourteenth century to the late fifteenth century in order to gain a fuller understanding of how memory was used by various romance authors in late medieval England. This thesis will primarily focus on *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, *Ywain and Gawain*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Le Morte Darthur*.⁸ Aside

⁶ Corinne Saunders, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Romance*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 4.

⁷ Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6.

⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, the main editions that I will be using for these texts in my thesis are as follows: *Sir Perceval of Galles*, in *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995) <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles-and-ywain-and-gawain>; *Ywain and Gawain*, in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 75-173; *Sir Launfal*, in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 190-218; *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 219- 243; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Daniel Donoghue. Trans. Larry D. Benson (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2012); *Lybeaus Desconus*, in *TEAMS Middle English Texts Series: Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. George Shuffleton (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), 111- 164; *Lybeaus Desconus*, eds. Eve Salisbury and James Weldon (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013) <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus>; *Lybeaus Desconus*, ed. Maldwyn Mills (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969); Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004). I have chosen to use Shepherd's edition of *Le Morte Darthur* because it remains truer to the Winchester Manuscript than do Vinaver or Field. All subsequent references to these aforementioned texts will come from these editions and will be cited by page and/or line numbers.

from Malory's work and work attributed to Thomas Chestre, the majority of these romance texts are anonymous. This list encompasses a wide selection of Arthurian romances, and some are well-known and well-studied texts, while others have received relatively little scholarly attention. While these texts differ from one another in many interesting ways, they all deal with Arthurian subject matter, and memory in its various manifestations figures prominently in them all. This thesis argues that there are many ways in which memory is explored, used, represented, and understood in these romances, and that this engagement with memory touches upon questions of ethics, religion, social status, personal conduct, identity, and narrative convention. The thesis emphasizes the pluralities and complexities of memory, and it is also alert to the literary effects that these uses and deployments of memory create, which enable us to further understand the texts and aesthetic art of those texts. This thesis will therefore seek to advance and open up avenues of understanding the various ways that memory is used in Middle English Arthurian romance texts, how the various uses of memory help to shape and modify our understanding of these texts, and how the uses of memory within the texts also provide insights into the society in which they were composed. This thesis also seeks to advance and contribute to medieval memory studies in general through exploring how these romance authors understood and deployed memory within their works.

This introduction will first provide a brief overview of the rise in memory studies, particularly on the ways in which memory studies has contributed to the scholarship of the medieval period. A brief description of each of the chapters of this thesis will then be provided at the end of this introduction.

Memory Studies and the Middle Ages

Memory encompasses all facets of life and forms the basis for an individual's relationships with others, as well as an individual's sense of self. Memory can therefore be used in the construction of both personal identity and cultural and social identity. Individuals use their memories every day in various forms and situations, and while memory has become a topic of significant interest in neuroscience and its related fields, it has also become a subject of interest across various academic fields of study. Within the last several decades, the interest in memory has increased in both academic research as well as in more general public discourse. Astrid Erll states that over the last two decades, studies on memory have become a "key concept of academic discourse" across many areas of study (sociology, psychology, neuroscience, history, religious studies, literary studies, media studies, etc.).⁹ Many areas of study, including literary studies, are interested in exploring the connection between culture and memory.¹⁰ Memory studies has thus emerged as a multidisciplinary field of study; however, for the purposes of this introduction, studies pertaining to memory in the Middle Ages will be discussed in order to show how this thesis will contribute to this burgeoning field of study.

Frances Yates' study, *The Art of Memory*, established *ars memoriae* as an object of research within modern cultural studies.¹¹ Yates traces the *ars memoriae* from classical sources all the way to the seventeenth century but does spend some time on the treatments of memory in the Middle Ages.¹² Before Yates' book, there was little systematic attention paid to the processes

⁹ Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, transl. Sarah B. Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1-2.

¹⁰ Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 2.

¹¹ Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 69.

¹² Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 1966.

of memory in the medieval world.¹³ After Yates' overarching study on memory across many centuries, scholars such as Mary Carruthers, M. T. Clanchy, Patrick J. Geary, and Elizabeth Van Houts –amongst others– have contributed influential studies specifically devoted to memory in the Middle Ages, and how it was represented and discussed in numerous accounts across a variety of literary forms (for example, chronicles and annals, saints' lives and other religious writings, legal documents, charters, etc.).¹⁴ Mary Carruthers' seminal book, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* is still the “definitive study of medieval memory.”¹⁵ Carruthers argues that her book can be read “in at least two ways: as a history of a basic and greatly influential practice on medieval pedagogy, and as a reflection on the psychological and social value of the institution of *memoria* itself.”¹⁶ Carruthers argues that medieval culture was “fundamentally memorial, to the same profound degree that modern culture in the West is documentary.”¹⁷ In their book, *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski present a thorough anthology

¹³ Kisha G. Tracy, “Memory, Recollection, and Forgetting,” in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 1020.

¹⁴ See, for example, Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*; Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*; M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*; Elizabeth Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900-1200*; and Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). While these aforementioned texts are seminal studies and have greatly influenced the ways in which we understand the highly memorial culture of the Middle Ages, it should be noted that Kisha G. Tracy and James McKinstry have also contributed smaller studies based on their PhD research on memory in Middle English literature. For Tracy's and McKinstry's works, see: Kisha G. Tracy, *Memory and Confession in Middle English Literature* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan Imprint, Springer Nature International Publishing, 2017), and James McKinstry, *Middle English Romance and the Craft of Memory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015). For an interesting archaeological study on medieval commemoration practices, see: Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Tracy, “Memory, Recollection, and Forgetting,” 1020.

¹⁶ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 17.

¹⁷ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 9.

of medieval texts and pictures by medieval philosophers and theologians on memory, which provides readers with works on memory by such prominent medieval thinkers as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. People in the Middle Ages lived in a highly memorial culture, and as M. T. Clanchy points out throughout his influential book, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, the shift from memory to written record had just begun in the late Middle Ages, which Clanchy argues was taking place during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁸

Clanchy states that “The main contention of *From Memory to Written Record* is that lay literacy grew out of bureaucracy, rather than from any abstract desire for education or literature.”¹⁹ In fact, Clanchy points out that oral procedures, such as the continuing preference for reading a text aloud rather than reading a text silently with the eye, “persisted through the Middle Ages and beyond.”²⁰ Carruthers also discusses written records in the late Middle Ages and states that written material came increasingly into use from the eleventh century and onwards, and that the reason that more manuscripts survive from the later Middle Ages is obviously because more were being produced.²¹ However, Carruthers goes on to state that even in the late Middle Ages,

medieval culture remained profoundly memorial in nature, despite the increased use and availability of books for reasons other than simple technological convenience. The primary factor in its conservation lies in the identification of memory with creative thinking, learning (invention and recollection), and the ability to make judgements (prudence and wisdom). Writing, as we have seen, was always thought to be a memory aid, not a substitute for it.²²

¹⁸ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 5.

¹⁹ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* 19.

²⁰ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* 2.

²¹ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 195.

²² Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 195.

Patrick J. Geary has also looked at memory in the Middle Ages, and his book, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the end of First Millennium*, focuses on the day-to-day practices of remembering, transforming, and using the past.²³ Geary's book examines how people in the tenth and eleventh centuries remembered their past in relation to their own present, and "how individuals remembered and forgot."²⁴ Geary argues that "The history of memory can mean different things to different people. The most obvious and frequent meaning is historiography, or the study of explicitly elaborated and cohesive accounts of the past."²⁵ Geary goes on to argue that the second kind of history of memory is the study of the ways in which memory was understood and cultivated within the intellectual traditions, which includes what people thought about memory and the various techniques used for memory training that were used to enhance "human memory faculties."²⁶ Elizabeth Van Houts explores memory in the Middle Ages through a gendered reading in her book, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900-1200*, which she argues is "primarily concerned with the ways in which medieval people perceived their fairly recent past and the tools they developed to recall it to the best of their abilities."²⁷ Van Houts' book surveys how between the period of 900-1200 CE, people remembered their past and recorded their experiences in both oral and written traditions.²⁸ Van Houts' book stresses the significance of the collaboration between women and men in the

²³ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 10.

²⁴ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 8.

²⁵ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 9.

²⁶ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 9-10.

²⁷ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 16.

²⁸ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 145.

remembrance of the past.²⁹ Van Houts argues that the important position of women in the passing on of traditions and stories about the past exists in an impressive amount of evidence from a variety of sources ranging from chronicles and saints' lives to objects and wills.³⁰ While Van Houts's study focuses on gender and memory within the culture of the Middle Ages, Van Houts also shares a similar sentiment to that of Carruthers, Clanchy, and Geary about the importance of memory and how written traditions in the late Middle Ages did not simply replace memory and oral traditions. Van Houts states, "however much the written traditions helped to stabilize memories, they never completely eradicated the fluidity of memory."³¹ Furthermore, Van Houts argues that literary fictional texts, such as romances, should not be overlooked because they reflect the attitudes of contemporary society and can help to elucidate the historical reality of the memorial tradition.³² While Van Houts acknowledges that a study of memory in medieval romance is important to our understanding of the ways in which memory featured in medieval life, her study, as previously mentioned, mainly focuses on the high Middle Ages, and Van Houts does not go into much detail concerning romances. While it is clear that much interesting and seminal research has been done in regard to memory in medieval culture, there still remains the space in which to examine the multifarious uses of memory in Middle English Arthurian romance. Previous scholarly research by prominent medieval scholars in the field has either tended to focus on how memory was thought about and conceived by theologians, philosophers, and other prominent thinkers, or has focused on the cultural and social memories

²⁹ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 150.

³⁰ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 147.

³¹ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 10.

³² Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 65.

of people in the Middle Ages from all walks of life. However, there has been limited study on the uses of memory within medieval fictional literature, particularly Middle English romance.

Studies into how memory was used in romances are important in our understanding of the texts themselves as well as the authors' and audiences' cultural beliefs and practices more generally.

This thesis thus seeks to contribute to this area of memory studies in the Middle Ages, by providing an exploration of the uses and representation of memory in Middle English Arthurian romance.

A Brief Description of the Chapters

The first chapter of this thesis, “‘Of tham na mare have I herd tell, nowther in romance ne in spell’: Oral and Written Records of Remembrance within Medieval English Romance and Culture,” explores oral and written memorial traditions within *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, *Ywain and Gawain*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Le Morte Darthur*. The date of composition for these texts spans from the early fourteenth century until the late fifteenth century, but they all show an interesting intermingling of oral and written traditions. This chapter looks at the ways in which memory, orality, and written records interact within each of these tales. The form of Middle English Arthurian romance is predicated on a memorial, oral, storytelling tradition, and the authors of these romances use oral references in their tales, such as having heard the story from somewhere, and tell their audience to listen to the tale. The narrators harken back to the oral minstrel storytelling traditions of the myth of King Arthur, even though these stories come down to us in written compositions in manuscripts. In these instances, the authors situate themselves as the oral narrators of the Arthurian past to a listening audience (whether real or imagined). The

narrators draw on memorial traditions of storytelling, but these are done in textual ways. Middle English Arthurian romances therefore show an interesting intermingling of both oral and written forms of memorial traditions in the narratives, which reveals the intricate connection between oral and written modes of remembering. Previous scholarship has tended to make generalisations about the composition and dissemination of these works. However, this chapter rejects the polarised nature of recent critical debate about this corpus, favouring instead a view which recognises the bimedial nature of late-medieval literary culture and its compositional practices.

The second chapter of this thesis, “‘He had forgotten his leman!’: Remembering and Forgetting Promises and Oaths in Medieval Romance and Culture,” explores memory’s relationship with oral promises and oaths in *Ywain and Gawain*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Le Morte Darthur*. Chapter two explores how these oral residues of medieval culture emphasized a strong commitment to remember one’s spoken promises and oaths. This need to remember one’s oral promises and oaths to others can be traced to the keeping of one’s “treuth,”³³ which was of paramount importance in maintaining one’s honour and public image in late medieval England. The need to keep one’s promises and oaths in these texts is framed in terms of memory. While previous scholarship has discussed the importance of oral pledges in medieval society, it has neglected to discuss how memory is inherently involved in this process. By understanding fidelity to one’s word in terms of memory, these romance texts also draw attention to memory’s relationship to morality. Moral failings, and a loss of honour and personal integrity, are frequently accounted for in terms of a failure of memory, which in turn renders the texts’ treatment of character more complex and ambiguous. It is unclear whether the emphasis on memory as an explanation for ethical failings is used in these texts to excuse – or at least

³³ The spellings for this term vary, and this will be explained and expanded upon in chapter two.

partially excuse – the immoral actions of their protagonists. These authors’ engagement with contemporary ideas about memory would therefore seem to be designed to elicit a variety of different emotional response from the texts’ readers and audiences.

The third chapter of this thesis, “‘For wa he wex al wilde and wode’: Memory and Madness in Medieval English Romance and Culture,” explores the interconnectedness of memory and madness in Middle English Arthurian romance, which, to an extent, reflects the views of people in late medieval England concerning mental illness. Memory played an important role in determining if a person was suffering from a mental illness in late medieval England,³⁴ but medieval ideas about the causes and treatments for madness were varied. Chapter three explores the representation of grief-madness within *Ywain and Gawain*, *Le Morte Darthur*, and *Sir Perceval of Galles*. This chapter argues that there is an interesting interconnectedness specifically between grief-madness and memory issues in these three texts, and this has been overlooked by past scholarship. Previous scholarship has also largely overlooked female madness in romance in favour of exploring the madness of knights. The juxtaposition of male and female madness in these texts draws attention to the ways in which gender inflected the contemporary discourses of madness, as well as to the very different assumptions about gender and gender roles which romance. The portrayals of grief-madness and its all-encompassing amnesia also help to shape the narratives of these romances and our understanding of the texts, as the grief-madness of these characters elicits feelings of sympathy for them, especially Achefflour, as she suffers from grief-madness when believes her son to be dead.

³⁴ See, for example, Wendy J. Turner’s detailed discussion: “Silent Testimony: Emotional Displays and Lapses in Memory as Indicators of Mental Instability in Medieval English Investigations,” in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy J. Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 81-95.

The last chapter of this thesis, “‘And munge me with matens and masses in melle’: Remembering the Dead in Medieval English Romance and Culture,” explores how remembering the dead is represented in this corpus. Remembering the dead was a religious and ethical imperative in late-medieval Catholicism, and this aspect of belief, and the ritual and ceremonial practices which assumed such an important place in the devotional lives of the faithful, assume a prominence in *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* and the final books of Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*. Both texts, in very different ways, use belief in Purgatory, and the prayers, ceremonies, and rituals which were believed to speed the passage of souls through Purgatory, as a way of representing death in all of its stark and unavoidable reality. While previous scholarship has explored the theme of death within these two romances separately, chapter four brings the two texts into dialogue with one another. They both use memory in complementary but nonetheless different ways. *The Awntyrs off Arthure* uses the ghost of Guinevere’s mother, who solicits matins and masses from her daughter in order to liberate her soul from Purgatory, as a means of critiquing the worldly values of chivalric romance, while the final books of Malory’s text, which poignantly register the proximity of death, deploy the contemporary practice of commemorating and memorialising the dead in order to achieve a variety of different thematic, narrative, aesthetic, and indeed pietistic ends.

Chapter One

“Of tham na mare have I herd tell, nowther in romance ne in spell”: Oral and Written Records of Remembrance in Medieval English Romance and Culture

Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis will discuss memorial, oral, and written storytelling traditions within Middle English Arthurian romance texts. This chapter will explore the interesting interaction of oral and written records of remembrance and storytelling within *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, *Ywain and Gawain*, *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Le Morte Darthur*. Through this very broad selection of romance texts, this chapter will provide a cross-section of romances on both ends of the spectrum; at one end there are the so-called “popular” romances that are believed to have been more orally/memorially composed, perhaps by minstrels or hack scribes, and at the other end there are the romances that are believed to be more sophisticated literary/writerly texts. “Popular” Middle English Arthurian romances have often been neglected and dismissed by some scholars because of their form and content. However, there have been a few more recent

scholarly works that discuss the “popular romances” in a more favourable light, especially regarding what they can reveal about contemporary culture.³⁵ Through exploring this wide range of romances, this chapter will look at the ways in which the authors and their potential audiences understood memory, orality, and writing, which is very different from our modern society where there is a clearer distinction between orality and writing. This chapter will look at the ways in which oral and written memorial traditions are employed by both the authors/narrators and/or the scribes/printers of their tales, which will expand on previous scholarly debate in order to accommodate the range of insights about the contemporary authors and audiences that these individual romances can provide to us. By looking at the various examples of oral, memorial and written traditions within these texts, we can gain insight into how these romance authors wanted their texts to be read and understood. The composition dates for these texts range over a fairly large span of time, from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the late fifteenth century, yet they all imbed and gesture to memories of oral story-telling culture through the authors’ asides, as well as through the characters and their interactions with each other within the narratives. This indicates that there was still considerable interest in memorial, oral storytelling in the late Middle Ages, even as the population in England was becoming increasingly literate. Arguably, these romance texts were created for both oral performance to a listening audience as well as silent, private reading. The process of recording these stories in writing prevents the stories from being lost or forgotten; however, oral residues in the form of asides to the audience (such as “As I have hard men sayn”) relating to a story being heard, rather than read, can be found within all of these

³⁵ See: *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, eds. Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton (D. S. Brewer, 2009); *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, eds. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2000); and *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

aforementioned texts, even the more literary texts, such as Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. These asides are excellent indicators of how these authors and their audiences (whether real or imagined) conceptualized memorial traditions in relation to oral narratives and written documents.³⁶

In a particularly interesting passage from *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory mentions both oral and written sources relating to Arthur's death:

Thus of Arthur I fynde no more written in bokis that bene auctorysed, nothir more of the verry sertaynté of hys deth harde I never rede...
 Now more of the deth of Kyng Arthur coude I never fynde, but that thes ladyes brought hym to hys grave, and such one was entyred there whych the ermyte bare wytnes that sometyme was Byssshop of Caunturbyry. But yet the ermyte knew nat in sertayne that he was veryly the body of Kyng Arthur; for thys tale Sir Bedyvere, a knight of the Table Rounde, made hit to be wrytten. Yet som men say in many partys of Inglonde that Kyng Arthur ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of Oure Lorde Jesu into another place: and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wyne the Holy Cross. Yet I woll nat say that hit shall be so; but rather I wolde sey, here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff. And many men say that there ys wrytten uppon the tumbe thys [vers]: Hic iacet Arthurus, rex quondum rexque futurus (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 689).

While it may appear unexpected at first to make a reference to one of the most writerly romances of the Middle Ages in a chapter on oral and written records of remembrance, this passage is a good example to show this interesting intermingling of memorial, oral, and written story-telling traditions that is present within Middle English romances and the culture in which they were composed. In this above passage, Malory links oral storytelling traditions with written records by stating that he has neither heard nor read any more stories of Arthur and his death. He uses the phrase, "men say" twice in this passage, giving it a more colloquial and conversational tone.

³⁶ I must acknowledge that modern conceptions of medieval authors and audiences are problematic, and it is impossible to know for certain what the entire range of audiences might have been for these texts. Manuscript ownership can reveal what type of readers owned certain romances, but that does not necessarily indicate the immediate and entire audience of these texts. This is made more problematic by the fact that each scribe/redactor may have had a different kind of audience for which they were transcribing / translating the story. My interpretations of author and audience are based on previous work done by scholars and my own textual analysis, which are inevitably subjective.

Malory gives both written and oral accounts that he has heard about Arthur's death, and even states that a key witness, the hermit, was uncertain as to the identity of the body that was buried there, and Malory says that the hermit's account of this was then written down. Elizabeth Edwards discusses Malory's mention here of the inscription on King Artur's tomb and states, "The message itself is ambivalent; *Rex futururus* seems to go with the oral position that Arthur 'ys nat dede' but 'shall com agayne', yet this assertion is written on his tomb, where he lies. In order for the rumours of non-death to achieve authority, they must be written on the proof of Arthur's death."³⁷ Edwards argues that Arthur's tomb therefore denies its own inscription, and she states that the fixed location of the tomb, along with the inscription, promotes a reverential attitude towards the written word, but that Malory attempts to "break free from that fixity of writing" in this passage in order to provide Arthur with an unfixed location.³⁸ However, Malory is not so much breaking free of writing per se; he is simply providing both the oral and written accounts that he has heard and read concerning King Arthur's supposed death. The oral accounts still state that there is a written inscription about Arthur on the tomb, but Malory never specifically says that it is Arthur's tomb for certain. Malory integrates both the written and oral accounts of Arthur's death and purposefully leaves his account ambivalent. This aforementioned excerpt from Malory's text that displays both oral and written memorial storytelling traditions is not unique, as Malory uses oral and written storytelling traditions throughout the entirety of his work. Malory often writes as if he is imagining the sources speaking their narratives. Malory presents himself within his narrative as a solitary "knight prisoner," consulting his library of

³⁷ Elizabeth Edwards, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 176-177.

³⁸ Edwards, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur*, 177.

written sources, but he often invokes oral, memorial storytelling traditions. As Terence McCarthy points out,

The cultures of orality and literacy have an entirely different attitude to memory. We write something down in case we forget. If the spoken word is forgotten, it is lost. Writing replaces memory; oral cultures must, unless they are ready to accept oblivion, defend memory at all costs. They therefore devise all sorts of mnemonic aids: charms, lists, alliterations, formulae, devices which will stimulate recall. In this respect there are times when Malory writes as though he were not *writing* at all, writes as though he were *recording* great deeds, but trying to anchor them in our minds.”³⁹

Malory is certainly not the only late medieval romance author to write as if he were speaking and who shows an intermingling of oral and written traditions in his work; in fact, almost all surviving Middle English romances either imitate or reflect the conditions of an oral performance before a listening audience, and by combining the effects of memory, performance, improvisation, and writing, these romances reveal the complex relationship between orality and literacy in late medieval England.⁴⁰ As a result of this interaction of oral story-telling and written text, Middle English romance is an ideal genre in which to study the role of memory in oral and written records, as well as the interaction of oral and written methods of transmission within Middle English romance in late medieval England. Most likely, Middle English romances were circulated in both writing and in memory,⁴¹ and not every reader/listener of these stories would have had his/her own book. Orality and literacy were interconnected in the medieval period, and even Middle English romances such as *Le Morte Darthur*, which was not composed orally by memory, still retain these oral residues.

³⁹ Terence McCarthy, *An Introduction to Malory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 125.

⁴⁰ Nancy Mason Bradbury, “Literacy, Orality, and the Poetics of Middle English Romance,” in *Oral Poetics in Middle English Poetry*, ed. Mark C. Amodio, with the assistance of Sarah Gray Miller (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1994), 41.

⁴¹ Bradbury, “Literacy, Orality, and the Poetics of Middle English Romance,” 48.

These oral residues in Middle English romance have garnered various responses from scholars, and this introduction will provide a brief overview of the scholarly literature that has been done on oral and written traditions in the Middle Ages. Scholars have often sided with a more oral, memorial, minstrel style of composition for some of these romance texts, or with a more writerly tradition (oftentimes arguing that some of the more “popular” romances were merely put together by hack scribes), but they have often not acknowledged that these oral and written traditions work together in interesting ways in the creation of a wide variety of romances. Recitation and oral reading were common ways that medieval audiences received romances.⁴² Many scholars have focused on the way works were received in the Middle Ages and have discussed how these works often emphasize the audience needing to listen to or hear the story. M. T. Clanchy points out that the emphasis on hearing in these works does not necessarily mean that their contents come entirely from oral tradition, but that reading continued to be considered in terms of hearing rather than seeing.⁴³ Walter J. Ong shares a similar view and states that probably most medieval writers across Europe wrote their literary works to be read aloud.⁴⁴ Roberta L. Kreuger similarly argues that early verse romances were composed in writing, but they were intended for public reading and often display the authors’ sense of both oral performance and literary aesthetics.⁴⁵ William Nelson argues that reading aloud to others was

⁴² Huot discusses oral reading and recitation and further states, “various patterns of reading – oral and silent, private and public – coexisted in the reception of romance from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries at least.” Sylvia Hout, “The Manuscript Context of Medieval Romance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Kreuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 73-74.

⁴³ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 270.

⁴⁴ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 154.

⁴⁵ Roberta L. Kreuger, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Kreuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

“the usual way in the Middle Ages.”⁴⁶ If romances that existed in manuscripts were often being read aloud, then this showcases this interesting relationship between the written, oral, and memorial traditions that were invoked when composing these works. Considering that many of these romances were written down with the intent to be orally delivered to a listening audience, Matthew Innes brings up an interesting point by asking: “Do we characterize the spoken text as oral or literate?”⁴⁷ However, Dieter Mehl argues that the processes of translating, copying, and adapting were far less ‘literary’ than the modern reader might imagine. In fact, these romance texts left ample room for improvisation, and other features which modern readers associate with oral compositions.⁴⁸ Mehl contends that while it cannot be denied that romances may have had their origin in an oral tradition, they were later embodied in written versions and emulated by their translators. Furthermore, Mehl believes that in most Middle English romances, oral references are a “purely literary convention, designed to create an atmosphere of lively recitation, and they were probably in the majority of cases ready from a manuscript rather than improvised.”⁴⁹ However, given the sheer number of invocations to oral recitation in many Middle English romances ranging over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it does seem strange to read them all the same as merely fictitious literary conventions put in place by clever authors, so that the readers of these texts could imagine them as a lively oral performance, thus harkening back to a more oral tradition of storytelling. Written culture and memorial oral story-

⁴⁶ William Nelson, “From ‘Listen, Lordings’ to ‘Dear Reader,’” *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 46, no. 2 (1976): 112. Project MUSE.

⁴⁷ Matthew Innes, “Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society,” *The Past and Present Society* 158 (1998): 35.

⁴⁸ Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), 10.

⁴⁹ Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, 8.

telling traditions were still very much connected in a variety of ways in late medieval England, and to simply state that these oral references in every single romance are merely literary conventions, is reductive and dismissive of the society in which these romances were composed. Karl Reichl also points out that it would seem strange if these appeals to the audience and other oral markers should *never* be meant literally.⁵⁰ Reichl argues,

There might have been the learned author writing in a popular style as well as the less learned hack rapidly churning out popular fiction, but there must have been also the minstrel performing the works of others, with or without written help, as well as the popular entertainer who had mastered the idiom of popular storytelling to such a degree that he was capable of producing his own works.⁵¹

Some authors might not have had manuscript copies of their source texts on hand to work with while composing their adaptations, so they might have had to compose their works from their memory of an oral performance of a text or from notes. Bradbury claims that many modern scholars have been unwilling to acknowledge memory as an important factor in romance transmission because scholars tend to underestimate the capacity for memorization that was possible in a culture far less literate than our own.⁵² Bradbury stresses the importance of memorial transmission, because it is the least explored of the means of medieval romance provenance.⁵³ Ad Putter adds to the debate surrounding oral or written transmission of romances, indicating that things may be a bit more connected and complicated. Putter offers a more nuanced approach to the material and states that oral recitation and written texts often went “hand in hand” in the medieval period. Most manuscripts therefore still existed to “serve the ears

⁵⁰ Karl Reichl, “Plotting the Map of Medieval Oral Literature,” in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 21.

⁵¹ Reichl, “The Middle English Popular Romance,” 262.

⁵² Bradbury, “Literacy, Orality, and the Poetics of Middle English Romance,” 44.

⁵³ Bradbury, “Literacy, Orality, and the Poetics of Middle English Romance,” 50.

of listeners,” and written texts often served the purpose of transmitting a romance back into oral circulation.⁵⁴ Putter continues by asserting that romances survived not only by being copied by a scribe and then read, but by being orally recited and stored in the living memories of the audience. Therefore, it is very possible that some Middle English romances may have been reconstructed from memory or from notes by someone who had heard an oral reading from a written romance.⁵⁵ Putter postulates why some scholars are quick to dismiss oral and/or memorial transmission, and he states,

The widespread skepticism about the oral transmission of medieval popular romances (despite the many medieval voices telling us the contrary), and, conversely, the readiness to believe that the signs of orality and minstrelsy in popular romance were planted there by clever authors seeking to efface the traces of their bookishness, are symptoms of our own modernity, reflexes of the habits and conditions of literate people with literate minds.⁵⁶

Middle English romances (like many other medieval works) are collaborative enterprises whereby the composer, audience, writer, compiler, scribe, and patron all contribute to the making and meaning of the work.⁵⁷ Middle English romances (and other medieval works) were therefore transmitted to audiences in a variety of ways: a story could be narrated from memory without the use of a manuscript, a manuscript could be read silently in private, a manuscript could be read aloud to oneself, or a manuscript could be read aloud to a group of listeners.⁵⁸ From this brief survey of the critical literature on oral and written modes of transmission for Middle English

⁵⁴ Ad Putter, “A Historical Introduction,” in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, eds. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2000), 8.

⁵⁵ Putter, “A Historical Introduction,” 10-11.

⁵⁶ Ad Putter, “Middle English Romances and the Oral Tradition,” in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 349.

⁵⁷ Gail Ashton, *Medieval English Romance in Context* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 24.

⁵⁸ Reichl, “Orality and Performance,” 134.

romances, it is evident that many scholars in the field have widely studied both the oral and written nature of Middle English romance texts, and this chapter will further contribute to the ongoing debate and discussion of this topic but will take a slightly different approach to the material.

As evidenced in the above review of past scholarship on oral and written modes of romance transmission, scholars have tended to debate the oral or literate nature of medieval romance texts, arguing the ways that they might have been received by contemporary audiences, with most scholars arguing for either a more oral, memorial quality or a more literate quality to these romance texts. Many of the debates that have been put forth by scholars about memory and oral undertones often simply focus on the form of popular romance in general and do not take into account the individuality of each of these works and how the authors use memorial, oral traditions and written traditions in a variety of ways within their specific works. There is no cut-and-dried distinction between oral and written storytelling traditions in Middle English romances because they were composed in a culture that did not make those distinctions. Previous scholarship has therefore tended to make generalisations about the composition and dissemination of these works; this chapter rejects the polarisation of much of the critical debate about this corpus. This chapter will argue that rather than thinking of oral and written methods of recording and transmitting these stories as completely different from one another, it is much more fruitful to examine the relationship between the two and how they work together and are used in various ways within these aforementioned romances, particularly when these two methods of recording relate to memory. Memory, orality, and written traditions all have a place and a role in the creation of these late Middle English romances, which points to memory still having a prominent place in written textual traditions. Previous scholarship on the debate of the

oral or literate aspects of medieval romance has focused on discussing the oral and/or literate qualities of romance and often generalizes and simplifies; however, this chapter will take a more panoptic approach but will also engage critically with each of the aforementioned romance texts separately and in detail in order to explore how each romance treats this intermingling of oral, memorial storytelling traditions and written traditions and how each of these texts might have enjoyed a variety of audiences.

This chapter will now turn to a separate and detailed exploration of *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, *Ywain and Gawain*, *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Le Morte Darthur*, and will look at the ways in which memory, orality, and written records interact and are used within each of these tales. The arrangement of these romances within this chapter begins with works that are conventionally thought to be “popular romances,” and then moves on to discuss romances that are considered to be more literary. However, each of these romances contains references to both oral and written traditions, which reflects the diverse cultural and literary practices in late medieval England, where oral, memorial storytelling traditions interacted with more writerly traditions in a variety of ways.

Lybeaus Desconus

Lybeaus Desconus is thought to have been written in the mid-fourteenth century (c. 1350), though the precise date is still a matter of debate.⁵⁹ There is no direct source for *Lybeaus Desconus*; however, the closest analogue is Renaut de Bâgé’s twelfth-century Old French poem,

⁵⁹ Eve Salisbury and James Weldon, “*Lybeaus Desconus*: Introduction,” in *TEAMS Middle English Text Series: Lybeaus Desconus*, eds. Eve Salisbury and James Weldon (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus-introduction>.

Li Biaus Descouneüs, but this poem varies considerably from *Lybeaus Desconus*. J. A. Burrow asserts that Chestre is most likely the poet of *Lybeaus Desconus*, and that Chestre himself relied on his memory for this story.⁶⁰ Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury state that many scholars assume that Chestre was the author of *Octavian* and *Lybeaus Desconus* because they are located on either side of *Sir Launfal* in the Cotton Caligula manuscript, and Chestre names himself as the author of *Sir Launfal*.⁶¹ However, James Weldon and Eve Salisbury claim that scholars who advocate Chestre's authorship of *Lybeaus Desconus* "advance a plausible argument based on diction, dialect, meter, and 'habits of composition.'" Nonetheless, the lack of convincing external evidence, especially when added to the absence of a signature in any of the redactions of the poem, raises more concerns than it lays to rest."⁶² The arguments put forth by Weldon and Salisbury are persuasive, and this chapter will not refer to Chestre as the author of *Lybeaus Desconus*.

Lybeaus Desconus exists in six manuscripts,⁶³ all of which differ from one another. Maldwyn Mills has suggested that if the number of surviving manuscripts of a medieval text is a dependable guide to its popularity, then *Lybeaus Desconus* was quite possibly one of the most popular Middle English Arthurian Romances. Mills also suggests that the differences between

⁶⁰ Burrow, "The Fourteenth Century Arthur," 78.

⁶¹ Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, "Sir Launfal: Introduction," in *TEAMS Middle English Text Series: The Middle English Breton Lays*, eds. Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-sir-launfal-introduction#bib>.

⁶² Salisbury and Weldon, "Lybeaus Desconus: Introduction," <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus-introduction>.

⁶³ London, British Library, Cotton Caligula, MS Caligula A.ii (ca. 1400); Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29 (N, 1457); London, Lambeth Palace, MS 306 (ca. 1460); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 6922, also known as Codex Ashmole 61 (ca. 1490); London, Lincoln's Inn, MS 150 (ca. 1400); and London, British Library, MS Additional 27879 (the Percy Folio, ca. 1650).

these six manuscripts are “so pervasive and substantial” that they can only be explained by supposing that there had once been an even larger number of copies.⁶⁴ The first manuscript where *Lybeaus Desconus* can be found is in Cotton Caligula A. ii, and the last is the Percy Folio manuscript. The dates of composition for all six manuscripts range over a two-hundred-and-fifty-year time period, but five of the six manuscripts in which *Lybeaus Desconus* can be found were compiled during the fifteenth century. As Murray McGillivray points out, comparative readings of manuscript versions are an effective way to determine if any of them were transcribed by memory alone, and this is not possible when only one manuscript has survived.⁶⁵ McGillivray argues that memorized versions of romances lie behind many of the manuscript copies of popular Middle English romances.⁶⁶ While McGillivray does not examine *Lybeaus Desconus*, it is very possible that memory could have played a role in the original composition of this tale or in the transcription of this tale by a scribe into one or more of the surviving manuscripts. J. A. Burrow believes that these manuscript copies of *Lybeaus Desconus* exhibit clear signs of textual transmission by memory.⁶⁷ Mills has a slightly different opinion regarding the memorial transcriptions of these manuscripts and states that perhaps an early form of the Cotton Caligula manuscript was written down from memory, but that the subsequent stages in this line of

⁶⁴ Maldwyn Mills, “Chivalric Romance: *Lybeaus Desconus*,” in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 124.

⁶⁵ McGillivray’s study provides evidence for memorial transmission in four romances where more than one manuscript exists. Throughout his study, McGillivray provides a cogent argument that some of the manuscripts for *Floris and Blancheflur*, *King Horn*, *The Seege of Troye*, and *Sir Orfeo* were reconstructed by memory. Murray McGillivray, *Memorization in the Transmission of the Middle English Romances* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 6.

⁶⁶ McGillivray, *Memorization in the Transmission of the Middle English Romances*, 6.

⁶⁷ Burrow, “The Fourteenth Century Arthur,” 78.

transmission were “completely scribal.”⁶⁸ Mills does not believe that the Lambeth version was written down from memory,⁶⁹ but he does believe that the versions that are found in Codex Ashmole 61, Naples XIII.B.29, and the Percy Folio manuscripts are “the work of a *disour* who knew this and other ME romances by heart.”⁷⁰ Mills’ argument points to all three of these manuscripts being written down by scribes following an original version that was composed by memory, possibly from a public recitation.⁷¹

While all six manuscript copies vary significantly from one another in composition style, they also vary in content matter, and scholars have not provided an in-depth line-by-line discussion of the differences in oral and written references within the various manuscript copies and how these references show the interesting relationship between oral and written records. This chapter will therefore provide a more detailed discussion of the oral and written references within some of these manuscript copies of *Lybeaus Desconus*. This chapter will look at four of the six surviving manuscript versions: Cotton Caligula; Codex Ashmole 61; Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29; and Lambeth Palace, MS 306. Since the Percy Folio manuscript was not composed during the Middle Ages, it will not be examined. The Lincoln’s Inn manuscript will not be examined because while it is a manuscript from the Middle Ages, it is considered defective.⁷² By looking at more than one manuscript copy, it is possible to see the different ways

⁶⁸ Maldwyn Mills, “Introduction,” in *Lybeaus Desconus*, ed. Maldwyn Mills (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), 11.

⁶⁹ Mills, “Introduction,” 13.

⁷⁰ Mills, “Introduction,” 10.

⁷¹ Mills, “Introduction,” 13.

⁷² On pages 3-4 of his introduction to his edition of *Lybeaus Desconus*, Mills notes that the version of *Lybeaus Desconus* in the Lincoln’s Inn manuscript is defective. This manuscript is defective because half of it is missing. Mills also discusses this in his article, “A Medieval Reviser at Work,” *Medium Ævum* 32, no. 1 (1963): 11-23.

in which memory, orality, and writing all worked together in the creation and transcription of this tale within these manuscripts. Several selected examples from these manuscript copies will be explored in order to discuss the mixture of oral and written traditions in each of these versions. The opening passages of the Cotton Caligula, Naples, Lambeth, and Codex Ashmole 61 manuscripts are all very similar, and the audience is orally addressed in all four manuscripts.

Rate states:

Jhesu Cryst owre savyowre
 And his moder, that swete flower,
 They sped them in ther need
 That lystyns of a conquerour,
 Wytty knyght and gode weryour,
 And doughty mane of dede.
 Hys name was called Gyngelwyn;
 Getyn he was of Sir Gawayne
 By a forest syde.
 A beter knyght, ne more profetabull,
 With Arthor at the Rownd Tabull,
 Herd I never of rede (lines 1- 12).

The Cotton Caligula scribe states:

Jhesu Cryst our Sauyour
 And hys modyr, þat swete flowr,
 Helpe hem at her need
 Þat harkeneth of a conquerour,
 Wys of wytte and whyzt werrour
 And douzty man yn dede.
 Hys name was called Geynleyn,
 Be-yete he was of Syr Gaweyn,
 Be a forest syde;
 Of stouter knyzt and profitable
 Wyth Artour of þe Rounde Table,
 Ne herde ye neuer rede (lines 1-12).

The Lambeth Palace manuscript compiler states:

Jhesus Criste oure Savyour
 And His Moder, that swete floure,
 Spede hem at her nede
 That lysteneth of a conquerour,

Wise of witt and wight wereour
 And doughty man of dede.
 His name was Sir Gyngelayne,
 Gotten he was of Sir Gaweyne,
 Under a forest syde;
 A better knyght was never prophitable
 With Arthur at the Roun Table:
 Herde I never of redde (lines 1- 12).

The Naples manuscript scribe states:

Jhesu Criste owre Saviour,
 And his modir, that swete flour,
 Helpe us at our nede,
 That listenith of a conquerour
 That was wis, witty, and wight werroure,
 A doughti man of dede.
 His name was hote Gyngelayn;
 Ygete he was of Sir Gaweyn
 Bi a forestis side;
 Of a betir knyght ne profitable,
 With Arthur at the Round Table,
 Hurd never yet man rede (lines 1- 12).

Each of these opening passages mention an audience listening to the tale, and they all end the passage with a colloquial phrase about not hearing or reading of a better knight in Arthur's Round Table, which gives an interesting interconnectedness between oral and written traditions. Each of these manuscripts contain asides to the audience through use of phrases like, "for soth," "forsothe," and "soth to sey." There are several possibilities for the additions of these oral asides by the original poet and also why these oral asides are retained in all four of these manuscript copies. These asides could be words that were simply used to fill in the rhyme-scheme. The asides might also be there if the manuscripts were going to be performed to a listening audience, thus creating a lively atmosphere for audience interaction. The asides also could have been a way for the scribes to harken back to a more oral, memorial transmission of storytelling, which would enable the readers or audience to enjoy a more interactive and almost improvisational tone to the

narrative.

While all of these manuscript versions include oral asides to the audience, they also indicate a written tradition by harkening back to a French source, and this reference to a French source could possibly show that the original poet may have had a familiarity with a French text. However, Weldon and Salisbury state that although it is a convention of romance to acknowledge a French source, whether or not it is the actual source, this particular reference is “probably an allusion rather than an explicit reference to *LBD*.”⁷³ In his edition, Shuffleton, who believes Chestre to be the original poet, shares a similar sentiment to Weldon and Salisbury when he claims, “Though this phrase suggests that Chestre is working directly from a French source, several factors limit the certainty of this interpretation. Several other manuscripts preserve entirely different readings of this line, and it is a common formula used by many other Middle English romances.”⁷⁴ It is also noteworthy that the poet calls it a “French book,” but that this French source also “tells” the story,⁷⁵ which shows an interesting intermingling of oral and written modes of conceptualizing the storytelling process.

Mills makes an interesting point that *Lybeaus Desconus*, more than any other Middle English Arthurian romance, shows how literary scribe-redactors treated and transmitted works. There are some things that cannot be changed in a narrative, such as the main characters, but

⁷³ See Weldon’s and Salisbury’s note about line 673 in the Lambeth manuscript <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus-lambeth>, and line 691 in the Naples manuscript <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus-naples>.

⁷⁴ Rate’s manuscript contains two references to a French source: line 258, “So telys the French in tale” and line 699, “In Frenche boke as it is in found.” The Naples manuscript also contains two references: line 255, “Thus tellith the Frensche tale” and line 691, “In Frensche tale as it is found.” The Lambeth manuscript contains three references to a French source: line 245, “Thus telleth the Frensshe tale”, line 673, “In Frensshe as it is ifounde”, and line 2196, “As the Frensshe tale us tolde.” The Cotton Caligula manuscript contains two references to a French source: line 222, “So seyþ þe Frenȝsch tale”, line 2122, “As þe Frenssch tale teld”.

⁷⁵ See Shuffleton’s note about line 699 in his edition of Codex Ashmole 61. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/shuffleton-codex-ashmole-61-lybeaus-desconus>.

many things can be changed and often texts were not simply reproduced.⁷⁶ Rate and the Naples scribe both tie up loose ends by bringing Lybeaus' mother into the ending of the story, so that his identity as Gawain's son can be known to all. These lines that discuss Lybeaus' mother coming to the wedding banquet and Gawain's acknowledgment of Lybeaus as his son are not in the Lambeth Palace manuscript, so these lines were more than likely not included in the original version of *Lybeaus Desconus*; however, it is interesting to note how these lines are similar to one another in the two manuscript copies. The Naples' scribe writes,

Sir Libeous' modir so fre
 Yede to that maungeré.
 Hur rode was rede so rys.
 Sho knewe Libeous wel bi sight
 And wist welle, anone right,
 That he was of moche pris.
 Sho went to Sir Gaweyne
 And seid, withouten delaye:
 'This is our childe so fre!'
 That was he glad and blithe
 And kissid hur fele sithe,
 And seid: 'That likith me!'

Sir Gaweyne, knyght of renoune,
 Seid to the Lady of Synadoune:
 'Madam, trewliche,
 He that wanne thee with pride
 I wanne him bi a forestis side
 And gate him of a giantis lady.' (lines 2232- 2249).

Rate states,

Syr Lybeus moder so fre
 Come to that mangeré;
 Hyr rudd was rede as ryse.
 Sche knew Lybeus wele be syght,
 And wyst wele anon right
 That he was of mych pryse.

Sche went to Syr Gawen
 And seyde, 'Withouten leyn,

⁷⁶ Mills, "Chivalric Romance: *Lybeaus Desconus*," 129.

Thys is owre chyld so fre.
 Than was he glad and blyth
 And kyssed hyre many a sythe,
 And seyde, 'That lyketh me.'
 Syr Gawen, knyght of renown,
 Seyde to the Lady of Synadon,
 'Madame, treuly,
 He that hath thee wedyd with pride,
 I gate hym under a forest syde
 Of a gentyll lady.' (lines 2192- 2209).

Lynne S. Blanchfield states that most of the endings of Rate's texts in the Codex Ashmole 61 manuscript show reworking towards both a moral and oral framework; however, while Blanchfield makes a good point, it is noteworthy that Rate is not the only scribe who includes Gawain's mother at the end of the tale. As previously noted, these additional lines are very similar in both the Naples manuscript and Rate's manuscript, which could point to these scribes working from a similar manuscript or hearing a reading from a similar manuscript. However, the wording is different in both passages, which could indicate that one of them was working from memory or notes supplemented with memory. The Percy Folio manuscript also has a similar ending, which might indicate that these three manuscripts derive from a common source in which an earlier unknown reviser had tidied up some of the contradictory material found in the original version.⁷⁷

In the ending passage of Rate's version, he includes references to an oral tradition and states,

Here endys the lyfe,
 I tell yow, withouten stryfe,
 Of gentyll Libeus Disconus.
 For his saule now byd ye
 A Pater Noster and an Avé,

⁷⁷ "Introduction", in *TEAMS Middle English Text Series: Lybeaus Desconus*, eds. Eve Salisbury and James Weldon (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus-introduction>.

For the love of Jhesus,
 That of hys sawle have pyté,
 And of owyrs, if hys wyll be,
 When we schall wend therto.
 And ye that have herd this talking,
 Ye schall have the blyssing
 Of Jhesu Cryst also.
 AMEN QUOD RATE (lines 2240-2252).

These references to telling, hearing, and talking are not found in the Cotton Caligula or Lambeth Palace manuscripts, which end the tale with a simple prayer to Jesus and Mary. Therefore, Rate's ending seems to be an effort to attract the attention of the audience by including them in the ending of the tale, which lends credence to Blanchfield's claim that the format of Rate's manuscript and the style of some of the variants suggest that Rate used this manuscript in a "performance context."⁷⁸ This ending with its oral references provides us with an understanding of how Rate might have imagined his manuscript being received, or how he wanted it to be received. While Rate's version ends with references to oral storytelling, the ending in the Naples manuscript is unique:

Qui scripcit carmen sit benedictis. Amen.

Hic explicit Libeus Disconyus.

He that lovyth welle to fare
 Ever to spend and never spare quod More
 But he have the more good
 His here wol grow throw his hood

Hic pennam fixi penitet me si male scripsi (lines 2280-2286).

Here, the scribe includes some Latin phrases, asking to be blessed and also says, "Here I set my

⁷⁸ Lynne S. Blanchfield, "The romances in MS Ashmole 61: An Idiosyncratic Scribe," in *Romance in Medieval England*, eds. Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol Meale (Cambridge: D. D. Brewer, 1991), 73.

pen down. I [not the pen] am blameworthy if I have written poorly.”⁷⁹ The ending of the Naples manuscript does not make a reference to oral transmission, and the scribe makes it clear that this is a written copy and takes responsibility if the text has been poorly written. The scribe might even be naming himself as More here, but it is a bit ambiguous. This ending seems to indicate that the Naples’ scribe anticipated that people might also be reading the manuscript, rather than just listening to a performance, or that he wanted the manuscript to be read and received in a more written tradition. Given the very different concluding lines in these two manuscripts of ostensibly the same text, it is evident that these two compilers had very different reflections on the nature of their adaptations and the transmission of their manuscript copies. The distinctions that these scribes evidently made in their ending lines for their version of *Lybeaus Desconus* further show how these manuscript copies were very much collaborative enterprises between the original poet, the compiler/scribe, the patron, and the audience.

All four of these manuscript copies of *Lybeaus Desconus* show an interesting intermingling of oral and written traditions throughout the narrative. Memory could have played a role in the transcription of some of these manuscripts, particularly Rate’s copy, although it is impossible to prove for certain because of the lack of concrete evidence. These manuscripts of *Lybeaus Desconus* indicate that even in the late Middle Ages, romance authors and audiences still enjoyed references to oral storytelling and oral performances, despite the fact that these stories were being recorded in writing in order to be preserved and read from manuscripts.

⁷⁹ I have taken this translation from: “Lybeaus Desconus (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29),” in *TEAMS Middle English Text Series: Lybeaus Desconus*, eds. Eve Salisbury and James Weldon (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus-naples>

Sir Launfal

Sir Launfal was written in the late fourteenth century and is preserved in only one early fifteenth-century manuscript: British Library MS Cotton Caligula A. ii. *Sir Launfal* is one of only a few Middle English romances which note the author's name; at the end of *Sir Launfal*, Thomas Chestre claims to be the author of the tale and states, "Thomas Chestre made thys tale" (line 1039). S. T. Knight states that Chestre's claim to have made the tale is "a sort of patent," and that it is unlikely that Chestre produced his poem by "copying another *faithfully*."⁸⁰ In contrast, Shepherd argues that "made" could simply refer to the act of copying.⁸¹ It is not uncommon for scribes to name themselves in their manuscript copies,⁸² so theoretically Chestre could have simply been a scribe copying the tale who decided to name himself (much like Rate and Thornton). However, Chestre is widely accepted as the author of *Sir Launfal*, so this chapter will henceforth refer to him as the poet of this tale.

The story of Launfal can be found in earlier sources (Marie de France's *Lai de Lanval*⁸³ and the anonymous Middle English *Sir Landevale*⁸⁴), which Chestre most likely used when composing *Sir Launfal*. Marie de France's twelfth-century Old French *Lai de Lanval* is different from the fourteenth-century Middle English versions of the story, *Sir Landevale* and *Sir Launfal*, although *Sir Landevale* is a more faithful adaptation of the French source than is *Sir Launfal*.

⁸⁰ S. T. Knight, "The Oral Transmission of *Sir Launfal*," *Medium Ævum* 38, no. 2 (1969): 169.

⁸¹ See Shepherd's note on page 218 of *Middle English Romances*.

⁸² As discussed in other sections of this chapter, Rate and Thornton name themselves in their manuscript copies of *Lybeaus Desconus* and *Sir Perceval of Galles*.

⁸³ I have referred to Burges' and Busby's translation: *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Glyn S. Burges and Keith Busby (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

⁸⁴ References to this text will come from Shepherd's edition: Stephen H. A. Shepherd, "Sources and Backgrounds: *Sir Landevale*," in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995), 352-364.

The plot of all three stories is very similar, but because Chestre adds numerous additional details and episodes, *Sir Launfal* is considerably longer than *Lanval* and *Sir Landevale*. Shepherd notes that Chestre might have reworked episodes from *Graelent* and “any number of medieval tales”⁸⁵ when composing *Sir Launfal*, which would have contributed to its additional episodes. Ad Putter suggests that the differences between Chestre’s sources and his adaptation strongly suggest that he usually had his sources “not in his eye but in his mind.”⁸⁶ While Chestre seems to have used a few different sources for his version of the tale, *Sir Landevale* is Chestre’s most immediate source.⁸⁷ Putter claims that Chestre probably did not have a copy of *Sir Landevale* on hand, but that he drew on his memory of the tale when he composed his own version.⁸⁸ S. T. Knight also suggests that Chestre knew *Sir Landevale* in an oral form,⁸⁹ and contends that the text of *Sir Launfal* that we have available to us is derived from an orally known version of *Sir Landevale*.⁹⁰ Knight argues that Chestre makes substitutions which seem highly unlikely if he had a written source on hand, but which are very possible if he had only heard the story.⁹¹ However, Shepherd notes that the dependency of *Sir Launfal* on *Sir Landevale* is evident in the lines repeated almost verbatim and “other close verbal echoes.”⁹² Previous scholarship on *Sir Launfal*, therefore, has tended to either argue that Chestre composed his work from memory or that he composed it from

⁸⁵ Shepherd, “Sources and Backgrounds: *Sir Launfal*,” 351-352.

⁸⁶ Putter, “A Historical Introduction,” 13.

⁸⁷ Shepherd, “Sources and Backgrounds: *Sir Launfal*,” 351.

⁸⁸ Putter, “A Historical Introduction,” 13-14.

⁸⁹ Knight, “The Oral Transmission of *Sir Launfal*,” 164.

⁹⁰ Knight, “The Oral Transmission of *Sir Launfal*,” 168.

⁹¹ Knight, “The Oral Transmission of *Sir Launfal*,” 166.

⁹² Shepherd, “Sources and Backgrounds: *Sir Launfal*,” 351-352.

written sources that he had in his possession. However, what is interesting about Chestre's work is that he seems to be using, or integrating, both oral, memorial traditions as well as written traditions within his work. Chestre does mention a French source several times in his work, which could point to his familiarity with Marie de France's text as well. However, when Chestre describes Launfal's battle with the Earl of Chester, he says "thus seyde the Frensch tale" (line 474), but this scene appears to be Chestre's own original invention, even though he indicates that he derived this episode from the French original. This is not unusual to make a reference to a source text, as many Middle English authors do this, and it is possible that Chestre may have had access to another now lost source which did include this episode in the story. If Chestre remembered that this scene did not occur in the French tale, then there could be several possibilities for his reference to Marie de France's *Lanval*. One possible reason could be that Chestre assumed his audience was familiar with the Old French source and could appreciate the changes he made to the tale. Another explanation for this reference could be that Chestre was trying to prove the veracity of this addition to the tale by claiming that it came from an authoritative original text. It is also interesting to note that Chestre states that the French tale "says" this happened, which indicates the persisting medieval idea of reading in terms of hearing rather than seeing. This gives a very improvisational tone and suggests that Chestre anticipated, or wanted, his work to be received orally.

An interesting passage that merits more scholarly discussion is when Landevale's/Launfal's generosity is described by both Chestre and the poet of *Sir Landevale*. As with other passages, Chestre changes the words slightly and adds in a few extra lines, but he tries to keep the rhyme similar to his most immediate source. The poet of *Sir Landevale* follows Marie's *Lanval* quite closely, and writes:

Landevale makyth nobile festys;
 Landevale clothys the pore gestys;
 Landevale byith grette stedys;
 Landevale yevyth riche wedys;
 Landevale rewaredith religionse,
 And acquiteth the presons;
 Landevale clothes gaylours;
 Landevale doith each man honours (lines 173-180).

Chestre says:

Launfal helde ryche festes.
 Fyfty fedde povere gestes,
 That yn myschef wer.
 Fyfty boughte stronge stedes;
 Fyfty yaf ryche wedes
 To knyghtes and squyere.
 Fyfty rewardede relygyons;
 Fyfty delyverede povere prysouns,
 And made ham quyt and schere;
 Fyfty clodede gestours.
 To many men he dede honours
 In countreys fer and nere (lines 421-432).

What is most interesting about this passage is Chestre's use of the word "Fyfty." One surviving manuscript of Marie's *Launfal* abbreviates the hero's name to "L," and this abbreviation could have been misread as the Roman numeral for fifty.⁹³ If Chestre was working directly from a manuscript that only included the abbreviation "L" in this particular passage, and if he was not composing it to be read aloud for an oral performance, it seems odd that he would change the abbreviation to the word "Fyfty." Therefore, it is very possible that Chestre composed his manuscript for oral performance and added in the "Fyfty" instead of the abbreviation "L" because an abbreviation would sound strange in an oral performance. Chestre could have also heard an oral performance of the tale which used "Fyfty" instead of "Launfal," and then composed his work from notes and/or his memory of the performance.

⁹³ See note 1 on page 202 of Shepherd's edition of *Sir Launfal* in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995).

While Chestre does make references to a French source and does seem to have had some type of access to or memory of *Sir Landevale*, Chestre includes many oral asides to his audience throughout his tale, which indicate a listening audience. At the very beginning of the tale, Chestre says to his audience, “Now herekeneth how hyt was” (line 6). After describing the wedding feast of King Arthur and Guinevere, Chestre again makes an aside to the audience by saying, “As ye mowe her and lythe” (line 63). As Chestre describes Dame Tryamour’s appearance, he gives another aside to his audience, “I dar well say, yn sert” (line 297). In the closing passage to his tale, Chestre says, “Ne no more of hym telle I ne can, / Forsothe wythoute lye” (lines 1037-1038). This again indicates an audience listening to Chestre as he orally tells them his story. Whether or not Chestre was reciting this story from memory to a listening audience, or if he was writing this tale down from written sources on hand, Chestre takes on the role of an oral narrator throughout his adaptation, while also mentioning his source texts.

As previously mentioned, references to oral storytelling are a common feature in Middle English romance texts; however, the number of oral references that are contained within some popular Middle English romances, such as *Sir Launfal*, have led several scholars to argue that Chestre and other popular Middle English romance poets might have been *disours* or minstrels who delivered their tales orally by memory to a listening audience.⁹⁴ Karl Reichl notes that,

There must have been a great variety of minstrels in the Middle Ages, some certainly ‘only’ acrobats or musicians, but some certainly also creative poets, such as Rutebeuf or

⁹⁴ For general arguments about the oral and memorial nature of romances, see: Karl Reichl, “Plotting the Map of Medieval Oral Literature,” in *Medieval Oral Literature*; Karl Reichl, “Orality and Performance” in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*; Ad Putter, “A Historical Introduction,” in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*; Nancy Mason Bradbury, “Literacy, Orality, and the Poetics of Middle English Romance,” in *Oral Poetics in Middle English Poetry*; and Murray McGillivray, *Memorization in the Transmission of the Middle English Romances*.

For arguments specifically relating to Chestre, see: Karl Reichl, “The Middle English Popular Romance: Minstrel versus Hack Writer,” in *The Ballad and Oral Literature*, ed. Joseph Harris (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991); S. T. Knight, “The Oral Transmission of *Sir Launfal*,”; and Ad Putter, “A Historical Introduction.”

Thomas Chestre. It is also clear that those minstrels who performed narrative texts orally must have memorized their texts, the formulaic style of the poems 'easing' their memory as well as providing a technique for rapid telling, or in the event that memory failed. In many cases the memorized texts might have come from manuscripts.⁹⁵

Knight also discusses the possibility of Chestre having been a minstrel and states that we should perhaps not think of *Sir Launfal* as a rather "moderate piece of literary work," but as a particularly interesting example of an oral work by a minstrel.⁹⁶ Knight also asserts, "We might perhaps reflect that the oral background of *Sir Launfal* suggests that Chestre is a minstrel, rather than a literary poet; this would explain the crudity of some of the poetry and also the bluntness of some of the incidents."⁹⁷ Ad Putter also addresses the possibility of Chestre having been a minstrel, due to the oral nature of his work. Putter posits the question: "Do these facts make Chestre a 'disour' or a 'professional hack writer'?" Putter does not come to a definitive conclusion and simply states that like the texts of these Middle English romances, their composers refuse to be confined to a world that is either oral or literate because their world was both.⁹⁸ There were many different possibilities for the production of romances; memory, orality, and written records were all a part of the transmission of many Middle English romances, and with knowing very little or nothing at all about these authors, it is often difficult to come to a definitive conclusion as to how these romances were composed and received. Contrary to what some scholars have argued (that Chestre was most certainly a minstrel or most certainly a hack writer), there is simply not enough concrete evidence within the lines of *Sir Launfal* itself to confidently conclude that Chestre was either a minstrel or a hack writer/scribe. What is evident is

⁹⁵ Reichl, "The Middle English Popular Romance," 261.

⁹⁶ Knight, "The Oral Transmission of *Sir Launfal*," 169.

⁹⁷ Knight, "The Oral Transmission of *Sir Launfal*," 169.

⁹⁸ Putter, "A Historical Introduction," 15.

that *Sir Launfal* was composed with many oral asides and several references to written source texts, indicating an interesting intermingling of oral and written storytelling traditions, and it was likely composed with the intent that it would be recited aloud to listening audiences. However, given the fact that the society in which Chestre composed his work did not have a clear distinction between orality and literacy, there seems to be little point in arguing so strongly for Chestre being either a minstrel or a hack writer. While it is evident that our own contemporary society would like to place medieval composers and their works into strict categories (i.e. oral or literary works), they simply cannot be viewed in this manner because the society in which they were composing their works did not have these cut and dried distinctions.

Sir Perceval of Galles

The anonymous poet of *Sir Perceval of Galles*, who probably wrote in the North East Midlands, composed the poem sometime in the fourteenth century. *Sir Perceval of Galles* survives in a unique copy in the Thornton manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral, MS 91), copied by Robert Thornton around the middle of the fifteenth century.⁹⁹ Mary Flowers Braswell states that the contents of the Thornton manuscript are all written in one hand, “a variable mid-fifteenth-century *Anglicana Formata*, and the dialect – which may not be the original – is northern, reflecting the North Riding Yorkshire district of the scribe.”¹⁰⁰ At the end of the poem, Thornton

⁹⁹ Ad Putter, “The Text of *Sir Perceval of Galles*,” *Medium Ævum* 70, no. 2 (2001), 191. JSTOR.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Flowers Braswell, “*Sir Perceval of Galles*: Introduction,” in *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995).
<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles-introduction>

names himself and states, “Quod Robert Thornton.” (line 2289). Thornton’s name (and that of various family members) appears several times throughout the manuscript.¹⁰¹

Susanne Hafner rightly notes that *Sir Perceval of Galles* “has long lived in the shadow of its more famous Old French and Middle High German counterparts.”¹⁰² Braswell shares a similar sentiment and states that *Sir Perceval of Galles* has until recent years suffered at the hands of critics “who judged it ‘uninteresting,’ ‘wretched,’ and ‘crude,’” and she points out that the poet has often been criticized for not understanding the original source and for having “little or no poetic ‘flair.’”¹⁰³ However, critics of the poem have often overlooked its comic nature, and certain scenes seem to almost parody the romance genre.¹⁰⁴ One such comedic scene occurs when Perceval’s mother has mentioned God to him, and then he sees Ywain, Gawain, and Kay in the woods riding horses and dressed in green; their attire and appearance causes Perceval to think they are Gods, so he says to them, “Wilke of yow alle three / May the grete Godd bee / That my moder tolde mee, / That all this werlde wroghte?” (lines 281-284). Perceval then brings a horse home after his encounter with the three knights, and his mother asks what he is doing with the mare, which causes Perceval to mistakenly think that all horses are called mares (which results in another comedic episode where Perceval is riding a pregnant horse when he fights the Red Knight). The comedy regarding the character of Perceval focuses on his ignorance of the world

¹⁰¹ Braswell, “*Sir Perceval of Galles*: Introduction.” <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles-introduction>

¹⁰² Susanne Hafner, “‘He ne wiste nother of evyll ne gude’: A Prelapsarian Perceval,” *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 8, no. 1 (2020): 108.

¹⁰³ Braswell, “*Sir Perceval of Galles*: Introduction.” <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles-introduction>

¹⁰⁴ Braswell, “*Sir Perceval of Galles*: Introduction.” <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles-introduction>

and courtly society, but the poet also adds a parodic element of his own at the beginning of the tale, when he addresses his audience and says, “Lef, lythes to me / Two wordes or thre,” (lines 1-2), which harkens to a minstrel story-telling tradition of asking the audience to listen to a story (minstrels also favoured tail-rhyme romances like *Sir Perceval of Galles* because they could be more easily memorized and heard). However, this poem is 2288 lines (2291 lines if we include the three lines made by Thornton at the end); therefore, it is not a short tale like some of the other popular romances thought to be minstrel compositions, so this promise of speaking only a few words sets a comedic tone for the poem.¹⁰⁵

While many scholars have criticized *Sir Perceval of Galles*, some scholars have recently provided more favourable views of the poem. Caroline D. Eckhardt shares a similar notion about the comic nature of the poem and also comments on the poet’s adeptness.¹⁰⁶ David C. Fowler claims that *Sir Perceval of Galles* is a poem of “great artistic merit,” and he also suggests that the poem is a parody of conventional romances (similar to Chaucer’s *Sir Thopas*).¹⁰⁷ Chaucer himself was familiar with *Sir Percyvell of Galles* and makes reference to it in *Sir Thopas*, which is often viewed as a parody of the romance genre. However, while Fowler compares the parodic nature of *Sir Percyvell of Galles* to that of Chaucer, Fowler negates the writerly qualities of this romance and deems the poem to be “an English minstrel’s admiring response to Chrétien’s romance.”¹⁰⁸ Ad Putter comments on the poem and argues that it is loosely based on Chrétien de

¹⁰⁵ See the note for line 1 of *Sir Perceval of Galles* in Braswell’s edition of this text. *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995). <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles>

¹⁰⁶ Caroline D. Eckhardt, “Arthurian Comedy: The Simpleton-Hero in *Sir Perceval of Galles*,” in *Perceval/Parzival: A Casebook*, eds. Norris J. Lacy and Arthur Groos (New York: Routledge, 2002), 248.

¹⁰⁷ David C. Fowler, “*Le Conte du Graal* and *Sir Perceval of Galles*,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 12, no. 1 (1975): 5. JSTOR.

¹⁰⁸ Fowler, “*Le Conte du Graal* and *Sir Perceval of Galles*,” 6.

Troyes's *Conte du Graal* (c. 1181), but it is by no means a slavish translation of Chrétien's tale. Putter argues that if the English poet knew it, he was probably working from his memory of the story (or having heard it read) and not from a written text of the Old French source.¹⁰⁹ Putter argues that the poet of *Sir Percyvell of Galles* made the tale into a narrative that could be recited by minstrels, and Putter notes that the anonymous poet of the *Laud Troy Book* (c. 1400) includes "Percyvell" in a catalogue of heroes celebrated by *gestoures*.¹¹⁰ However, while the favourable reviews put forth by some scholars view *Sir Perceval of Galles* as an orally composed tale by memory by a very adept minstrel, this tale also employs more writerly qualities and does not include oral asides to the audience throughout the tale that one might expect to see in a romance that was composed with the sole intent of being recited orally by a minstrel. Moreover, while *Sir Perceval of Galles* might have become popular due to performances of it being delivered by minstrels to listening audiences, this romance comes down to us in only the one manuscript copied by Thornton, who could have decidedly taken out some of the oral residues or even changed some of the plot details (as is the case with the various manuscript copies of *Lybeaus Desconus*). Therefore, while the *Laud Troy Book* indicates that *Sir Perceval of Galles* was recited by minstrels, nothing is known about the original poet of this Middle English tale, or if the poem that has come down to us is the only version of *Sir Perceval of Galles* that was circulating in late medieval England. Even though scholars have been quick to judge this tale as one initially composed by memory by a minstrel, there is not enough evidence to say this for certain.

¹⁰⁹ Ad Putter, "Arthurian Romance in English Popular Tradition: *Sir Percyvell of Gales*, *Sir Cleges*, and *Sir Launfal*," in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 236.

¹¹⁰ Putter, "Arthurian Romance in English Popular Tradition," 236.

Shortly after addressing the audience in a minstrel story-telling fashion, the poet then makes a reference to reading: “Percyvell thay gan hym calle, / Whoso redis ryghte. / Who that righte can rede,” (lines 15-17), indicating that the audience might also be reading this tale instead of just listening to it being read aloud. This intermingling of oral and written traditions speaks to the close relationship that the two had within the Middle Ages and how this is reflected in Middle English romance. While *Sir Perceval of Galles* showcases an interesting intermingling of oral and written story-telling traditions within its opening lines, the poem does not continue to include many references to oral or written story-telling traditions throughout the rest of the narrative. The beginning of the tale which asks the audience to listen to the story is the only oral story-telling reference made within the poem. Therefore, because there are very few oral asides throughout the poem (the poet says, “I tell yow” only three times in the poem), the material evidence of the poem that is available to us seems to contradict the claims made by scholars that the poem was definitely composed by a minstrel for the purpose of oral recitation. This is not to say that memory had no part in the poem’s creation, as the poet may well have had to rely on his memory of Chrétien’s text, but since there are very few oral asides within this romance, this might indicate that *Sir Perceval of Galles* was originally composed in writing for a wide range of audiences.

Ywain and Gawain

The anonymous *Ywain and Gawain* survives in a single copy preserved in the British Library as Cotton Galba E. ix., and the text’s date of composition is considered to have been sometime in the second quarter of the fourteenth century.¹¹¹ Tony Hunt discusses the possible

¹¹¹ See Shepherd’s note on page 75 of his edition. *Ywain and Gawain*, in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 75-173.

contemporary audience for this romance and states that *Ywain and Gawain* was probably made for a baronial court in the North of England.¹¹² In her introduction to *Ywain and Gawain*, Braswell states that because certain North-East Midland forms are often displayed within the rhyme of the poem, the language is assumed to be that of the original poet, who probably composed the work “some fifty to one hundred years” before this particular copy of the romance was written down in the manuscript.¹¹³ While this particular manuscript copy was written quite some time after the Middle English poet composed his adaptation of Chrétien’s *Yvain*, the scribe of the manuscript that we have available to us evidently decided not to make any scribal changes to the Middle English poem. Nothing is known about the poet of *Ywain and Gawain*, and, like many of the anonymous Middle English romances, very little is known about the actual historical audience of the text.¹¹⁴ Albert B. Friedman, Norman T. Harrington, and Michelle Szkilnik argue that *Ywain and Gawain* was the work of a minstrel;¹¹⁵ however, J. A. Burrow argues that the poet of *Ywain and Gawain* should not be considered a minstrel because *Ywain and Gawain* is the “most writerly” of all the Middle English Arthurian metrical romances. Burrow then claims, “the anonymous author has mastered an English version of the French octosyllabic couplet, saying what he has to say in verse that is generally strong and pointed, with very few of those fillers and

¹¹² Tony Hunt, “Beginnings, Middles, and Ends: Some Interpretive Problems in Chrétien’s *Yvain* and its Medieval Adaptations.” In *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics*, ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester, Michigan: Solaris Press, Inc., 1984), 83-117.

¹¹³ Mary Flowers Braswell, “*Ywain and Gawain*: Introduction,” in *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995).
<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-ywain-and-gawain-introduction>.

¹¹⁴ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012), 94.

¹¹⁵ See Friedman and Harrington, eds., *Ywain and Gawain*, EETS 254 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), xvi- xvii; and Michelle Szkilnik, “Medieval Translations and Adaptations of Chrétien’s Works,” in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, eds. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 206–7.

tags commonly associated with minstrel rhyming.”¹¹⁶ In fact, the poet follows the French source quite closely in several sections of the Middle English adaptation. Unlike the poets of *Sir Perceval*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Sir Launfal*, the poet of *Ywain and Gawain* follows the entire narrative of *Yvain* closely and does not make many copious changes to the overall story. Taking into consideration Burrow’s argument, as well as the textual evidence within the poem, *Ywain and Gawain* does not appear to have been composed by the poet by memory alone. Despite the reduction of the original text, it is evident that the Middle English poet must have had the French source at hand when he was composing his version of the tale. Sif Rikhardsdottir argues that the changes are thus likely to reflect deliberate authorial decisions (such as the emphasis on truth rather than love, which will be explored in the next chapter), rather than being the result of a faulty memory of a minstrel who was recreating a text that he had heard rather than read.¹¹⁷ However, while it is evident that *Ywain and Gawain* is very much the written product of a poet adapting the written French source, this tale still harkens back to a memorial and oral story-telling tradition in both its form and content, and it contains several interesting examples of an intermingling of written and oral traditions. This intermingling of written and oral traditions provides further evidence of how many written texts in the later Middle Ages— in this case Arthurian romance texts— were still concerned with oral memorial story-telling traditions.

The opening of *Ywain and Gawain* presents an interesting combination of oral and written traditions, and the poet states,

Almyghti God that maketh mankyn,
He schilde his servandes out of syn,
And mayntene tham with might and mayne

¹¹⁶ Burrow, “The Fourteenth-Century Arthur,” 74.

¹¹⁷ Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, 94.

That herkens *Ywayne and Gawayne*.
 Thai war knightes of the Tabyl Rownde;
 Tharfore listens a lytel stownde.
 Arthure, the Kyng of Yngland,
 That wan al Wales with his hand,
 And al Scotland, als says the buke, (lines 1-9).

This passage shows how the poet of *Ywain and Gawain* begins the tale as if he were addressing a live, listening audience because the poet asks the audience to listen to the tale; however, there is also the mention of a “buke,” which is referencing Chrétien’s *Yvain*, which states that Arthur is the King of Britain. There are a few other occasions where the anonymous Middle English poet refers to the French source as a book, which again points to a written tradition. When Ywain is fighting the two devil-sons, the Middle English poet gives an aside to the audience and says, “And als it tells in the boke, / He gaf the doubbil of that he toke” (lines 3209-3210). This reference to the French source is faithful to the original, as Chrétien writes that Yvain returned their attentions with double measure (Vv. 5457-5770).¹¹⁸ Later in the tale, when Ywain and Gawain discover they have been fighting one another, the Middle English poet writes, “Sone thai light, so sais the boke,” (line 3671). In all of the aforementioned examples, the author writes that the book “says” or “tells,” which shows a combination of oral and written traditions and gives a slightly more oral tone to the narrative. These types of references to a book telling the story may be because, as previously mentioned, reading continued to be conceived in terms of hearing rather than seeing. At the ending of *Ywain and Gawain*, the poet addresses the audience and states, “Of tham na mare have I herd tell, / Nowther in romance ne in spell” (lines 4027-4028). This ending is much like the beginning, given that the poet again makes references to both oral and written traditions. The poet claims not to have heard anything else about the characters in

¹¹⁸ For all line references to *Yvain*, I am using the English translation in *Arthurian Romances*, translated by W. W. Comfort (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1913; repr., New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2006).

romance nor in spoken story. Here, the reference to romance seems to mean the French story that has been written down. Perhaps the poet of this adaptation of the tale wavers between oral and written memorial traditions because the tale was being written down and adapted from a copy of *Yvain* that was on hand, but it was also being composed within a genre of literature that was often still read out loud to an audience of listeners.

The poet's asides throughout *Yvain and Gawain* show an interesting interaction of oral and written traditions, but the characters in the tale also participate in their own oral storytelling, which Mills aptly calls a "story within a story."¹¹⁹ After the poet's initial introduction and digression on "trowth," the poet starts the tale with a prototype of oral storytelling; Guinevere and several knights (including Yvain) sit down to listen to Colgrevance tell them the story of what happened to him six years earlier, when he ventured to a magic fountain by himself. Colgrevance begins his story in a similar fashion to how the poet started his own tale, by stating "Herkens, hende, unto my spell;" (line 149). Invoking the audience to listen to the tale is common in Middle English romance, so the way in which Colgrevance begins his tale is itself a narrative convention. Colgrevance showcases an amazing memory for recollecting his earlier adventure, and he goes into great detail when describing the events and conversations that took place. Mills states that Colgrevance has essentially provided his listeners with "a blueprint" for his adventure that "is both detailed and seductively marvelous."¹²⁰ This long and detailed narrating of past events is a typical convention of romance, which is itself a projection into the fictional world of the story, with the storyteller narrating before a live audience. After Colgrevance tells his tale, King Arthur comes out of his room and Guinevere retells

¹¹⁹ Maldwyn Mills, "Chivalric Romance: *Yvain and Gawain*," in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 118.

¹²⁰ Mills, "Chivalric Romance: *Yvain and Gawain*," 118.

Colgrevice's story to the king (lines 515-519). Colgrevice's oral narration of past events is what sets the entire plot into motion because after hearing the story, Arthur decides to set out with a retinue of knights in order to find this magic fountain. Ywain decides to avenge his cousin, Colgrevice, on his own and sets out ahead before anyone else, so that he alone can fight the knight who bested his cousin in battle and who guards the magic fountain. If anyone was skeptical of Colgrevice's memory of any of the events that took place, his story is quickly proven true, as Ywain encounters the same people and situations.

While Colgrevice's story was told orally by memory, there is another scene that depicts oral storytelling traditions; however, in this scene, a maiden is reading a romance aloud to others. The poet describes the scene as follows:

The mayden red at thai myght here
 A real romance in that place
 (Bot I ne wote of wham it was).
 Sho was bot fifteen yeres alde— (lines 3088- 3091).

The maiden is reading aloud, so that everyone can hear the story. The romance is not being orally recited from memory; rather, written and oral transmissions are both being invoked here because the maiden is orally reading to others from a written text. It should be noted, however, that this same scene also occurs in *Yvain* (Vv. 5347-5456), so it is not an addition by the anonymous Middle English poet. In fact, a depiction of someone reading aloud to an audience is not an uncommon motif in medieval literature, as there are other accounts in medieval texts of stories being read aloud to a listening audience. Joyce Coleman mentions that in *Li Chevaliers a deus espees*, a messenger finds Queen Guinevere sitting beside a fountain in a garden, holding "A romance from which she read / To knights and to maidens." Coleman also points out that in *Hunbaut*, Sagremor and Kay find a "young chatelaine," with ten knights and her six maidens,

“listening to a fair poem from a romance / that the maiden was having read.”¹²¹ Another example of oral reading to a listening audience can be found in Book Two of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*,¹²² when a maiden is reading a story about the siege of Thebes to Criseyde and two other ladies. There is also the famous illumination in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 61 of *Troilus and Criseyde*, which depicts Chaucer reading to a courtly audience.¹²³ Since romances were often read out loud to groups of listeners, there is simultaneously a writing author and an inscribed narrator speaking directly to an audience.¹²⁴ These numerous artistic and literary examples of reading, listening, and talking about romances do suggest that it was probably quite common for romance texts to be read aloud to a listening audience, and *Ywain and Gawain* likely enjoyed audiences of both readers and listeners.

The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne

The date of composition for the anonymous *The Awntyrs off Arthure* is held to be within the first quarter of the fifteenth century.¹²⁵ *The Awntyrs off Arthure* survives complete in four fifteenth-century manuscripts, none of which is based upon any of the other extant copies. Much like Mill’s sentiment regarding the potential immense popularity of *Lybeaus Desconus* because it

¹²¹ Joyce Coleman, “Reading Malory in the fifteenth Century: Aural Reception and Performance Dynamics,” *Arthuriana*, 13, no. 4 (2003): 56, Project MUSE.

¹²² See lines 78- 84 of “Troilus and Criseyde,” in *The Riverside Chaucer 3rd Edition*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 473-585.

¹²³ Derek Pearsall, “The Troilus Frontispiece and Chaucer’s Audience,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 7 (1977): 68-74. Kathy Cawsey briefly mentions this on page 7 of her book, *Twentieth-Century Chaucer Criticism: Reading Audiences* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011).

¹²⁴ Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “The Shape of Romance in Medieval France,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Kreuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 14.

¹²⁵ Shepherd notes this on page 219 of his edition of this text.

exists in six manuscripts, *The Awntyrs off Arthure* was probably quite popular amongst contemporary audiences since it has come down to us in four surviving manuscripts. Thomas Hahn argues that,

Such popularity seems even more extraordinary since the poem did not begin as an oral tale, like *Ragnelle*, *Carlisle*, *Turke*, or the ballads. While its supernatural and chivalric storylines have affinities with popular tales, the complex rhyme scheme, narrative structure, written sources, allusions, and content demonstrate that *Awntyrs* was a distinctively literary effort. *Awntyrs* emerges from a transitional cultural context, in which a literate author has fully exploited oral stylistics and techniques.¹²⁶

Thomas Hahn also notes that although its meter and language indicate a northern composition (perhaps in Cumberland, whose seat is Carlisle), the four manuscripts were made in different parts of England, including the Midlands, Yorkshire, and the London area.¹²⁷ Therefore, the geographical range of these manuscript copies, as well as the number of surviving manuscript copies, constitutes material evidence that *The Awntyrs off Arthur* was quite popular with Middle English audiences. However, even though this poem was a written composition, it still includes oral undertones and asides to the audience.

Unlike the other romances that this chapter discusses, *The Awntyrs off Arthur* has faced criticism regarding the potential number of authors involved in its original composition. Until more recently, many scholars viewed *The Awntyrs off Arthur* as a work that was written by two poets with different aims.¹²⁸ While some scholars have criticized *The Awntyrs off Arthure* for its perceived lack of unity and have argued that it might actually be two romances put together, many other scholars have argued that it should be viewed as one single romance by one author.

¹²⁶ Thomas Hahn, “*The Awntyrs off Arthur*: Introduction,” in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 169.

¹²⁷ Hahn, “*The Awntyrs off Arthur*: Introduction,” 169.

¹²⁸ Rosamund Allen, “Chivalric Romance: *The Awntyrs off Arthur*,” in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 151.

Hahn claims that in both of its halves or episodes (the intrusion of the ghost and the intrusion of Galeron), *The Awntyrs off Arthure* “presents a view of social and spiritual interdependency” that reflects common medieval ideas of society as “a unified political and sacred body.”¹²⁹ Much like Hahn, Rooney also presents an argument for reading it as a single romance and states that both episodes achieve a single romance because both halves adopt the language of social complaint.¹³⁰ Both episodes include a complaint from an intruding character: the ghost complains about her awful state in Purgatory, and Galeron complains about the unjust actions of Arthur giving his land to Gawain. Both complaints are taken seriously, and the court tries its best to resolve them. Hence, Shepherd is correct in his assertion that the very fabric of the poem is associative and that readers should look for affinities on the larger scale.¹³¹ Hahn argues that although each part of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* presents a self-contained episode, the episodes should not be read as independent, unconnected sections that are artificially or arbitrarily joined together, but that they should instead be read as narrative elements that are thematically linked “by contrast and complementarity.”¹³² Several scholars have chosen to view this romance as a diptych, and Hahn describes the diptych form of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* as “a conventional medieval form, in which two separate framed subjects are physically joined into a unity by a hinge; in such a doubled structure, meaning is produced not simply through a continuous harmony of parts, but through the collision this manifestly split structure sets up.”¹³³ Spearing also argues for its

¹²⁹ Hahn, “*The Awntyrs off Arthur*- Introduction,” 171

¹³⁰ Kenneth Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2011), 205.

¹³¹ Shepherd notes this on page 369 of his edition of this text.

¹³² Hahn, “*The Awntyrs off Arthur*- Introduction,” 170.

¹³³ Hahn, “*The Awntyrs off Arthur*- Introduction,” 170.

At the beginning of the poem, the poet states, “as the boke tells” (line 2), which shows an intermingling of oral and written traditions. While some of the other texts discussed in this chapter reference French works, this is the only time that the poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthur* mentions a book, and there is no known source-text for this romance, although the poet must have been familiar with a variety of texts, including the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. While it is fairly commonplace to find references to a book telling or saying something in Middle English romance, *The Awntyrs off Arthure* also includes some interesting asides from the poet to the audience. The poet tells the audience, “the trouthe for to tell–” (line 34), indicating that he is aiming to tell his audience the truth of the matter, but this seems to be done in a playful manner, as this is a fictional romance that incorporates many different narrative elements. When describing the gruesome appearance of the ghost of Guinevere’s dead mother, the poet says, “To tell the todes theron my tong wer full tere.” (line 121), indicating to the audience directly that it would be very difficult for the poet to enumerate the toads that were on Guinevere’s dead mother, thus painting a very vivid picture of a gruesome figure covered in toads. When the poet is describing the battle between Gawain and Galeron in the second episode, the poet says in a direct aside to the audience, “But him lympted the worse, and that me wel likes!” (line 615). Here, the poet divulges his own thoughts on the battle between the two knights and indicates to the audience that he is happy that Gawain is winning the battle. Through these oral asides, the poet takes on the role of narrator and invokes the oral storytelling tradition, even though he was most likely writing this poem and not reciting it orally by memory.

Rosamund Allen believes that *The Awntyrs off Arthure* was initially composed for public

recitation.¹³⁷ Allen posits the question: “Was the poem performed as a semi-dramatic monologue or with speakers (perhaps nobles) reciting the dialogue?”¹³⁸ It is very plausible that this poem was initially intended to be performed aloud to a listening audience, and these aforementioned oral asides to the audience substantiate that argument. While the poem’s versification is incredibly sophisticated, and the matter of the text, especially the first episode, is very complex, *The Awntyrs off Arthur* is yet another late Middle English Arthurian romance that that was probably enjoyed by a wide range of audiences. Because this is an anonymous work, it is not known for certain if this poem was performed out loud to a listening audience or not, but these oral asides certainly lend themselves to an oral recitation, and given the popularity of the tale, it most likely enjoyed a wide range of audiences, both readers and listeners.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight exists alongside three other poems attributed to the anonymous *Gawain-poet*¹³⁹ in a unique late fourteenth-century manuscript (Cotton Nero A. x.). Paul Battles notes that the poem’s exact date of composition has yet to be settled.¹⁴⁰ Derek Brewer states that the sole manuscript that we have available to us was probably written some time soon after the original composition of the poems, “not by the poet but by a scribe who

¹³⁷ Rosamund Allen, “Chivalric Romance: Notes,” in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 332. Allen briefly discusses this notion in note 184.

¹³⁸ Rosamund Allen, “Chivalric Romance: *The Awntyrs off Arthur*,” 155.

¹³⁹ Derek Brewer notes that the poet is sometimes referred to as the *Pearl*-poet. Brewer also notes that we do not know for certain if all four poems were composed by one poet. For a more detailed discussion, see: Derek Brewer, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, eds. Derek Brewer and Jonathon Gibson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 1.

¹⁴⁰ Paul Battles, “Introduction,” in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Paul Battles (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2012), 11.

inevitably made some errors.”¹⁴¹ The manuscript is illuminated for the solitary reader, but it is also organized and divided in a way that would make public recitation a possibility.¹⁴² The layout of the manuscript again points to the intermingling of oral and written storytelling traditions because the owners of the manuscript could be both readers, enjoying the illuminations, and listeners, enjoying the public readings and oral asides.

Carolyne Larrington notes that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the “most artistically accomplished and most singular” Middle English Arthurian romance and states that the poem has no “obvious immediate source,” either in English or French; however, it does contain motifs and plot elements found elsewhere in other Arthurian romances, but its mixture of them is unique.¹⁴³ Elisabeth Brewer shares a similar sentiment and notes that while the ultimate origins of the tale might be Celtic, the *Gawain*-poet appears to have been familiar with a variety of both English and French romances, particularly those of Chrétien de Troyes.¹⁴⁴ Thomas Hahn discusses the character of Gawain and claims that his presence in Celtic works suggest that he was well-established in oral stories as the nephew, companion, and defender of the great king.¹⁴⁵ The Beheading Game motif also has Celtic origins and can be traced back to the Irish tale, *Bricriu’s Feast*; however, the *Gawain*-poet probably encountered the story in one of the continuations of Chrétien’s *Percival*, where Caradoc is presented with a beheading challenge

¹⁴¹ Brewer, “Introduction,” 1.

¹⁴² Ad Putter, *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc., 1996), 18.

¹⁴³ Carolyne Larrington, “English Chivalry and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,” in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 252.

¹⁴⁴ Elisabeth Brewer, “Sources I: The Sources of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,” in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, eds. Derek Brewer and Jonathon Gibson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 243.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Hahn, “Gawain and Popular Chivalric Romance in Britain,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Kreuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 218.

from a stranger who is later revealed to be his father.¹⁴⁶ In fact, many elements of the plot are familiar from the Arthurian tradition: the focus on one of Arthur's knights instead of the king himself; the interruption of a feast by an unwelcome intruder; the knightly quest; the testing of the knight's honour; the supernatural; and the seductive and potentially dangerous capabilities of women.¹⁴⁷ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* draws on a large range of narratives, so it is quite possible that the poet was familiar with both oral narratives and written texts concerning Gawain.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is often regarded as one of the great works of medieval literature. Elisabeth Brewer notes that the poet "uses his material in such a way that we are left marveling at the skill with which he has ordered it, enhanced its symbolic power and endowed it with profundity of meaning."¹⁴⁸ Ad Putter comments on the poem's structural richness,¹⁴⁹ while Kevin Gustafson claims that it is generally regarded by scholars as the best Middle English romance.¹⁵⁰ Derek Brewer discusses the *Gawain*-poet's use of numerology and states that numerology is "the quintessence of literacy, counting lines written on a page."¹⁵¹ The poet places an importance on the numeric significance of the number five in the poem; for example, the description of the pentangle on Gawain's shield emphasizes the number five and is exactly fifty

¹⁴⁶ J. A. Burrow, *The Gawain-Poet* (Horndon; Tavistock; Devon: Northcote House Publishers, Ltd, 2001), 43. Elisabeth Brewer also discusses the Beheading Game motif in *Bricriu's Feast* and continuations of *Percival*. See: "Sources I: The Sources of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," 245.

¹⁴⁷ Sarah Stanbury, "The *Gawain*-Poet," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature, 1100-1500*, ed. Larry Scanlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 147-148.

¹⁴⁸ Brewer, "Sources I," 255.

¹⁴⁹ Ad Putter, *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet*, 38.

¹⁵⁰ Kevin Gustafson comments that Gawain's pentangle fuses body and spirit, as well as secular and religious values. Kevin Gustafson, "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c. 1350- c. 1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Malden; Oxford; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 619.

¹⁵¹ Brewer, "Introduction," 20.

lines long. Gawain's five senses are joined to his five fingers, which can be linked to the five wounds of Christ.¹⁵² The number five was commonly used in devotional literature; for example, the five joys of the Virgin Mary.¹⁵³ Gawain has a particular devotional interest in Mary within this poem, so the poet's use of the number five is obviously intentional. However, while this poem is very literary, the poet also includes oral asides to the audience.

Throughout the tale, the poet harkens back to oral and memorial story-telling traditions. The poet begins the tale with indications of oral delivery and directly addresses the audience (whether real or imagined):

Bot of alle þat here bult, of Bretaygne kynges,
 Ay wat3 Arthur þe hendest, as I haf herde telle.
 Forþi an aunter in erde I attle to schawe,
 Þat a Selly in si3t summe men hit holden,
 And an outrage awenture of Arthure3 wondere3.
 If 3e wyl listen þhis laye bot on little quile,
 I schal telle hit as-tit, as in toun herde,
 With tonge,
 As hit is stad and stoken
 In stori stif and stronge,
 With lel letteres loken,
 In londe so hat3 ben longe (lines 25-36).

Like other poets of Middle English romance texts, the *Gawain*-poet also asks the audience to listen to the story. The poet mentions an oral source, but then implies that the story has been written down. When the poet tells the audience that Gawain left and took his way to find the Green Knight, the poet again makes a reference to a written source by stating, "Þe bok as I herde say" (line 690). However, there is a reference to both oral/aural and written traditions in this statement. Spearing argues that this statement is a self-contradictory expression.¹⁵⁴ However, if

¹⁵² Gustafson, "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," 622.

¹⁵³ Brewer, "Introduction," 18.

¹⁵⁴ Spearing, "Poetic Identity," 39.

Syþen Brutus, þe bolde burne, bodʒed hider first,
 After þe segge and þe assaute watʒ sesed at Troye,
 Iwysse.
 Mony auntereʒ here-biforne
 Haf fallen suche er þis.
 Now þat bere þe croun of þorne,
 He bryng vus to his blysse! (lines 2520-2530).

With the references to Brutus and Troy, the ending harkens back to the poem's beginning, but also to an older form of epic poetry. The poet mentions the "best book of romance," and Spearing states that the poet, "never claims to have *read* this source."¹⁵⁵ Spearing believes that the poet negates the textuality of his source and denies himself any explicit association with writing.¹⁵⁶ While the poet makes no direct claim here to have read his source (if he even had a direct source), the poet has already mentioned hearing the book, which, as previously discussed, could have been from an oral performance or from private reading, since reading was still conceived in terms of hearing. This "best book of romance" could also be a reference to the poet's own tale.

Le Morte Darthur

Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* is arguably one of the most complex literary texts of all the Middle English romances, partially due to its length and the considerable number of sources Malory made use of when writing his work. Terence McCarthy makes an interesting point about Malory's access to these sources, especially if he was in prison, and argues that it is difficult to know where Malory found all of the texts he needed or chose to use for his own work, and McCarthy points out that some of Malory's sources "are so far from the books he makes out of

¹⁵⁵ Spearing, "Poetic Identity," 38.

¹⁵⁶ Spearing, "Poetic Identity," 39.

them” that Malory might not have had all of them on hand as he wrote and might have had to rely on his memory of his sources, especially since he was imprisoned at the time he was writing.¹⁵⁷ While it may be hard to imagine such a writerly work like *Le Morte Darthur* being partially composed from Malory’s memory of his sources, McCarthy’s argument is entirely plausible. However, there are many instances where Malory follows his sources quite closely, so he must have had some of his sources on hand.

McCarthy also points out that Malory is very much a “traditional writer” who is rooted in oral storytelling traditions.¹⁵⁸ Like the other romances discussed so far in this chapter, Malory makes references to both oral story-telling traditions and authoritative written sources in his *Le Morte Darthur*. Even though Malory was writing his work in the late fifteenth century, oral and written traditions are still intermingled in a similar fashion to that found in fourteenth-century romances, as in many places in his work he writes phrases such as, “as it tellith in the booke,” “as it tellith in the booke of adventures,” etc. Malory often presents himself as both an author and a narrator, with his sources speaking to him “as if with a voice.”¹⁵⁹ Malory continually uses a mixture of oral and written phrases when referring to his sources, and these references are found throughout his text and are not just relegated to a particular section of his work.¹⁶⁰ Given that *Le*

¹⁵⁷ McCarthy, *An Introduction to Malory*, 141.

¹⁵⁸ McCarthy, *An Introduction to Malory*, 125.

¹⁵⁹ Michael W. Twomey, “The Voice of Aurality in the *Morte Darthur*,” *Arthuriana*, 13, no. 4 (2003): 103, Project MUSE.

¹⁶⁰ Malory’s references to a book or tale telling or saying something are as follows: “as it tellith in the booke” (How Uther Pendragin Gate Kyng Arthur [I], page 28, lines 36-37); “as hit tellith in the booke of adventures” (How Uther Pendragin Gate Kyng Arthur [I], page 29, lines 42-43); “So, as the booke tellith,” (The Weddyng of Kyng Arthur [III], page 73, line 37); “As it tellith in the Frenshe booke” (Sir Launcelot du Lake [VI], page 176, line 4); “So the booke seyth” (The Take of Sir Gareth of Orkeney [VII], page 195, line 13); “As the Freynsh booke seyth,” (The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney [VII], page 226, line 36); “And as the booke seyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [VIII], page 231, line 16); “as the booke seyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [VIII], page 233, line 27); “as the Frenshe booke seyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [VIII], 237, line 13); “as the Frenshe booke seyth, page 262, line 2); “as the booke seyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [VIII], page 275, line 9); “as the booke seythe” (Syr Trystrams De Lyones

Morte Darthur is in prose, there is no basis to suggest that these phrases were added by Malory in order to fill in and rhyme with the rest of a passage. Even though Malory was writing his text while incarcerated and not reciting it orally to a listening audience, he includes his imagined listening audience in his oral asides when he writes things such as “Now leve we there, and speke we of.” Hence, Malory is invoking the oral tradition of telling a tale to a listening audience, and these asides can be found throughout *Le Morte Darthur*.¹⁶¹

[IX], page 324, line 34); “as the Freynshe booke sayth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 327, line 25); “as the booke seyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 377, line 27); “as the booke seyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 386, line 7); “as the booke tellyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 388, line 26); “but the booke seyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 390, line 38); “as the booke saythe” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 435, line 17); “the booke seyth” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 438, line 21); “as the booke tellith” (The Sankgreal [XIII], page 507, line 14); “Here levith the tale of Sir Galahad, and spekith of Sir Gawayne. / Now seyth the tale,” (The Sankgreal [XIII], page 515, lines 1-2); “Here levith the tale of Syr Gawayne and hys felowys and spekith / Of Sir Galahad” (The Sankgreal [XIII], page 516, lines 27-28); (The Sankgreal [XIV], page 521, line 13) “And as the tale tellith” (The Sankgreal [XIV], page 526, line 33); “Now levith the tale of Sir Launcelot and spekith of Sir Gawayne” (The Sankgreal [XVI], page 538, line 14); “Now seyth the tale, whan Sir Galahad had rescowed Sir Percyvale frome the twenty knyghtes, he rode tho into a waste foreyste wherein he dud many journeyes and founde many adventures which be brought all to an ende, whereof the tale makith here no mencion” (The Sankgreal [XVII], page 557, lines 20-24); “Now saith the tale [that]” (The Sankgreal [XVII], page 573, line 22); “Now seyth the tale” (The Sankgreal [XVII], page 573, line 43); “Now seyth the tale” (The Sankgreal [XVII], page 580, line 1); “Than, as the booke seyth,” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 588, line 10); “as the boke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 590, line 18); “as the Freynshe booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 601, line 3); “the booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 603, line 12); “as the Freynsh booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 603, line 18); “the Freyn- / she booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 609, lines 41-42); “as the boke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 613, line 29); “as the / Freynshe booke sayth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 622, lines 30-31); “the booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XIX], page 626, line 6); “the Freynshe booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XIX], page 628, lines 2-3); “for the booke sayth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XIX], page 628, line 36); “and the booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XIX], page 629, lines 13-14); “as the Freynsh booke saythe” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XIX], page 632, line 12); “as the booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XIX], page 641, line 2); “the Freynshe booke seyth” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XIX], page 647, line 41); “as the Freynshe booke seyth” (The Dethe of Arthur [XX], page 649, lines 1-2); “as the Freynshe booke seyth” (The Dethe of Arthur [XX], page 657, line 19); “But the Freynsh booke seyth” (The Dethe of Arthur [XX], page 662, line 11); “the Freynshe boke seyth” (The Dethe of Arthur [XX], page 664, lines 38-39); “as the Freynshe booke seyth” (The Dethe of Arthur [XX], page 676, line 20); “as the Freynshe booke saythe” (The Dethe of Arthur [XX], page 678, lines 12-13). This list comprises every reference Malory makes within his work to a book telling or saying something.

¹⁶¹ These asides are as follows: “Now leve we there, and speke we of Sir Launcelot,” (Sir Launcelot du Lake [VI], page 170, line 15); “So leve we Sir Gareth there wyth Sir Gryngamour and his sisters, and turne we unto Kyng Arthure that at the nexte feste of Pentecoste” (Sir Gareth of Orkeney [VII], page 208, lines 36-37); “Now leve we of thes Knyghtes and kynges, and lette us speke of the grete aray that was made within the castell and aboute the castell;” (Sir Gareth of Orkeney [VII], page 214, lines 30-31); “Now woll we speke of” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 326, line 10); “Now woll we leve Sir Trystram. Sir Palomydes, and Sir Dynadan in preson, and speke we of other knyghtes” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones, page 327 [IX], lines 38-39); “Now leve we of thys tale and speke we

In his PhD dissertation, *The Oral Tradition in Malory's Morte Darthur*, Donald Hobar argues that the oral techniques in Malory's text do not simply represent "traces" of an earlier form of romance carried over into his prose, but rather that these oral undertones represent an essential part of the composition "as a result of the particular limitations of the audience." Hobar's thesis centres on his argument that Malory's oral undertones are not simply just residual, but that they actually form the foundation of Malory's prose style.¹⁶² In addition to Hobar's dissertation research on orality in *Le Morte Darthur*, a very interesting argument for Malory's oral asides has been proposed by scholars such as Joyce Coleman, Karen Cherewatuk, Michael W. Twomey, Janet Jesmok, D. Thomas Hanks Jr., and others, who argue that Malory expected his work to be read silently by private readers and also to be read aloud to a listening audience, which is why there are so many oral references within his work.¹⁶³ Their overall argument is persuasive, as many romance texts were often read aloud to listening audiences. What makes their argument even more convincing is the fact that in his 1485 printed edition of Malory's text, William Caxton also assumes that his customers buying *Le Morte Darthur* will be both a listening audience and silent readers. Caxton addresses his customers as "noble prynces, lords

of" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 331, line 13); "Now leve we of Sir Lamerok, and speke we of" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 369, line 42); "Now woll we passe over this mater and speke we of the harpers" (Syr Trystrams De Lyones [X], page 378, line 7); "as ye have harde aforetime." (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 381, lines 40-41); "Now turne we from this mater and speke we of Sir Trystram, of whom this booke is pryncipall off" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 400, lines 22-23); "Now leve we of this mater and speke we of" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 451, line 43); "Now leve we Sir Trystram de Lyones, and speke we of Sir Launcelot du Lake and of Sir Galahad," (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XI], page 462, lines 15-16); "And now leve we of a whyle of Sir Ector and of Sir Percyvale, and speke we of Sir Launcelot" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XII], page 480, lines 4-5); "Now woll we leve of thys mater, and speke we off" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XII], page 490, line 10); "Now speke we of" (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 615, line 20); "now turne we from her and speke we of Sir Launcelot du Lake-" (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 690, line 6).

¹⁶² Donald Hobar, *The Oral Tradition in Malory's Morte Darthur* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1967), 5.

¹⁶³ See, for example: The special edition of *Arthuriana*, Volume 13, Number 4, Winter 2003; Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also Donald Hobar's dissertation.

and ladyes, gentylnen or gentywymmen, that desyre to rede or here redde of the noble and joyous hystorye” of King Arthur. Caxton, therefore, seems to have marketed his text as suitable for both silent reading and oral performance because of the continuing appeal of the image of the minstrel among domestic readers in late medieval England.¹⁶⁴ In fact, public reading to a listening audience continued in popularity amongst late medieval elite audiences.¹⁶⁵ While it may seem like Malory’s work is too long to read aloud, it would be manageable if read in sections over the span of a few weeks or a month. Caxton himself separated *Le Morte Darthur* into twenty-one books, perhaps making it easier for his customers to read the text in its prearranged sections aloud if they wished to do so. In fact, Hobar notes that out of the entire *Le Morte Darthur*, only two sections, The Tale of Sir Gareth and ‘Isode the Fair’ from Book I of Tristram, require three hours of continuous reading time; the rest of the sections of Malory’s work can be grouped into a one to two hour reading span.¹⁶⁶ Hobar delves further into this and devises a time span for each of the tales with their possible groupings for reading Malory’s work aloud, estimating that the ideal time for reading would be about one hour per day.¹⁶⁷ While Hobar does not directly state this in his dissertation, Coleman claims that Hobar read *Le Morte Darthur* “aloud himself, to his wife, noting the natural breaks that could mark the boundaries between one night’s reading and the next. In *toto* Hobar’s reading took just under 33 hours; read continuously for one to two hours per night, the *Morte* would thus provide about two and a half weeks of

¹⁶⁴ George Shuffleton, “Is There a Minstrel in the House?: Domestic Entertainment in Late Medieval England,” *Philological Quarterly*, 87, no. 1-2 (2008): 70, ProQuest.

¹⁶⁵ Joyce Coleman, “Reading Malory in the fifteenth Century: Aural Reception and Performance Dynamics,” *Arthuriana*, 13, no. 4 (2003): 49, Project MUSE.

¹⁶⁶ Hobar, *The Oral Tradition in Malory's Morte Darthur*, 64.

¹⁶⁷ Hobar, *The Oral Tradition in Malory's Morte Darthur*, 65-68.

entertainment.”¹⁶⁸ Reading *Le Morte Darthur* aloud in this way would therefore be the medieval equivalent of our modern-day mini-series on television. Jesmok comments on her own experience of reading Malory’s text aloud instead of silently and states, “In doing more reading aloud of Malory and listening to Malorian readings, I am continually struck by his extraordinary oral qualities and rhythms.”¹⁶⁹ Cherewatuk comments on the aural/oral nature of Malory’s work and states that Malory’s “artful aurality” is evident in his use of rhyme, repetition, alliteration, assonance, syntax, and envelope structure.¹⁷⁰ Twomey also comments on Malory’s aurality and states, “The most distinctive stylistic feature of aurality is mnemonic repetition— that is, syntactical repetition such as parallelism, verbal repetition such as formulaic expressions, and phonetic repetition such as alliteration – rhetorical strategies that appeal to the memory by appealing to the ear.”¹⁷¹ While some scholars like to imagine that the increase in writing brought with it and increase in private reading, it seems that even longer works like those of Malory were probably enjoyed in a variety of ways. While we also like to think of our own contemporary society as simply private readers, most of us enjoy audio and visual entertainment (for example audiobooks and books made into movies/television shows), so it is understandable that even in the late Middle Ages, when books were becoming more readily available to a wide range of audiences, people still enjoyed listening to works being read aloud. Nelson discusses the coming of print, focusing much of his article on the Renaissance, and argues that even in the sixteenth

¹⁶⁸ Coleman, “Reading Malory in the fifteenth Century,” 57.

¹⁶⁹ Janet Jesmok, “Reading Malory Aloud: Poetic Qualities and Distinctive Voice,” *Arthuriana*, 13, no. 4 (2003): 87, Project MUSE.

¹⁷⁰ Karen Cherewatuk, “Aural and Written Reception in Sir John Paston, Malory, and Caxton,” *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 21 (2004): 126, Project MUSE.

¹⁷¹ Twomey, “The Voice of Aurality in the *Morte Darthur*,” 106.

century print did not entirely eradicate public reading. Nelson acknowledges the impact of the advent of print and states that there was therefore less of a need for one to read aloud to others; however, Nelson claims that lighting was still as poor and expensive as it was in the Middle Ages, and corrections for eye conditions/defects were not markedly improved either.¹⁷² Therefore, a younger reader, “not yet hypermetropic,” could read from a text and entertain “a multitude of listeners.”¹⁷³ Nelson also claims that there were “the delights of social response, of the communally indrawn breath, the interplay with others in passion and idea about the mutual experience, delights of which the lone reader is deprived.”¹⁷⁴ Nelson’s argument, that even in the Renaissance works were still read aloud to others, is convincing and lends credence to the arguments made by Joyce Coleman, Karen Cherewatuk, Michael W. Twomey, Janet Jesmok, D. Thomas Hanks Jr., and Donald Hobar that in the late Middle Ages works were still read aloud, and that Malory expected that his work would be read aloud to a listening audience.

However, while it is good that some scholars are beginning to see the oral qualities of more writerly medieval works like that of Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, and Malory does appear to be writing in the expectation that his work could be read aloud, there are also instances where it appears that he was hoping to also have an audience of silent readers, which again points to this intermingling of oral and written storytelling traditions in the late Middle Ages. At the end of “The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney,” Malory addresses himself as the author and his audience as readers of his book when telling them, “And I pray you all that redyth this tale to pray for hym

¹⁷² Nelson, “From ‘Listen, Lordings’ to ‘Dear Reader,’” 113. When thinking about Nelson’s argument about poor lighting in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, it is worth mentioning Chaucer’s *The Parliament of Fowls*, where he has to stop reading the *Dream of Scipio* because it is dark.

¹⁷³ Nelson, “From ‘Listen, Lordings’ to ‘Dear Reader,’” 113.

¹⁷⁴ Nelson, “From ‘Listen, Lordings’ to ‘Dear Reader,’” 113.

that this wrote, that God sende hym good delyveraunce sone, and has-tely.” (Sir Gareth of Orkeney [VII], page 227). Malory refers to himself as a chronicler at the end of “The Sankgreal” and he writes,

Thus endith the tale of the Sankgreal that was breffly drawyn oute of Freynshe– which ys a tale cronycled for one of the trewyst and of the holyest that ys in thys worlde– by Sir Thomas Maleorré, knyght. O blessed Jesu, helpe hym throw Hys might. Amen. (The Sankgreal [XVII], page 587).

Here, Malory is taking on the traditional role of romancer. Malory is cataloguing the entire Arthurian legend and is acting as the chronicler who preserves the memory of the oral stories in writing for his collective audience. At the ending of “Aftir the Questis,” Malory seems to be addressing both a future audience and/or prospective authors. He writes,

And this booke endyth whereas Sir Launcelot and Sir Trystrams com to courte. Who that woll make ony more, lette hym seke other bookis of Kynge Arthure or of Sir Launcelot or Sir Trystrams; for this was drawyn by a knyght prisoner, Sir Thomas Maleorré, that God sende hym good recover. “Amen & c!” (Aftir the Questis [IV], page 112).

In this passage, Malory addresses future authors by stating that anyone who wants to “make ony more” can look at other sources when writing their own adaptation. Here, the role of reader and author coalesce. Therefore, there is a wide range of relationships between Malory and his audience, as he addresses his audience as both hearers and readers, and even as future authors.

It is interesting to note that while Malory takes measures to address himself as the author throughout his work, he does not specify the sources he used for his own work. Like the poets of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Ywain and Gawain*, *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Sir Launfal*, when Malory mentions a source text, he simply calls it “the book” or “the French book.” However, when he does mention a source, Malory seems to be attempting to show his audience that he is concerned with composing an authoritative version of the story. While many of these references are faithful adaptations of the French source, Malory sometimes

mentions a source when there is no known source (such as the entire tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney), so these sections were more than likely his own invention, although his original source(s) could just be lost to us. Much like his section on Gareth, Malory appears to have invented the entire section regarding Launcelot's healing of Sir Urry (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenvyvere [XIX], pages 638-644), even though he mentions a French source on several occasions. When Arthur is crowned emperor of Rome, Malory mentions a rather ambiguous source when he writes, "as the romaynes me tellys" (The Noble Tale Betwyxt Kynge Arthure and Lucis the Emperour of Rome [V], page 150). Shepherd notes that in Malory's main source for this tale— and Arthurian tradition in general— Arthur returns home at this point in the story because he receives word of Mordred's treachery and Arthur is not crowned emperor of Rome. Malory might have mentioned a source here in order to conceal the fact that this is all his own invention, or he could have been using another source, John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, which does have King Arthur crowned as emperor.¹⁷⁵ Regardless of whether or not Malory used Hardyng's work as his source, it is interesting to note that he still refers to an oral, memorial tradition of transmission by saying that the romance is telling him the story.

It is evident that Malory did not use his memory alone in composing his work, but as previously mentioned, he might have had to rely on his memory for some of the material. Like the other aforementioned romance poets, Malory also includes both oral, memorial storytelling traditions and written traditions, which indicates that even in late medieval England, oral storytelling was still popular amongst romance audiences. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge both the oral, memorial and written styles of storytelling within Middle English romances in order to better understand the authors' and audiences' conceptions of the

¹⁷⁵ Shepherd discusses this on page 150 in note 6 in the edition of *Le Morte Darthur* that I am using.

storytelling processes in a society that was influenced by both oral and written traditions.

Conclusion

In *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, D. H. Green briefly discusses the noteworthy interaction of both written and oral transmissions and memorial practices within medieval literature and culture. Green argues that the Middle Ages can be seen as a bimedial society, which he says is characterized by a shifting relationship between the written and the oral. Green goes on to say that the value that an oral society places on memory does not mean that a literate society would allow memory to fall into disuse and claims that the Middle Ages “should be seen as displaying a memorial alongside a bookish culture, sometimes in conjunction in the same person or work.”¹⁷⁶ While Middle English romances are not discussed in Green’s work, Green’s assertions can be applied to this interesting intermingling of oral, memorial, and written traditions within the Middle English Arthurian romances that this chapter has discussed. What can be ascertained is that oral and written modes of remembrance worked together to create these romance texts.

Whereas previous scholarship has tended to either discuss the more oral qualities or the more writerly qualities of these Middle English romances, arguing for their potential oral or written composition and receptions, this chapter has adopted a more comparative approach, and has explored a wide range of romances together and in detail in order to explore the various memorial, oral, and written references within each of these texts. From the romances discussed in this chapter, each romance contains references to both oral and written traditions, which reflects the diverse cultural and literary practices in late medieval England, where oral, memorial

¹⁷⁶ D. H. Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58-59.

storytelling traditions interacted with more writerly traditions in a variety of ways. However, while many comparisons can be drawn between these romances, they also differ in the ways in which they treat these interactions of oral and written traditions, and each romance is worthy of its own detailed exploration. This chapter has sought to do just that and has endeavoured to begin a more individualized exploration of these romance texts, particularly the often overlooked and marginalized romances that have simply been deemed to be the work of minstrels or hack writers. Similarities can also be drawn between the overlooked romances and the more readily studied and favoured romances (such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Le Morte Darthur*), which can provide further documentation on how Middle English romances were composed and received in regard to oral and written methods of transmission. Each one of these Middle English Arthurian romance texts relies on the audiences' memories of past Arthurian narratives and partakes in both oral, memorial storytelling traditions as well as written ones. Regardless of whether the original poet was orally composing the tale from memory alone, or was working with other source texts on hand, the memory of the Arthurian legend and past stories of King Arthur and his court would be invoked by the authors and their wide range of audiences. The future of romance was transmission and remembrance through the written word, but the authors and their audiences also looked to earlier oral traditions of remembering and telling stories. What these Middle English romances show us is both the oral and literate identities of the authors and their audiences. Late medieval audiences can be categorized simultaneously as both oral/aural and textual. Literacy and orality worked together in the production and reception of these texts, and late medieval audiences could be both listeners and private readers. Thus, literary culture in late medieval England was very complex, with the authors writing down their tales, but also still engaging with oral storytelling. While it may seem

contradictory to modern notions of oral and literary traditions being separate from one another, these aforementioned texts show that textual culture and memorial oral story-telling traditions were still very much connected in a variety of ways in late medieval England and that contemporary medieval culture did not make a clear distinction between these two methods of storytelling.

While the Middle Ages presents an interesting dialogue between oral and written records of remembrance, it should be noted that there is a continuous dialogue between oral and written communication in most cultures, and these different modes of communication inform memorial traditions. This interesting relationship between oral and written memorial traditions also reveals an intricate connection between all forms of memory and time itself. Patrick J. Geary discusses how writing can transform memory by fixing it, but points out that “even heavily text-orientated societies communicate values (and, one should add, the interpretive structures within which to understand these written memories) orally.”¹⁷⁷ While oral and written memories differ in the ways they are communicated, literary modes of narration are often informed by oral narratives, which results in a constant interchange between the written word and the oral word.¹⁷⁸ Thus, even in the modern Western world, oral and written records of remembrance are still interacting, albeit in a very different way from that which characterizes the late Middle Ages.

¹⁷⁷ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 15.

¹⁷⁸ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900-1200*, 5.

Chapter Two

“He had forgotten his leman!”: Remembering and Forgetting Promises and Oaths in Medieval Romance and Culture

Introduction

While the previous chapter explored memory's interconnectedness to both oral and written records in select Middle English Arthurian romances, and how oral traditions were still very much a part of medieval society, this chapter will explore memory's relationship with oral promises and oaths. Building on the previous chapter's discussion of D. H. Green's claim that the Middle Ages can be seen as a bimodal society, characterized by a shifting relationship between the written and the oral,¹⁷⁹ this chapter will explore how these oral residues of medieval culture emphasized a strong commitment to remember one's spoken promises and oaths. This emphasis that medieval society placed on the need to remember to keep one's oral promises and oaths is reflected in Middle English romance, and the authors often explore a character's ability to remember and keep his or her promises and oaths to others and how this impacts the character's public and private reputation and honour. Keeping one's oral promises and oaths is one of the preoccupations of these romance texts, and keeping promises is couched in terms of memory, which will be the focus of this chapter. In the social world of these romances, to remember a

¹⁷⁹ Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, 58-59.

promise implies that a character will keep it. This suggests that memory has an ethical dimension and function in the world of Middle English romances, and this can be related to the honour code of feudal society, as well as the power and prestige which this society still attached to the spoken word. Word bonds had a social and political significance that was further enhanced by the ethical and religious dimensions attached to them.¹⁸⁰ Medieval English society placed a great deal of importance on oral promises and their performance,¹⁸¹ and while previous scholarship has discussed the importance of oral pledges in medieval society, it has neglected to discuss how memory is inherently involved in this process, and how this is fleshed out and explored within Middle English romances. The romance authors' use of memory in relation to oral word bonds is therefore something that has not been at the forefront of critical debates, and this chapter seeks to make good this omission in scholarly research.

This chapter will discuss examples of remembering and forgetting promises and oaths within Middle English romances, but will particularly focus on *Ywain and Gawain*, *Lybeaus Desconus*,¹⁸² and *Le Morte Darthur* because while it is implicit that memory is needed in order

¹⁸⁰ Joanna Bukowska, "Promises Kept and Broken – The Power of a Spoken Word in the Chivalric World of *Le Morte Darthur*," *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia: International Review of English Studies* 38, (2002): 63. Gale Academic Onefile.

¹⁸¹ Morris S. Arnold, "Fourteenth-century Promises," *Cambridge Law Journal* 35, no. 2 (1976): 321.

¹⁸² While there are six manuscript copies of this romance (five medieval and one from the seventeenth century), and I referred to four in my previous chapter in order to compare and contrast the oral residues within each manuscript, I have chosen to use only the Lambeth Palace manuscript for line references in this chapter. The scribe of the Lambeth manuscript actually uses the term "forgate," while some of the other manuscripts diverge in their description of this episode, so they cannot be comparatively discussed. I think it is reasonable to assume that the original poet used the term "forgate," so there is no need to discuss the altered versions of this episode in the other manuscripts, especially considering that Maldwyn Mills states that the author's "own version of the story is reasonably well preserved in manuscripts Cotton Caligula A.II and Lambeth Palace 306. See: Maldwyn Mills, "A Medieval Reviser at Work," *Medium Ævum* 32, no. 1 (1963): 11. JSTOR. Moreover, Mills states that the Lambeth version is "fundamentally the best text of those available to us." See: *Lybeaus Desconus*, ed. Maldwyn Mills (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), 12. Mills also comments that the Lambeth Palace manuscript is the most commonly referenced text for *Lybeaus Desconus* because the Cotton Caligula is full of errors. See: Maldwyn Mills, "Chivalric Romance: *Lybeaus Desconus*," in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W. R. J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 124.

to remember to keep promises and oaths, these three texts make this explicit and directly stress the importance of memory in relation to the keeping of one's promises and oaths in a variety of ways. *Ywain and Gawain* is a text that presents both the poet's and the characters' overarching preoccupation with the idea of "trowth," and the story focuses on the importance of remembering promises and what happens when Ywain forgets his promise. *Lybeaus Desconus* contains a short episode where Lybeaus, while in a state of infatuation and under enchantment, forgets about Elyne and his promise to save her lady. Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* displays a focus on honour and the importance of memory in relation to remembering oral promises and oaths in order for a knight to maintain his honour. The dates of composition for these three texts span from the second quarter of the fourteenth century up to the second half of the fifteenth century, thus providing a wide time frame to aid in the discussion and interpretation of late medieval English views on the importance of keeping promises and oaths that are reflected in these texts. The authors of these romance texts explore the different interpretations of what it means to forget a promise or oath; for example, is it simply that the character had a lapse in memory, or are other issues at play, such as did they simply choose to disregard their promise, were they distracted by other things, etc.? These different interpretations can affect our readings of these texts. Memory, therefore, is not morally neutral; a failure of memory regarding an oath or promise reflects or signals a lack of moral integrity. In some cases, the failure to remember to keep a promise or oath is also offered by these authors as almost a plea of mitigation. Therefore, a character's failure to keep their oral word bond could be viewed in a more sympathetic light by the audience and/or characters because it is a failure of memory that prevented them from upholding their promise or oath. The authors of these romances use a failure of memory as a means to suggest either that

they are somehow looking to minimise the culpability of the heroes for their moral failures in forgetting their oaths and promises, and/or that memory can be seen as having an ethical dimension. This implies an ambivalence and ambiguity about memory; faulty memories can imply a moral failure (i.e., the character forgot about the promise or oath because they did not care, or they just disregarded it), but faulty memories might also lead the audience and the characters to be more inclined to forgive these moral failings. Like the previous chapter, this chapter will take a more comparative approach than that of previous scholarship. This chapter will discuss these aforementioned romance texts in detail and separately but will also look for affinities between these three romances in regard to how they explore a character's ability to remember and keep oral promises and oaths. This chapter will consider how memory is involved or implicated in questions of ethics, integrity, and personal honour within these romance texts, and will also explore how memory might be used as a narrative device by the authors that can be read as a plea of mitigation, an excuse, or an attempt to minimise the moral failures of the characters who forget their promises and oaths.

It should be noted that while the terms "oath" and "promise" are sometimes used as synonyms in Modern English, they still have differing connotations, and both terms were used in the Middle English language, with varying meanings. The term, "prōmis(se)," is defined in the *MED* as, "A promise, solemn pledge, vow; also, that which is promised."¹⁸³ The term, "Oth," is defined in the *MED* as, "a solemn invocation of God, sacred relics, one's troth, etc. to witness the truth of a statement or one's intent to carry out a promise, agreement, etc.; a statement or promise made with an oath; also, the act of stating or promising with an oath."¹⁸⁴ The medieval definition

¹⁸³ "Prōmis(se)," in *MED*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED34877>.

¹⁸⁴ "Oth," in *MED*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED31005>.

for oath is inherently bound up with the notion of one's honour in upholding a promise, so the terms are very much interlinked. However, it is helpful to distinguish the two terms, since medieval writers do use the two terms in different contexts some of the time; for example, Malory mentions the Pentecostal Oath, which is an overarching framework of behaviour that Arthur's knights must swear to uphold, so while they make individual promises, they still must keep these promises while upholding the overarching Pentecostal Oath in order to maintain their chivalric honour. This stress on the importance of remembering oral promises and oaths in medieval English culture and literature can often be linked to the Middle English term "treuth,"¹⁸⁵ and this chapter will first provide a brief overview of this complex term before turning to an exploration of remembering and forgetting promises and oaths in the aforementioned romance texts.

"Treuth" in late medieval England

The etymology of "treuth" derives from the Old English term "trēowþ" (also trīewþ, or trȳwþ), which means an oath or pledge.¹⁸⁶ "Treuth" has various spellings in medieval literature, including, "troth," "trowth," and "trouthe," and the inherent meaning of this term had a significant impact on late medieval England. "Treuth" was a complex term, and the *MED* gives sixteen definitions (senses and subsenses) for "treuth,"¹⁸⁷ which, among many other meanings,

¹⁸⁵ Middle English writers and medieval scholars alike use a variety of spellings for this term. The *Middle English Dictionary* provides "treuth" as the general spelling for the term before providing all of the various spellings and forms. For the sake of clarity, I have adapted the standard *MED* spelling of "treuth."

¹⁸⁶ Monika H. Lee, "Conceptions of Truth in Fourteenth-Century English Poetry," *Essays in Literature* 21, no. 2 (1994): 154.

¹⁸⁷ "Treuth," in *MED*, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED47016/track?counter=1&search_id=867584

encompasses both the keeping of promises and oaths.

In his seminal book, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England*, Richard Firth Green looks at the cultural significance of the word “treuth” in Ricardian England and argues that it is of great importance to understanding the culture of late fourteenth-century England.¹⁸⁸ Green discusses the importance of this term by the end of the fourteenth century, as well as its wide range of meanings, and he asserts,

It is one thing to be able to show that the word *truth* was a ‘strong, difficult and persuasive word’ in late medieval English usage and that a sense of its significance extended well beyond the social and intellectual elite of the kingdom, but if we are able to establish the status of *truth* as a keyword in the Ricardian period, we must also be able to demonstrate that by the end of the fourteenth century it had acquired a considerable range of meanings, that some of these meanings were felt to be new and difficult, and that the overlaps between them were complex and potentially ambiguous.¹⁸⁹

Alison Ganze also discusses the importance of this term and its range of meanings, and she argues that it is perhaps the single most multivalent word in Middle English.¹⁹⁰ The term “treuth” comprised a wide range of interrelated meanings.¹⁹¹ Green attempts to make clearer sense of the term and groups the various meanings of “treuth” in the *MED* into four main categories: legal senses, theological senses, intellectual senses (such as accuracy, exactitude, and also a fact or factual statement), and ethical senses (such as fidelity, honesty, and veracity).¹⁹² It is evident that the ethical senses of “treuth” are strongly tied to the quality of keeping one’s given word, and the ethical sense of this term can be found in the works of many late medieval writers, including

¹⁸⁸ Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 1.

¹⁸⁹ Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, 8.

¹⁹⁰ Alison Ganze, “My Trouthe for to Holde – Allas, Allas!’: Dorigen and Honour in the *Franklin’s Tale*,” *The Chaucer Review*, 42, no. 3 (2008): 312. JSTOR.

¹⁹¹ Ganze, “My Trouthe for to Holde,” 312.

¹⁹² Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, 9.

Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet.¹⁹³ In fact, Chaucer uses “treuth” in over two hundred entries and in a variety of significant contexts.¹⁹⁴ “Treuth” is often used in regard to honour and public image in works by Chaucer, the *Gawain*-poet, and many other anonymous Middle English romance poets. Green suggests that this is because their society was still predicated on a system of honor, and a position in this society was secured by those “with an unsullied reputation for standing by their word,” so the keeping of one’s “treuth” became a subject of one’s public image and reputation for honesty.¹⁹⁵

While Chaucer explores the notion of “treuth” within many of his works, his most well-known use of the term occurs within his *The Franklin’s Tale* in which he explores various and conflicting interpretations of “treuth.”¹⁹⁶ The poet of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* also explores the meaning of “treuth” in relation to keeping one’s promises and honour. Throughout the tale, Gawain is very concerned in upholding and maintaining his public honour and his “treuth.” However, the exploration of “treuth” in both texts comes about due to the “rash promise” motif. Both Dorigen and Gawain make “rash promises;” Dorigen jokingly promises to be with Aurelius if he removes all the rocks by the shore, a seemingly impossible task, and Gawain promises to receive a return blow in a beheading game with the Green Knight, who, unbeknownst to Gawain, is able to survive a beheading. In order to maintain their “treuth,” both characters feel compelled to uphold their fidelity to their pledged promises. For characters like Arveragus, Dorigen, and Aurelius in Chaucer’s *The Franklin’s Tale*, keeping one’s oral promise

¹⁹³ Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, 9.

¹⁹⁴ Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, 4.

¹⁹⁵ Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, 15.

¹⁹⁶ All line references to Chaucer’s *The Franklin’s Tale* will come from *The Riverside Chaucer*.

is of great importance in maintaining one's honour and public image. Arveragus places so much importance on "treuth" that he even states, "Trouthe is the hyeste thygn that man may kepe" (line 1479), just before he directs his wife Dorigen to keep her rash promise and sleep with another man. Arveragus and Dorigen both value the ethical senses of "treuth," but Arveragus privileges "treuth" here in relation to keeping one's oral promises, while Dorigen privileges "treuth" in relation to her own fidelity and loyalty to her husband. However, both of their conceptions of "treuth" revolve around the keeping of one's honour.¹⁹⁷ Dorigen is also placed in an unfortunate predicament, as there is a conflict between the two promises she has made: one promise to her husband to be faithful (which she wants to keep), and the other promise to love Aurelius "best of any man" (line 997) if he removes all of the rocks (the rash promise that she made in jest and does not want to keep). *The Franklin's Tale* highlights the complexity of "treuth," since different characters seem to have a different interpretation of it and how it relates to their own personal conception of honour. This complexity of the conception of "treuth" is also highlighted in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as Gawain judges himself harshly for not upholding his own understanding of "treuth" and honour, while the other characters take a more generous and jovial approach to Gawain's shortcomings. When he decides to keep the green girdle, Gawain breaks his "exchange of winnings" pact with Bertilak in order to feel prepared to both fulfil and survive his promise to the Green Knight. Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet are therefore alert to the fact that there can often be no shared understanding of either "treuth" or honour (with which "treuth" is bound) because different ideas of "treuth" are so multivalent and are often in conflict with one another.

While Chaucer's and the *Gawain*-poet's explorations and uses of "treuth" have been

¹⁹⁷ Ganze, "My Trouthe for to Holde," 312-313.

widely studied by scholars, many other Middle English texts also focus on the ethical senses of “treuth,” the complex nature of “treuth,” and the importance to remember one’s oral agreements.¹⁹⁸ The plots of Middle English romances often include the fulfilling or breaking of oaths and promises. The act of keeping a promise or oath in Middle English romance texts upholds the good reputation of the particular character, while forgetting or neglecting a promise results in the character’s honour being questioned by the other characters, sometimes resulting in serious consequences for that character, both public and personal. Middle English Arthurian romances often focus on the need for knights to keep their promises (which is frequently expressed in terms of memory) in order to uphold their chivalric honour. Dean R. Baldwin discusses “treuth” in relation to a knight who keeps his oaths, and he asserts that the “true knight” remains faithful to family obligations, to the chivalric code, and to his sworn word.¹⁹⁹ In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain felt that he had breached his own “treuth” by not upholding his agreement to the exchange of winnings game with Sir Bertilak/The Green Knight because he kept the girdle. Since one of the main aspects of being a true knight is keeping his promises and fulfilling his oaths, when a knight disregards or forgets an oath or a promise, his chivalric reputation is called into question.

While many Middle English romances therefore emphasize the importance of keeping one’s word or “treuth,” the remainder of this chapter will particularly focus on *Ywain and Gawain*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Le Morte Darthur* because what it means to both remember and forget one’s promises and oaths are explored in a variety of interesting ways within these three

¹⁹⁸ For some examples of the importance of keeping promises and oaths in Middle English romances, see: *Le Morte Darthur*, *Ywain and Gawain*, *Sir Launfal*, *Amis and Amiloun*, *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*, *The Weddyng of Syr Gawain and Dame Ragnell*, *Havelock the Dane*, and *Erle of Tolous*.

¹⁹⁹ Dean R. Baldwin, “Amis and Amiloun: The Testing of *Treupe*,” *Papers on Language and Literature* 16, no. 4 (1980): 335. EBSCOhost.

texts, and much like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Franklin's Tale*, the characters within these three romance texts also encounter differing interpretations of “treuth” and honour. In each of the aforementioned Middle English romance texts, the keeping of promises and oaths is tested by some sort of dilemma or dilemmas, which can only be resolved through an adherence to “treuth,” which is complicated by the many interpretations of the term and its complex nature. Furthermore, Malory and the poets of *Ywain and Gawain* and *Lybeaus Desconus* also use memory as a tool in which to explore what happens when a promise or oath is broken, and by using the term forgot in relation to a broken promise, a faulty memory can be used as a way of minimising the hero’s culpability in the judgement of the audience. The use of the term forgot can also be interpreted as an act of ignoring one promise in favour of another, and this complicated nature of adhering to one promise while breaking others is also explored within these texts. This chapter will now turn to a separate and detailed exploration of *Ywain and Gawain*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Le Morte Darthur*.

Remembering & Forgetting Promises in *Ywain and Gawain*

As previously mentioned, “treuth” and the need to keep one’s promises is a prominent theme within *Ywain and Gawain*. This emphasis on “treuth” in *Ywain and Gawain* is not found in its Old French source text, as Chrétien’s *Yvain* focuses more on courtly love, so the Middle English adaptor clearly made a conscious decision to focus on “treuth” in relation to the keeping of one’s word. The poet of *Ywain and Gawain* therefore shifts the narrative’s attention away from matters of love and toward “treuth,” which Jensen argues has a more practical social value for the poet’s fourteenth-century audience.²⁰⁰ While *Ywain and Gawain* has been viewed by past

²⁰⁰ Christopher Jensen, “The Role of the Lion in the Middle English *Ywain and Gawain*,” *Arthuriana* 30, no.1 (2020): 114.

scholarship as lacking subtlety in both style and sense compared to its Old French source, its own positive qualities have begun to be recognized, particularly in the poet's emphasis on "treuth."²⁰¹ Many scholars have therefore noted how the Middle English poet's focus on "treuth" relates to the views of its contemporary audience.²⁰² However, while many scholars have discussed the Middle English poet's emphasis on "treuth" throughout the tale, they have neglected to discuss how Ywain's "treuth" in relation to his ability to keep his promises is used in association with memory. In Chrétien's text, Yvain breaks his promise because he has an immature conception of love and chivalric responsibilities— he wishes to continue his life as a knight errant rather than fulfilling his personal and social obligations as a husband and lord— but in the Middle English adaptation, the poet explores this broken promise – and the repercussions which arise from this – as an act of forgetting. The poet also appears to use forgetfulness as a tool with which to divert some of the blame away from Ywain. Rather than simply disregarding his promise as he does in the French source, the Middle English adaptation states that Ywain forgot, and this leads to an exploration of how important it is to remember and keep one's oral promises, which is an important aspect of one's "treuth."

This preoccupation with "treuth" and the trustworthiness of one's given word is first evidenced at the very beginning of *Ywain and Gawain* when the poet states:

Thai tald of more trewth than bitwene
 Than now omang men here es sene;
 For trowth, and luf, es al bylaft-

²⁰¹ Mills, "Chivalric Romance: *Ywain and Gawain*," 117.

²⁰² See, for example, Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, 105; Michael Cichon, *Violence and Vengeance in Middle Welsh and Middle English Narrative* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 167; Tony Hunt, "Beginnings, Middles, and Ends: Some Interpretive Problems in Chrétien's *Yvain* and its Medieval Adaptations." In *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics*, ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester, Michigan: Solaris Press, Inc., 1984), 83-117; Gayle K. Hamilton, "The Breaking of the Troth in *Ywain and Gawain*," *Mediaevalia* 2 (1976): 111-135.

Men uses now another craft.
 With worde men makes it trew and stabil,
 Bot in thaire faith es noght bot fabil;
 With the mowth men makes it hale
 Bot trew trowth es nane in the tale.
 Tharfore hereof now wil I byn;
 Of Kyng Arthure I wil bygin,” (lines 33-42).

Sif Rikhardsdottir points to the repetition of “trew” and “trowth” in these opening lines and claims that the addition of these lines to the Middle English version of this tale amounts to the declaration of thematic agenda.²⁰³ Rather than a focus on the theme of love that is present in the Old French source, the Middle English poet focuses on the theme of “treuth.” In this passage, the narrator emphasizes a lack of “trew trowth” in men and their tales of the present day in comparison to the days of King Arthur and his court. This emphasis at the beginning of the tale on “treuth” lays the foundation for the rest of the tale, as Ywain’s breach of “treuth” and his subsequent redemption are the main focus of the plot.

In *Ywain and Gawain*, Ywain experiences dishonor and downfall when he forgets a promise that he made to his wife, Alundyne, to return to her on an appointed day. Shortly after Ywain marries Alundyne, Gawain persuades Ywain to ask Alundyne for permission to go on knightly quests and tournaments. Alundyne agrees to this request, but because she needs a knight to defend her magic fountain (this is the principal reason that she married Ywain), she tells Ywain that he must return in exactly one year’s time (the eve of Saint John the Baptist). Alundyne tells Ywain that if he does not return on time, he will lose her love forever. Alundyne says to Ywain:

I gif yow leve
 Until a terme that I sal sayn—
 Bot that ye cum than ogayn.
 Al this yere hale I yow grante

²⁰³ Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, 99.

Dedes of armes for-to hante—
 Bot, syr, als ye luf me dere,
 On al wise that ye be here
 This day twelmoth how som it be,
 For the luf ye aw to me.
 And if ye com noght by that day,
 My luf sal ye lose for ay.
 Avise yow wele now or ye gone—
 This day es the evyn of Saint Jon—
 That warn I yow now or ye wende;
 Luke ye cum by the twelmoth ende. (lines 1500-1514).

Ywain agrees to the terms and replies, “I sal noght let / To hald the day that thou has set—” (lines 1515-1516), but then says to her,

A man that passes divers landes
 May sum tyme cum in grete destres,
 In preson or els in sekenes;
 Tharfore I pray yow, or I ga,
 That ye wil out-tak thir twa. (lines 1520- 1524).

Green states that Ywain inserts an “exceptions clause” in his exchange with Alundyne because he expects to be held to the exact terms of his promise to return in one year’s time.²⁰⁴ In response to Ywain’s concerns that he might not make it back in time if he is in distress because of imprisonment or sickness, Alundyne then lends Ywain a magic ring to ensure his safe arrival home by their agreed upon date. However, she states, “In nane anger sal ye be— / Whils ye it have and thinkes on me.” (lines 1529-1530), indicating that in order for its protective properties to work, he must be thinking of her (and obviously remembering his promise to return home on the appointed day). Alundyne’s decision to lend Ywain her ring is twofold: if Ywain is thinking of his wife, he will be protected by the ring and will also be mindful of keeping his promise to return home on time. The language used by Alundyne and Ywain throughout their exchange possesses the quality of an oral contract between two parties. By setting a specific date,

²⁰⁴ Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, 309.

providing the aid of the ring, and stating the penalty for not remembering to come home on time, Alundyne creates the binding oral contract between herself and Ywain. Because this is an oral agreement, Alundyne's ring serves as the mnemonic device to assist Ywain's memory of his promise to return home in one year's time. Cichon states that a contract in an oral or semi-literate society depended on the goodwill and memory of the parties involved in the contract, and these parties involved made the contract unforgettable by means of some sort of ritual or symbolic objects, such as exchanges and gestures.²⁰⁵ Alundyne gives the ring as the symbolic object and also makes her own oral promise that she will not forgive Ywain if he does not return to her in one year's time; thus, the ring is the "symbolic token of this promise."²⁰⁶ Even though Alundyne does everything in her power to ensure that Ywain remembers and keeps his promise, Ywain forgets to return on the appointed day.

In the Old French source, *Yvain*, Chrétien does not directly state that Yvain forgot to return to Laudine on the appointed day; however, the poet of *Ywain and Gawain* specifically states that Ywain did forget his promise. By mentioning that Ywain forgot, the Middle English poet shifts the focus of this scene and uses memory as a tool here to show the consequences of Ywain's forgetfulness. This entire passage is very different in *Ywain and Gawain* when compared to its Old French source.²⁰⁷ In *Ywain and Gawain*, the poet states,

Sir Ywayne umbithoght him than-

²⁰⁵ Cichon, *Violence and Vengeance in Middle Welsh and Middle English Narrative*, 175.

²⁰⁶ Melanie McGarrahan Gibson, "Lyonet, Lunete, and Laudine: Carnavalesque Arthurian Women", in *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries*, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and Fiona Tolhurst (Dallas: Scriptorium Press, 2001), 224.

²⁰⁷ In Chrétien's *Yvain*, the hero suddenly has a surprising thought and realizes he has broken his word, and the limit of his leave was already exceeded. Yvain does not think of this in terms of him forgetting his promise, and his realization emerges in silent thought. For a comparison between the two differing passages, see lines 2639-2773 of Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain in Arthurian Romances*, transl. W. W. Comfort (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1913; repr., New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2006), and lines 1583-1636 of *Ywain and Gawain in Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).

He had forgeten his leman!
 ‘Broken I have hir cumandment!
 Sertes,’ he said, ‘now be I shent!
 The terme es past that sho me set-
 How ever sal this bale be bet?’
 (lines 1583-1588).

The anonymous Middle English poet deliberately diverges here, as for many sections of the story the poet follows Chrétien’s text quite closely. The distinct difference between the Old French source and the Middle English adaptation in this section of the story would suggest that there is an emphasis in *Ywain and Gawain* on Ywain actually forgetting and having a lapse in memory, instead of simply an unwillingness to stop his knightly adventures and an immature misconception of his duties towards his wife and his obligations as a knight. Ywain’s “treuth” is therefore called into question because he forgot an important promise that he made to his wife. The Middle English poet therefore explores the social obligations of giving and keeping one’s word and what might happen when one forgets an oral promise in a society where oral obligations are of the utmost importance. In the case of Ywain, the consequences of a forgotten promise are dire.

Directly after Ywain realizes he has forgotten his promise, one of Alundyne’s maidens comes to publicly rebuke him. The maiden says that Ywain is “ateyned for trayture” (line 1601). To a modern audience, the maiden’s words may seem overly harsh and accusing here; however, the principal reason Alundyne married Ywain, and why her baronial court approved the marriage, was because Ywain was deemed to be a knight capable of defending the magic fountain/well and Alundyne’s kingdom. In forgetting his promise and failing to return home, Ywain proved himself incapable of protecting Alundyne’s well/fountain and kingdom. Moreover, someone like Ywain who is not trustworthy in regard to oral promises could easily be seen as posing a threat to the social order of an oral society that places a high importance on spoken

contracts. Gayle Hamilton asserts that “Untrowth in tongue really surfaces when a man publicly breaks his promise, so bringing upon himself the greatest shame imaginable. Ywain himself is so shamed when he forgets the oath he made to his bride Alundyne.”²⁰⁸ While not discussing *Ywain and Gawain* specifically, Bukowska makes an interesting point about oral word bonds and the chivalric code that is relevant to Ywain’s situation. Bukowska argues that one’s word as a bond served in European feudal society as its “master code,” regulating the transmission of property and power, as well as guaranteeing the continuity of that power and political alliance.²⁰⁹

Bukowska continues by stating, “The chivalric code of the word with its prerequisite values of loyalty, constancy, and trust performed a reasserting and protective function towards this social order and, hence, defined the transgressors as traitors posing a threat to the existence of the whole community.”²¹⁰ Ywain can be seen as a transgressor of his own society because of his broken promise, and even though the poet frames this mistake as a result of a faulty memory, he is still seen as a traitor to his wife and the court that he was under an obligation to protect. After calling him a traitor, the maiden goes on to tell the court that Ywain has betrayed her lady because he broke his promise to return on the eve of Saint John the Baptist. She even calls his knighthood into question by saying, “It es ful mekyl ogains the right / To call so fals a man a knight” (lines 1611-1612) and she continues by saying, “Certainly, so fals a fode / Was never cumen of kynges blode, / That so sone forgat hys wyfe” (lines 1621-1623). The maiden uses the term “forgat” here, which could indicate that Ywain is being rebuked for having such a faulty memory that he forgot about the agreed upon day to return home, or that the court believes that

²⁰⁸ Hamilton, “The Breaking of the Troth in *Ywain and Gawain*,” 115.

²⁰⁹ Bukowska, “Promises Kept and Broken,” 62.

²¹⁰ Bukowska, “Promises Kept and Broken,” 62-63.

Ywain simply disregarded his promise to his wife and willfully broke it. It is interesting that the poet chose to use the term “forgot” here because it leaves this interpretation of Ywain’s culpability in this situation ambiguous; however, while a faulty memory might be fully, or partially, to blame for Ywain not returning home on time, Alundyne and her court take his broken promise very seriously. The maiden then directly says to Ywain, “Thou es / Traytur untrew and trowthles / And also an unkind cumling- / Deliver me my lady ring!” (lines 1625-1628). The maiden then removes the ring from Ywain’s finger and promptly leaves the court. Because Ywain has forgotten his promise, Alundyne and her court have deemed Ywain unworthy to hold the status and title of her husband and defender of their kingdom. Ywain’s chivalric identity within his own society is therefore entirely dependent on his adherence to keep his promises, and memory is obviously inherent in the need to remember his oral pledge.

Ywain’s loss of his identity as a knight, defender, and husband, causes him to run mad into the woods.²¹¹ Alundyne’s ring is said to have many protective properties, and Ywain goes mad directly after the maiden removes it from his finger; moreover, the ring’s protective properties were said to only work if he was thinking of her, and because he forgot his promise, it does not seem like Ywain was thinking much about Alundyne while he was out partaking in tournaments and adventures with Gawain and other knights. Penelope B. R. Doob comments on this scene and argues that the English poet seems to have made Ywain go mad so suddenly in order to show that the onset of his madness is the moral consequence of his breach of “treuth.”²¹² While Chrétien and the Middle English poet both showcase Ywain’s madness as the cause of his

²¹¹ I further discuss Ywain’s madness and the loss of himself and his identity in my next chapter, “‘For wa he wex al wilde and wode’: Memory and Madness in Medieval English Romance and Culture”.

²¹² Penelope B. R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), 145.

immense grief, the Middle English poet phrases this in the context of Ywain's violation of "treuth."²¹³ Doob, like many other scholars, focuses on Ywain's breach of "treuth," but does not discuss the act of forgetting that causes this breach. The Middle English poet seems to be exploring the direst consequences possible for one forgetting an oral promise, and the poet finds that avenue of exploration within the French narrative of *Yvain*. The Middle English poet's addition of Ywain's forgetfulness regarding his oral contract with Alundyne can be read as providing a more sympathetic interpretation of Ywain's situation. In the Old French source, Yvain simply disregards his promise and is out tourneying far beyond the time limit of the oral bond that he made with Laudine; however, in the Middle English adaptation, Ywain recalls that he has broken his promise on the exact day, so he is only slightly past his appointed time to return home. Nevertheless, Ywain's act of forgetting does show that he was more concerned with chivalric tournaments and knightly quests over his duties as a husband and defender. His act of forgetting could have resulted in Alundyne's entire kingdom being seized by enemies. Therefore, in forgetting his oral contract, Ywain has shown that he is not a reputable knight or husband, which opens him up to dishonour and public ridicule. However, Ywain is his own worst critic, and he, much like Gawain's hyperbolic outburst over his breach of "treuth" at the end of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, cannot handle the mental strain of knowing that he has publicly shamed himself through his own act of forgetfulness. Ywain's mental anguish and subsequent madness come from not only his grief over losing his wife, but also his grief over forgetting an important oral promise and tarnishing his public honour within his feudal society. Ywain's madness can therefore be viewed as a form of self-exile: so strongly does the community value the keeping of oral promises that Ywain is compelled to expel himself from society.

²¹³ Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children*, 146.

Once Ywain is cured of his madness, he takes on the alter-ego of “The Knight with the Lion,” after he saves a lion from a dragon. Jensen comments on the lion and argues that as an unspeaking animal, the lion can neither swear an oath nor break it; however, the lion instinctively understands moral right and continually helps Ywain to keep his promises to help others.²¹⁴ The lion, therefore, has an instinctive understanding of “treuth” and becomes Ywain’s loyal helper/companion. With the help of the lion, Ywain undertakes a series of tasks and adventures in the service of others, all the while known simply as “The Knight with the Lion.” In order for Ywain to restore his position in a world which relies so heavily on remembering and honouring one’s spoken bonds, Ywain must undertake various trials of social service as an “incognito champion” to others in order to be worthy of his position in that society. Monika H. Lee notes that for modern readers to understand this seemingly extreme nature of Ywain’s atonement for his forgotten promise, they need to take into account that oral cultures tend to place greater emphasis on the social function of the individual than literate cultures do.²¹⁵ Indeed, there is a strong emphasis on Ywain’s social function within the text and his relationships with the other characters. Through his various trials and relationships with other characters, Ywain slowly gains a better understanding of “treuth” as it pertains to both personal and societal relationships.²¹⁶ While undertaking these trials of service to others, Ywain must remember his promises that he makes to the other characters, which often involve him keeping specified appointed dates in order to help them. Ywain therefore redeems himself as a “true knight” by remembering to keep

²¹⁴ Jensen, “The Role of the Lion in the Middle English *Ywain and Gawain*,” 120.

²¹⁵ Lee, “Conceptions of Truth in Fourteenth-Century English Poetry,” 155.

²¹⁶ Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, 99.

his promises to others.²¹⁷ By remembering and keeping his promises to others, Ywain shows that he is able to uphold his personal and social obligations in a society that places such a high importance on remembering and keeping one's oral oaths and promises.

Remembering and Forgetting Oaths and Promises in *Lybeaus Desconus*

While not nearly as serious an outcome of that of Ywain's forgotten promise to his wife Alundyne in *Ywain and Gawain*, Lybeaus also breaks an important promise he made to King Arthur and Elyne, albeit through very different circumstances and with very different outcomes. The poet of *Lybeaus Desconus* phrases the breaking of this promise by saying that Lybeaus forgot the promise he made, so the poet's use of the term forgot in this situation is similar to that of the poet's use of the term in *Ywain and Gawain*. In *Lybeaus Desconus*, King Arthur promises Lybeaus that he can have the next quest that presents itself to Arthur's court. When Elyne comes to the court with her dwarf in need of assistance to save the Lady of Synadon, Lybeaus reminds Arthur of his earlier promise, and Arthur allows Lybeaus to take up the quest. When Elyne is dismayed by the youthful appearance of Lybeaus, Arthur says to her, "He shall holde uppe all high hightis, / And be gode champion / To the Lady of Synadon / And fellen hir foon in fyghti" (lines 236-239). Arthur's claim to Elyne that Lybeaus will keep all promises²¹⁸ to help her and save the Lady of Synadon involves Arthur and his court as well as Lybeaus in the need to keep this promise, and it also exposes Arthur to the dishonour which could come from Lybeaus's

²¹⁷ For a detailed account of the importance that is placed on Ywain's obligation to keep his vows to others in tale, see Gayle K. Hamilton, "The Breaking of the Troth in *Ywain and Gawain*," *Mediaevalia* 2 (1976): 111-135.

²¹⁸ In this line reference, "hightis" can be translated to promises. See the definition in the *Middle English Dictionary*: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field=hnf&q=hight and the note for line 236 in the edition of *Lybeaus Desconus* edited by Weldon and Salisbury: <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus-lambeth>.

failure to keep his promise. Lybeaus is thus bound to both Arthur and Elyne to fulfill this quest. However, Lybeaus nearly fails in keeping this promise when he becomes enchanted with Dame Amoure and “forgate mayde Elyne” (line 1481). The poet’s use of “forgate” here is an interesting word choice, as it could signal a few different explanations for his forgetfulness: Lybeaus “forgate” because he was under an enchantment that caused him to forget about his quest, Lybeaus was seduced by Dame Amoure and therefore considered that fulfilling his promise was not as important as being with her (thus, he simply disregarded his promise), or Lybeaus was simply so caught up in his infatuation with the enchantress that he really did just forget about everything else. The Middle English poet does not clarify the immediate cause of Lybeaus’ forgetfulness, and therefore leaves this ambiguous and open for interpretation. Depending on which interpretation is chosen for Lybeaus’s forgetfulness, determines the extent of his culpability in his act of forgetting. The poet definitely does not condone Lybeaus’ behaviour and does initially state that “Lybeous graunted hir in haste / And love to hir ganne caste, / For she was bright and shene.” (lines 1473-1475), which indicates that Lybeaus consented to stay with Dame Amoure because he thought she was beautiful; however, the poet also mentions that Dame Amoure knew sorcery and, “With false lies and fayre / Thus she blered his eye: / Evill mote she thryve!” (lines 1494-1496), so the poet also does not simply condemn Lybeaus either. When Lybeaus sees Elyne, however, she condemns him, which highlights the moral and social obligation to remember and keep a promise, regardless of the situation. In much the same way that Alundyne’s maiden rebukes Ywain, Elyne rebukes Lybeaus for not upholding his promise to help. While Ywain forgot his wife because he was out taking part in chivalric tournaments and adventures with Gawain and other knights of Arthur’s court, Lybeaus’ predicament is perhaps more forgivable, especially if he was under some sort of enchantment, but he is still culpable in

his forgetfulness. Elyne uses similar language to that of Alundyne's maid when she calls him "false" in his promise. Elyne says to Lybeaus,

Knyght, thou arte false in thi laye
Ageynes Kynge Arthure!
For the love of o woman
That mekyll of sorcery canne
Thow doste thee grete dissehonour:
My lady of Synadowne
May longe lye in preson,
And that is grete doloure! (lines 1501-1508).

Elyne not only reminds Lybeaus of his failure to save the Lady of Synadon, but she also reminds him that he is also breaking his promise to Arthur to fulfill the quest. The implication of Elyne's response to Lybeaus here seems to suggest that the audience should agree with Elyne's condemnation of his actions, so there is a sense that it is not entirely Dame Amoure's fault for keeping him there and that Lybeaus is at least partially at fault for not keeping his promise to help Elyne save the Lady of Synadon. Lybeaus' own response to Elyne's condemnation also points to his blame in forgetting his promise. The poet states that, "Syr Lybeus herde hir speke; / Hym thought his hert gan breke / For sorowe and for shame." (lines 1509-1511). Lybeaus feels shame in forgetting about Elyne and saving her lady, so it is obviously not entirely Dame Amoure's fault for his negligence and forgetfulness.

While this is a minor episode in *Lybeaus Desconus*, it is notable because of the poet's choice to suggest that Lybeaus actually forgot about Elyne and his promise to King Arthur that he would fulfill the quest and save the Lady of Synadon. This episode also showcases Elyne's active role in the tale; not only has she traveled to Arthur's court and procured a knight to save her lady, but her very words in this episode bring about Lybeaus' remembrance of his promised task to her and Arthur. Her chastising words here save him from Dame Amoure who seemed to have at least some power over his emotions. As James Weldon asserts, Lybeaus "evades the

machinations of a seductress,”²¹⁹ but he does not do this on his own. Lybeaus only leaves Dame Amoure when Elyne reprimands him and reminds him of his promise, thus spurring him to action once again. Weldon states that Elyne functions as “messenger, guide, witness (to the worthiness of Lybeaus), and ‘conscience’ (when she reminds him of his abandoned mission).”²²⁰ While the maiden in *Ywain and Gawain* only comes to publicly rebuke Ywain after he forgot his promise and missed his appointed day to return home, Elyne reminds Lybeaus of his promise in time for him to save the Lady of Synadon. In both *Ywain and Gawain* and *Lybeaus Desconus*, it is the female characters who rebuke and remind the hero of his failure to keep his promise; however, the results of the women’s reprimands of the knights have quite different outcomes. The maiden’s reprimanding reminder to Ywain of his forgotten promise contributed to his subsequent madness and need for redemption, whereas Elyne’s reminder leads to Lybeaus’ success in saving the Lady of Synadon and his subsequent happy marriage to her.

Remembering and Forgetting Oaths and Promises in *Le Morte Darthur*

Whereas *Ywain and Gawain* and *Lybeaus Desconus* focus on the actions of individual knights, Malory places a heavy emphasis on all chivalrous knights needing to remember oaths and promises in order to uphold their honour throughout *Le Morte Darthur*. Keeping his promises and oaths is a test of a knight’s honour, and in the episodes involving Trystram and Palomydes and their arrangement to fight on an appointed day, memory also serves a utilitarian function. Memory enables knights to arrange the particular times and places where they will

²¹⁹ James Weldon, “‘Naked as she was bore’: Naked Disenchantment in *Lybeaus Desconus*,” *Parergon* 24, no. 1 (2007): 69. Project Muse.

²²⁰ Weldon, “‘Naked as she was bore,’” 72.

engage in combat at a later time, so it forms a part of how chivalric society organises and regulates itself. However, much more morally ambiguous questions are explored in relation to the role of memory in the adulterous relationship of Launcelot and Guinevere. This section of this chapter will explore how memory is used in forgetting and remembering promises and oaths in *Le Morte Darthur* but will particularly focus on the episodes involving Trystram and Palomydes pledging to each other to meet and fight on an appointed day, and Launcelot and Guinevere's promises to each other and others regarding their relationship. The promises that Launcelot makes in one context are in conflict with other promises he has made, and Malory touches on the same issues about forgetting that are explored by the poet of *Ywain and Gawain*. Launcelot's forgetting promises might be seen as an attempt – both by himself and by Malory – to excuse his relapse into his sinful relationship with Guinevere.

While discussing honour and what it means to be a “true knight” in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, Derek Brewer states, “True knighthood consists of bravery, loyalty, keeping promises, and in general fulfilling the demands of the Pentecostal Oath.”²²¹ The Pentecostal Oath is an oath that all Round Table knights must remember to obey, and King Arthur establishes the Pentecostal Oath near the beginning of *Le Morte Darthur*. Malory's description of the Pentecostal Oath is as follows:

Than the Kynge stablysshed all the knyghtes and gaff them
rychesse and londys – and charged them never to do outrage
nothir mourthir, and allwayes to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto
hym that askith mercy, uppon payne of forfeiture of their worship
and lordship of Kynge Arthure for evirmore; and allwayes to do lad-
yes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes [socour], strengthe
hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them, uppon payne of
dethe. Also, that no man take no batayles in a wrongefull quarrel,
sworne of the Table Rounde, both olde and yonge; and every yere

²²¹ Derek Brewer, “The Paradoxes of Honour in Malory,” in *New Directions on Arthurian Studies*, ed. Alan Lupack (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 46.

so were they sworne at the hyghe feste of Pentecoste (The Weddyng of Kyng Arthur [III], page 77).²²²

The Pentecostal Oath is Malory's own addition, which clearly lays out the expectations for Arthur's knights, as well as what kinds of actions these knights must avoid.²²³ The Pentecostal Oath is required to be sworn and reconfirmed "every yere," and this repetitive act of swearing the same oath aids in its retention in the memories of those who take part in the swearing of this oath at the same time every year. The Pentecostal Oath essentially brings the fellowship of the Round Table knights into existence and determines the identity that is to be associated with these knights.²²⁴ Dorsey Armstrong states that how closely a knight adheres to the ideal of the Pentecostal Oath is "one of the major elements in the expression of his characterization."²²⁵ The Pentecostal Oath provides a "pre-determined model of behaviour"²²⁶ for Arthur's knights, and this oath defines the code of chivalry a knight must adhere to if he wants to win worship and maintain his honour.²²⁷ However, while the Pentecostal Oath is the fundamental oath that all Round Table knights must follow, many knights make individual oaths and declarations that they must also uphold throughout the text. It is also not just knights who pledge oral promises to others. Malory's characters make different promises to one another throughout *Le Morte Darthur*, and the characters' ability to keep their promises shapes their identities in different

²²² In his edition of the *Le Morte Darthur*, Stephen Shepherd notes that while this oath does not have a match in any of Malory's known sources, it does reflect the oaths of actual chivalric orders in Malory's day. See note 6 on page 77 of Shepherd's edition.

²²³ Dorsey Armstrong, "Malory and Character," in *A New Companion to Malory*, eds. Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2019), 151.

²²⁴ Bukowska, "Promises Kept and Broken", 61.

²²⁵ Armstrong, "Malory and Character," 153.

²²⁶ Bukowska, "Promises Kept and Broken," 65.

²²⁷ Bukowska, "Promises Kept and Broken," 65.

ways. Therefore, the keeping of promises and oaths not only shapes the chivalric world of Malory's text, but also aids in character self-fashioning.²²⁸ Bukowska discusses the role of a promise or an oath as the structuring element of feudal chivalry and argues that "due to its fully formalized structure," a promise or an oath "is an explicit example of such a social deed operating in the context of medieval performativities."²²⁹ The performative nature of promises and oaths is present within Malory's work, as Arthur's knights must continue to perform the role of honourable knight and must continue to swear the same oath every year at Pentecost. If a knight wants to be an honourable knight, then he will always need to honour his promises and oaths. By continuously keeping his promises or oaths, the knight is performing and reinforcing his identity as a chivalrous and honourable knight. Malory places a high importance on the keeping of promises and oaths, and his characters usually keep their promises and oaths, even if that brings a disadvantage.²³⁰ When a knight makes a promise in *Le Morte Darthur*, especially to another knight, memory is stressed; obviously, a promise is not worth anything unless it is remembered.

Larry D. Benson comments on the swearing of oaths in Malory's work and states, "in *Gareth* and even more in *Sir Tristram* the characters swear vigorously and often. Oaths, exclamations, and proverbial phrases lend a colloquial flavor to the speech of these works."²³¹ Palomydes and Trystram are two characters in *Le Morte Darthur* who have several interactions in which the need to remember to keep their oral promises to each other is emphasized, which

²²⁸ Bukowska, "Promises Kept and Broken," 62.

²²⁹ Bukowska, "Promises Kept and Broken," 62.

²³⁰ Brewer, "The Paradoxes of Honour in Malory," 46.

²³¹ Larry D. Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 114.

highlights their interests in upholding their own public honour and identity as reputable knights. Unlike Ywain in *Ywain and Gawain* and Lybeaus in *Lybeaus Desconus*, Palomydes and Trystram in Malory's text are very aware of how a knight earns honour through keeping his promises, and they are also aware of how honour is bound up with the practical aspects of keeping certain dates. Palomydes and Trystram are two knights who were not part of the initial swearing of the Pentecostal Oath, yet they are still very concerned with remembering their promises, which seems to highlight their inherent worthiness as chivalric knights, even though they could be considered as outsiders to Arthur's court; Trystram is from Cornwall and is part of King Mark's court, and Palomydes is a Saracen. There are two instances where Trystram and Palomydes make an oral promise to each other to fight on an appointed day, which is provoked by their longstanding conflict over their love for Isode. Elizabeth Edwards states that their conflict due to their love of Isode is the "chief recurring motif of the whole 'Book of Sir Tristram,'" ²³² and that "it is impossible in summary to give a sense of the *longuer* of this relationship, of the sense in which it plays out the recurring themes or chivalric 'questions' of the section: love, envy, treachery, fellowship, and nobility." ²³³ One of these chivalric themes that is explored through these two characters is maintaining one's chivalric honour, which often involves the keeping of one's promises and oaths. The first time they promise to fight one another on a designated day occurs after Trystram nobly saves Palomydes from a group of dishonourable knights. Because of Palomydes' unrequited love of Isode and his envy of Trystram, Trystram tells Palomydes that he is "the man in the worlde that I moste hate!" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 339); however,

²³² Elizabeth Edwards, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 13.

²³³ Edwards, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur*, 14.

due to Palomydes' injuries, they decide to arrange a different day to battle. Trystram asks Palomydes to promise to meet him by the tombstone of Sir Launceor to fight with him. Here, Malory couches memory with oral promises, as Trystram says to Palomydes, "But in ony wyse, that ye have remembraunce of your promyse that ye have made with me to do batayle, this day fortenyght." (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 339). Their quarrel over their love for Isode results in them swearing an oath to remember to battle one another; however, through no fault of his own, Palomydes is captured and kept as a prisoner, thus missing his appointed day to fight Trystram. This results in a mix-up of identities because Trystram remembers his promise to come and fight, so he ends up mistaking Launcelot for Palomydes and starts fighting with Launcelot. This then inadvertently leads to the prophesied combat between Launcelot and Trystram, which only comes about because Trystram was expecting Palomydes.²³⁴ Subsequently, Trystram and Palomydes encounter one another again and make a promise to each other to fight, this time in fifteen days. Like Alundyne setting an exact date for Ywain to return home in *Ywain and Gawain*, both times that Trystram and Palomydes agree to do battle, Trystram sets an exact date for keeping the terms of their oral agreement. Unlike Ywain, Trystram has a keen memory for dates, and after making this second promise to meet on an appointed day to fight, Trystram then remembers the earlier promise that he and Palomydes made to fight and says, "But now I am remembred," and continues by stating that Palomydes broke his promise to come on the appointed day to fight. Trystram says to Palomydes, "ye fayled of youre promyse." (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 460). Palomydes then explains why he was unable to make it on their appointed day. Benson states that this speech is Malory's own invention that is designed to

²³⁴ Edwards, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur*, 14.

strengthen the parallel thematic structures.²³⁵ Trystram's remembrance of their earlier promise refers back to their earlier exchange and serves as a narrative device to remind the audience of what happened the first time they promised to fight one another on an appointed day. Olga Burakov Mongan discusses their exchange and says that Trystram "pettily reminds the reader" of Palomydes' failure to appear on his appointed day.²³⁶ However, when this exchange is viewed through the context of the late medieval culture of oath-taking and remembering oral promises, which is what is being explored in this chapter, this does not seem to be inherently petty on Trystram's part because it is reasonable for Trystram to be concerned that Palomydes would again not uphold his promise to return to fight with him on the appointed day, especially considering what happened the last time. Malory's use of memory in relation to discussions of keeping one's oral promises showcases how both knights are very concerned with remembering to keep their promises and upholding their honour as true and chivalrous knights. Malory uses memory here in a utilitarian fashion in these episodes; memory has a social dimension here, but it is mentioned as a way to ensure that practical arrangements are observed. But these practical arrangements – and so by implication memory itself – are bound up with the honour code.

However, Palomydes does not always demonstrate honourable behaviour in regard to the keeping of one's promises. When Palomydes saves Dame Brangwayne in the forest and makes Isode promise him a boon for her maiden's safe return, Isode rashly agrees without asking what this boon entails. When Palomydes returns with Dame Brangwayne, he says to Isode, "remembir uppon your promyse, for I have fullfyllled my promyse." (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [VIII], page

²³⁵ Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur*, 125.

²³⁶ Olga Burakov Mongan, "Between Knights: Triangular Desire and Sir Palomides in Sir Thomas Malory's 'The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones,'" *Arthuriana* 12, no. 4 (2002): 84. JSTOR.

262). After reminding Isode of her promise, they go to King Mark, and Palomydes tells him about Isode's rash promise to his boon, and states that he wants to leave with Isode (obviously with the hope of making her his paramour), much to King Mark's dismay.²³⁷ In a situation similar to that of Arveragus, Dorigen, and Aurelius in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, King Mark must keep everyone's public honour intact by agreeing to uphold Isode's oral promise to Palomydes, however hasty it might have been. However, King Mark agrees to uphold Palomydes' boon because he "unbethought hym of Syr Trystrames, and demed that he wolde rescowe her" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [VIII], page 263), and shortly after King Mark lets Palomydes leave with his queen, she is quickly saved by Trystram. Trystram becomes an intermediary who physically forces Palomydes to release Isode from her orally binding contract. In this instance, Trystram upholds Isode's public and private honour and compels Palomydes to rescind the unfair oral agreement. Throughout *Le Morte Darthur*, Trystram is portrayed as a knight who is very concerned with maintaining both public and private honour and remembering to keep one's promises, unless they are unfair and rash promises like the one Isode was forced to make.

Like Trystram, Launcelot is also a knight who is very concerned about his public image and honour. However, unlike Trystram who makes sure to remember his oral promises in order to maintain his chivalric honour, Launcelot is faced with conflicting promises that relate to his relationship with Guinevere. As mentioned, Trystram and Palomydes are very much concerned

²³⁷ In Malory's text, King Mark must uphold his wife's rash promise and let Palomydes take her as his boon. There is a parallel episode of a king upholding a rash promise in the opening of Chrétien's *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart* (*Lancelot ou le Chevalier de la charrette*), where King Arthur is faced with Meleagant's impending abduction of Guinevere. Sir Kay threatens to leave Arthur's court; however, he says he will stay if he is granted in advance a favour. In a similar situation as Isode who makes a rash promise in order to save Dame Brangwayne, Arthur makes a rash promise and agrees to Kay's request in order to have him stay at the court. Kay requests to be the knight to defend Guinevere, Arthur keeps his rash promise and grants Kay his request, Guinevere ends up being abducted, and Lancelot rescues her.

with keeping their promises and oaths in order to maintain their honour and reputations; therefore, the remembering and keeping of their promises and oaths has a social function in Malory's text. However, when Malory mentions Launcelot forgetting his promise that he made to the hermit during the Grail quest to stay away from the queen, it has an ethical and moral dimension, which is similar to that of Ywain's situation in *Ywain and Gawain* and Lybeaus' situation in *Lybeaus Desconus*. While Ywain and Lybeaus actually do forget their promises, Malory's mention of Launcelot forgetting his promise to the hermit is then seemingly contradicted by Launcelot himself who later mentions to Guinevere how his thoughts of her prevented him from seeing the marvels of the Grail, so Malory's use of memory here is complex and ambivalent. Memory in relation to remembering and keeping promises and oaths is therefore used by Malory in different and complex ways for different characters within his work and for different narrative purposes.

While on the Grail Quest, Launcelot stays with a hermit who helps him, but he makes a promise to the hermit that he later fails to keep. The hermit asks him to "ensure me by youre knyghthode ye shall no more come in that quenys felyship as much as ye may forbere." Launcelot, "promysed hym that he nolde, by the faythe of hys body." (The Sankgreal [XIV], page 520). However, while Launcelot keeps his promise during the remainder of the quest for the Holy Grail, he ultimately fails to keep the promise he made to the hermit because he resumes his relationship with Guinevere once he returns to King Arthur's court. During the Grail Quest, Galahad is also concerned about his father's spiritual salvation and immediately before his death he asks Sir Bors to tell Launcelot to "remembir of this worlde unstable" (The Sankgreal [XVII], page 586), and Bors later relates this message to Launcelot. Galahad wishes his father to live a more pious life; however, after his return from the Grail Quest, Launcelot seemingly forgets the

advice of Galahad and his promise to the hermit. Launcelot resumes his adulterous relationship with the Queen, and Malory states, “Than, as the booke seyth, Sir Launcelot began to resorte unto Quene Gwenivere agayne, and forgate the promyse and the perfeccion that he made in the Queste;” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwennyvere [XVIII], page 588). Much like the episode in *Lybeaus Desconus* where there are a few possible implications for the poet’s use of the term “forgate,” there are a few possible interpretations for Malory’s use of this term here in his work. Here, Malory’s use of the term “forgate” could be an attempt to mitigate some of the blame that could be placed on Launcelot for not keeping his promise to the hermit, especially given that the promise entailed Launcelot’s own spiritual redemption. However, Malory’s use of “forgate” here could also underline his emphasis on Launcelot’s carelessness; Launcelot is so caught up in his love for Queen Guinevere that he forgets his promise for his own spiritual salvation. Another possible reading for Malory’s use of “forgate” could be that he wants his audience to believe that Launcelot intentionally “forgate” his promise because he could not let go of his feelings for Guinevere, which would indicate that “forgate” meant that he simply disregarded his earlier promise to the hermit, thus highlighting that his intense earthly love for the queen exceeds his desire for spiritual salvation. Malory also mentions that it is the “booke” that says that Launcelot “forgate.” Kenneth Hodges notes that, “Launcelot may be failing in his promise, but he claims that he has not forgotten it.”²³⁸ In fact, shortly after Malory writes that the “booke” says that Launcelot “forgate,” Launcelot tells Guinevere, “And if that I had nat had my prevy thoughtis to returne to youre love agayne as I do, I had sene as grete mysteryes as ever saw my sonne Sir Galahad, Percivale, other Sir Bors” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwennyvere [XVIII], page 589). If Launcelot did initially forget, he soon seems to remember that he has broken his promise to the

²³⁸ Kenneth Hodges, *Forging Chivalric Communities in Malory’s Le Morte Darthur* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 27.

hermit when he mentions his religious experiences during the Grail Quest to Guinevere.

However, a potential reason for Launcelot not keeping his promise to the hermit could be because Launcelot made a promise to Guinevere on the first day that he met her, and he later mentions this promise to Arthur. Launcelot tells Arthur, “I promysed her at that day ever to be her knyght, in ryght other in wronge” (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwennyvere [XVIII], page 597). After the Grail Quest, Launcelot thus has conflicting promises to remember: his initial promise to serve the Queen in right or in wrong and his later promise to abstain from her. Perhaps Malory’s focus is directed more on Launcelot’s initial promise to serve Guinevere, which then surpassed his need to remember and keep his promise that he made during the Grail quest to abstain from her. While Ywain and Lybeaus do actually forget their promises, Malory’s account of Launcelot forgetting his promise to abstain from Guinevere is ambiguous, and the excuse that he simply forgot does not carry much weight. Therefore, it appears that it has less to do with a faulty memory and more to do with Launcelot’s intense love for Guinevere and his need to remember and adhere to his promise to serve her that result in him disregarding his later promise to stay away from her.

While Launcelot “forgate” or disregarded his promise not to resume his adulterous relationship with Guinevere, it is his intense worldly love for her and his promise of devotion to her that eventually does lead to his spiritual salvation. When Guinevere renounces any continuation of her relationship with Launcelot in order to follow a more religious life before her death, she suggests that he marry, to which Launcelot replies, “Nay madame, wyte you well that shall I never do, for I shall never be so false unto you of that I have promysed. But the same desteny that ye have takyn you to, I woll take me to, for the pleasure of Jesu, and ever for you I caste me specially to pray.” (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 692). Launcelot mentions his initial

promise to her, and he believes that he would be false in this promise to serve her if he decided to marry someone else. Corey Olsen discusses their exchange and suggests that even Launcelot's pledge always to pray for Guinevere 'specially' "suggests not a personal reformation but a continuation of their previous relations, merely shifted onto new ground. He was always her defender in the physical realm, and now he seeks to be her spiritual champion. Launcelot is not repenting; he is planning to become a hermit errant."²³⁹ Terence McCarthy claims that Launcelot enters the Church to "emulate his lady: it is the only way of following her to the end."²⁴⁰ Larry Benson points out that Launcelot's loyal love for the queen, which prevented Launcelot from achieving the Grail, becomes the means of his spiritual salvation.²⁴¹ Launcelot, therefore, finally enters the religious life not because he forsakes his earthly love for the queen but because he remains true to that love.²⁴² Indeed, Launcelot says to the queen, "in you I have had myn erthly joye; and yf I had founden you now so disposed, I had caste me to have had you into myn owne royame: But sythen I fynde you thus desposed, I ensure you faythfully, I wyl ever take me to penaunce and praye whyle my lyf lasteth," (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 692). Launcelot never forgets the initial promise he made to Guinevere, and he keeps his promise to be her faithful knight when he decides to follow her example and lead a holy life as well. In doing so, Launcelot is finally able to reach spiritual salvation before he dies. Malory's Sir Ector claims that Launcelot was "the trewest lover, of a synful man" (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 697), and by following Guinevere's example to live a repentant and spiritual life (thus remaining true to his

²³⁹ Corey Olsen, "Adulterated Love: The Tragedy of Malory's Lancelot and Guinevere," in *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, eds. D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Janet Jesmok (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), 48.

²⁴⁰ Terence McCarthy, *An Introduction to Malory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 74.

²⁴¹ Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur*, 244.

²⁴² Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur*, 244.

love and promise to always serve the queen), Launcelot is rewarded by being brought directly to heaven by angels after he dies (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 696).

Conclusion

Through this chapter's exploration of remembering and forgetting promises and oaths in Middle English romance, mainly in *Ywain and Gawain*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Le Morte Darthur*, it is evident that these texts place the highest importance on the requirement to remember one's oral oaths and promises, which reflects the importance that late medieval English society placed on upholding one's oral promises and oaths to others. At times, these romance texts treat remembering promises and oaths as synonymous with keeping them, and forgetting oaths and promises as synonymous with breaking them. It is evident that keeping one's oaths and promises is one of the preoccupations of these texts, but keeping promises and oaths is interestingly couched in terms of memory. As evidenced through characters such as Ywain, Lybeaus, Trystram, Palomydes, and Launcelot, in order to be considered a true and honourable knight, the knight must always remember to keep his oral oaths and promises to others. These romance authors use memory as a tool in order to explore what happens when a character forgets a promise or an oath and the various interpretations of that act of forgetting (for example, did the knight actually forget, or did the knight simply disregard the promise or oath). Memory can therefore be seen in these texts as having an ethical or moral dimension. In the cases of Launcelot, Ywain, and Lybeaus, the authors' choice to use the term forget in relation to the knight not keeping his promise, might be read as an attempt to mitigate the hero's culpability. Therefore, the ethical shortcoming of not keeping a promise or an oath, for which there are serious repercussions, is sometimes mentioned as a failure of memory, for which the hero cannot

be held fully responsible. The promises or oaths that a knight makes to others can also often be conflicting in nature, which relate to the ambiguous nature of “treuth,” and the contradictory obligations that the knights encounter when trying to keep their promises and oaths to others and maintain their honour.

The great importance that is placed on keeping one’s oral promises and oaths in these romance texts sheds light on the bimedial nature of late medieval society and the ways in which people in the Middle Ages still placed great importance on oral traditions and the spoken word. By their very nature, oral promises and oaths are a shared act because they must be spoken aloud to others, therefore establishing a social bond that has an affect on others.²⁴³ This need to keep one’s oral promises and oaths to others can be traced to the keeping of one’s “treuth,” which was of great importance in maintaining one’s honour and public image in late medieval English society, and the keeping of one’s “treuth” was also a key theme in a range of Middle English texts, such as *Ywain and Gawain*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as well as works by Chaucer. Much like written contracts are binding in our own modern society, oral contracts were, therefore, binding in the Middle Ages, and the importance of oral oaths and promises is reflected in these romance texts in a variety of interesting ways that have been explored within this chapter. Previous scholarship has discussed the importance of spoken oaths and promises in late medieval society, and the importance of “treuth,” but the use of memory has not been at the forefront of scholarship relating to Middle English romance and oral pledges, and this chapter has sought to make good this omission and initiate scholarly discussion surrounding memory’s interesting relationship with oral promises and oaths within Middle English Arthurian romance.

²⁴³ Bukowska, “Promises Kept and Broken,” 66.

Chapter Three

“For wa he wex al wilde and wode”: Memory and Madness in Medieval English Romance and Culture

Introduction

The previous chapter explored memory's role in keeping and breaking promises and oaths in Middle English romance texts, as well as some of the repercussions that could result for the characters who made rash promises, or who broke important promises or oaths that they made to others. One repercussion was Ywain's madness in *Ywain and Gawain*, which came about when he was reprimanded for not keeping an important promise that he made to his wife to return to her on an appointed day. Ywain's madness is far from unique; the protagonists of many romances go mad, and madness can be seen as an abiding preoccupation of romance as a literary form. This chapter will expand on and develop the work of a number of other studies on madness in the Middle Ages and in medieval romance, but the specific focus of this chapter will be on the role romance texts ascribe to memory in their representations and explorations of madness. Before turning to the place of memory in these literary explorations of madness, it is worth briefly pausing over the question of why madness is so central to romance, and to Arthurian romance in particular. It is surely no coincidence that bouts of madness afflict the two greatest Arthurian

knights – Launcelot and Trystram – which almost suggests that madness should be seen as an attribute of knighthood, and constitutive of the knightly identity. Of course, there are all kinds of ways in which madness is implicated in the romance world, as well as in its narrative trajectory. We know from the experience of modern warfare, that being a warrior – engaging in mortal combat – is traumatic, so we can read the madness of knights such as Ywain, Launcelot, and Trystram as reflective of a kind of trauma. On a psychological and indeed a narrative level, madness might also gesture to the vulnerabilities of knights– the fears and anxieties which the ideology of chivalry does not allow them consciously to express. There is also the conflicted nature of knighthood itself. The narrative trajectory of romance moves between the civilized world and the wilderness (as do knights). Knights must be both courtly lovers and fierce fighters, and madness can perhaps be read as a psychological response to the diametrically opposing demands which the role makes of them. On yet another level, the madness which we see in romance might be seen as expressing and registering the irrationality – the madness – not just of knighthood, but of romance itself: the literary form which celebrates knighthood.

Within the romance genre, there are many varying depictions and representations of madness, but this chapter will focus on the relationship of madness to memory, or loss of memory, which seems particularly linked to portrayals of grief-madness. This chapter will explore Ywain’s madness in more detail and will also look at other mad knights in Middle English Arthurian romance, particularly the portrayal of grief-madness in several of the characters within Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, with a focus on Trystram and Launcelot. However, this chapter will not just explore the madness of knights; in order to provide a fuller and more nuanced understanding of grief-madness in romance, this chapter will also explore the grief-madness of Perceval’s mother, Ache flour, in *Sir Perceval of Galles*.

In each of these aforementioned romance texts, there is an interesting interconnectedness between grief-madness and memory issues. While a loss of memory is associated with all of these aforementioned characters' descent into madness, these three texts also provide a wide range of examples of grief-madness and a wide range of cures for these bouts of grief-madness, so these differences can be compared and explored. This amnesia or memory problems that follow the onset of Ywain's, Launcelot's, Trystram's, and Achefflour's grief-madness then occasion various responses from the individual characters, and each character behaves in ways that are out of character for them; for example, they strip off their clothing and run through the woods, often behaving violently towards others. The wildness and unknown space of the woods can then be read in this context as representing the character's own wild and disordered mental state. These aforementioned romance texts showcase representations of grief-madness within both male and female characters, and these representations of grief-madness can be considered in relation to contemporary views on gender, memory, and madness in late medieval England. The dates of composition for these texts also span from the first half of the fourteenth century to the last quarter of the fifteenth century, so they provide a large timespan to compare how the authors use memory issues in relation to grief-madness in late medieval English romance and how these representations might reflect— to a certain degree— various views on madness in late medieval England.

Looking at the various depictions of male and female madness and memory issues in romance is also important because this can shed light on how these authors and their contemporary audiences might have viewed madness and memory issues possibly affecting the genders differently; however, scholars have often overlooked female madness in favour of exploring the madness of knights. Knights in romance often go mad and suffer from amnesia

when there is a breakdown in their relationship with their lady, while women's madness has varying causes, but seems to be more so linked with a death or loss of a family member (In *Ywain and Gawain*, Alundyne almost goes mad after her husband's death, in *Sir Perceval of Galles*, Perceval's mother goes mad when she thinks he is dead, and in *Sir Orfeo*, Heurodis has a mental breakdown when she is told that she will be taken away from her husband by fairies). The portrayal of male madness in *Ywain and Gawain* and *Le Morte Darthur* is similar in many ways and shows how the loss of memory for Ywain in *Ywain and Gawain*, and the loss of memory for both Lancelot and Trystram in *Le Morte Darthur* is particularly linked to grief-madness. All three knights go mad from grief and run through the woods in an amnesiac state; Trystram even becomes physically unrecognizable to everyone around him, which hints at his wild man/bestial identity while mad. Chivalry makes contradictory demands on the romance knight, amongst which is the requirement to be both a violent warrior and gentle lover.²⁴⁴ Knights in Middle English romance are therefore required to somehow reconcile and integrate these demands and impulses which are in conflict with one another, but sometimes this is simply too large a task for the knight. These opposing demands can cause problems in their heterosexual relationships, which sometimes result in the knight going mad from grief over the breakdown of his relationship with his lady, and he runs to the woods in an amnesiac state. In Ywain's case, in order to still be considered a great knight, he must go out on adventures and participate in tournaments, but to be considered a good husband, he needs to be at home protecting his wife's kingdom and magic fountain. Ywain tries to balance these two conflicting demands, and he ultimately fails, which results in the breakdown of his relationship with his wife and his

²⁴⁴ John F. Plummer, "Frenzy and Females: Subject Formation in Opposition to The Other in the Prose *Lancelot*," *Arthuriana* 6, no. 4 (1996): 46, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27869221>.

subsequent madness that occurs because of his grief over losing the love of his wife and his failure to be both a good husband and prestigious knight. Launcelot tries unsuccessfully to have a private romantic life with Guinevere while also trying to uphold his role and reputation as the best knight of Arthur's court. Launcelot also has conflicting obligations; he needs to be a true and honourable knight to King Arthur (which obviously does not entail being in a romantic relationship with his queen), and he needs to be a true lover to Guinevere (which poses all sorts of risks for Launcelot, both mentally and physically). Elayne takes advantage of Launcelot's already precarious situation with Guinevere, and this is what leads to his altercation with Guinevere and his ensuing grief-madness. Trystram has a somewhat similar situation as Launcelot, although King Mark is portrayed as an adversary of Trystram. However, like Launcelot, Trystram must somehow try to maintain his romantic relationship with Queen Isode, while also being a fierce warrior who defeats foes and avoids the machinations of his king. The secrecy revolving around his romantic relationship with Isode leads him to believe that she is willing and able to have another secret affair with another knight. These conflicting tasks of being a true and honourable knight who also has a long-term and loving adulterous affair, cause Trystram to have a mental breakdown. While the theme of madness occurs in several romances for a variety of purposes, *Ywain and Gawain* and *Le Mote Darthur* are two romance texts that use grief-madness and its subsequent memory issues as narrative devices to explore what happens when these opposing demands prove to be too much for even the best of knights. However, it is not just knights who suffer from grief-madness in Middle English romance. As previously mentioned, this chapter will also look at the often-overlooked representation of female grief-madness in Middle English romance, particularly that of Acheflour in *Sir Perceval of Galles*, as Acheflour's madness is generally only mentioned in passing by scholars or not at

all,²⁴⁵ and this is detrimental to understanding the romance's narrative and also to understanding the poet's choice to add in her episode of madness. Rather than depicting a mad knight, the anonymous poet of *Sir Perceval of Galles* chooses to depict female grief-madness and shows Perceval's mother, Acheflour, going mad from grief because she thinks her son is dead. While it is unclear if the anonymous Middle English poet had a copy of Chrétien's *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal* on hand, it is interesting that instead of having Perceval's mother simply die of grief like she does in Chrétien's unfinished work, the anonymous poet of *Sir Perceval of Galles* changes the narrative and has Acheflour go mad from grief. Acheflour is thus given a more prominent role in the narrative of the Middle English adaptation because Perceval must return to the woods to search for his mother, obtain a cure for her madness and memory issues, and then bring her back to his court. The depiction of a woman suffering from grief-madness in this romance text might also reflect late medieval English views on grief-madness affecting both genders, and this text might have appealed to the increasing female readership of romances in late medieval England. Therefore, depictions of grief-madness and amnesia in these Middle English romance texts are not only used as narrative devices (in this case, Perceval's mother's

²⁴⁵ There are some scholars who mention her madness in passing, and some who just altogether ignore her madness. See, for example: Susanne Hafner, "He ne wiste nother of evyll ne gude': A Prelapsarian Perceval," *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 8, no. 1 (2020): 107-127. Hafner does not mention Acheflour's madness. Ad Putter, "The Text of *Sir Perceval of Galles*," *Medium Ævum* 70, no. 2 (2001), 191-203. JSTOR. Ad Putter does not mention his mother's madness or cure in this article; however, Putter does briefly mention her madness in his chapter, "Arthurian Romance in English Popular Tradition: *Sir Percyvell of Gales*, *Sir Cleges*, and *Sir Launfal*," in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Caroline D. Eckhardt, "Arthurian Comedy: The Simpleton-Hero in *Sir Perceval of Galles*," in *Perceval/Parzival: A Casebook*, eds. Norris J. Lacy and Arthur Groos (New York: Routledge, 2002), 237-252. Caroline D. Eckhardt also does not mention Acheflour's madness or her being cured at all; Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 60-61. While Helen Cooper aptly states that *Sir Perceval of Galles* "demands attention," Cooper does not discuss Perceval's mother's madness. Cooper only mentions that he restores his mother to health (which could indicate any number of illnesses); Glenn Wright, "'De Kynde Wolde Oute Sprynge': Interpreting the Hero's Progress in *Sir Perceval of Galles*," *Studia Neophilologica* 72, no. 1 (2000): 47. Wright mentions in passing that his mother went mad from grief but does not discuss her madness; Patricia Rose, "Acheflour: Wise Woman or Foolish Female?" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 46, no. 4 (2004): 463. JSTOR. Patricia Rose provides a few sentences on Acheflour's madness and cure.

madness causes him to return back to the forest in which he was raised), but they can also be viewed as providing reflections of how madness was conceived of by the authors and their contemporary audiences. The realistic portrayals shape how the readers/audiences respond to the narrative and the characters; a descent into madness with its all-encompassing memory loss elicits sympathy, as it highlights the characters' frailties and vulnerabilities, and their suffering might prompt readers to look sympathetically not just on their plight, but on their previous conduct as well.

When Ache flour, Ywain, Launcelot, and Trystram run mad through the woods, they cross the threshold between civilisation and wilderness, which is reflective of a shift in their mental states from that of a sane person to a person who is "wode." This shift in mental state is occasioned by their loss of memory. There is an inherent connection between madness and wildness, which can be linked to the various meanings for the term "wode."²⁴⁶ According to the *Middle English Dictionary*, "wode" could mean trees, woods, forests, etc.; "wode" could also mean madness (or pertain to someone who was insane, deranged, mad, etc.) or an overmastering emotion, such as rage or fury. "Wode-man," had a range of meanings from one adept at hunting, to a wild and savage semi-human creature. There seems to be a play on words here, or some inherent connection between madness and wildness, as one who is deemed "wode" often runs into the "wode." Whilst living as "wode-men" in the woods, Ywain, Launcelot, and Trystram all suffer from amnesia until they are cured. Ache flour also seems to suffer from some sort of amnesia or memory issues, as she does not recognize Perceval in the woods and tries to attack him. She is only cured when she is brought back to the castle and given a type of magical drink that restores her sanity.

²⁴⁶ The Middle English dictionary cites 53 different meanings for "wode."
https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary?per_page=100&q=wode&search_field=hnf

As previously mentioned, Ache flour's madness is generally overlooked by scholars or is only mentioned in passing, and there has been limited scholarly work done on *Sir Perceval of Galles* in general. While much has been said about the madness of Ywain, Launcelot, and Trystram, scholars have often overlooked the role that memory plays within the depiction of their madness; each knight suffers from amnesia and takes on a wild man persona during his state of madness, which showcases a similar theme and idea surrounding the grief-madness of these three knights. The loss of memory then explores all of the other things associated with their madness. Previous scholarship has also neglected to explore representations of male and female grief-madness together in order to look for various affinities and differences, and what this can tell us about the authors' use of memory in relation to madness within their work. The aim of this chapter is to create a dialogue about the authors' uses of memory in relation to grief-madness and how this affects our readings of the texts. This chapter also aims to contribute to the discussion of the representations of madness in Middle English romance in general, particularly what they can tell us about medieval attitudes towards madness, the relationship between matters of madness and gender, and memory's fascinating relationship with portrayals of grief-madness.

Much like previous chapters in this thesis, this chapter will be broken down into sections, and this chapter will discuss each of the aforementioned characters and their grief-madness separately. A separate section on the woods, madmen, and amnesia will also be provided in order to discuss the similarities of the mad characters' descent into grief-madness and flight through the forest within all three texts. Before exploring these three aforementioned romance texts in more detail, however, this chapter will provide a brief overview of medieval notions of madness and also medieval ideas about the causes of, and cures for, madness, as they differ from modern conceptions of mental illnesses and their treatments. This brief overview will help to supplement

the various reasons as to why it is valuable to study the use of memory in portrayals of grief-madness in Middle English romance, and how it aids in our readings of these texts.

Medieval Notions of Madness

David Allan Sprunger poses the question, “What is madness?” Indeed, even in our own modern society, madness is a contested term. Sprunger continues by stating that behaviour deemed to be mad or insane in one context could pass as merely eccentric or even normal in another context, so in some cases, “the indications are ambiguous.”²⁴⁷ Leigh Ann Craig notes that madness can connote a behavioural or interactive pattern, a subjective perceptual experience, a social or legal status, a descriptor of bodily function, an ethical judgment, or “some combination of these.”²⁴⁸ Madness, therefore, carries multiple meanings within a number of different contexts. Medieval ideas about the causes and treatments for madness were varied; however, these treatments were all designed to bring someone back to their own state of mind. Petteri Pietikainen claims that Hippocratic medicine, which emerged in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, had a significant influence on the treatment and theories of madness up until the eighteenth century.²⁴⁹ Pietikainen states that “In the history of madness, the birth of Hippocratic medicine was a crucial turning point not only because of its naturalism, but also because it led to the classification of the various forms of madness as well as to the development of new methods

²⁴⁷ David Allan Sprunger, *Madness in Medieval Art and Romance* (PhD thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1992), 2.

²⁴⁸ Leigh Ann Craig, “The History of Madness and Mental Illness in the Middle Ages: Directions and Questions,” *History Compass* 12, no. 9 (2014): 731, doi: 10.1111/hic3.12187.

²⁴⁹ Petteri Pietikainen, *Madness: A History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 15. On page 19 of his book, Pietikainen states that Hippocrates was a Greek physician (460-370 BCE), and there are 72 books of Hippocratic writings. Petteri Pietikainen also says that “it is difficult to know how much the real-life Hippocrates contributed to these books, so it is more accurate to regard ‘Hippocrates’ as a collective pseudonym.”

of treatment.”²⁵⁰ Hippocratic medicine used the doctrine of the four humours or bodily fluids: black bile (*melan chole*), yellow bile (*chole*), phlegm (*phlegma*) and blood (*haima*).²⁵¹ This theory of the four humours passed almost in its entirety into the literature of the English Middle Ages, where it was further categorized in medical and encyclopaedic texts.²⁵² Madness in these medieval medical texts was regarded principally as a somatic affliction, which resulted from an imbalance of the humours or a malfunctioning of the brain.²⁵³ The four humours were believed to be in need of regulation in order to keep a natural state of health, and imbalances in the humours led to what present-day doctors might classify as physical and/or mental health conditions. The three main conditions that were associated with madness in medical texts were mania (*mania*), frenzy (*fenesis*), and melancholy (*melancholia*).²⁵⁴ Penelope Doob also discusses the medieval theory that imbalances in a person’s humours resulted in madness, and she asserts,

the three major types of madness – frenzy, amentia, and stupor– are associated with excesses of three humours: choler, melancholy, and phlegm. Each type may be associated with sin, Original or actual, and the etiology of each is somewhat distinctive: frenzy comes from too much passion and overeating; amentia from adust melancholy and from such passions as anxiety, fear, and grief; stupor from the coldness of age or from drinking so much that the body’s natural heat is quenched (usually excess of drink increases heat).²⁵⁵

However, Doob believes that the “instrumental” causes of madness all have a “moral

²⁵⁰ Pietikainen, *Madness*, 20.

²⁵¹ Pietikainen, *Madness*, 19.

²⁵² Duncan Salkeld, *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 21.

²⁵³ Stephen Harper, “‘By cowntynauce it is not wist’: Thomas Hoccleve’s *Complaint* and the spectularity of madness in the Middle Ages,” *History of Psychiatry* viii (1997): 388, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1177/0957154X9700803105>

²⁵⁴ Claire Trenery and Peregrine Horden, “Madness in the Middle Ages,” in *The Routledge History of Madness and Mental Health*, ed. Greg Eghigian (New York: Routledge, 2017), 66.

²⁵⁵ Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Children*, 27.

component.”²⁵⁶ Doob admits that scientific explanations for madness in the Middle Ages are often given in literature, such as romances, but then states, “whatever the immediate cause of madness, the ultimate moral causes are always implicit.”²⁵⁷ However, this does not always seem to be the case, and Doob puts too much emphasis on the moral component of madness. Stephen Harper shares a similar sentiment and argues that Doob’s assumption that the Church’s view of madness as divine punishment for sin is the way that madness “was seen” in the Middle Ages allows the moral interpretation of madness “too much purchase.”²⁵⁸ Moreover, Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach discuss their own research into medieval ideas about the causes of madness and they state that they found that the early medieval evidence does not sustain the common stereotype that madness was caused by sin.²⁵⁹ Kroll and Bachrach assert that medieval authors were well aware of the proximate causes of mental illness, such as humoral imbalance, overwork, intemperate diet and alcohol intake, and grief.²⁶⁰ In fact, the main medical texts of the Middle Ages have almost nothing to say about demonic possession, and none of the widely-read and eminent authorities on madness (including Bartholomeus Anglicus) considers demonic forces to play any part in the onset of madness.²⁶¹ Moreover, people in the late Middle Ages

²⁵⁶ Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Children*, 11.

²⁵⁷ Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Children*, 11.

²⁵⁸ Stephen Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature* (Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2003), 18.

²⁵⁹ Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach discuss this on page 396 of their article titled, “Sin and the Etiology of Disease in Pre-Crusade Europe,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 41. No. 4 (1986): 395-414. JSTOR.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24633559>

Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach earlier findings (specifically on page 511) can be found in their article titled, “Sin and Mental Illness in the Middle Ages,” *Psychological Medicine* 14 (1984): 507-514. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1017/S0033291700015105>

²⁶⁰ Kroll and Bachrach, “Sin and mental illness in the Middle Ages,” 507.

²⁶¹ Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 43.

believed that there were various causes of madness (astrological influences, drunkenness, anger, sorrow, grief, fear, and even study).²⁶² In light of the many diverse explanations for madness that existed in the Middle Ages, madness simply cannot be generalized into one main cause.

However, one notable difference between our modern conceptions of what madness is, or is not, and what medieval people conceptualized as madness, is the inherent role that memory played within medieval ideas of the causes and symptoms of madness. Unlike today's varying views of mental illness, and the various known causes, symptoms, categories, and treatments of mental health illnesses, memory played a key role in deciding whether or not a person was suffering from a mental illness in medieval England.²⁶³ Wendy J. Turner states that "investigators used descriptions of emotion and memory in conjunction with standards of mental competency as a way of depicting mental confusion or incapacity in their reports."²⁶⁴ Sprunger also comments on medieval practices of determining if someone had a mental illness and states,

Distinguishing a lunatic from an eccentric or an idiot could be done formally, complete with a hearing before a jury to decide if the person were sound of memory and reasoning. These judgements determined a person's legal rights, for a lunatic unfit to administer his or her own affairs became the ward of a protector who oversaw the patient's estate in order to provide long-term care.²⁶⁵

The predominant test of a person's mental capacity was therefore of his or her memory.²⁶⁶ In

²⁶² Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 48-55.

²⁶³ While some known mental health illnesses in our own society, such as depression, anxiety, and some dissociative disorders, might sometimes have memory loss as one symptom, memory, or lack thereof, is not a key determining factor in identifying if a person is suffering from a mental illness. While dementia also occasions memory loss in patients, dementia is not categorized as a mental health illness; rather, it is a disorder of the brain caused by physical conditions, such as a stroke. People in medieval England lacked the knowledge that we have today, but it is interesting to note how memory had such a strong connection with beliefs concerning if someone was of sound mind or not. This seems indicative of just how important memory was to people in the Middle Ages.

²⁶⁴ Turner, "Silent Testimony," 81.

²⁶⁵ Sprunger, *Madness in Medieval Art and Romance*, 6.

²⁶⁶ Turner, "Silent Testimony," 82.

fact, the majority of the tests for long-term mental disabilities were based on memory, or lack thereof.²⁶⁷

The subject of madness was undoubtedly prevalent in popular, religious, legal, and medical discourses of the late Middle Ages, and these diverse attitudes towards madness in the late Middle Ages were reflected within medieval literature. As previously mentioned, madness had a particular appeal to Middle English romance writers; however, the characters that this chapter will discuss all seem to be suffering from grief-madness, which would be classified in medieval medicine as a type of melancholy madness. While the causes for Ywain's, Trystram's, Lancelot's and Achefflour's melancholy grief-madness differ, they all suffer from memory issues, which cause them to live in the woods as wild men/women until they are found and cured. Grief-madness seems to be linked to a loss of memory in these texts, and all of the other things that happen to these characters while mad are occasioned by this loss of memory. This chapter will now turn to a discussion of *Ywain and Gawain*, *Le Morte Darthur*, and *Sir Perceval of Galles*, and this chapter will explore the character's grief-madness individually and comparatively, the link between madness, amnesia, and the woods, and the various cures for grief-madness that are depicted in these texts.

Ywain's madness in *Ywain and Gawain*

As previously discussed in the last chapter, the hero Ywain forgets to keep an important promise to his wife Alundyne and the consequences are severe. Shortly after they marry, Ywain (prompted by Gawain) asks Alundyne for permission to go on knightly quests and tournaments. This puts Alundyne in a predicament, as she needs a knight to defend her magic fountain. She

²⁶⁷ Turner, "Silent Testimony," 84.

hesitantly agrees to let him go, but she tells him several times that he must return to her in twelve month's time. Ywain is pulled in two different directions because one of the main goals of a knight is to win the favour of a lady, but once a knight has won his lady, the need for successful adventures that make one a good knight is at odds with the need to stay at home and be a good husband. Reconciling these two roles proves to be too demanding on Ywain, and he forgets his promise to his wife.²⁶⁸ He only remembers his promise to her after he has missed his deadline to return to her court.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ywain returns to King Arthur's court after he has finished tourneying. While there, Ywain suddenly remembers that he is past the date that Alundyne had set for him:

Sir Ywaine umbithoght him than-
 He had forgeten his leman!
 'Broken I have hir cumandment!
 Sertes,' he said, 'now be I shent!
 The terme es past that sho me set-
 How ever sal this bale be bet?' (lines 1583-1588).

Directly after Ywain realizes he forgot his promise to return home on the eve of St. John the Baptist, one of Alundyne's maidens comes to publicly rebuke him, and she calls Ywain a traitor (line 1626). Due to his broken promise, Ywain loses the love of his wife and his title of defender of her magic fountain/well.

Directly after Alundyne's maiden leaves the court, Ywain is in a state of grief, and he "Murned and made simpil chere" (line 1638). Ywain believes that his grief will actually cause him to die, as he cries: "Allas, this dole wil mak me dy!" (line 1648). Ywain is so overcome with

²⁶⁸ At the end of *Ywain and Gawain*, when he reconciles with his wife, Ywain finally seems to understand how to balance these two obligations (being a good knight and a good husband) and keep his promises to others. It is also worth noting that a similar situation happens to Eric in Chrétien's *Eric and Enide*, as Eric also struggles to reconcile his commitment to his new wife with the social expectations of continued participation in tournaments.

grief that he loses his mind and suffers from amnesia. Ywain therefore suffers from two different forms of memory issues in the text. Ywain initially forgets to return to his wife on the agreed upon day (therefore breaking his promise to her), but this simple act of forgetting brings about the repercussions of that broken promise which then leads to his madness and all-encompassing amnesia. In the first instance, he forgets his promise; in the second instance, he forgets himself and everyone around him. The poet, therefore, explores two very different acts of forgetting, and Ywain's simple act of forgetting a promise is the catalyst to his altercation with his wife that causes his grief-madness. The Middle English poet's use of two very different kinds of forgetfulness in the character of Ywain speaks to the complexity and plurality of memory, as memory is deployed by the poet in different ways and has various meanings and interpretations. While the previous chapter explored Ywain's first act of forgetting, this chapter will explore his second act of forgetting, which is linked to his grief-madness.

Sylvia Huot claims that there are many aspects that make up a person's perception of their own identity (memory, personal experience, behavior, self-presentation, the perceptions of others, etc.), and when a person is overcome with madness, these aspects come undone and cease to function coherently.²⁶⁹ Ywain's grief-madness is so intense that it causes him to lose his memory, and, therefore, his sense of self. As Ywain is lamenting, the poet says, "An evyl toke him als he stode; / For wa he wex al wilde and wode," (lines 1649-1650). In her edition of this tale, Braswell translates "An evyl" as "an evil spirit possessed him."²⁷⁰ In his edition, Stephen

²⁶⁹ Sylvia Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature: Identities Found and Lost* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

²⁷⁰ See line 1649 of *Ywain and Gawain in Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995). <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-ywain-and-gawain>.

Shepherd translates “evyl” as “illness.”²⁷¹ Shepherd also translates “ivel” as “illness” in the line, “Than him tok an ivel strong,” (line 114) of *Havelock*.²⁷² Braswell and Shepherd’s different translations of what “evyl” means in the context of Ywain’s madness is interesting. If “evyl” is read as “evil spirit,” then it could be construed by modern readers that the onset of his madness could be interpreted in a more religious context; Ywain somehow sinned through his forgetfulness, and thus was punished with madness by an evil spirit. However, if “evyl” is to be read as “illness,” then it could be construed by modern readers that his madness could be interpreted in more medical terms; Ywain is suffering from intense grief over his breakup with his wife due to his forgotten promise, which results in his melancholic madness and amnesia. The *OED* cites many definitions for “evil,” including an entry on line 114 of *Havelock*, which, like Shepherd, the *OED* defines as meaning “a disease or malady.”²⁷³ Arguably, reading “evyl” as a disease, malady, or illness implies that Ywain’s madness should not be read in a theological context. In fact, the Old French source, *Yvain*, does not hint at any religious connotations regarding the onset of the knight’s madness,²⁷⁴ so it would be odd for the Middle English poet to completely redefine the cause of Ywain’s madness. However, it should be noted that the *MED* cites seven possible definitions (senses and subsenses) for “ivel,”²⁷⁵ ranging from wicked;

²⁷¹ See line 1649 of *Yvain and Gawain in Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).

²⁷² See line 114 of *Havelock*, in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).

²⁷³ “Evil”, in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/view/Entry/65386>

²⁷⁴ W. W. Comfort’s Modern English translation of Chrétien’s work states, “such a storm broke loose in his brain that he loses his senses.” *Arthurian Romances*, transl. W. W. Comfort (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1913; repr., New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2006), Vv. 2774-3230.

²⁷⁵ “Ivel”, in *Middle English Dictionary*, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED23620/track?counter=3&search_id=1106698

harmful; difficult; miserable; worthless; and diseased (even mentioning the humours), so these two differing definitions given by editors of *Ywain and Gawain* for “evyl” might not have been so clearly separated in fourteenth-century England.

It is also worth noting the time of year that Ywain goes mad: sometime shortly after the eve of the feast of St. John the Baptist (June 23rd). The incidence of insanity in the Middle Ages was thought to vary according to the seasons, and each season disposed people to a certain type of madness; however, all types of madness were generally believed to be more likely to occur in the summer months.²⁷⁶ Thus, because of the time of year in which Ywain breaks his promise, the odds were not stacked in his favour. It does not seem likely that this was the main reason why Chrétien chose this particular date, and why the anonymous Middle English poet kept this particular date in the adaptation, but it is interesting to note nonetheless because the Middle English poet would most likely have been aware of the connection between madness and the seasons. Ywain runs mad “a grete sesowne” (line 1667) before he is found sleeping under a tree and is cured by a lady and two of her ladies in waiting.

The maiden who finds Ywain sleeping naked in the forest recognizes him by a wound on his face. The maiden says to her lady:

For sertayn
 Here have we funden Sir Ywayne,
 The best knight that on grund mai ga.
 Alas, him es bytide so wa;
 In sum sorrow was he stad,
 And tharfore es he waxen mad-
 Sorow wil meng a mans blode
 And make him for-to wax wode.
 (lines 1733- 1740).

The maiden knows that grief can make a person go mad, and she realizes that Ywain is suffering

²⁷⁶ Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 48.

from grief-madness. The maiden points out that if Ywain were sane, he would be able to help them fight an intruding earl, so the lady decides to use some of her magic ointment to restore Ywain's sanity. The lady says,

Swith at hame I wald we were,
 For thare I have an unement dere-
 Morgan the Wise gaf it to me
 And said als I sal tel to the:
 He said, 'This unement es so gode,
 That if a man be brayn-wode
 And he war anes anynt with yt,
 Smerly sold he have his wit' (lines 1751-1758).

The lady reveals that Morgan the Wise gave it to her and that this ointment has the power to restore someone's "wit," which seems to mean his memory in this context. The cure used for Ywain is a form of supernatural cure, as Morgan le Fay is known as a sorceress in many romance texts.²⁷⁷ When Ywain first recovers from his madness, he has no memory of how he ended up naked in the forest, so it is evident that his amnesia and madness were interlinked. As soon as he is cured of his madness, his memory is restored; however, Ywain seemingly does not retain any of his memories of when he was running mad in the woods. The lady's and her maiden's plan to help Ywain, and ultimately their kingdom, proves to be beneficial to all involved: Ywain regains his memory, and he saves their kingdom from the intruding earl.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, shortly after being cured of his madness, Ywain befriends a lion that he saves from a serpent. Ywain's sense of self becomes largely tied to his

²⁷⁷ In this text, Morgan is called a 'he', but Morgan is known in Chrétien's *Yvain*, as well as other romance texts, to be a woman, so this is most likely just a scribal error. In note 8 on page 118 of his edition of *Yvain and Gawain*, Shepherd notes that Morgan is traditionally associated with great magic power (which she learned from Merlin), including the power to heal. While Morgan is stated here to have a cure for madness, it should be noted that "Morgan the Goddess" creates the Green Knight's appearance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in order to test Arthur's court, to take away their wits, and to cause Guinevere to die from fright (lines 2456-2460), so in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, her magical abilities include being able to potentially cause someone to go mad by taking away their wits. While Morgan's magical potion is used for good in *Yvain and Gawain*, Morgan is also an ambiguous figure in many other medieval romances, including *Le Morte Darthur*.

lion, and for most of the remainder of the tale he is known simply as the “Knyght with the Liown.” In fact, Ywain’s true name is not made public until closer to the end of the tale. While remaining simply the “Knyght with the Liown,” Ywain completes a series of unselfish deeds and eventually seeks the forgiveness of his wife and the reacquisition of his life before he went insane. Helen Cooper notes that Ywain can be seen “clawing his way back from madness and anonymity, first to sanity, then to a different, more socially responsible, kind of questing, and finally to winning both her forgiveness and the right to carry his own name.”²⁷⁸ Only after his reconciliation with Alundyne does the poet state, “Thus the Knyght with the Liown / Es turned now to Syr Ywayn” (lines 4020-4021). Ywain only regains his full sense of self after Alundyne forgives him.

While most scholarly work done on the madness of Ywain has focused on his grief-madness when he loses the love of his wife, it should be noted that there are four main episodes where Ywain nearly goes mad for a second time, all of which constitute a form of grief-madness. The first is when he fears Lunet will be put to death: “For, sertes, if sho war done to ded, / Of him war than none other rede / Bot oither he sold hymselfen sla / Or wode ogain to the wod ga” (lines 2375- 2378). The second time occurs when he fears for his lion’s life: “When that he saw hys lyoun blede, / He ferd for wa als he wald wede” (lines 2631- 2632). Ywain almost goes mad a third time when he realizes that he has been fighting Gawain: “He ferd right als he wald wede” (line 3647). The final episode where Ywain almost goes mad again occurs when he decides that if he cannot reconcile with Alundyne, he will go mad: “Bot he get grace of his lady, / He most go wode or for luf dy” (lines 3833- 3834). In this last episode, the Middle English poet stresses the fact that Ywain would go mad if he cannot reconcile with his wife. In Chrétien’s *Yvain*, however,

²⁷⁸ Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 87.

the options for him are to die or continue to wage war on Laudine and her court, which gives him a more masculine and active role in terms of what happens with him and his estranged wife, Laudine. In *Ywain and Gawain*, if Alundyne does not forgive Ywain, the options for him are to either go mad or die, both of which are out of his control. Ywain had some control over what happened with Lunet, his lion, and his fighting with Gawain, so he was able to take action in order for things to end well; therefore, with everyone alive and well, there was no need for Ywain to fall into a second state of grief-madness and amnesia. However, Ywain is completely powerless when it comes to Alundyne's decision to forgive him, so this last instance of him possibly going mad again is very probable. Even when faced with an uncertain outcome, Ywain's memory remains functioning throughout the rest of the poem, and he therefore does not descend into madness. With a bit of help from Lunet, Ywain is forgiven by Alundyne. At the end of the story, Ywain finally regains his role as husband to Alundyne and the defender of her kingdom, and Ywain and Alundyne live the rest of their lives "in joy and blis" (line 4024) with their friends and the lion.

Launcelot's madness in *Le Morte Darthur*

When Launcelot is banished by Guinevere, he suffers from a sudden onset of grief-madness much like Ywain does when he is forsaken by Alundyne. This incident occurs when Launcelot is fooled a second time into thinking he is in bed with Guinevere, while he is really in bed with Dame Elayne. Launcelot and Guinevere agree to meet in the middle of the night, and Elayne takes advantage of this situation and Launcelot's body because she gets Dame Brusen to use magic to make her look like Guinevere, so that Launcelot will sleep with her. This points to how vulnerable Launcelot is in his love for Guinevere, and Elayne takes advantage of him by

way of mental and physical deception. Guinevere hears Launcelot talking loudly in his sleep from the room he is in with Elayne, and, furious, she rebukes him harshly and says: “A, thou false traytoure knyght, loke thou never abyde in my courte, and lyghtly that thou voyde my chambir! And nat so hardy, thou false traytoure knyght, that evermore thou com in my syght” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XI], page 472). Just as Alundyne’s maiden calls Ywain a traitor, Guinevere calls Launcelot a traitor twice. While Ywain and Launcelot’s situations are different (one forgets his promise to return on a set date, while the other is fooled into sleeping with another woman), both women feel betrayed and deem the knights as traitors to their love. Guinevere and Launcelot both question his reputation as a true and honourable knight because he allows himself to be so easily fooled. In being forsaken by their ladies, both Ywain and Launcelot go into a state of grief-madness, which results in them running to the woods in an amnesiac state.

Upon hearing that he is banished, Launcelot falls into a swoon; when he awakes, he has lost his mind and “was as wylde [woode] as ever was man; and so he ran two yere, and never man had grace to know hym” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XI], page 472). Launcelot’s identity as a chivalrous knight and “true” lover is so contingent on the love of Guinevere that without her, his sense of self becomes dislocated, and he suffers from grief-madness, which results in his amnesia and flight into the woods. Malory states that Launcelot runs “wylde woode” through the forest (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XII], page 480) before he is finally found by Dame Elayne, who asks Dame Brusen and her father, King Pelles, to help her cure him of his madness. However, unlike the magical cure used for Ywain, the cure for Launcelot is a religious object. Elayne arranges to have Launcelot brought to a chamber where the Holy Grail was and “by myracle and by vertu of that holy vessell Sir Launcelot was heled and recoverde” (Syr Trystrams

de Lyones [XII], page 484). Elayne has knowledge of the most important physical object related to God, and she knows how to use it to cure Launcelot's madness. Sprunger comments on the cure used for Launcelot in Malory's work and states,

That it took the Holy Grail, the mysterious object of spiritual longing and search, to cure him is significant, for it highlights for readers that Launcelot is not a knight firmly grounded in the purely human world and looks forward to his moral and spiritual failure ever to see the Holy Grail.²⁷⁹

The object used to cure Launcelot of his madness and restore his memory is therefore used as a plot device by Malory to hint at what will befall Launcelot during the quest for the Holy Grail, but Malory also uses it to point to Launcelot's spiritual salvation at the end of the work. As soon as Launcelot is cured of his madness, he remembers who he is, but much like Ywain, Launcelot is confused about how he got there, is embarrassed, and has no memory of his life as a madman. Dame Elayne informs Launcelot of how he came to their country out of his mind. Once Launcelot returns to King Arthur's court and is accorded with Guinevere, he regains his position as a knight of the Round Table and Guinevere's lover. However, even though he resumes his relationship with Guinevere, Launcelot's bout of grief-madness highlights how mentally vulnerable he is in regard to his love for her and how difficult it is to try to manage the expectations on him to be both a true and honourable knight to King Arthur and also a true and gentle lover in his relationship with Guinevere.

Trystram's madness in *Le Morte Darthur*

Like Ywain and Launcelot, Trystram suffers from grief-madness and a loss of memory after a dispute with his lady, Isode. However, unlike Ywain and Launcelot, whose grief-madness

²⁷⁹ Sprunger, *Madness in Medieval Art and Romance*, 159.

and memory loss come on suddenly, Trystram's grief slowly turns into madness, which is characterized by the onset of his loss of memory. Just like Ywain and Launcelot, Trystram runs to the forest after his altercation with Isode.

Trystram's dispute with Isode happens after he mistakenly thinks Isode has taken a new lover when he finds a letter from Sir Kayhydyus (who is in love with Isode, and who actually dies from lovesickness over his unrequited love) to Isode and a letter she sent to him. Trystram takes offence to this and mistakenly thinks they are having an affair. Trystram appears to believe that he has lost Isode's love. Without Isode, Trystram loses his sense of self because it is his love for her that spurs him to outstanding feats of arms, which, in turn, have shaped his career as one of the best knights.²⁸⁰ Therefore, it is Isode who helps to create both aspects of Trystram's chivalric identity (courtly lover and fierce knight). In assuming that he has lost the love of Isode, Trystram quickly leaves the court and goes into the forest. Sir Fergus as well as a damsel and her lady all try to help Trystram (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], pages 300-301) while he is in the forest, but he eventually, "ran hys way" and "than was he naked." (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 301). Trystram lives like a madman, running naked, for quite some time. Larry D. Benson claims that Trystram, "runs mad for love (like Lancelot later), a necessary penance for his affair with Isode la Blaunche Mains (just as Lancelot's madness is penance for his affair with Elayne)."²⁸¹ However, Malory never hints at this as being a sort of penance for Trystram, and unlike Ywain's and Launcelot's madness, Trystram's madness does not come on suddenly, and

²⁸⁰ An example of this can be seen when Sir Trystram (who is still wounded from a previous tournament) does battle with Sir Elyas (Syr Trystram de Lyones [X], page 377, 27-28). Trystram is losing the battle and Malory writes, "Sir Trystram remembird hym of hys lady, La Beale Isode," (Syr Trystram de Lyones [X], page 377, 30). This thought alone is what makes him try harder and he wins the battle. In this instance, the memory of his lady saves Trystram's life and also increases his knightly identity. This scene implies that when a knight has a lady to think about and to remember, he will try harder to save his life and win his battles.

²⁸¹ Larry D. Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 121.

his condition seems to deteriorate over time. While Guinevere blames Launcelot for being fooled into sleeping with Elayne, Malory definitely does not place any blame on Launcelot, so Launcelot's madness does not seem like a penance for being tricked into sleeping with her. Being mentally and physically deceived by Elayne is hardly anything to be categorized as an "affair."²⁸² While Alundyne and Guinevere blame Ywain and Launcelot for their misdeeds, which quickly results in them going mad and losing their memories, Trystram's madness does not occur when he is blamed by his beloved over a transgression; rather, he slowly goes mad after mistakenly blaming Isode for being an untrue lover.

While Trystram is still running mad in the woods, he has a skirmish with Sir Dagonet, and King Mark believes that Dagonet encountered Sir Matto le Breune, another mad knight, "that felle oute of hys wytte because he loste hys lady; for whan Sir Gaherys smote downe Sir Matto and wan hys lady of hym, never syns was he in his mynde— and that was grete pité, for he was a good knyght" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 303). Interestingly, in Malory's text, there is more than one mad knight at a time running around in the forest as a result of losing the love of his lady. Malory, therefore, highlights the dangers of loving women; madness does not just happen to the best knights, but can happen to any "good knyght" who loses his lady's love. In fact, there is more than one knight who goes mad over one woman; Palomydes and Trystram both go mad over Isode. As Jose states, "Palomides' recurring episodes of madness are prompted by his despair over ever attaining Isode's love, and by his rage at being constantly surpassed by Tristram."²⁸³ However, Palomydes' madness is a different form of madness. Palomydes' madness

²⁸² After he is cured of his madness, Launcelot tells Elayne, "ye and Dame Brusen made me for to lye be you magry myne hede—" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XII], page 485), indicating that she took advantage of him. Later in Malory's work, Guinevere says that Elayne, "made hym to lye by her by enchauntment" (The Sankgreal [XIII], page 500).

²⁸³ Laura Jose, *Madness and Gender in Late-Medieval English Literature* (PhD Thesis, Durham University, 2010), 155.

is not caused from grief-madness; instead, his madness is caused by lovesickness because his love is unrequited. In Malory's text, lovesickness does not seem to cause complete amnesia for Palomydes, although he is definitely not of sound mind while battling his bouts of madness. Malory, therefore, links amnesia particularly with grief-madness.

Harper argues that "Tristram's madness has a special resonance for Malory" because Malory, "emphasizes the pitiable rather than the sinful aspect of Tristram's madness."²⁸⁴ Trystram's situation is so pitiable, as well as intriguing, that King Mark has him brought to his castle, and attendants "bathed hym and wayshed hym, and gaff hym hote suppyngis tylle they had brought hym well to hys remembraunce. But all thys whyle there was no creature that knew Sir Trystrams nothir what maner man he was" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 304). Unlike the magical cure used for Ywain and the religious cure used for Launcelot, Trystram's cure is quite secular and ordinary: Trystram is just bathed, clothed, and properly fed. What is interesting about Trystram's madness is that much like Ywain and Launcelot, Trystram suffers from amnesia, but unlike Ywain and Launcelot who are both recognized by the ladies who cure them, no one is able to recognize Trystram when he is brought to the court. Even when Trystram finally remembers who he is, no one else can recognize him. The fact that no one can recognize him implies that his grief-madness greatly affected both his mind and body. His identity as an amnesiac mad wild man obviously effected his physical appearance in some way. It is also interesting that it is an animal (signaling Trystram's identity as a wild, bestial man) and not a human who first recognizes Trystram. It is the female hunting dog that Trystram gave to Isode who recognizes Trystram by his scent: "And anone thys lityll brachet felte a savoure of Sir Trystram;" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 305). The dog runs over to Trystram and greets

²⁸⁴ Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 93.

him, and by the dog's excited and happy reaction, Isode realizes it is Trystram. The little dog stays with Trystram, sitting on his lap, which then causes King Mark and Sir Andred to finally realize it is Trystram. As soon as they ask him, "what he was and what was hys name", Trystram quickly replies, "my name is Sir Trystramys de Lyones" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 305), finally confirming his identity. Unknowingly, this little dog assisted in Trystram's recognition and reintegration back into courtly society.

Later in Malory's narrative, Sir Dynadan comments to Isode about knights like Trystram who go mad over women: "I mervayle at Sir Trystram and mo other suche lovers: What aylyth them to be so madde and so asoted upon women?" Isode's reply is interesting because she asks him, "ar ye a knight and ar no lovear?" (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [X], page 412), which implies that a knight's identity should be linked with that of a lover; however, the conflicting responsibilities of the two are often what lead to the knight's madness. The conflicts and tensions that arise for Trystram and Launcelot result in their parallel episodes in which they go mad from grief and live as amnesiac madmen in the woods. Clark examines these wild-men episodes in *Le Morte Darthur* and argues that they function as a "Bakhtinian carnival," which "allow Tristram and Lancelot to escape the rigid confines of chivalric society and experience a temporary change in their place in the social order. Their experiences follow the traditional medieval wild-man episode type and culminate in the knights' reintegration into courtly society."²⁸⁵ However, Clark notes that this reintegration does not signal a resolution of the overall conflict that Launcelot and Trystram experience.²⁸⁶ For knights like Launcelot and Trystram, the pursuit of the ideal of

²⁸⁵ Clark, "There and Back Again," 55.

²⁸⁶ Clark, "There and Back Again," 55.

knighthood involves a harrowing separation of behaviour and emotions.²⁸⁷ To be a good knight entails being a lover, but accommodating the necessity to fight with the imperative to serve/love a lady can prove a task which is beyond the capabilities of even the two greatest knights. While not discussing Malory's work directly, Huot claims, "It is no accident that the two most perfect and most problematic heroes of romance tradition, Lancelot and Tristan, both suffer prolonged episodes of madness that reflect at once the sublimity and abject folly of their love for their respective queens."²⁸⁸ In Malory's work, both Trystram and Launcelot have conflicting obligations; they need to be a true and honourable knight to their king and court, which should not involve being in an adulterous relationship with the king's wife, and they need to be a true lover to their respective queens. As previously mentioned, Elayne takes advantage of Launcelot's situation by tricking him into sleeping with her, and this leads to his altercation with Guinevere and his ensuing grief-madness. While Launcelot is the best and fiercest knight in King Arthur's court, his mind and body are incredibly vulnerable to the women around him. These opposing demands, coupled with his vulnerability and tumultuous relationship with Guinevere, cause him to suffer from a bout of grief-madness. Paradoxically, the woman who ends up curing Launcelot is the one who also contributed to his falling out with Guinevere and his subsequent grief-madness. Much like Launcelot, Trystram must somehow try to maintain his adulterous relationship with Queen Isode, while also being a fierce knight who defeats his enemies and triumphs in tournaments. Inevitably, it is the secrecy revolving around his adulterous relationship with Isode that leads him to so quickly believe that she is having another secret affair with another knight. These conflicting tasks of being a true and honourable knight to his king while

²⁸⁷ Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 96.

²⁸⁸ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 39.

simultaneously having a long-term and loving adulterous affair with the king's wife, are a contributing factor in the mental breakdowns of Malory's two greatest knights and truest lovers. Launcelot and Trystram are the best knights in the world, but in order to continue to be great and respected knights, they can never elope with their respective queens, and the nature of knighthood does not lend itself well to the romantic relationships that they seek and ultimately need.

However, it should be noted that even without romantic relationships, knighthood and madness are interlinked in Malory's work. Phrases like "woode man" are used by Malory to describe knights when they are fighting each other. The demands of chivalric combat itself constitutes a form of madness, and knights are often described as madmen while fighting one another. Harper notes that "the common adage *ira est furor brevis* is often exemplified by the knights who fight, in Malory's words, 'woodly' or 'as men outraged of resoun.'"²⁸⁹ Janet Jesmok compares Launcelot's behaviour while mad and in battle and states, "Although he struggles to control himself throughout the *Morte*, Lancelot clearly is a man capable of great anger and violence. When in battle or during his madness, Lancelot is a killing machine."²⁹⁰ Sir Dynadan even comments on Trystram and Launcelot's mad behaviour when it comes to fighting. After fighting a total of thirty knights with Trystram, Dynadan states that he does not want to continue fighting; however, Trystram begs him to continue, and Dynadan states:

I may curse the tyme that ever I sye you, for in all in the world ar nat such two knyghtes that ar so wood as ys Sir Launcelot and ye, Sir Trystram— for onys I felle in the felyshyp of Sir Launcelot, as I have done now with you, and he sette me so a-worke that a quarter of a yere I kept my bedde! (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 309).

²⁸⁹ Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 52.

²⁹⁰ Janet Jesmok, "The Double Life of Malory's Lancelot du Lake," *Arthuriana* 17, no. 4 (2007): 86.

Here, Dynadan does not see Trystram's behaviour as that of a sane man. This speech is even more poignant here because it is made directly after Trystram has recently recovered from his time spent living as an amnesiac madman in the woods because of his dispute with Isode. Dynadan is pointing to the fact that Trystram and Launcelot are both mad for wanting to fight with so many knights just to maintain their honour, but his comment is also inadvertently pointing to how they act with their relationships; in their emotional responses to both love and combat, these two knights can behave as madmen. Madness and memory loss can therefore be read as tools used by the authors within the narratives to register a critique of the chivalric ideals, either unconsciously or consciously.

However, while knights like Launcelot and Trystram can often behave like madmen during fights, Ywain, Trystram, and Launcelot only suffer from memory loss and live like actual wild madmen in the forest after the breakdown of their heterosexual relationships. As previously mentioned, what causes Ywain's, Trystram's, and Launcelot's bouts of madness is the breakdown of their heterosexual relationships, although, much like their cures, the reasons for their grief-madness differ. Both instances of madness for Trystram and Launcelot are prompted by misunderstandings;²⁹¹ Trystram mistakenly believes that Isode loves Keyhydys, and Launcelot only slept with Elayne because he was tricked into believing that she was Guinevere. Ywain's madness is not prompted by a misunderstanding; rather, it is caused by his broken promise to Alundyne. However, the altercations between the three knights and their ladies all relate to a perceived break of fidelity in the relationship; Trystram believes Isode to be unfaithful because he thinks she loves another man, Guinevere views Launcelot as unfaithful because he unknowingly slept with Elayne, and Alundyne deems Ywain unfaithful to her and her kingdom

²⁹¹ Jose, *Madness and Gender in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 156.

because he did not return to her on their agreed upon day. These narratives imply that there are dangers for a knight who loves a woman, but to be considered a great knight, one must have a lady to love. As Fiona Tolhurst argues, knights need their partnerships with ladies to establish their chivalric identities.²⁹² However, these ladies have the capacity to not only help or establish chivalric identities, but to also interrupt or dislocate those identities when a knight goes through an episode of grief-madness over the breakdown of his relationship with that lady. However, as previously noted, it is not just male characters in Middle English Arthurian romance who suffer from grief-madness, which results in memory issues and a withdrawal into the forest. This chapter will now turn to a discussion of female grief-madness and will particularly focus on Achefflour's madness in *Sir Perceval of Galles*.

Achefflour's madness in *Sir Perceval of Galles*

So far, this chapter has explored mad knights and how madness, especially grief-madness, is connected with a loss of memory. However, as previously noted, knights are not the only characters in Middle English romance who suffer from grief-madness. The knights who go mad that are discussed in this chapter all succumb to madness and memory loss because of a breakdown in their heterosexual relationship. However, Achefflour does not go mad when her husband dies; rather, she goes mad when she thinks her son is dead, which indicates a difference in the reason for her madness in comparison to the madness of these knights. After her husband (who is also named Perceval) is killed in battle, Achefflour leaves King Arthur's court and takes her young son, Perceval, to live with her in the forest. In her first withdrawal into the forest,

²⁹² Fiona Tolhurst, "Why Every Knight Needs His Lady: Re-viewing Questions of Genre and 'Cohesion' in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*," in *Reviewing Le Morte Darthur*, eds. K. S. Whetter and Raluca L. Radulescu (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 139.

Acheflour is grieving but has not gone mad because she still has all of her mental faculties. In fact, she lives there and raises Perceval for fifteen years. The poet even provides Acheflour's reasonings for deciding to live in the forest and states,

And now is Percyvell the wighte
 Slayne in batelle and in fyghte,
 And the lady hase gyffen a gyfte,
 Holde if scho may,
 That scho schall never mare wone
 In stede, with hir yonge sone,
 Ther dedes of armes schall be done,
 By nyghte ne be daye.
 Bot in the wodde schall he be:
 Sall he no thyng see
 Bot the leves of the tree
 And the greves graye;
 Schall he nowther take tent
 To justes ne to tournament,
 Bot in the wilde wodde went,
 With bestes to playe.
 With wilde bestes for to playe,
 Scho tuke hir leve and went hir waye,
 Bothe at baron and at raye,
 And went to the wodde. (lines 161-180).

Therefore, the first time that Acheflour goes into the forest, she is of sound mind because she makes an oath to herself to raise her son away from courtly society and its violent tournaments, which seems somewhat rational, as her husband was just killed in a tournament. It is also ironic that her husband dies while partaking in a tournament meant to celebrate the birth of his son and the beginning of his life as a family man, which again points to this conflicting nature of being a good knight and a good husband because to be a good knight, a knight must participate in adventures and tournaments, but to be a good husband and father, a knight must be home with his family as well. Even while living in the forest with her son, Acheflour retains her memory of her former courtly life with her husband. However, near the end of the tale, when Acheflour thinks that Perceval is dead, she suffers from grief-madness and runs mad through the woods.

Perceval only learns that his mother has gone mad from grief when he suddenly remembers his mother and goes looking for her. Perceval's sudden remembrance of his mother is similar to that of Ywain's sudden remembrance of his broken promise to Alundyne. However, Perceval never promised his mother when he would return; Ache flour simply says that she will wait for him. The poet comments on how Perceval has not thought about his mother and states, "Till that the twelmonthe was gone, / With Lufamour his lemman. / He thoghte on no thyng, / Now on his moder that was," (lines 1770-1773). The poet then states,

Till it byfelle appon a day,
 Als he in his bedd lay,
 Till hymselfe gun he say,
 Syghande full sare,
 'The laste Yole-day that was,
 Wilde wayes I chese:
 My modir all manles
 Leved I thare.'
 Than righte sone saide he,
 'Blythe sall I never be
 Or I may my modir see,
 And wete how scho fare.' (lines 1781-1792).

Instead of Perceval going mad from grief because he forgot about his mother and had not returned to her for over a year, like what happens to Ywain after he is reprimanded for forgetting his promise to return to Alundyne in a year, it is Perceval's mother who goes mad from grief because she believes him to be dead.

While the poet does not specifically mention Perceval's mother's madness resulting in a total loss of memory, Ache flour does act strangely when she first sees Perceval in the woods, indicating that she is suffering from some sort of memory issues. Ad Putter claims that "Although she is obviously deranged and cowers like an animal, she has somehow managed to stick to her word, and is not so far gone that she cannot recognize her son in the man who now

stands before her.”²⁹³ However, after searching in the woods for his mother for over a week, wearing goatskin clothing that would have made him easily recognizable to Achefflour had she been of sound mind and memory, Perceval finally sees her and she hides from him, saying, “Siche a sone hade I!” (line 2218), which seems to indicate that while she does remember that she once had a son, her mind does not process that this is her son. She then tries to attack Perceval before he picks her up and brings her to the castle. At the castle, Achefflour is given a drink that puts her to sleep. The use of a magic potion to induce sleep and thus to restore one to the “proper” state of mind was a common convention in medieval romance,²⁹⁴ and this magic potion is very similar to the magic ointment that is used to cure Ywain of his madness and restore his memory. When Perceval’s mother awakes, “scho was in hir awenn state” (line 2261), indicating that the drink cured her of her madness. Achefflour was obviously not of sound mind and had some sort of memory issues because she needed the magic potion to restore her to her “awenn state.” Perceval’s mother is cured by the magic potion over the course of three days.

His mother’s madness also seems to aid in Perceval’s return to the forest, which is used to showcase a symmetrical narrative. Caroline D. Eckhardt points out that “the initial departure from the mother is paralleled by the concluding return to the mother; the ring-exchange which forms part of Perceval’s transition from forest to court reappears in his transition back from court to forest; even the goatskin clothing is resumed.”²⁹⁵ However, Eckhardt fails to discuss how Achefflour’s madness ties into the organizing principle of the narrative (Perceval’s separation

²⁹³ Putter, “Arthurian Romance in English Popular Tradition,” 240.

²⁹⁴ See the note for line 2251 of *Sir Perceval of Galles* in Braswell’s edition of this text. *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995). <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles>

²⁹⁵ Eckhardt, “Arthurian Comedy,” 246.

from and return to his mother). If his mother had not gone mad from grief, Perceval would not have had to return to the forest and spend over a week in the forest, wearing goatskins, looking for his mother. Achefflour's madness also affects our understanding of her as a character, as her grief-madness over thinking her son has died makes her a sympathetic character. Since Achefflour's madness forms an important part of the narrative and gives insight into depictions of female grief-madness, it deserves more scholarly attention.

While Perceval, with the help of the porter, restores his mother's sanity, he ends up leaving her again, this time with his wife, Lufamour, in her court. Instead of the narrative ending happily for the family, the audience is told that "Sythen he went into the Holy Londe, / Wanne many cités full stronge, / And there was he slayne, I undirstonde; / Thusgatis endis hee." (lines 2281-2284). Patricia Rose comments on this and asks, "What might Maidenland look like with both Achefflour and Lufamour guiding its development? Achefflour's passive acceptance of Perceval's decision may have extremely active results both for Achefflour and for Maidenland."²⁹⁶ Indeed, the ending of *Sir Perceval of Galles* leaves the fate of his mother, his wife, and her kingdom ambiguous. Even the mental state of Perceval's mother is left ambiguous, as she is left at a court (albeit one ruled by a woman), away from the familiar woodlands that she lived in with Perceval for fifteen years, and it is unclear as to whether his wife and/or his mother are still alive when Perceval dies in the Holy Land, so aside from describing Perceval's death, the poet leaves everyone else's stories incomplete and rather ambiguous.

In her study, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, Huot argues that women in medieval romance are certainly subject to trauma, but instead of going mad they usually pine

²⁹⁶ Rose, "Achefflour," 463.

away, attempt suicide, succumb to some somatic illness, and even die of grief.²⁹⁷ Huot claims that women are “sublime” in their grief, but she goes on to say that “women are denied the subjectivity of male characters in courtly literature. The misogynistic view of women as naturally irrational, in fact, suggests that they are not even susceptible to the journey through madness and back to sanity that can be traced by a male character.”²⁹⁸ However, Huot’s study focuses on madness in medieval French romance, which she argues does not showcase madwomen, but, interestingly, women do go mad or can behave in ways deemed mad in Middle English romances, as evidenced in Perceval’s mother’s madness, as well as several other romance heroines. This change in narrative and the use of memory, or loss of memory, in the depiction of grief-madness in both male and female characters in Middle English romance may indicate a change in audience interests, and perhaps a greater female readership of romance manuscripts in late medieval England.²⁹⁹ Moreover, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, literacy rates for both men and women increased, which resulted in minor aristocrats, gentry, and merchant classes being able to affect the production and consumption of texts, and women played a role in the textual and literary activities in the late Middle Ages.³⁰⁰ With an increase in female readership and female interest in literary activities, this may have contributed to the change in the narrative that included a larger and much more interesting role for Perceval’s mother.

While scholars have neglected to explore in detail the madness of Perceval’s mother in

²⁹⁷ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 29.

²⁹⁸ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 177.

²⁹⁹ For studies relating to female readership in the late Middle Ages, see, for example: Amy N. Vines, *Women’s Power in Late Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), and Carol M. Meale, ed. *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500 second edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), particularly the chapters by Meale and Boffey.

³⁰⁰ Vines, *Women’s Power in Late Medieval Romance*, 8.

Sir Perceval of Galles, the most well-known portrayal of a woman acting mad in Middle English romance is that of Heurodis in *Sir Orfeo*.³⁰¹ Heurodis' madness has even become a topic of interest to scholars studying mental illness in relation to disability in the Middle Ages.³⁰² After Heurodis is visited by the fairy king and told that she will be carried off into the land of fairy the next day, she "froted hir honden and hir fet, / And crached hir visage- it bled wete; / Hir riche ribe hye al to-ritt, / And was reveyd out of hir witt." (lines 79-82). Heurodis' moment of madness does not seem to be a form of grief-madness; rather, she appears to be in a severe state of hysteria and fear over what has just happened. Her madness here is not irrational, as she is subsequently seized the next day and taken away from her husband, Sir Orfeo. Their relationship breaks down because Heurodis is physically separated from her husband, not because of a misunderstanding or disagreement, but because of an abduction. Their separation causes Orfeo to live in the forest for ten years as a type of wild man, although not an insane, amnesiac wild man. In fact, Heurodis and Orfeo are both in the woods when they spot and recognize each other, which spurs Orfeo to act and save Heurodis. Since Heurodis' and Orfeo's separation was involuntary and was not a result of a breakdown of their relationship, Orfeo remains of sound mind, and the poet does not state that he is specifically suffering from any form of grief-madness over the abduction of his wife.

Although they do not suffer from madness to the extent that Heurodis and Achefflour do or run mad through the woods and suffer from memory issues like Achefflour does, characters

³⁰¹ The following line references come from *Sir Orfeo*, in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 174-189.

³⁰² See for example: A. C. Spearing, "Sir Orfeo: Madness and Gender," in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, eds. A. Putter, and J. Gilbert (Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2000), 258-272; Ellen M. Caldwell, "The Heroism of Heurodis: Self-mutilation and Restoration in *Sir Orfeo*," *Papers on Language & Literature* 43, no. 3 (2007): 291-310, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/docview/198428586/fulltextPDF/B242693B9F9454DPQ/1?accountid=10673>

like Alundyne and Guinevere can behave like madwomen. Immediately before Guinevere catches Lancelot with Elayne, Malory says that Guinevere, “wry-thed and waltred as a madde woman” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XI], page 472). Alundyne is described as nearly mad during the funeral for her first husband, “Sho wrang hir fingers, outbrast the blode. / For mekyl wa sho was nere wode” (lines 821-822).³⁰³ Alundyne’s reaction to her husband’s death is very reminiscent of Heurodis scratching her own face. While Heurodis and Alundyne’s self-mutilation may seem to be a characteristic typical of female madness, their self-mutilation is somewhat similar to Lancelot’s self-inflicted wounds when, after his altercation with Guinevere, he recovers from his swoon and thrusts himself out of the window into a garden, and “with thornys he was all to-cracched of his visage and hys body” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XI], page 472), before running mad into the woods. During their initial bout with madness, Lancelot and Heurodis both end up with scratched faces from self-inflicted wounds (while Lancelot does not scratch himself like Heurodis does, he does hurl himself out of a window into a garden full of thorny bushes that scratch his face). Male bodies, in their propensity to madness, are therefore portrayed as very similar to female bodies, and are, as Jose notes, “acutely vulnerable.”³⁰⁴ While not directly discussing Malory’s text, John F. Plummer makes an interesting point about the character of Lancelot in medieval literature and argues, “it is a striking fact that Lancelot, while the embodiment of Arthurian chivalric ideals and practice and a knight of nearly super-human

³⁰³ In Chrétien’s *Yvain*, Laudine also acts like a madwoman at her husband’s funeral, leading Marc M. Pelen to argue that Yvain is attracted to her insane behaviour and is attracted to insane behaviour in general. Pelen characterises Chrétien’s work as “an exploration of a mad, interior world”, indicating a theme of madness throughout the work. For Pelen’s complete discussion, see Pelen’s article: “Madness in *Yvain* Reconsidered,” *Neophilologus* 87 (2003): 361–369.

³⁰⁴ Laura Jose, “Monstrous Conceptions: Sex, Madness and Gender in Medieval Medical Texts,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 5, no. 2–3 (2008): 160, doi: 10.3366/E1744185408000372.

physical prowess and endurance, is psychically remarkably fragile.”³⁰⁵ In this particular scene of Malory’s work where Launcelot is physically injured by the thorny bushes, this fragility of Launcelot’s character is highlighted; Launcelot runs off into the woods in a state of madness, forgetting himself and discarding his armour, which leaves his body just as vulnerable and fragile as his mental state. Launcelot leaves behind his clothes and damages his features, and this seems like a common theme in depictions of mad characters; Ywain, Launcelot, Trystram, and Achefflour all tear off their clothing and run mad into the woods and/or somehow damage their features from self-inflicted wounds. The mad character often remains in the woods until someone is able to cure them of their madness by restoring their memory.

The Woods, Amnesia, and Madness

While suffering from grief-madness, Launcelot, Trystram, Ywain, and Achefflour all run through the woods naked and in an amnesiac, wild state. Marilyn Sandidge points out that the medieval forest was thought of as the border between the known, courtly, civilized society and the unknown, isolated territory “beyond human consciousness,”³⁰⁶ so it makes sense that medieval writers might use the woods as an emblem of narrative tension, uncertainty, memorial disorders, and madness.³⁰⁷ While mad and living in the woods in an amnesiac state, these characters live like wild men/women, and this image of the wild man living in the woods was used in a variety of ways in medieval art and literature. Often, this figure of the wild man who

³⁰⁵ Plummer, “Frenzy and Females”, 45.

³⁰⁶ Marilyn Sandidge, “The Forest, the River, the Mountain, the Field, and the Meadow,” in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter), 539.

³⁰⁷ McKinstry, *Middle English Romance and the Craft of Memory*, 77.

lives in the woods is suffering from some type of loss of mental faculties. According to Richard Bernheimer,

The picture drawn by medieval authors of the appearance of the wild man is thus very largely a negative one, dominated by the loss or absence of faculties which make of human beings what they are. The wild man may be without the faculty of human speech, the power to recognize or conceive of the Divinity, or the usual meaningful processes of the mind.³⁰⁸

Bernheimer claims that in the Middle Ages, insanity and wildness were almost interchangeable terms, and many medieval writers were very interested in the image of the wild man as insane.³⁰⁹

Bernheimer also suggests that this image might have been influenced by contemporary reality because, “It was a habit in the Middle Ages to let many lunatics go free.”³¹⁰ Moreover, these “lunatics” were “at liberty to follow their irrational urges and desires,”³¹¹ so there is a possibility that some people in the Middle Ages who were suffering from mental health illnesses could be found roaming through the forests. These people living mad in the woods seem to have provided inspiration to medieval romance writers.

Yamamoto makes an interesting observation, noting, “Neither ‘wild man’, nor ‘knight’ are stable terms, for each draws upon the other for confirmation of its identity.”³¹² The wild man motif is inherent in the knight’s bout of madness; the loss of memory causes a transformation of the knight’s civilized and chivalric identity to that of a beastly wild man. Each knight must be

³⁰⁸ Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 9.

³⁰⁹ Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages*, 12.

³¹⁰ Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages*, 12.

³¹¹ Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages*, 12.

³¹² Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 169.

cured of his madness, which always involves the restoration of his memory. Ywain, Trystram, and Launcelot are perhaps the most famous and well-known mad knights turned wild men of the romance tradition, and all three of these men grieve the breakdown of their romantic relationships, go into a state of amnesia, and run mad into the woods before they are found and cured. The descriptions given of all three knights when they run to the forest and live like wild men are somewhat similar: Ywain, “Unto the wod the way he nome; / No man wist whore he bycome. / Obout he welk in the forest– / Als it wore a wilde beste.” (lines 1651- 1654); Trystram, “endured there...naked, and wolde never com in towne.” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [IX], page 301); and Launcelot, “ranne furth he knew nat whothir, and was as wylde [woode] as ever was man.” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XI], page 472). Launcelot continues running wild from place to place, with many people (knights, ladies, a dwarf, and a hermit) trying to find him and/or help him, until he “ran his way into the foreyste;” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XI], page 483). While these knights roam the forest as amnesiac madmen, Jose asserts that this is “pointless journeying,” which reflects the mental disorientation inherent in madness. Therefore, the mad knights running through the forest show a lack of purpose. There is usually an overarching purpose to knightly wandering; errant knights go out looking for adventure, which Morton W. Bloomfield describes as “the opening out to the unexpected, the encounter with the unknown.”³¹³ However, Bloomfield argues that some of these knightly adventures, that are of crucial importance to the development of the story, have an absence of rationality.³¹⁴ Therefore, the implicit irrationality of some knightly adventures is then made explicit when a disorientated,

³¹³ Morton W. Bloomfield, *Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language, and Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 106.

³¹⁴ Bloomfield, *Essays and Explorations*, 106.

amnesiac, mad knight begins running through the forest. Therefore, having lost the ties that bound them most strongly to courtly society, the mad knights find the wilderness the only suitable environment for their amnesiac mental state and disorientation.³¹⁵

Instances of knights running mad into the wilderness not only reflect their disorientation, but also reflect a form of powerlessness. Knights who go mad over a dispute with their lady run to the very forest in which they have previously quested because their only recourse in situations such as this is to flee. Derek Pearsall argues that running mad into the woods is a customary response to extreme embarrassment in medieval romance.³¹⁶ If a knight is publicly embarrassed by another knight, he can then fight the man to try to repair his reputation; however, when a knight is rebuked by his lady, the knight is helpless to repair his reputation on his own. While Pearsall is right to note that there is some form of private and public embarrassment for knights who run into the woods, embarrassment, however, does not seem to be at the forefront of why Ywain, Launcelot, and Trystram run mad through the woods and suffer from amnesia. Arguably, it is not embarrassment, but rather intense grief over the fact that the knight believes he has lost the love of his lady forever. Since a knight's chivalric identity is formed around being both a fierce warrior and a gentle lover, when the knight loses his lady, his sense of self becomes disjointed. When a conflict occurs with his lady, the outcome for the knight is madness and flight to the forest, and the knight then roams the forest without his mental faculties. Elizabeth Edwards argues that "This is the most radical form of dissociation for the protagonists, the low ebb of chivalric identity, the purposelessness of the knight without the lady."³¹⁷ The woods

³¹⁵ Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages*, 14.

³¹⁶ Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction*, 80.

³¹⁷ Elizabeth Edwards, "The Place of Women in the *Morte Darthur*," in *A Companion to Malory*, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 41.

symbolize the outermost boundaries of the text, and the woods are the most remote space for a knight to go into self-exile during a bout of madness. The ambivalent nature of the woods also reflects the irrational state of the mad character's mind, which is represented in a loss of memory.³¹⁸ It is not until these knights are found and cured of their madness, and their memories are restored, that they are able to begin their reintegration back into courtly society and their reconciliation with their lady.

So far, this section of this chapter has discussed the amnesiac knight turned wild man motif. However, Ache flour takes on a type of wild woman persona twice in *Sir Perceval of Galles*. When she first retreats to the forest after the death of her husband, she takes on a type of wild woman identity and raises her son in the woods with a maidservant and some goats (lines 180-188). Perceval's mother then runs mad through the woods after she believes her son has died. Unlike Ywain, Launcelot, and Trystram, Perceval's mother had lived a long time in the woods willingly and used it as a recluse from the violence of the chivalric world of King Arthur's court, so the woods have become her home. However, when Perceval returns to the forest where his mother lives, he meets with the porter of a castle who tells Perceval that his master was trying to woo Perceval's mother and tried to give her the ring that she gave to Perceval, which causes Ache flour to believe that her son has been slain. Ache flour then quickly goes mad from grief.

The porter tells Perceval:

Hir clothes ther scho rafe hir fro,
 And to the wodd gan scho go;
 Thus es the lady so wo,
 And this is the draghte.
 For siche draghtis als this,
 Now es the lady wode, iwys,
 And wilde in the wodde scho es,
 Ay sythen that ilke tyde.

³¹⁸ Sandidge, "The Forest, the River, the Mountain, the Field, and the Meadow," 542.

Fayne wolde I take that free,
 Bot alsone als scho sees me,
 Faste awaye dose scho flee (lines 2157-2167).

So, unlike the knights who run into the unknown and unpredictable forest, Perceval's mother is at least running mad into familiar territory. Perceval also adopts wild man behaviour in order to search through the woods for his mother, and the poet states, "His armour he leved therin, / Toke one hym a gayt-skyne, / And to the wodde gan he wyn, / Among the holtis hare." (lines 2197-2200). Glenn Wright argues that Perceval's "reversion to goatskins need not signify his own rejection of chivalry, but merely the awareness of his mother's."³¹⁹ Indeed, Perceval does not indicate any mad behaviour while searching for his mother. It should also be noted that Ache flour does not return to the forest at the end of the tale. Perceval's journey into the forest can be viewed as a means to fully reintegrate Ache flour back into the courtly world.³²⁰ Like Ywain, Trystram, and Launcelot, Ache flour strips off her clothes and adopts violent behaviour when she is suffering from grief-madness. This stripping off clothing, which Ywain, Launcelot, Trystram, and Ache flour do before running mad into the forest, also seems to indicate their bestial, amnesiac, transformation. As previously discussed, Ache flour does not recognize her son (even though he has taken off his armour and is wearing clothing that would make him easily recognizable to his mother) when she is mad in the forest, and the poet states, "Had hir myghte so mekill bene, / Scho had hym slayne that tyde!" (lines 2231- 2232), indicating that in her bestial, mad, and amnesiac state, she could have slain her own son. After Ache flour tries to attack him, Perceval then has to pick her up and bring her to the castle to be cured of her madness.

³¹⁹ Wright, "'De Kynde Wolde Oute Sprynge,'" 47.

³²⁰ Wright, "'De Kynde Wolde Oute Sprynge,'" 48.

Huot comments on the recovery of mad knights and states that a mad knight may lose his memory, yet once he is cured, his memories are recovered, his knightly qualities reassert themselves, and “his story resumes where it left off.”³²¹ Jose also discusses Launcelot’s and Trystram’s recoveries and has a similar opinion as Huot regarding the recovery of mad knights. Jose states that after they are cured of their madness, both knights are restored to their original positions, their identities as the world’s best knights remain unaffected, and their bout with madness is not mentioned again in the narrative.³²² However, the arguments put forth by Huot and Jose are rather cursory; while Launcelot, Trystram, Ywain, and Ache flour all recover from their madness and regain their memories, the potential for them to go mad and act yet again as wild men/women still underlies their narratives. Their stories do not simply continue as if their bouts of madness never happened. As previously discussed, the Middle English poet of *Ywain and Gawain* mentions Ywain possibly going mad again throughout the rest of the narrative, and Ywain does not accord with his wife until the very end of the tale. Trystram does not return to his original position as a knight of King Mark’s court and Isode’s lover because he leaves the court once he is cured and his true identity is known. Launcelot’s relationship with Guinevere is strained when he first returns to Arthur’s court. Ache flour’s life is transformed after her bout with madness, as she returns to courtly life after having lived in the forest while she raised Perceval. Even though Ache flour is cured and brought back into courtly society, it is uncertain of whether or not Perceval’s mother will go mad from grief again, since the poet tells the audience that Perceval is killed in the Holy Lands but does not mention Ache flour dying. Therefore, even though these mad characters are cured, and their memories are restored, their positions within the

³²¹ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 212.

³²² Jose, *Madness and Gender in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 152.

narratives are notably altered, and they do not simply return to their original positions in the story.

Conclusion

The depictions of the grief-madness of Ywain, Launcelot, Trystram, and Achefflower share many similarities that have been explored in this chapter. Each of these characters suffer from some sort of grief, and while the cause of their grief differs, they all suffer from subsequent madness and memory loss, which causes them to strip off their clothing and run through the woods, living as wild men/women. This loss of memory occasions their loss of identity, and they all act like violent, bestial men/women while in the woods, which indicates a confusion of the usual identity markers normally associated with their gender and class. The woods in which they all reside while mad are used by the authors as a way to symbolize the characters' dislocated mental states. Even though the methods used to cure each of the character's madness differ, Ywain, Trystram, Launcelot, and Achefflower are all given a cure for their grief-madness that restores their memories and brings them back to their previously stable mental state. Throughout the Middle Ages, popular cures for madness included the visiting of holy shrines and wells and the use of herbs, incantations, or holy relics.³²³ Moreover, the Sacrament could be given "to those who had lost their reason but had formerly shown devotion towards the host."³²⁴ Achefflower, Ywain, Trystram, and Launcelot are all given different cures for their madness (magical, religious, and secular), so this seems reflective of the various cures used to try to help people suffering from mental illnesses in the Middle Ages.

³²³ Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 68-69.

³²⁴ Trenery and Horden, "Madness in the Middle Ages," 65.

Turner notes that “emotions — especially expressions of overwhelming anger, despair, and unreasonable fear — were used in combination with the ability to recall and remember to illuminate the mental state of an individual no longer capable of interacting rationally with society.”³²⁵ Trystram, Launcelot, and Ywain all show an overwhelming amount of grief over the breakdown of their heterosexual relationships before they go mad, lose their memory, and run into the woods. Achefflour’s madness is caused by intense grief over thinking that her son has been killed. As Turner asserts, mental stability in the Middle Ages was judged through memory,³²⁶ so the emphasis on the character’s loss of memory of themselves and their friends and family while mad reflects some of the ideas surrounding how a loss of memory could be a strong indicator that a person was suffering from some form of mental disability in late medieval England. Stephen Harper points out that one important way of discovering medieval attitudes towards madness is to examine the literary evidence, and he points out that much helpful research into the subject of madness in the Middle Ages has been done by literary scholars.³²⁷ While scholars have explored the madness of knights in medieval romance, they have overlooked representations of female madness and have also failed to explore how memory is interlinked with representations of madness and what this can tell us about attitudes and beliefs surrounding mental illness in late medieval England. This chapter has explored these overlooked areas in research regarding gender, memory, and madness in Middle English romance and culture. This chapter has also explored how these reflections of grief-madness shape how the readers/audiences might respond to the romance narratives and the characters. Through episodes

³²⁵ Turner, “Silent Testimony,” 82.

³²⁶ Wendy J. Turner, “Introduction,” in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy J. Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 14.

³²⁷ Harper, *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*, 16.

of grief-madness, these romances look at the often contradictory demands made on knights. Grief-madness and its all-encompassing amnesia explore the vulnerabilities of the mad characters, which can evoke feelings of sympathy from the readers/audiences for the mad characters, particularly Ache flour who believes her son is dead.

Further study into the ways in which medieval writers used a loss of memory as a way in which to indicate a character's madness will be helpful in discerning medieval attitudes and interpretations of mental illness and will be useful in the field of disability studies, particularly concerning representations of female madness in romance, since this has received little to no scholarly research to date. Middle English romances often show an interest in themes of madness and memory, which does seem to reflect certain concerns and ideas that people in medieval England had about mental illness at the time that these romances were being composed, and this chapter has sought to contribute to the research into this interesting topic of memory and madness within Middle English Arthurian romances.

Chapter Four

“And munge me with matens and masses in melle”: Remembering the Dead in Medieval English Romance and Culture

Introduction

While the previous chapter explored madness in Middle English romances and how this could be seen as a symbolic type of death for the mad character because madness in Middle English romance is often represented as a loss of memory, language, and other identity markers, this chapter will explore the physical deaths of characters in select Middle English romance texts. Discussions and depictions of the deaths of these characters are often interwoven with the need to remember and pray for them, which reflects contemporary commemoration practices in late medieval England. K. S. Whetter and Karen Cherewatuk note that from the Arthurian legend’s inception in the Middle Ages through to its portrayal in modern fiction and film, the theme of death is prevalent.³²⁸ Two defining factors of Arthurian romance are courtly love and chivalry, and the violent exercise of chivalry inevitably results in the deaths of knights.³²⁹ While romances with happy endings about individual knights usually only result in the deaths of the “other” (antagonistic knights not associated with Arthur’s court, giants, monsters, necromancers,

³²⁸ K. S. Whetter and Karen Cherewatuk, “Introduction,” in *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition*, eds. Karen Cherewatuk and K.S. Whetter (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 9.

³²⁹ Michael Wenthe, “The Legible Corpses of *Le Morte Darthur*,” in *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition*, eds. Karen Cherewatuk and K.S. Whetter (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 128.

Saracens, etc.), the overarching legend of Arthur and his court ends tragically with the deaths of both the antagonists and protagonists. Themes of death and remembering the dead are therefore explored in more detail in texts that discuss the fall of the Round Table and the death of King Arthur than in some of the other Middle English Arthurian romances composed during the same time period that only deal with an individual knight and his chivalric adventures.

This chapter will focus on *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* because the narratives of these two texts detail the deaths of Arthur and his court and the fall of the Round Table, and they use memory in many different and interesting ways, especially concerning commemoration and the need to remember and pray for the dead, which is reflective of contemporary practices and beliefs, particularly the belief in Purgatory. In conventional chivalric romance, death is ubiquitous, but it is the antagonists rather than the protagonists who generally die within the narrative; however, these two Middle English texts force the protagonists to confront the reality of their own deaths, and they do so in very different and engaging ways, so it is fruitful to bring these two specific texts into dialogue with one another. Since they were composed during roughly the same time period, the representations of memory, death, and remembering the dead in these two texts can be comparatively explored and discussed. These romances are therefore able to shine a revealing light on contemporary beliefs and attitudes towards death. These two specific texts complement one another in different ways, and they both encompass the chronological duration or span of Arthurian history, but they do so differently. While previous scholarship has discussed the theme of death within these romances separately, it has neglected to discuss these two specific texts together in order to explore their various differences and affinities, how they use memory in relation to death and the dead, and how they differ from more traditional conventional romances that focus on a single

knight. It is worthwhile to explore the similarities and differences in how various romance writers used memory and death within their narratives, and this chapter is making a case for that by discussing these two texts within this chapter.

Malory and the anonymous poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* bring into focus two differing accounts of the fall of the Round Table. *The Awntyrs off Arthure* seems to follow the Alliterative tradition that details Mordred's treachery and the fall of the Round Table, whereas Malory incorporates many sources to complete his expansive work but relies heavily on the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* and the *Morte le Roi Artu* near the end of his work.³³⁰ In Malory's text, his readers/audience have followed Arthur and his court from youth to middle/old age, and at the end of his work the characters are experiencing death in all of its unavoidable proximity. In his final books, many of Malory's protagonists show a concern for the salvation of their souls, while Arthur and his court in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* show no real concern and do not heed the ghost's prophecy of their future downfall. In the first episode of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, the poet presents the audience with Arthur's court looking to their future deaths in the remote future through a very ambiguous prophecy. *The Awntyrs off Arthure* approaches the deaths of Arthur and his court through the ghost's prophecy, and the court is still in its youth, which might be one reason as to why the court does not seem to show any concern for the salvation of their souls. Both Malory and the poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* show an understanding of the heedlessness of youth and the impotence of age, and this understanding effects their treatment of death. Malory himself is very aware of the proximity of death, and his continued asides to his audience to pray for his deliverance from prison turn to him specifically asking for prayers for his soul in

³³⁰ When discussing these sources in this chapter, I will refer to *The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, in *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. Larry D. Benson and Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), and Shepherd's Sources and Backgrounds section of his edition of Malory's work for the *Morte le Roi Artu*.

the final book of his work. While death is present throughout Malory's work, this chapter will focus on the final books of Malory's work which detail the tragic end of the Round Table fellowship and deaths of the majority of his protagonists.

The ghost's encounter with Guinevere and Gawain in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* is very reminiscent of both The Three Living and The Three Dead and The Loathly Lady motifs. The poet brings these two motifs together in a unique way, and scholars have neglected to discuss the ways in which these two motifs can be read together in almost opposition to one another. The Loathly Lady motif is often associated with Gawain in very secular terms,³³¹ and the ghost who visits Gawain and Guinevere is reminiscent of a loathly lady; however, she is gruesome because she is a corpse suffering in Purgatory, rather than an ugly old woman. The Three Living and The Three Dead motif, where the three dead visit the three living to warn them of the suffering that will await them in Purgatory if they do not reform their ways is always used in more religious contexts. The poet uses these two motifs to juxtapose the worldly and the religious in this first episode of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. The belief in Purgatory is at the forefront of The Three Living and The Three Dead motif, and this motif is explored through the ghost of Guinevere's mother who warns her daughter about the torments and turmoil that await those who do not reform their sinful ways while still alive. The ghost wants to be remembered and comes to not only warn Guinevere about these things, but to also solicit prayers from the living to help aid her soul in Purgatory. The poet brings these two motifs together in the character of the ghost of Guinevere's mother, and the ghost highlights the intense and complex need to remember the dead through prayers for their souls.

Even though the violent exercise of chivalry and its inherent need to uphold honour

³³¹ For example, *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*.

results in the deaths of many and the eventual fall of Arthur's court, Malory does not seem to be critiquing the golden age of Arthurian chivalry; however, the author of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* does seem to use the ghost of Guinevere's mother as a way to criticize the Arthurian way of life. *The Awntyrs off Arthure* looks to the past through Guinevere's dead mother and also forward through the prophecy of the dissolution of the round table and the deaths of its protagonists. In *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, Guinevere sees her own mortality in the ghost of her mother (who also relates the fall of Arthur's court), and the final book of *Le Morte Darthur* relates the deaths of most of the primary characters that the audience/readers have followed from youth to maturity and even old age, including more detailed accounts of the deaths of Gawain, Launcelot, and Guinevere, and the supposed death of King Arthur. In Malory's work, death is treated not as just something that happens to others, but as a reality which we all must face (including Malory himself). However, while Malory directly addresses the deaths of some of his main protagonists, including Gawain, Launcelot, and Guinevere, and even his own death through his requests for prayers from his audience, he is reluctant to address the death of Arthur. The death of Arthur is the title of his final book, but Malory's account of his death is uncertain; Arthur either went to Avalon to be healed and will one day rise again as King Arthur, or he really did die and is buried with Guinevere. King Arthur's death is different than the others because his death exists in the realm of epic and heroic fantasy, whereas the deaths of many of the other protagonists contain references to various contemporary commemorative and devotional practices in their funeral rites, and the characters are very concerned about the salvation of their souls. The length of Malory's work, which includes the growth and ageing of the protagonists, allows Malory to reflect on death in ways that are not often seen in more conventional romance, and to reflect on contemporary devotional practice. But the death of Arthur – or supposed death of Arthur – also

highlights the ways in which the fictional world of the text is not unified and coherent; beliefs which have a provenance from beyond the realm of Christianity are also accommodated, however uncomfortably, into Malory's work. Instead of finishing his work with the death of King Arthur as one might expect from the Alliterative Tradition, or with the death of Guinevere, as is the case with the ending in the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, Malory finishes his book with a detailed description of the death of his favourite character, Launcelot, and Launcelot's ascension into heaven. Rather than focusing his last section of his work on the tragic fall and death of King Arthur, Malory more so focuses on the spiritual journey of Launcelot as penitent commemorator for many of the deceased characters. Malory might have done this because he wanted to end his work with the death of his favourite character, thus placing more importance on Launcelot's repentance and his turn to a devotional life; in doing this, Malory is able to spend more time on his favourite protagonist, and his work ends on a more spiritual and devotional tone that seems to have a sense of finality that is not there with his description of Arthur's death. There is also a sense of spiritual comfort that can be gained from Malory's emphasis on the salvation of a sinner. Because Malory placed such a high importance on the character of Launcelot and his spiritual journey at the end of his work, this chapter will explore Launcelot's role as a penitent commemorator for many of the deceased protagonists, and this will be the main focus on the section in this chapter that discusses Malory's work. These two texts therefore interestingly juxtapose both worldly and religious treatments of death. The ghost in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* wants prayers for her soul in Purgatory and instructs her daughter on what to do to also save her own soul, but most of what the ghost says goes unheeded because the youthful court is more concerned with worldly matters. Malory reflects many of his own society's commemoration practices and religious beliefs, but the Arthurian court is very secular, and Arthur's death, or

supposed death, is described in terms relating to a pagan hero/king, which is starkly contrasted to the description of the death of Launcelot.

The Awntyrs off Arthure and *Le Morte Darthur* both show a relationship between the living and the dead, and this relationship is inherently social. The dead either directly communicate with the living, or the memories of the deceased and prayers for them are evoked. Malory uses various modes of commemorating the dead as ways to remember, reimagine, or create the identities of the deceased characters. Malory also uses the various methods of commemorating the dead as a means to situate the progress of the narrative and focus the audience's attention on certain key moments that have taken place or will take place. Through the use of depictions commemorating the dead, Malory represents his own society's methods for remembering the dead and praying for the souls of the dead. In fact, Malory's text is full of references to English funerary customs, such as "lyke-wake, vespers, Mass, matins, dole, and month mind."³³² However, as previously noted, Malory's account of Arthur's death is different and does not reflect contemporary commemoration practices. Malory also inserts himself into his own narrative and uses self-referencing language that shows his desire for his audience to remember him and to pray for his soul. Additionally, *Le Morte Darthur* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure* also highlight the widespread medieval belief and tradition of *memento mori*. These two texts also provide insight into the medieval belief in Purgatory, especially the first episode of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. Both *Le Morte Darthur* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure* explore themes concerning confession of sins, repentance of sins, and the need for penance, which all relate to the belief in Purgatory. Thus, when discussions of remembering the dead come up in these romances, reminders of Purgatory more than likely would have come to mind for the medieval

³³² Lynch, "Malory's *Morte Darthur* and History," 310.

audiences, so central was it to late-medieval faith and religious practices.

Before exploring these two texts separately and in detail, this chapter will provide a brief discussion of medieval notions of death and commemoration. The purpose of this section is to provide a brief description of medieval views on Purgatory and the various commemoration practices for remembering the dead that are reflected and explored in *Le Morte D'Arthur* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*.

Medieval Notions of Death and Commemoration

In any society, ‘the dead’ as a social or historical construct can only be explored through the expressed and recorded memories of the living.³³³ Kenneth Rooney discusses the concept of the “presence of the dead” in medieval culture and claims that in the Middle Ages death was to be kept in people’s minds by imagining their own deaths and also remembering those who had already died.³³⁴ Patrick J. Geary claims that in the Middle Ages,

death was omnipresent, not only in the sense that persons of all ages could and did die with appalling frequency and suddenness but also in the sense that the dead did not cease to be members of the human community. Death marked a transition, a change in status, but not an end. The living continued to owe them certain obligations, the most important that of *memoria*, remembrance. This meant not only liturgical remembrance in the prayers and masses offered for the dead for weeks, months, and years but also the preservation of the name, the family, and the deeds of the departed.³³⁵

The dead were present among the living in dreams and visions, through liturgical commemoration, and in their physical remains, especially the relics and tombs of the saints.

³³³ Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, “Introduction: Placing the Dead in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

³³⁴ Kenneth Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2011), 35.

³³⁵ Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 2.

Thus, the dead were drawn into every aspect of life, and they played vital roles in social, political, economic, and cultural spheres.³³⁶ Death was clearly very much a part of the everyday lives of medieval people, and memory had an intricate connection with ideologies concerning death in the Middle Ages.

Christopher Daniell states that the introduction of Purgatory as doctrine can hardly be over-emphasized in importance for the Middle Ages,³³⁷ but the plagues of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also emphasized the frailty of human flesh and the inevitability of death.³³⁸ The lingering memory of the Great Plague,³³⁹ and the recurrence of smaller plague outbreaks after that,³⁴⁰ would have contributed to the audience's sense that death was always waiting around the corner, and that one really needed to do everything one could to help the dead and to remember them. Hiram Kümper states that a major reason for the "sudden proliferation" of death imagery in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was because of an increase in the actual visibility of death, produced by the terrible epidemics of the time, such as the Great Plague.³⁴¹ During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, new themes connected with death and burial

³³⁶ Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, 2.

³³⁷ Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England: 1066-1550* (New York; London: Routledge, 1997), 178.

³³⁸ Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 194.

³³⁹ In the Introduction to *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague*, ed. Daniel Williman (Binghamton, New York: Centre for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), Nancy Siraisi notes that the Great Plague of the mid-fourteenth century "has long been recognized not only as a human calamity with few parallels in recorded history, but also has a factor in the subsequent social, economic, religious, and cultural development of medieval Europe", 9.

³⁴⁰ Joseph P. Byrne notes that the terrible epidemic of 1347-1352, was only the first of a long series of plagues that lasted over a 350-year time period. See: Joseph P. Byrne, *The Black Death* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 1.

³⁴¹ Hiram Kümper, "Death," in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter), 314.

appeared in literature and art. Themes that were popular in England during this time included the Dance of Death,³⁴² the Three Living and the Three Dead,³⁴³ and cadaver tombs. These themes were associated with the *memento mori* tradition, that is, repentance before it is too late.³⁴⁴

The relationship between the living and the dead was not one-sided; in praying for the dead, the living were performing good deeds, which was believed to be one way to shorten their stay once they died and entered Purgatory. Also, the saints in Heaven were thought to be able to intercede for the living.³⁴⁵ Thus, at times, a reciprocal community could be imagined between the living and the dead. Memory had to be regularly invoked in order to continually pray for the souls of the dead, as there was a moral obligation on the living to remember and pray for the souls of the deceased. This relationship between the living and the dead was deeply embedded in religious beliefs,³⁴⁶ particularly the belief in Purgatory. There are a number of classic accounts which explore the development of the doctrine of Purgatory and its wide-ranging effect on both the mentalities and the religious practices of the later Middle Ages,³⁴⁷ however, for the purposes

³⁴² Joseph Polzer claims that the *Danse macabre*, the dance of the living and the dead, captured the imagination of medieval people in the fifteenth century, but that the theme first appeared in the late fourteenth century. See: Joseph Polzer, "Fourteenth-Century Iconography of Death and the Plague," in *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague*, ed. Daniel Williman (New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1982), 116. Kümper also discussed the *Danse macabre* and states that "A fascinating heir of the *ars moriendi* tradition is the French *Danse macabre*, an allegory of the universality of death, just like the (usually quite unallegorical) earlier medieval *memento mori*. The term "*Danse macabre*" first appears in the fourteenth century in a poem by Jean Le Fèvre, entitled *Le respit de la mort*." Kümper goes on to state, "In the Dance of Death, people from all groups of society dance in pairs alongside a personification of death, usually a skeleton. The skeleton dances with living person and wears clothes that are similar to this person's clothes." See: Kümper, "Death," 324.

³⁴³ This theme within medieval literature will be discussed later in this chapter.

³⁴⁴ Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 195.

³⁴⁵ Gordon and Marshall, "Introduction," 4.

³⁴⁶ Gordon and Marshall, "Introduction," 3.

³⁴⁷ See for example, Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer (London: Scholar Press, 1984); and Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-1580* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992; 2nd edition 2005).

of this chapter, only a very brief overview of Purgatory will be provided.

Jacques Le Goff claims that during the fourth century, the greatest Fathers of the Church had thought of the idea that sinners might be saved by a trial of some sort and that by the twelfth century this belief gradually turned into the belief in Purgatory.³⁴⁸ According to Christian doctrine in the Middle Ages, Purgatory was a place where most souls went to remove their sins and prepare themselves to ascend into heaven. Purgatory was thus a transitional and temporary place, where the dead were thought to be purged of lesser sins through punishments similar to those in hell before they could be released into heaven. Purgatory was also sometimes defined as a connecting space between hell and heaven, which would then make it seem to exist in the same space as the living.³⁴⁹ Purgatory began to take on a distinct identity with its own physical location, which was imagined to be above hell or between hell and heaven.³⁵⁰ Purgatory was therefore believed to be an intermediary world in which some of the dead were subjected to trials that could be reduced by the prayers of the living.³⁵¹ Kümper states that Purgatory was thought to be an “in-between space and time, a locus for the cleansing and propitiating of the soul.”³⁵² Christopher Daniell argues that one of the key elements of medieval religion was the fate of the individual’s soul after death, and he states that an individual’s time on earth was thought to be “transitory and infinitesimal” compared to the life of the soul after death; however, the fate of the

³⁴⁸ Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 3.

³⁴⁹ Eileen Gardiner, “Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven,” in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter), 653.

³⁵⁰ Gardiner, “Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven,” 664.

³⁵¹ Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 4.

³⁵² Kümper, “Death,” 319.

soul was influenced by its actions while it was still in the mortal body.³⁵³ The living could work for their own salvations during their lifetimes, and they could also be helped after death through the good deeds and prayers of the bereaved (which the dead might have secured for themselves during their lifetimes).³⁵⁴ The souls of the deceased could move through punishment toward paradise, “being rescued by an array of devotional activities performed by the living including prayers, Masses, intercessions, and good works.”³⁵⁵ This idea of Purgatory thus encouraged the need for Christian charity; for example, providing food to the living poor and saying prayers for both the living and the dead. Hence, praying for the dead whilst still alive could help ease one’s stay in Purgatory. Eamon Duffy asserts:

Wherever one turns in the sources for the period one encounters the overwhelming preoccupation of clergy and laity alike, from peasant to prince and from parish clerk to pontiff, with the safe transition of their souls from this world to the next, above all with the shortening and easing of their stay in Purgatory.³⁵⁶

Depictions of souls in Purgatory would have been etched into the minds of medieval audiences because it was frequently described not only in sermons, but in art and literature as well.

The Awntyrs off Arthure

As previously mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Purgatory is central to the plot of the first episode in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. The poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* links two separate story lines, and while the title of the story suggests that Arthur will be a major figure in the plot, he hardly appears in the first episode. In fact, the first episode focuses on a unique

³⁵³ Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 1.

³⁵⁴ Kümper, “Death,” 319.

³⁵⁵ Gardiner, “Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven,” 668.

³⁵⁶ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 301.

exchange between Guinevere and the ghost of her dead mother: an encounter which provides the Queen – and the court over which she presides – with a graphic warning of the terrible consequences of neglecting religious and moral duties and leading a life of sin. While it is interesting that the author decides to insert a gruesome corpse into an Arthurian narrative, it is also curious that the author chooses to use the ghost of Guinevere’s mother because Guinevere’s mother never appears in any other medieval romance texts.³⁵⁷ Since Guinevere’s mother is not a character in any other known Middle English Arthurian romances, the poet is able to use her character in thought-provoking ways (such as a means to potentially criticize the secular Arthurian ideals and favour Christian spiritual values) and gives her an adulterous identity, similar to that of her daughter.

In medieval Arthurian romance, it is a common motif for Arthur’s court to be interrupted during a feast by an intruder who provides the opportunity for an adventure for the court. Both episodes of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* include an intrusion; however, in the first episode of this tale, the intrusion does not occur at court, as convention would normally dictate (for example, The Green Knight’s intrusion at Arthur’s court in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), but in the forest. This intrusion is not an opportunity for secular adventure; instead, it is an opportunity for spiritual salvation. While the ghost’s macabre appearance is disturbing, she is not bringing death or destruction to the court; rather, she is trying to save her soul, the soul of her daughter, the souls of others in Purgatory, the living poor, and the future of Arthur’s court.

Rooney discusses the opening scene of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and states, “A kingly hunt, emblematic of pride and life, and in the alliterative mode always liable to meaningful

³⁵⁷ Margaret Robson, “From Beyond the Grave: Darkness at Noon in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*,” in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, eds. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2000), 222.

interruption, is upstaged by a raging corpse.”³⁵⁸ Rooney is correct in his assertion that the corpse upstages any secular adventure that might have taken place and also that a hunt is emblematic of pride; however, Rooney is wrong to claim that a hunt is emblematic of life. Arthur and his party are intruding into the natural and wild space of the forest, for the simple purpose of hunting and killing animals. In fact, the poet even describes the fear that the deer are feeling and says that “All the dure in the delles / Thei durken and dare. / Then durken the dere in the dymme skuwes / That fir drede of the dethe droupes the do.” (lines 51-54). The poet links the fear of death that the deer feel with the impending fear that Gawain and Guinevere will feel when faced by a dead corpse who is upset that everyone has forgotten to pray for her and who tells them about their own future deaths. Thus, death is already a part of the narrative; however, the earthly activity of killing animals is stopped by the ghost who is participating in her own hunt for spiritual salvation. This incursion happens when the ghost appears to both Gawain and Guinevere, while they are in the forest with Arthur and his hunting party. It is interesting that Gawain is the knight who is involved in this first episode of the tale, as Gawain rarely has lengthy interactions with Guinevere in other Middle English romance texts; however, Gawain has a repeated association with loathly-lady-and-beauty pairs,³⁵⁹ so it does make sense that he is the knight to be included in this section of the story where the beautiful Guinevere has an encounter with the loathsome ghost of her dead mother. Gawain’s association with loathly-lady-and-beauty pairs would have most likely been familiar to the poet’s contemporary audience. In other romance texts that deal with The Loathly Lady motif, such as *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, the loathly lady has the ability to be turned back into a young and beautiful woman in such a way

³⁵⁸ Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination*, 211.

³⁵⁹ Robson, “From Beyond the Grave,” 231.

that it can be read as almost a denial of old age and death. However, in the case of Guinevere's mother, she is dead, and there is no way of bringing her back from the dead and turning her back into a young and beautiful woman, but there is a way to help save her soul from the torments of Purgatory, which is why she is upset that no one has remembered to pray for her soul. This association of the loathly lady could have been the poet's way of drawing on the audience's intertextual knowledge/memory of the other romances that include Gawain and a loathly lady. However, The Loathly Lady motif to which Gawain is associated, is purely secular, but this secular motif is altered; the ghost is not a loathly lady wishing to marry Gawain, she is Guinevere's dead mother wishing to be remembered, so that prayers can be said for the repose of her soul. The poet therefore places secular and religious ideals in opposition to one another, and the use of a loathly ghost is similar to The Three Living and Three Dead motif that is found in more religious texts.

The appearance of a gruesome corpse is not unique to *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, as artistic and literary depictions of the macabre corpse were popular in the Middle Ages. One popular literary depiction was *The Three Dead Kings*, which draws on The Three Living and The Three Dead motif. *The Three Dead Kings* tells of how the ghosts of three dead kings visit their three living sons to warn them of the brevity of life and the consequences of sin. The reason for their visit has similarities to Guinevere's dead mother's visit in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, and there are many versions of the tale of the Three Living and the Three Dead motif, which date as far back as the thirteenth century, so it is possible that the poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* was familiar with the story. In Susanna Fein's introduction to her edition of *John the Blind Audelay's Poems and Carols* (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302), she states:

The Three Dead Kings narrates a classic ghost-story motif, the Three Living and Three Dead, in a *tour de force* of dense alliteration and rhyme. This popular theme of *memento*

mori brings three kings face to face with unsettling mirrors of themselves in future time, when they meet the Three Dead, that is, the walking, speaking corpses of their fathers.³⁶⁰

Richard J. Moll says that *The Three Dead Kings* is not a direct source for *The Awntyrs off Arthure*.³⁶¹ However, there are clear parallels between *The Three Dead Kings* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. Both stories include dead monarchs visiting their children to warn them of the brevity of life and to warn them to repent their sins. Both stories also force the living to remember and commemorate their deceased family member. Both stories also portray the process of decomposition of the dead parents in graphic detail, capture the ambiguity and fear of death, discuss the fate of the parent's and child's souls after death, and depict the popular theme of *memento mori*. Furthermore, much like the appearance of Guinevere's dead mother in the forest while Arthur and his party are hunting, the dead kings also visit their sons in the forest while they are hunting. At the end of *The Three Dead Kings*, the three ghosts depart, and their chastising words, as well as their macabre appearance, reform the behaviour of their sons. The main message in these poems is twofold; the dead need to be remembered and prayed for, and the living can help their own souls through praying for the dead and performing good deeds while alive. Another popular motif of a child visited by a parent is that of a son who is visited by the ghost of his mother who is in Purgatory for a variety of sins, and *The Trental of St. Gregory* uses this motif. The description that the poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* gives of Guinevere's mother's condition and of her requests are very similar to the ghost's requests in *The Trental of St. Gregory*. *The Trental of St. Gregory* has long been recognized as a source for *The Awntyrs off*

³⁶⁰ Susanna Fein, "Introduction," in *John the Blind Audelay: Poems and Carols* (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302), ed. Susanna Fein. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009), <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/fein-audelay-poems-and-carols-oxford-bodleian-library-ms-douce-302>.

³⁶¹ Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 127.

Arthure.³⁶² Thomas Hahn discusses how the anonymous poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* transformed a popular legend associated with Pope Gregory the Great– the Mass or Trental of Saint Gregory– into a chivalric episode and argues that it “recasts a popular tale of religious devotion (in which a monk-pope rescues his mother’s soul from eternal torment) as a critique of the ideals and practice of the highest secular aristocracy.”³⁶³ Hahn goes on to state that *The Awntyrs off Arthur* “assumes, and gives vital expression to, a sense of corporate religiosity, in which the living and the dead are directly in touch with each other, so that those in heaven, on earth, and in hell (or limbo) act together in securing their mutual welfare.”³⁶⁴ In fact, the ghost’s request of masses for her soul (in both *The Awntyrs off Arthur* and *The Trental of St. Gregory*) makes it clear that those still living may affect the fate of those in the spirit world (i.e. Purgatory).³⁶⁵ It is clear that the literary representation of the interactions of parents in Purgatory with their children who are still alive was evident in many literary works in medieval England; however, it is interesting that the poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* uses the trope of a parent in Purgatory to also prophecy the fall of Arthur’s court, whose members seem to lack a connection to, and memory of, those in the spiritual realm. The poet’s treatment of death highlights the dissonance between secular and religious values, as Guinevere and Gawain struggle to understand the ghost’s message.

Arthur’s planned hunt in the first episode of *The Awntyrs off Arthur* takes place near “Turne Wathelan,” a place which in other Arthurian romances, such as *The Marriage of Sir*

³⁶² See, Stephen H. A. Shepherd’s discussion of *The Trental of St. Gregory* in “Sources and Backgrounds,” in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 366.

³⁶³ Hahn, “*The Awntyrs off Arthur*- Introduction,” 169-170

³⁶⁴ Hahn, “*The Awntyrs off Arthur*- Introduction,” 170-171.

³⁶⁵ Hahn, “*The Awntyrs off Arthur*- Introduction,” 170.

Gawain and The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle, is associated with the abrupt appearance of supernatural figures.³⁶⁶ *The Marriage of Sir Gawain and The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* are also romances that include The Loathly Lady motif, so the mention of the “Turne Wathelan” would have signalled to the audiences’ memories that something supernatural relating to the appearance of a loathly lady might soon occur. Like the deer lying hidden in the brushes, Guinevere lies under a laurel-tree. While the deer are aware of the danger they are in, Guinevere is completely oblivious to what is about to happen. Lying under a tree on or before noon is in a number of Middle English romances tantamount to inviting a visit from the supernatural. For example, supernatural visitations occur in *Sir Launfal* (when Launfal lies down under a tree, he is then approached by fairies who take him to the fairy princess named Tryamour) and *Sir Orfeo* (when Heurodis falls asleep under an orchard tree with grafted branches, the fairy king visits her in her dream and tells her that he will abduct her the next day).³⁶⁷ These markers encourage an audience familiar with the romance tradition, particularly this motif of falling asleep under trees and encountering the supernatural, to expect an otherworldly intrusion when Guinevere lies under the laurel-tree. While the audience may be expecting an intrusion from a fairy-like or magical being, the intrusion is, in fact, Guinevere’s dead mother.

³⁶⁶ Brett Roscoe, “Reading the Diptych: *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, Medium, and Memory,” *Arthuriana* 24, no. 1 (2014): 53-54. <http://www.arthuriana.org/>.

³⁶⁷ For other examples of medieval romances that include characters sleeping under trees and having supernatural encounters, see Curtis R. H. Jirsa’s detailed discussion in: “In the Shadow of the Ympe-tre: Arboreal Folklore in *Sir Orfeo*,” *English Studies* 89, no. 2 (2008): 141 – 151. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00138380801912909?needAccess=true>. Jirsa’s article also mentions a “range of elaborate and widely-attested traditions that allude to the potency of tree shadows and their disruptive influence over the regular course of the natural world.” There does not, however, seem to be a theme of Middle English poets specifically using a laurel tree in this recurring motif, as various types of trees, or simply just unnamed trees, are mentioned in these romance texts. Perhaps the poet’s choice of a laurel tree in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* had some sort of biblical allegorical interpretation in the Middle Ages, or the laurel tree could have had some sort of personal importance to the poet. The poet’s choice of a laurel tree could also have just been a random choice with no inherent meaning.

Even before she actually appears, the ghost has a supernatural control over the natural environment of the forest: the sky turns as dark as if it were midnight and it begins to rain and then snow (lines 75-82), causing Arthur and his hunting party to run for cover, which is reminiscent of the poor deer who had to run for cover earlier in order to hide from Arthur and his hunting party. Here, the tables have turned; a worldly hunt has turned into a spiritual hunt, and the hunters have become the hunted. The ghost then comes out of the lake “Yauland and yomerand with many loude yelles” (line 86). The poet takes a great interest in describing the ghost’s gruesome condition, and says, “bare was the body and blak to the bone” (line 105). The poet continues by saying, “On the chef of the [cholle] / A pade pikes on [hir] polle / With eighen holked ful holle / That gloed as the gledes” (lines 114-117). The author seems to take delight in describing the macabre appearance of the ghost and states that “To tell the todes theron my tong ewer full tere” (line 121). The ghost’s gruesome and terrifying appearance is definitely one way to grab the attention of both the characters and the audience. Helen Phillips discusses the description of the toads and serpents and says these animals have complex ancestry because they “belong to the *memento mori* tradition, demonstrating dissolution of the corpse; they may also reflect tales and exempla of ‘Adulterous Mother’ type, where toads and serpents symbolize illicit kisses and illegitimate children; but they also clearly represent the fiends of hell who, held at bay by baptism, have reclaimed the sinner after death.”³⁶⁸ The ghost’s gruesome body forewarns the characters and the audience of the consequence for those guilty of the same sins as the ghost, but her body also draws attention to the imminence and raw reality of death.³⁶⁹ The ghost is then a

³⁶⁸ Helen Philipps, “The Ghost’s Baptism in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*,” *Medium Ævum* 58, no. 1 (1989): 51. JSTOR.

³⁶⁹ Raluca L. Radulescu, “Liminality and Gender in Middle English Arthurian Romance,” in *Medieval English Literature*, ed. Beatrice Fannon (London: Palgrave, 2015), 32

gruesome reminder of the end that will befall Arthur and his court, and is “a striking juxtaposition of the spiritual reality of eternity and the artificial banality of courtly pretensions.”³⁷⁰ Whetter argues that the ghost is designed to give Guinevere and the poem’s audience cause to listen to her example and message.³⁷¹ The example she provides is her own horrific state in Purgatory due to her own sins, and her message is twofold: the living need to take heed and do good works to ensure a blissful hereafter, and the living also need to remember the dead and pray for them in order to alleviate the punishments of the dead who are already in Purgatory.

Before the ghost can even deliver her message, her gruesome appearance causes Guinevere to think that this is her “deth-day” (line 98) because it was a common belief in the Middle Ages that a demonic visit was a presage of one’s death.³⁷² However, the ghost simply wishes to be commemorated and to save her daughter from the same fate. Guinevere’s dead mother tells her daughter that “With Lucyfer in a lake logh am I light– / [Thus am I lyke to Lucefere; takis] tent [by me:]” (lines 164-165), indicating that she is in Purgatory.³⁷³ She tells Guinevere,

Thus [dethe] wil you dighte, thare you not doute;
Thereon hertly take hede while thou art here,
Whan thou art richest araied and ridest in
 thi route.
Have pité on the poer [while] thou art in power–

³⁷⁰ Maureen Fries, “The Characterization of Women in the Alliterative Tradition,” in *The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century*, eds. Bernard S. Levy and Paul E. Szarmach (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1981), 32.

³⁷¹ K. S. Whetter, “Love and Death in Arthurian Romance,” in *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition*, eds. Karen Cherewatuk and K.S. Whetter (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 101.

³⁷² See note 7 on page 223 of Shepherd’s edition of this text.

³⁷³ See note 2 on page 225 of Shepherd’s edition of this text. Shepherd discusses the common medieval belief that those who repented their sins but who had not confessed them in life, or those who had not completed prescribed penances in life, were consigned to Purgatory for the cleansing of their souls and cleansing could be achieved through the prayers of the living, especially through masses.

Burnes and burdes that ben besy the aboute,
 When thi body is bamed and brought on a ber,
 [Thay will leve the ful lyghteli,] that now wil the loute;
 For then the helps nothing but holy praier –
 The praier of [the] poer may purchas the pes
 Of that thou yeves at [thi] yete (lines 170-179).

The ghost reminds Guinevere to think of her own impending death and to take pity on the poor who can then pray for you after you die. In inviting Guinevere to think upon her eventual death and decay, the ghost is similarly inviting the audience to think upon theirs, and Alexander J. Zawacki argues that the ghost's message becomes a warning to us as readers to remember our own mortality and "the vanity of this world."³⁷⁴ While the ghost's message might very well cause readers today to reflect on their own mortality, the ghost's reminder to Guinevere would certainly have reminded the medieval audiences of this poem of their own impending deaths. Since the ghost is in Purgatory, she has been forgotten by the living because no one has provided prayers for her soul, and Carl Grey Martin blames their forgetfulness on "mundane contentment."³⁷⁵ While this does say something about the characters themselves, and their apparent lack of spirituality and connection to the dead, this also reflects the strong desire that late medieval men and women had to be remembered in the prayers of the living. Eamon Duffy asserts that medieval people had an immense fear of being forgotten after they died; therefore, the dead needed to be remembered, and they were entirely dependent on the benevolence and prayers of the living.³⁷⁶ Each Christian was asked to pray not only for his or her own dead who

³⁷⁴Alexander J. Zawacki, "A Dark Mirror: Death and The Cadaver Tomb in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*," *Arthuriana* 27, no. 2 (2017): 91-92. ProQuest.

³⁷⁵ Carl Grey Martin, "*The Awntyrs off Arthure*, an Economy of Pain," *Modern Philology* 108, no. 2 (2010): 185. JSTOR.

³⁷⁶ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 328.

were in Purgatory, but for All Souls too.³⁷⁷ Therefore, prayers for the deceased became just as urgent as prayers for the living.

After the ghost's warning to "Be war be my wo!" (line 195), Guinevere asks her mother if the singing of matins or masses might remedy her sin and help her to be released from Purgatory and into heavenly bliss. The ghost says, "Waynour, iwys. / Were thritty trentales don/ Bytwene under and non, / Mi soule [were] socoured [full] son / And brought to the blys" (lines 217-221). A trental is a sequence of thirty requiem masses offered in order to reduce the duration of the soul's stay in Purgatory. The specificity of thirty trentals here is interesting, as Shepherd states that Guinevere's mother's request for thirty trentals is another reason that *The Trental of St. Gregory* has been cited as a possible source for *The Awntyrs off Arthure*.³⁷⁸ The ghost goes on to say "To mende [me] with masses grete myster hit were; / For Him that rest on the Rode, / Gyf fast of thi goode / To folke that failen the fode, / While thou art here." (lines 230-234). After hearing her mother's speech, Guinevere pledges an oath to honour these behests and she says that she will make a million masses to commemorate her mother. Roscoe argues that Guinevere's answer "displays an impressive loss of short-term memory," because she says that she will perform a million masses, but says nothing about giving food to the poor.³⁷⁹ Guinevere's mother makes an effort to remind Guinevere once more of what she has to do in order to try to help her, and she says: "Thenke on the danger [and the dole] that I yn dwell; / Fede folk, for my sake, that failen the fode, / And munge me with matens and masses in melle" (lines 318-320). When beseeching Guinevere to pray for her soul, the ghost's pleas are shrouded in vocabulary relating

³⁷⁷ Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination*, 104.

³⁷⁸ See Shepherd's note on page 227 of his edition of the text.

³⁷⁹ Roscoe, "Reading the Diptych," 56.

to memory. In order to pray for the dead, you must *remember* the dead. The ghost's requests for commemoration and remembrance are not in vain, since Guinevere does remember her promise to provide matins and masses for her dead mother, and her promise is fulfilled at the end of the tale. However, there is no mention of Guinevere providing food for the poor (this includes food for the living poor and also matins and masses to feed the spiritual hunger of the dead). Thus, Guinevere does not seem to do anything to save her own soul, and there is no mention of her even taking pity on the poor. This raises the question as to whether or not Guinevere's efforts did in fact save her mother's soul in Purgatory. Hahn is confident that at least Guinevere saves her mother's soul, and he states, "the Masses arranged for the soul of Guenevere's mother bring heaven and earth together, and promise her full reconciliation with God."³⁸⁰ Leah Haught, however, notes that the audience is given no assurance as to whether Guinevere's actions do in fact save her mother's soul.³⁸¹ The poet leaves this ambiguous, as there is no indication of what exactly happened to the ghost at the end of the story, but the implication is that Guinevere at least remembered her promise to commemorate her mother, so her actions would have helped her mother's soul in Purgatory.

Haught suggests that the ghost's awareness of the body she had while she was living shows that the ghost has an awareness of time that extends beyond the present.³⁸² While the ghost is aware of her own past and also her horrific present state, Haught asserts that the dead mother is a personification of the past, which comes to disrupt a seemingly peaceful present in order to convey a warning about an ominous future to Guinevere whom Haught believes is "an

³⁸⁰ Hahn, "*The Awntyrs off Arthur*- Introduction," 172.

³⁸¹ Leah Haught, "Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers: Gender and Genre in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*," *Arthuriana* 20, no. 1 (2010): 17. <http://www.arthuriana.org/>.

³⁸² Haught, "Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers," 9.

unlikely subject.”³⁸³ Haught does not expand on this claim; however, Guinevere is not really an “unlikely subject” because in all versions of the tragic fall of Arthur’s court, she plays a pivotal role, so it would make sense for her to be privy to the ghost’s prophecy. Moreover, Robson argues that Guinevere and her mother are conflated by the text, and Robson states that “Guinevere is faced with one (possible? Inevitable?) version of her future self, the image of her fate should she continue along the path of adultery (as we, the readers, know she will).”³⁸⁴ Roscoe asserts that the ghost and Guinevere are “uncanny images of one another.”³⁸⁵ This “uncanny image” is the daughter as she will be –unless she mends her life– and the mother as she once was. The living daughter is abruptly confronted by the dead mother and while their physical appearances are not mirror images of one another, they both seem to share adulterous identities. Guinevere’s dead mother hints at her own past sins in order to warn Guinevere about her future. The ghost’s discussion of her sins, “luf paramour, listes, and delites” (line 213), is reminiscent of Guinevere’s own transgressions. It is left to the audience to decide if the poet is referring to Guinevere’s notorious affair with Launcelot, to her seduction by Mordred (as indicated in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*), or to Guinevere’s predilection for being surrounded by prestigious knights.³⁸⁶ All three possibilities require the audience to remember the tales which discuss and portray these aspects of Guinevere’s character. The poet’s contemporary audience might have been familiar with the *Morte Arthure*, or at least the audience would have been familiar with the Arthurian legend in general, so with the audience at least having some familiarity, the poet is

³⁸³ Haught, “Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers,” 3.

³⁸⁴ Robson, “From Beyond the Grave”, 231.

³⁸⁵ Roscoe, “Reading the Diptych,” 54.

³⁸⁶ Spearing, “*The Awntyrs off Arthure*,” 193.

able to make the ghost prophecy the future in a brief yet evocative fashion. Without the audience's memory of past tales, or the remembrance of the outcome of the Arthurian legend in general, these allusive hints simply will not work as narrative devices. Guinevere's adultery is simply hinted at here, as the poet's narrative does not include any adulterous behaviour, but the poet most likely assumed that the audience would remember other narratives that explicitly portrayed Guinevere's infidelity, which is linked to the fall of the Round Table.

Before the ghost of Guinevere's dead mother gives her final farewell to Guinevere, Gawain interrupts and asks how they (Arthur and his knights) who seek "to fight / And thus defoulen the folke on fele kinges londes" (lines 261-262) will prevail. This question seems to anticipate the arrival of Galeron in the second episode of the romance, showing the continuity between the two episodes. The ghost tells them that Arthur is "to covetous" (line 265), and the ghost provides them with a prophecy of the fall of the Round Table. The ghost mentions Fortune (lines 269-274), specific geographic locations, Gawain's death, and also provides a description of the traitor (whom the audience would know to be Mordred from other sources). The ghost says:

Beside Ramsey ful rad at a riding
 In Dorsetshire shal dy the doughtest of alle—
 Gete the, Sir Gawayn!
 The boldest of Bretayne,
 In a slake thou shal be slayne;
 Sich ferlyes sull falle.
 Suche ferlies shall fal, without eny fable
 Uppone Cornewayle coost with a knight kene:
 Sir Arthur the honest, avenaunt and able,
 He shal be wounded iwys— wothely, I wene—
 And al the rial rowte of the Rounde Table.
 Thei shullen dye on a day, the doughty bydene,
 Suppriset with a surget: he beris [of] sable
 With a sauter engreled of silver full shene.
 He beris hit of sable, sothely to say;
 In riche Arthures halle
 The Barne playes at the balle
 That outray shall you alle,

Delfully that day. (lines 294-312).

The ghost's prophecy here follows events from the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. A contemporary fifteenth-century audience would have recognized the ghost's prophecy as authentic Arthurian history.³⁸⁷ After delivering the prophecy, the ghost then quickly reminds Guinevere to pray for her soul and remember her with matins and masses. It is obvious that the ghost's main purpose was not to come and reveal a tragic prophecy of the fall of Arthur's court, but that she does so when pressed by Gawain, which hints at the omniscience of the ghost. Rooney discusses the ghost's prophecy and asserts that "In delivering her prophecy of doom for the Round Table, the near-at-hand withering of the flower of chivalry, she becomes a reminder, indeed a prophecy, of death for all of Arthur's court— and what reminder could be better served but by a corpse?"³⁸⁸ Using a corpse to prophesy the complete destruction and death of Arthur and his court shows the poet's narrative genius in portraying it in this unique way to an audience familiar with the overarching story.

However, while the audience would understand the ghost's prophecy, the poet gives no indication as to whether or not Gawain or Guinevere actually understood the ghost's prediction. By the end of the *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, it appears that the characters have forgotten the prophecy entirely, perhaps due to a variety of reasons: they do not completely understand the ghost's prophecy, they are distracted by the intrusion of Galeron and the ensuing events that take place after his arrival, they are in complete denial and disbelief about the frightening events that just took place with the ghost, they are young and view death as something in the far future (even though the ghost is not simply prophesying their inevitable, natural deaths), or they simply

³⁸⁷ Moll, *Before Malory*, 134.

³⁸⁸ Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination*, 211.

believe that they are incapable of changing the outcome. Jean E. Jost calls the ghost, “the outsider from hell, unwelcomed, unaccepted, and unheeded.”³⁸⁹ Arthur’s court certainly was not expecting the gruesome ghost’s arrival, so she was an unwelcomed intruder. However, the fact that she was unheeded could simply be because her words were not fully understood by Gawain and Guinevere because there is a sense that the dead and the living are not talking directly to each other. Roscoe states, “The conversation between Gawain, Guenevere, and the ghost jumps haphazardly from topic to topic. They discuss charity (11. 173-76), oath-breaking (11. 205-08), covetousness (1. 265), the wheel of fate (11. 266-73), transience (1. 215), and the efficacy of prayer and masses (11. 177- 82), among other things.”³⁹⁰ If Gawain and Guinevere did not fully understand the ghost to begin with, then their retelling of the events to the court might have contributed to this apparent disregard for the ghost’s prophecy. The sheer shock of the ghostly visitation might have also contributed to Gawain and Guinevere not fully understanding the ghost or forgetting what exactly the ghost said. Zawacki claims that “Guinevere and Gawain’s failure to act upon the ghost’s prophecies concerning the fall of the Round Table is a nearly incomprehensible act of forgetting. Gawain is told how he will die, but never seems to react to this information, defying the ghost’s command to ‘gete thee’ (take heed).”³⁹¹ Zawacki goes on to state that modern readers might be puzzled by the fact that Guinevere and Gawain seemingly do not inform King Arthur of what steps need to be taken in order to avoid the fall of his kingdom.³⁹² However, Zawacki is mistaken here, as Guinevere does tell the court about “the

³⁸⁹ Jean E. Jost, “Margins in Middle English Romance: Culture and Characterization in *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*,” in *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York: Routledge, 2002), 137.

³⁹⁰ Roscoe, “Reading the Diptych,” 55.

³⁹¹ Zawacki, “A Dark Mirror,” 95.

³⁹² Zawacki, “A Dark Mirror,” 96.

elcouthes that their hadde ther seen– ” (line 333), and, as previously discussed, she does perform matins and masses for her dead mother. While Guinevere does at least engage with her dead mother’s message and performs the requested commemoration services for her mother, Arthur and his knights do not seem to understand or act upon the ghost’s prophecy. Guinevere is therefore the only character who does heed some of the ghost’s words; however, she only focuses on things that have already happened or are currently happening (i.e. her mother has died, no one has prayed for her soul, and now she is suffering in Purgatory and needs prayers to help her soul). Guinevere and the entire court do not heed the ghost’s prophecy for things that will happen in the future. Radulescu claims that the poem’s second part displays “amnesia” in that King Arthur and his court show no real concern over the revelations that Guinevere and Gawain tell them about, and they simply continue on with their courtly life.³⁹³ Roscoe claims that the poem “recounts a story of incomplete memory followed by incomplete amnesia.”³⁹⁴ The ghost leaves as abruptly as she came, and the characters do seem to forget the ghostly encounter once the second episode begins. Anthony Cirilla poses an interesting question: “If they are all destined to be destroyed by Fortune’s wheel, including Gawain, what good does taking the ghost’s advice do, anyway?”³⁹⁵ If one cannot escape destiny, or Fortune’s Wheel, then perhaps a deliberate and compulsory amnesia is the court’s only recourse. If the court does in fact fully understand the prophecy, and they all believe that the course of the larger scheme of events is out of the court’s control, then forgetting the prophecy is actually necessary for the court to continue living. Zawacki argues that Guinevere and Gawain undergo a process of denial, and argues that when

³⁹³ Radulescu, “Liminality and Gender in Middle English Arthurian Romance,” 36.

³⁹⁴ Roscoe, “Reading the Diptych,” 49.

³⁹⁵ Anthony Cirilla, “Ghostly Consolation: *Awntyrs off Arthure* as Boethian Memorial,” *Ennaratio: Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 19 (2015): 80.

Gawain undertakes the battle with Galeron in the second episode: “he is not, then, oafishly forgetting the doubts and fears raised in the first episode and blindly rushing into the first fight that comes his way, but rather engaging in a complex process of encountering and then repressing a basic animal fear of death.”³⁹⁶ Zawacki asserts that Gawain’s apparent absence of the fear of death, demonstrated in his bloody battle with Galeron, is really a denial of death.³⁹⁷ However, this is not uncommon behaviour for Gawain (or for any of the knights of Arthur’s court), so Zawacki’s claim here that Gawain’s bloody battle is to be read as simply a denial of death as a result of the prophecy is unfounded. While other scholars have tried to come to a definitive answer as to why the ghost’s prophecy goes unheeded, it is clear that there is no straightforward answer to this query because the poet purposely leaves the interpretation ambiguous. The juxtaposition of the ghost’s suffering with the pleasurable life of the Arthurian court also raises potentially uncomfortable questions about the compatibility of the worldly life of chivalry with religious duties and obligations. Because of this ambiguity and the uncomfortable questions that the poet raises, there are many different interpretations of why the court does not heed the ghost’s prophecy: they did not understand the ghost, they forgot due to the distraction of Galeron, they did not believe that the prophecy would come true, they are young and viewed death as something in the far future, or they simply felt that they could not change fate. The poet already made new additions to the Arthurian legend by adding in the previously unknown characters of Guinevere’s dead mother and Galeron but was unwilling to have the characters address or try to alter the court’s ultimate tragic outcome. Roscoe claims that *The Awntyrs off Arthure* challenges the cognitive processes that are involved in reading a

³⁹⁶ Zawacki, “A Dark Mirror,” 97.

³⁹⁷ Zawacki, “A Dark Mirror,” 97-98.

narrative and, he suggests, through a spectral encounter that is forgotten yet remembered, the poem “haunts its audience and casts a critical shadow over the Arthurian court.”³⁹⁸ A medieval audience might have found it strange that the court did not heed the ghost’s prophecy, since people in the Middle Ages were very aware of death and the need to do everything they could to save their soul. Even if Arthur and his entire court are all destined to die according to the ghost’s prophecy, and the audience knows they are, it is still in the court’s control to feed the poor and pray for the dead. Feeding the poor and praying for the dead might help to save their souls once they enter Purgatory, so listening to the ghost’s advice would at least provide spiritual salvation.

A prophecy relating to the fall of King Arthur and his court is not unique to *The Awntyrs off Arthure*; for example, in Malory’s text, it is Merlin who makes a similar prophecy, and Arthur tries to address this prophecy by attempting to dispose of all the male babies who could potentially be the child (Mordred) from his unintentional incestual relationship with his sister. Malory states that Arthur puts all of the children into a boat that is sent out to sea, but Mordred was cast to shore and saved by man who fostered him until he was brought to Arthur’s court at the age of fourteen. Malory seems to indicate that he will rehearse more about this later in his work, but he either forgets to do so, or was simply referring to his source here having rehearsed it in more detail (How Uther Pendragon Gate Kyng Arthur [I], page 39). In Malory’s text, Arthur fails at his attempt to kill Mordred, and his attempt at this is tyrannical and very reminiscent of Herod the Great; however, Arthur does at least listen to Merlin’s prophecy, so the fact that the poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* has Arthur and his court do absolutely nothing to address the ghost’s prophecy is ambiguous and troubling. Moreover, the fact that in the various adaptations of The Three Living and The Three Dead motif the living reform and change their ways after their

³⁹⁸ Roscoe, “Reading the Diptych,” 49.

interaction with the three dead, and in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* Arthur and his court do nothing to save themselves and their souls from the prophecy does, indeed, cast some condemnation on them.

Roscoe discusses the authorship of the poem, as well as the way in which it was composed, and argues that “The writer(s) lived in a ‘memorial culture’ and was (were) in all likelihood familiar with principles of memory and mnemonics, but instead of strictly adhering to the laws of memory, the writer(s) artfully break(s) them. For the *Awntyrs* is a text in which forgetting is just as important as remembering.”³⁹⁹ Roscoe reads *The Awntyrs off Arthure* as “both coherent and incoherent,” and argues that the poem’s “(in)coherence contributes to its haunting effect.”⁴⁰⁰ Roscoe claims that the second episode of the poem exploits the role of memory in reading and simultaneously encourages the reader to both remember and forget the ghost who appears in the first episode.⁴⁰¹ However, even if the characters have forgotten the ghost’s prophecy, the audience has not, so while the poet shifts the plot to a different intruder in the second episode, the audience is not really encouraged to entirely forget what happened in the first episode. Even after the ghost leaves, the second episode is simply not engaging enough to make the audience forget the ghost and her prophecy of terrible things to come. The poet even brings the audience’s memory back to the first episode at the very end of the tale, by stating,

This ferely bifelle in [Ingulwud] Forest,
Under a holte so hore at a huntyng—
Suche a huntyng in [a holt] is noght to be hide.
Thus to forest they fore,
These sterne knightes in store,
In the tyme of Arthore

³⁹⁹ Roscoe, “Reading the Diptych,” 53.

⁴⁰⁰ Roscoe, “Reading the Diptych,” 50.

⁴⁰¹ Roscoe, “Reading the Diptych,” 50.

This anter betide (lines 709-715).

Instead of the typical romance ending of a prayer to Jesus Christ, the very last lines of the poem repeat the first line of the poem “In the tyme of Arthur an aunter bytdde” (line 1), redirecting the audience’s memory back to the first episode. In this text, the happy ending for the court in the second episode of the romance is haunted by the foreknowledge of the court’s tragic future that was presented through the ghost’s prophecy within the first episode.

Le Morte Darthur

While it is only the first episode of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* that specifically focuses on spiritual salvation and a connection between the spiritual and secular realms, Malory shows a concern for the spiritual realm and his own soul throughout his entire work. While Malory makes *Le Morte Darthur* memorable through his characters and their tales, he also tries to make sure his audience will remember *him*. P. J. C. Field suggests that Malory thought of his audience as those who were part of the English gentry who were enthusiasts for Arthurian romance.⁴⁰² Throughout his text, Malory establishes his own identity as a knight in prison and encourages his audience to pray for his freedom and to pray for his soul when he is dead. These invocations to his audience begin at the end of “Aftir thes Questis.” He makes it known that he was the one who wrote “Aftir Thes Questis” by telling his audience: “for this was drawyn by a knyght presoner, Sir Thomas Malleorré, that God sende hym good recover. ‘Amen & c!’” (Aftir Thes Questis [IV], page 112). At the end of “The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney,” Malory writes, “And I pray you all that redyth this tale to pray for hym that this wrote, that God sende hym good delyveraunce sone, and has-tely. Amen” (“The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney” [VII], page 227). At the end of “Syr

⁴⁰² Field, “Malory and His Audience,” 21.

Trystrams de Lyones,” Malory again reminds his audience that he is the author of this work by writing, “Here endyth the secunde boke off Syr Trystram de Lyones, whyche drawyn was oute of Freynshe by Sir Thomas Malleorré, knyght, as Jesu be hys helpe. Amen” (Syr Trystrams de Lyones [XII], page 495). Malory mentions himself again at the end of “The Sankgreal” by saying, “Thus endith the tale of the Sankgreal that was breffly drawyn oute of Freynshe– which ys a tale cronyclod for one of the trewyst and of the holyest that ys in thys worlde– by Sir Thomas Maleorré, knyght. O blessed Jesu, helpe hym thorow hys myght. Amen” (The Sankgreal [XVII], page 587). At the close of *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory makes one final plea to his audience to remember him and pray for his soul. He writes:

I praye you all, jentylmen and jentylwymmen that redeth this book of Arthur and his knyghtes from the begynnyng to the endynge, praye for me whyle I am on lyve that God sende me good delyver-
aunce, and whan I am deed, I praye you all praye for my soule.
For this book was ended the ninth yere of the reygne of Kyng
Edward the Fourth, by Syr Thomas Maleoré, knight, as jesu helpe
hym, for Hys grete might, as he is the servaunt of Jesu bothe day and nyght.
Amen (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], pages 697- 698).

This complete account of all of Malory’s self-referrals throughout his work reveals how much he was concerned with his audience praying for him throughout his entire work. Through his insertion of himself into his narrative by way of interjections to his audience asking for them to pray for his soul, it is apparent that Malory held to the doctrine of Purgatory and the efficacy of prayer for speeding the soul through Purgatory and into heaven.⁴⁰³ The sheer number of his invocations to his audience, and how these invocations are dispersed throughout the entirety of his narrative, makes it likely that these were more than mere formulaic expressions, especially

⁴⁰³ Karen Cherewatuk, “Christian Ritual in Malory: The Evidence of Funerals,” in *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory’s Morte Darthur*, eds. D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Janet Jesmok (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), 79.

since Malory was actually imprisoned during the time that he was writing *Le Morte Darthur*.⁴⁰⁴ D. Thomas Hanks Jr. discusses Malory's imprisonment while he was writing his work and states, "Given that he spent the last several years of his life in prison, and wrote his *Morte* during his imprisonment, one can see why Malory adds the explicit praying for good recover; one can see, too, given the charges against him, why he might be motivated to develop throughout his long work a theme of grace that says that sin can be forgiven."⁴⁰⁵ Being a "knyght presoner" writing about the death of Arthur, would have put death and Purgatory at the forefront of Malory's mind. Through these self-referrals, Malory shows his preoccupation with the salvation of his own soul. It is also interesting to note that Malory's self-referrals near the beginning of his text deal more with his physical deliverance from prison, but his last plea specifically mentions prayers for his soul. Malory's work details the full life cycle of King Arthur, and a sense of mortality and his own sense of the inevitability and imminence of death becomes evident closer to the end of his work. Although Malory was, of course, still alive when writing *Le Morte Darthur*, he did die shortly after finishing his work,⁴⁰⁶ and there is a poignancy in his final address to his audience. As Malory reaches the end of his work, death is not something his protagonists can deny or hide from, and Malory's plea shows that he acknowledges that he can't hide from death or deny it either. Malory's requests for remembrance and prayers for his soul are much like the pleas for prayers and masses that come from the ghost in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. The ghost's physical and spiritual state, as well as her warning about what awaits sinners in death, belongs to the very

⁴⁰⁴ In his edition of *Le Morte Darthur*, Stephen H. A. Shepherd notes that Malory was in prison from 1468 until possibly his death on March 14, 1471. See: "Chronologies," xxvi-xxvii.

⁴⁰⁵ D. Thomas Hanks Jr., "'Al maner of good love comyth of God': Malory, God's Grace, and Noble Love," in *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, eds. D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Janet Jesmok (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), 23.

⁴⁰⁶ Malory wrote *Le Morte Darthur* from 1469-1470 and died in 1471.

widespread medieval tradition of the *memento mori*.⁴⁰⁷ The ghost's discussion of Purgatory and her pleas for prayers, provide insight into the medieval belief in Purgatory and how important it was in medieval conceptions of death and remembering the dead. In Malory's text, both he and his characters provide insight into the medieval belief in Purgatory through the discussion of the need for masses and prayers for the dead by the living.

Not only did Malory show a concern for his own soul, but his work also contained many reflections of his own contemporary society's commemoration practices, and he often does so through the character of Launcelot. Malory bestows an interesting identity onto his favourite character, as Launcelot takes on both a secular and spiritual identity within the later books of Malory's work. Launcelot is one of the best chivalric knights in the world, but he also takes on a devotional role and becomes a penitent mourner for several of the characters, and his penitent mourning is what helps him ascend directly into heaven at the end of Malory's text. Launcelot was arguably Malory's favourite character, so this might have been the reason for Launcelot's more prominent role in the narrative and why he is the character who is used by Malory to reflect many of the contemporary commemoration practices at the time Malory was writing his work. Even though Malory's last section is titled, "The Deth of Arthur," Launcelot is a more prominent figure in the section, and he is the last character to die, which is a change from some of Malory's sources. Launcelot struggles throughout Malory's work, as he tries to be a chivalrous knight and is known as one of the best knights in the world, but he is unable to attain the Grail Quest because of his earthly love for Guinevere. This earthly love that they share then ultimately and inadvertently leads to the fall of the Round Table and the deaths of many of the characters.

⁴⁰⁷ Stephen H. A. Shepherd, "Sources and Backgrounds," in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 367.

Throughout the last section of Malory's work, Launcelot tries to take on the role of penitent mourner for many of the deceased characters, and this overarching theme has been overlooked by scholars. Even though Launcelot takes on the role of penitent commemorator, it is not until the very end of the story when Guinevere declines Launcelot's offer to go with him that he decides to completely reject his chivalric, secular life and turn to a completely spiritual one.

Launcelot tries unsuccessfully to take on the role of penitent mourner in an interesting episode where Launcelot offers to found chantries for Gareth and Gaherys, whom he has just accidentally slain. This episode is not found in Malory's sources, so this seems to be reflective of the role of the penitent mourner that Malory tries to assign to Launcelot, as well as the immense popularity that chantries had in late medieval England. Chantries were an integral part of remembering and praying for the dead in order to aid their souls in Purgatory.⁴⁰⁸ Before discussing this episode in Malory's work in more detail, a very brief overview of chantries and the chantry movement that occurred in late medieval England will be provided in order to give some context as to why Malory might have added in this episode.

A chantry can refer to both "an endowment founded for a priest or priests to celebrate masses for the soul of the founder or for another or others specified in the endowment," as well as the alter, chapel or other section of the church endowed for the purpose of providing masses and prayers for the deceased.⁴⁰⁹ Chantries were attached to both individuals and/or their

⁴⁰⁸ See: Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-1580* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992; 2nd edition 2005); Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003); Alan Kreider, *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978); and Marie-Hélène Rousseau, *Saving the Souls of Medieval London: Perpetual Chantries at St. Paul's Cathedral, c. 1200-1548* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011).

⁴⁰⁹ "Chantry", *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/30532?redirectedFrom=chantry&>.

families.⁴¹⁰ A chantry could be housed in a monastic church, a parish church, a collegiate church, a cathedral, or a specially constructed chapel.⁴¹¹ The chantry movement in late medieval England is significant and noteworthy due to its popularity and its importance as a form of individual spiritual expression.⁴¹² Ann R. Meyer discusses the immense importance of chantries in the lives of medieval English people and she states,

Fear of the sufferings of Hell and Purgatory, a belief in the intercessory power of the saints and the healing powers of their bodily remains, a belief in the spiritual power of the prayers of the living, the desire for a personal, daily encounter with the divine, and, above all, a wish to find some way to keep the dead alive in the minds of the living are the features of late medieval piety that found renewed expression in the private liturgical rituals of the chantry movement.⁴¹³

Robert L. Kelly also agrees on the importance and popularity of chantries, and he claims that chantries were the most widely endowed and most popular ecclesiastical institution of the later Middle Ages.⁴¹⁴ The immense popularity of chantry foundations could be ascribed to the Church's teachings about charity to the poor and the efficacy of prayers for the dead in Purgatory.⁴¹⁵ Chantries were being founded in East Anglia right up to the Chantry Act of 1545, which ordered the seizure of all chantry funds.⁴¹⁶ The Suppression Acts of Henry VIII (1545) and Edward VI (1547) dissolved the chantry institutions entirely, and hundreds of chantries were

⁴¹⁰ Eamon Duffy, "Religious Belief," in *A Social History of England 1200-1500*, eds. Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 313.

⁴¹¹ Duffy, "Religious Belief," 309.

⁴¹² Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 100.

⁴¹³ Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem*, 103.

⁴¹⁴ Robert L. Kelly, "Penitence as a Remedy for War in Malory's 'Tale of the Death of Arthur,'" *Studies in Philology* 91, no. 2 (1994): 116. JSTOR.

⁴¹⁵ Kelly, "Penitence as a Remedy for War in Malory's 'Tale of the Death of Arthur,'" 117.

⁴¹⁶ Kelly, "Penitence as a Remedy for War in Malory's 'Tale of the Death of Arthur,'" 116.

dismantled and/or destroyed.⁴¹⁷ Over fifty years after the Suppression Acts, Shakespeare wrote a notable speech in *Henry V* (act IV, scene I), which included a speech from Henry V regarding two chantries that he had built for his uncle, Richard II.⁴¹⁸ It is interesting that Shakespeare even mentions chantries, since they were no longer being used in England. However, Richard II was a huge supporter of the chantry movement. During his reign there was a great increase of chantry foundations, with Richard founding many of his own.⁴¹⁹

Malory, writing after the reigns of Richard II and Henry the V, and long before the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, includes an extended dialogue not found in his sources, in which Launcelot offers to found chantries in memory of the souls of Gareth and Gaherys (whom he accidentally slayed while he was saving Guinevere). Many instances of burial rites in Malory's text do accord in general terms with fifteenth-century commemoration practices,⁴²⁰ and one of these instances can be found in Launcelot's offer to construct chantries for Gareth and Gaherys. Kelly asserts that Launcelot's gesture to found chantries goes to the core of fifteenth-century aristocratic religiosity.⁴²¹ There is a notable historical example of founding chantries as a form of restitution for the dead killed in battle, which is reminiscent of Launcelot's offer to found chantries for Gareth and Gaherys. In 1458, the Duke of York and his party were made to endow a chantry at St. Albans Abbey on behalf of the souls of the Earl of Northumberland, the Earl of Somerset, the Duke of Buckingham, and Lord Clifford who were killed at the Battle of St.

⁴¹⁷ Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem*, 99.

⁴¹⁸ "And I have built / Two chantries where the sad and solemn priests / Sing still for Richard's soul." Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, Rebecca Niles, eds., *Henry V* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, n.d.), accessed November 2, 2017. www.folgerdigitaltexts.org.

⁴¹⁹ Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem*, 103.

⁴²⁰ Catherine Batt, *Malory's Morte Darthur: Remaking Arthurian Tradition* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 160.

⁴²¹ Kelly, "Penitence as a Remedy for War in Malory's 'Tale of the Death of Arthur,'" 116.

Albans (March 22, 1455).⁴²² In Malory's extended dialogue, Launcelot admits to slaying Gareth and Gaherys while he was battling other knights in order to save Guinevere, but he says to Gawain "I loved no kynnes-man I had more than I loved hym" and continues by stating,

I woll bewayle Sir Gareth hys dethe, nat only for
 the grete feare I have of you, but for many causys which causyth
 me to be sorowfull. One is that I made hym knight; another ys, I
 wote well he oved me aboven all othir knyghtes; and the third ys,
 he was passing noble and trew, curteyse and jantill and well-
 condicionde; the fourth ys, I wyste well, anone as I harde that Sir
 Gareth was dede, I knew well that I shulde never aftir have youre
 love, my lorde Sir Gawayne, but everlastyng warre betwyxt us– and
 also I wyste well, that ye wolde cause my noble lorde Kynge Arthur
 for ever to be my mortall foo.
 And as Jesu be my helpe, and by my knyghthode, I slewe never
 Sir Gareth nother hys brother be my wyllynge– but alas that ever
 they were unarmed that unhappy day!" (The Deth of Arthur [XX], page 668).

In this passage, Launcelot reminds Gawain how much he loved Gareth, how sorrowful he is over Gareth's death, and that Gareth's and Gaherys' deaths were accidental. Launcelot's attestation of admiration, love, and grief here is not found in any of Malory's sources, and it is likely Malory's own invention.⁴²³ Malory's insertion of this episode into the narrative highlights the role of penitent commemorator that Launcelot tries to take on for the two slain brothers. Nolan remarks that the chivalric love that was binding Launcelot and Gareth bows to destruction and death, and this passage weights more heavily because he makes the audience recall the two tales that Malory had devoted to "the beauty of Lancelot's and Gareth's essential, unalterable nobility of spirit."⁴²⁴ Launcelot then conveys his plan to Arthur and Gawain to make restitution for the

⁴²² Kelly, "Penitence as a Remedy for War in Malory's 'Tale of the Death of Arthur,' 111; and Batt, *Malory's Morte Darthur*, 176-177.

⁴²³ Barbara Nolan, "The *Tale of Sir Gareth* and the *Tale of Sir Lancelot*," in *A Companion to Malory*, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 153.

⁴²⁴ Nolan, "The *Tale of Sir Gareth* and the *Tale of Sir Lancelot*," 181.

deaths of the two brothers, and he declares:

if it may please the Kyngis good
 race and you, my lorde Sir Gawayn: I shall firste begyn at Sand-
 wyche, and there I shall go in my shearte, barefoote, and at every
 ten myles ende I shall founde and gar make an house of religious,
 of what order that yel woll assygne to me, with an hole covente, to
 synge and rede day and nyght in especiall for Sir Gareth sake and
 Sir Gaherys; and thys shall I perfourme [from Sandwyche unto Car-
 leil; and every hows shal I have suffycyent lyvelonde. And this shal I
 performe] whyle that I have ony lyvelod in Crystyndom, and there
 ys none of all thes religious placis but they shall be performed,
 furnysshed, and garnyssed with all thyngis as an holy place ought
 to be. And thys were fayrar and more holyar and more perfyte to
 their soulis than ye, my moste noble Kyng, and you, Sir Gawayne,
 to warre uppon me, for thereby shall ye gete none awayle.
 (The Deth of Arthur [XX], page 668).

Here, Launcelot is offering to make a penitential journey that will be the length of the entire kingdom, from Sandwich to Carlisle. In offering to make this journey on foot and to found chantries at every ten miles (which would be nearly 40 chantries), Launcelot is trying to avert an all-out war over the deaths of Gareth and Gaherys and is trying to persuade Arthur and Gawain to let him take on the role as penitent commemorator. Launcelot is essentially offering a peace agreement because he is trying to propose an alternative to revenge and war over the deaths of Gawain's two brothers. Kelly argues that Launcelot's peace offer announces a central theme in Malory's work, which is penitence as a remedy for war.⁴²⁵ These chantries would be a way of averting a war and also a way of remembering and praying for the souls of Gareth and Gaherys. Launcelot's offer would also allow him to atone for his sin of accidentally slaying them, so his offer will aid the souls of the two brothers and will also aid Launcelot's soul. Launcelot's offer to found chantries here continues Launcelot's spiritual journey and his role as penitent mourner throughout the remainder of Malory's narrative, and he even becomes the penitent mourner for

⁴²⁵ Kelly, "Penitence as a Remedy for War in Malory's 'Tale of the Death of Arthur,'" 113.

Gawain himself.

However, Gawain, refuses Launcelot's offer to found the chantries for his brothers, and this highlights the tension between the secular and the spiritual that exists in Malory's work. Gawain refuses the founding of chantries in commemoration of his dead brothers because he is tied to secular chivalric honour, which requires him to avenge the deaths of his brothers through combat and war. Launcelot, however, attempts to make peace by offering a religious solution, which highlights Malory's notion of Launcelot taking accountability and being morally responsible for his role in their deaths, which makes Launcelot a more sympathetic character. Instead of fighting over their deaths, Launcelot offers to aid the souls of the two brothers through Christian charity and prayer. Unfortunately, Gawain does not accept Launcelot's peace offer and it "never finds material realization."⁴²⁶ Since this offer of penitence is never fulfilled, the souls of Gareth and Gaherys are presumably left without many prayers for their souls after their speedy burial.

Launcelot's offer to establish chantries can also be seen as a fictional representation of the preoccupation that medieval people had with Purgatory in their everyday lives. There was an enormous inflation in the number of priestly ordinations in the later Middle Ages, including the need for chantry priests.⁴²⁷ Since Launcelot offers to specifically construct chantries, it is evident that Gareth and Gaherys are thought to be in Purgatory. Launcelot feels the need to found chantries in order to help the souls of the two dead brothers; however, in doing so, Launcelot would also be helping his own soul through penance. Launcelot sees his proposed act of founding chantries as a sort of pilgrimage undertaken as public penance, which is simultaneously

⁴²⁶ Batt, *Malory's Morte Darthur*, 177.

⁴²⁷ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 301.

private and public, religious and political, secular and spiritual.⁴²⁸ Launcelot is therefore motivated not only by the desire to avoid war over the death of Gawain's brothers, but also by his own guilt and the need to save his own soul.

While Gawain does not allow Launcelot to become the penitent mourner for his two brothers, Launcelot does become a primary mourner for many of the characters in Malory's work, including Gawain, who writes a deathbed letter which specifically asks Launcelot to pray for his soul. It is worth noting that in *Le Morte Darthur*, Elayne of Ascolat and Gawain are the only characters that are afforded the opportunity to articulate their dying thoughts in a letter. While Launcelot is inadvertently the cause of both of their deaths, in their letters they ask that Launcelot be the primary mourner for them, thus allowing Launcelot to become the penitent commemorator of the two deceased characters. In providing prayers for Elayne and Gawain, Launcelot helps their souls in Purgatory. However, Launcelot's mourning and his prayers do not simply assist Elayne and Gawain; they are also of benefit to Launcelot himself. Launcelot's prayers for Elayne and Gawain allow him to atone for any part he played in their deaths, which, like in the case of Gareth and Gaherys, is accidental.

Before he dies, Gawain realizes that he should have made peace with Launcelot rather than try to kill Launcelot over the accidental deaths of his brothers. Gawain writes a letter to be delivered to Launcelot. In the letter, Gawain tells Launcelot, "I was smitten upon the olde wounde that thou gaff me afore the cite of Benwyke, and tho-row that wounde I am com to my dethe-day" (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 682). Gawain gives Launcelot the "honour" of causing his death, and the wound is a symbol that unites them in an eternal fellowship rather than hostility. Later in his letter, Gawain asks Launcelot to come and see his tomb and pray for his

⁴²⁸ Kelly, "Penitence as a Remedy for War in Malory's 'Tale of the Death of Arthur,'" 116.

soul, and he finishes his letter by reiterating his request and states, “And therefore I requyre the, moste famous knight of the worlde, that thou wolte se my tumbē” (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 682). Gawain’s letter shows his tragic self-awareness of both his impending death and the entire court’s disastrous downfall. Cherewatuk comments on Gawain’s deathbed letter and states, “The sacrament of penance or confession requires three steps by the sinner: contrition of the heart, confession of the mouth or shrift, and satisfaction by deeds. Although Gawain had time to make his shrift before his death, it is the letter he writes to Lancelot that attests to the other two phases through which the penitent must pass: contrition and satisfaction.”⁴²⁹ After Launcelot receives and reads Gawain’s letter, he says that Gawain’s “dolefull wordes shall never go frome my harte—” (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 690). These “dolefull words” in Gawain’s letter in turn affect Launcelot’s “harte,” which could be an indication that Launcelot himself experiences contrition of heart.⁴³⁰ The *Middle English Dictionary* cites memory or remembrance as one of the possible meanings for the word “harte,”⁴³¹ and in this instance it is clear that Gawain’s words will forever be in Launcelot’s heart, that is, his memory. Launcelot goes on to say, “For he was a full noble knyght as ever was born; and in an unhappy owre was I born, that ever I shulde have that myssehappe to sle first Sir Gawayne, Sir Gaherys the good knyght, and myne owne frynde Sir Gareth that was a full noble knyght.” (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 690). Launcelot takes full responsibility for the deaths of Gawain and his two brothers, even though they were all accidental. By taking responsibility for their deaths, Launcelot takes on the role of penitent mourner.

⁴²⁹ Cherewatuk, “Christian Ritual in Malory,” 83.

⁴³⁰ Cherewatuk, “Christian Ritual in Malory,” 83.

⁴³¹ “Harte,” <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED20604>

Launcelot goes to Gawain's tomb, and he weeps and prays for Gawain's soul. Launcelot holds a memorial for him, which includes a lavish dinner and monetary gifts for the attendees. Cherewatuk states that Launcelot responds to Gawain's death with the panoply of acts of remembrance: "alms-giving, recitation of masses, penance, and prayer."⁴³² At the memorial, Launcelot asks people to pray for the soul of Gawain. Launcelot's feeding and giving of gifts to "all that wolde com of the towne or of the contrey" (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 691) is reminiscent of the scene in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* when Guinevere's mother asks her to feed the poor. Whereas the need to feed the poor seems to be forgotten by Arthur's court in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, Malory implies that Launcelot feeds both the rich and the poor at this memorial banquet. The implication of Launcelot's gesture is two-fold: the soul of Gawain will receive prayers right away, which will shorten his stay in Purgatory, and the Christian charity that Launcelot displays to the living will aid his soul once he dies.

The next morning, priests and clerks sing "Massis of requiem" (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 691). Malory makes a conscious decision to place Launcelot at the centre of mourning and remembering Gawain, which continues the theme of Launcelot as a penitent mourner and continues to demonstrate his character's spiritual development. These masses and prayers help to remember Gawain and are made in order to save his soul in Purgatory. Malory's contemporary audience would certainly understand the need to commemorate and pray for Gawain in this manner because it was important for the living to pray for the souls of the dead in Purgatory. Through his mourning and commemoration, Launcelot is able to perform a sort of penance for his unintentional role in Gawain's death. Launcelot spends both time and money through his mourning process for Gawain. Launcelot's forgiveness of Gawain also serves as an

⁴³² Cherewatuk, "Christian Ritual in Malory," 83.

attempt on Malory's part to reframe the prevailing ethos of this final book, substituting the ethic of forgiveness and reconciliation for that of honour, and in the process rehabilitating Gawain in the judgement of the book's readership.

Earlier in the narrative, Elayne of Ascolat dies of lovesickness over Launcelot, and much like Gawain and his deathbed letter, she dictates a message that she has her father and brother write into a letter. She requests that her dead body be put into a boat which will float down the river (with the assistance of one man) to King Arthur's court. Once the boat is discovered at the court, Arthur, Guinevere, and several knights listen as a clerk reads out Elayne's letter, which states:

Moste noble knyght, my lorde Sir Launcelot, now hath dethe made us two at debate for youre love. And I was youre lover, that men called the Fayre Maydyn of Ascolate— therefore unto all ladyes I make my mone— yet for my soule ye pray and bury me at the leste, and offir ye my masse-peny; thys ys my laste requeste. And a clene maydyn I dyed, I take God to wytnesse. And pray for my soule, Sir Launcelot, as thou arte pereles (Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere [XVIII], page 617).

This letter affords Elayne some agency, as it gives her a post-mortem voice, but her agency is limited because the dialogue between the dead Elayne and the living is necessarily one-sided.⁴³³

Elayne's letter reveals her preoccupation with the salvation of her soul, especially when she states that she died a virgin. Sue Ellen Hollbrook discusses Elayne's deathbed letter and claims,

Here in the letter, where she defines herself as his lover separated from him by her death, Elaine obliges Lancelot as the grateful patron he claimed he would be to reciprocate in two ways related to that death. One, she requests that he sponsor her honorable burial, a public form of acknowledging his relationship to her. Two, she asks that her memory be kept alive by prayer funded by his monetary gift, deflected from being a dowry to being a donation for the custom of the mass-penny.⁴³⁴

⁴³³ Wenthe, "The Legible Corpses of *Le Morte Darthur*," 134.

⁴³⁴ Sue Ellen Holbrook, "Emotional Expression in Malory's Elaine of Ascolat," *Parergon* 24, no. 1 (2007): 170. Project Muse.

Elayne's death speech, therefore, reflects late-medieval concerns about the afterlife and the judgement that all humans must face after death.⁴³⁵ Much like the scene that Malory inserted in his narrative where Launcelot offers to found chantries for Gareth and Gaherys, Malory also diverges from his sources here when he describes Elayne's death in detail and the role that Launcelot plays in her commemoration. In Malory's main sources for this episode, the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* and the *Morte le Roi Artu*, Launcelot is not even at the court when Elayne's body comes floating down the river, and he is not involved in her burial. Malory also diverges from his main sources by having Elayne directly ask in her letter that Launcelot bury her and pray for her. In doing so, Malory's Launcelot becomes the primary and penitent mourner for Elayne, and it allows Launcelot to atone for any wrongdoing that Elayne felt that he had committed by not loving her. This atonement continues Launcelot's journey as penitent commemorator throughout the final books. After hearing the letter, Launcelot performs the "masse-peny" along with the other knights who help him bury her richly. Through Launcelot's adherence to Elayne's requests in her letter, her wish for reparation is granted, and her life is commemorated by the court and memorialized.⁴³⁶ In death, Elayne is afforded one final chance to interact with Launcelot through his commemoration and prayers for her soul. This scene also adds to the tragic identities that Launcelot and Guinevere have as lovers: Launcelot is unable to love Elayne because of his love for Guinevere, and his inability to love any other woman aside from Guinevere is the cause of Elayne's death.

In Malory's text, Elayne is not the only woman for whom Launcelot performs funeral

⁴³⁵ Rebecca L. Reynolds, "Elaine of Ascolat's Death and the 'Ars Moriendi,'" *Arthuriana* 16, no. 2 (2006): 35. JSTOR.

⁴³⁶ Holbrook, "Emotional Expression in Malory's Elaine of Ascolat," 156.

rites; Launcelot also performs funeral rites for Guinevere, which again differs from his two main source texts for his last section, “The Deth of Arthur,” which are The Middle English *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* and The French prose, *Morte le Roi Artu*. In *The Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, Gwynn dies after Launcelot, and Launcelot does not have any visions about her death before he dies, so by changing the order of their deaths, Malory gives Launcelot the opportunity to become the penitent mourner and commemorator for Guinevere. In the *Morte le Roi Artu*, Guinevere does die before Launcelot, but they do not have any interaction at the nunnery beforehand, and Launcelot does not perform any funeral rites for her. Malory, therefore, differs from both of his main sources, and in doing so, he continues his theme of Launcelot being a penitent commemorator. In having Launcelot be the last character to die, he also raises questions of whose death the audience/readers should care about the most. Malory’s choice to rearrange the order of the deaths and to have Launcelot take on the role as penitent commemorator for many of the deceased characters might be read as a tool that Malory uses in which to invite us to identify with Launcelot and care about his death more so than the other characters. By giving Launcelot this role of penitent commemorator, this presents Launcelot in a more sympathetic light. By having Launcelot perform the funeral rites for Guinevere, Malory also highlights the relationship and love between Launcelot and Guinevere.

At their final meeting in Malory’s work, Guinevere is very aware of death and is very concerned with her spiritual salvation. There is stark contrast between the youthful Guinevere in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, who does not seem to understand or address her mother’s prophecy about her future death, and the older Guinevere presented by Malory in this episode. At their final meeting at the convent in Malory’s work, there is a sense here that Guinevere and Launcelot are obviously both older, and both age and the deaths of their family and friends have put

spiritual salvation in the forefront of Guinevere's mind. After telling Launcelot, "I am sette in suche a plight to gete my soule [hele]," Guinevere asks Launcelot to leave and pray for her soul (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 692). As mentioned in previous chapters, Launcelot then joins a hermitage along with his brethren, and they live there together for over six years before Launcelot and Guinevere both have visions alerting them to her impending death. This vision comes to Launcelot three times in one night, telling him that "in remysson of his synnes," he must go to Amesbury where he will find Guinevere dead. The vision tells him that he must bury her with King Arthur (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], pages 693-694). When Launcelot arrives at Amesbury with his brethren, he is told that Guinevere had the same vision, which seems to indicate that Malory wanted his audience to make a spiritual connection between the two.

Launcelot performs the funeral rites for Guinevere and also sings Mass the next day (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 694). Once Launcelot and his entourage arrive at Glastonbury with Guinevere's body, more funerary processions take place before she is wrapped in lead and put in a marble coffin. Once Guinevere is buried, Launcelot swoons, and the hermit tells Launcelot, "ye dysplese God with suche maner of sorrow-makyng" (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 695). It is obvious that the hermit does not think it is appropriate for Launcelot to make such dole over Guinevere's death; however, Launcelot's reply is very poignant, and he gives a rather moving and emotional speech, which becomes a eulogy of sorts for both Guinevere and Arthur.

Launcelot says,

I trust I do not dysplese God,
for He knoweth myn entente; for sorow was not, nor is not, for
ony rejoysyng of synne— but my sorow may never have ende. For
whan I remembre of hir beaulté and of hir noblesse, and was bothe wyth hyr kyng and
wyth hyr, so whan I sawe his corps and hir corps so lye togyders, truly myn herte wold
not serve to susteyne my careful body. Also whan I remembre me how by my defaute and
myn orgule and my pryde that they were bothe layed ful lowe, that were pereles that ever
was lyvyng of Cristen people, wyt you wel (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 695).

Launcelot again takes on the role of penitent commemorator here, and he blames himself for their deaths. In his speech, Launcelot reconstructs the memories of the king and queen and explains that he is overcome by his memories of the greatness of both Guinevere and Arthur, and the result of this revelation that comes from his speech is Launcelot's "long-delayed conviction of his own sins."⁴³⁷ Cherewatuk discusses this speech made by Launcelot to the hermit and claims,

At his final meeting with the queen, Lancelot had not acknowledged any sin on his part. After Guinevere's death, however, the language in which Lancelot expresses his memories insistently bespeaks his atonement, as the queen's had earlier. Lancelot expresses not simply grief for his queen (and king) but the profound pain of contrition, with its emphasis on the language of the heart.⁴³⁸

In his speech, Launcelot mentions actually seeing their corpses, but since Guinevere is entombed in marble and no one has claimed to know for certain if Arthur is indeed dead, Launcelot's words seem to be a recreation of Guinevere and Arthur from his memories of them. For Launcelot and his role as penitent commemorator, spoken testimony and oral memory are more important than the actual physical bodies of the dead.

After burying Guinevere and giving a eulogy of sorts for both her and Arthur, Launcelot returns to the hermitage to fast and pray. For modern readers, Launcelot's asceticism may seem extreme, but a medieval audience might have viewed Launcelot's praying and fasting through the lens of conversion narratives that were known to them through the stories of various saint's lives, where fasting is often associated with the healing of the sin of lechery.⁴³⁹ Launcelot dies shortly

⁴³⁷ Olsen, "Adulterated Love: The Tragedy of Malory's Lancelot and Guinevere," 49-50.

⁴³⁸ Cherewatuk, "Christian Ritual in Malory," 87.

⁴³⁹ Karen Cherewatuk, "Malory's Launcelot and the Language of Sin and Confession," *Arthuriana* 16, no. 2 (2006): 70. JSTOR.

after Guinevere's death, and the bishop has a dream that angels were taking Launcelot up to heaven (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 696). Launcelot's dead body is then discovered emanating a sweet odour. It was a common medieval belief that after death, the bodies of saints and holy people would have a sweet smell,⁴⁴⁰ so Malory's mention of this seems to indicate that through his penitent commemorating and praying for the deceased, Launcelot has transcended his identity as a chivalric secular knight and has come to the end of his quest for spiritual salvation. Launcelot's earthly suffering and his attempt at atonement for his sins seem to have been accepted as a form of Purgatory while still alive. The bishop's dream, therefore, indicates that Launcelot's soul was not going to spend any time in Purgatory because he ascended into heaven as soon as he died, and this seems to be related to his role as penitent commemorator for several characters. While everyone is lamenting Launcelot's death, Sir Ector comes and gives a eulogy for his brother, commemorating the memory of Launcelot by first calling him "hede of al Crysten knyghtes," but then continues in more secular terms, stating:

thou Sir Launcelot, there thou lvest, that thou were never
 matched of erthely knyghtes hande; and thou were the curtest
 knight that ever bare shelde; and thou were the truest frende to
 thy lovar and ever bestrade hors; and thou were the trewest lover,
 of a synful man, that ever loved woman; and thou were the kindest
 man that ever strake with swerde; and thou were the godelyest
 persone that ever cam emonge prees of knyghtes; and thou was
 the mekest man and the jentylllest that ever ete in halle emonge
 ladyes; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortsl foo that
 ever put spere in the reeste. (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], pages 696-697).

Ector identifies his brother as the best of Christian knights but then goes on to give a eulogy that discusses him in purely chivalric and secular terms.⁴⁴¹ Even though Malory indicates that near

⁴⁴⁰ Shepherd notes this on both pages 397 and 696 in his edition of *Le Morte Darthur*.

⁴⁴¹ Dorsey Armstrong, "Christianity and Social Instability: Malory's Galahad, Palomides, and Lancelot," in *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, eds. D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Janet Jesmok (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), 122.

the end of his life Launcelot transcended his chivalric identity to that of a more spiritual one, Launcelot is still remembered by other characters, including his family, for his earthly, chivalric deeds. However, Launcelot's later life as a holy man obviously resonated in the memories of his kinsmen because Malory writes that they lived as "holy men," even travelling out of England into the Holy Land to do many "bataylles upon the myscreantes or Turkes" before their deaths (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 697).

Interestingly, in Malory's work, Launcelot is given the same type of burial rites as Guinevere. Their bodies are both carried in the same horse-drawn bier and masses of requiem are sung for both by the same bishop. They both also have one hundred torches burning around them. This similarity in burial rites seems to be a way of prompting the audience to remember and connect the two together even when they are separated by death. They both turned to a spiritual life and became penitent survivors after the fall of Arthur and his court. While Guinevere is buried with the supposed body of King Arthur, Malory says that Launcelot is buried at Joyous Garde. Malory writes, "And ever his vysage was layed open and naked, that al folkes myght beholde hym; for suche was the custom in tho dayes that al men of worshyp so lye wyth open vysage tyl that they were buryed" (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 696). Launcelot's body remained unburied for thirty days (fifteen for the journey and fifteen for the church). These literal descriptions of burial rites would have been familiar to Malory's contemporary audience through personal experience.⁴⁴² Malory's description of burials within his work often reflects the themes and practices of medieval funerals and rites.⁴⁴³ In his elaborate descriptions of the burials

⁴⁴² Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 65.

⁴⁴³ Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 65.

of two of his principal characters, Malory depicts his own society's funerary practices for commemorating the dead. As mentioned in the introduction, rather than focusing his last section of his work on the tragic fall and death of King Arthur, Malory focuses on the spiritual journey of Launcelot as penitent commemorator for many of the deceased characters, and this gives a sense of finality and spiritual salvation, especially for the character of Launcelot. Malory's decision to ascribe Launcelot with the role of penitent commemorator also makes him a more sympathetic character in the eyes of Malory's readers. While Launcelot transcends his earthly identity as chivalric knight and takes on the role of penitent commemorator, Arthur's ending is treated in very different terms by Malory, and Malory does not give a sense of spiritual salvation or finality for Arthur.

While most of this section on *Le Mote Darthur* has focused on Launcelot's role as penitent commemorator, and Malory himself focused on Launcelot's transition from a secular knight to a spiritual, penitent commemorator, it only seems fitting to end this chapter with a discussion of Malory's description of the death— or supposed death— of King Arthur because it is very different than that of the other main protagonists. In *Le Morte Darthur*, unlike Malory's other characters, there are only hearsay reports of Arthur's death. Malory mentions that Arthur is entered into a ship with ladies who make great sorrow and who plan to take him to Avalon to be healed; however, the barge could also represent his voyage from the world of the living to the world of the dead. Arthur tells Sir Bedyvere: "For I [wyl] into the vale of *Avylyon* to hele me of my grievous wound— and if thou here nevermore of me, pray for my soule" (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 688). Arthur himself seems unsure of whether he will live or die, and so he asks Bedyvere to commemorate him and remember to pray for his soul. Lynch comments on this scene and states that Malory frequently follows his major characters' deaths "with the

comforting rituals of late medieval mourning. Arthur's stark, lonely, and uncertain departure is most unlike the end of a mighty contemporary monarch, yet Bedivere, after one moment of terror at his abandonment, offers many years' obedience in his little chantry to Arthur's last command: 'pray for my soul.'⁴⁴⁴ After watching Arthur leave in the barge, Bedyvere starts weeping and heads into the forest and walks all night until he comes to a hermitage in the morning. Bedyvere speaks with the hermit who is weeping at a newly dug grave, and the hermit tells Bedyvere that a number of ladies came at midnight with a dead corpse. The ladies gave him gold coins and candles and asked him to dig a grave for the body. The coins mentioned here indicate that the ladies are paying the hermit to pray for the soul of the deceased. Malory later identifies the women who were in the barge and who were performing the obsequies, and writes that Queen Morgan le Fay, the Queen of North Galis and the Queen of the Waste Londis were all in the boat. Malory also adds that Nynyve was with them. Since Morgan Le Fay had injurious intentions for Arthur throughout the narrative, and Nynyve was the one that usually came to Arthur's aid, Nynyve seems to be added to the list of ladies in order to show that no harm was intended for Arthur. All four ladies are genuinely upset over Arthur's supposed death and are genuinely concerned for his soul. Sir Bedyvere ascertains that the body that the women buried must be King Arthur; Bedyvere then swoons and upon waking, he asks the hermit if he can stay with the hermit for the rest of his life, so that he can fast and pray for Arthur's soul (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 688). Bedyvere's choice to stay with the hermit and pray for King Arthur's soul, the tomb with its epitaph for Arthur, the choice to bury Guinevere there, and Launcelot's mourning of their deaths, all indicate that Malory's characters believe that Arthur is dead; however, Malory's own description of Arthur's death is ambivalent.

⁴⁴⁴ Lynch, "Malory's *Morte Darthur* and History," 309.

Directly after Malory says that Bedyvere decided to stay and pray for the soul of King Arthur, Malory writes, “Thus of Arthur I fynde no more written in bokis that bene auctorysed, nothir more of the verry sertaynté of hys deth harde I never rede, but thus was he lad away in a shyp wherein were three quenys” (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 689). This seems to contradict the earlier account that Malory gave, which indicated that the ladies brought Arthur’s body to a grave; however, Malory then tells his audience that the ladies brought him to his grave, “But yet the ermyte knew nat in sertayne that he was veryly the body of Kynge Arthur;” (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 689). Therefore, nothing is completely certain; it would appear that King Arthur did die, but Malory seems reluctant to altogether confirm his death. Malory then goes on to discuss King Arthur’s famous epitaph and says:

Yet som men say in many partys of Inglonde that Kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of Oure Lorde Jesu into another place: and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wynne the Holy Cross. Yet I woll nat say that hit shall be so; but rather I wolde sey, here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff. And many men say that there ys wrytten uppon the tumbre thys [vers]: Hic iacet Arthurus, rex quondam rexque futurus (The Deth of Arthur [XXI], page 689).

In the end, Malory leaves his feelings on Arthur’s death rather ambiguous by just saying that King Arthur changed his life in this world; however, it is uncertain if this change simply means that he has died. While Malory provides detailed accounts of the deaths of many of his other primary characters, including Gawain, Guinevere, and Launcelot, he does not fully address the death of King Arthur. In comparison to the deaths of Guinevere and Launcelot, Arthur’s death is not concrete and is very uncertain. Instead of a description of Arthur dying, he simply disappears mysteriously with the four women, and Malory refuses to tell his audience in certain terms whether or not Arthur truly is dead. Aside from Launcelot’s informal eulogy about the King and Queen at Guinevere’s funeral, there is no formal funeral for King Arthur. Unlike the detailed funerary descriptions for some of the other characters which depict fifteenth-century funerary

practices, such as those for Gawain, Elayne, Launcelot, and Guinevere, Malory's description of Arthur's supposed death does not reflect medieval ideas about commemorating the dead. Malory reflects many contemporary funereal practices in his descriptions of the rites and commemorations of death, and he is very orthodox in his religious beliefs, as evidenced in his asides to his audience asking for prayers; however, his treatment of Arthur's death is different.

Throughout Malory's work, King Arthur is given an epic hero/pagan king persona, and even Arthur's ascent to the throne is shrouded in the realm of fantasy and adventure, since he must remove a magical sword from a stone. The barge that is said to be taking King Arthur to the magical Avalon, and the possibility that Arthur may arise from the dead to become king again, belongs to the realm of fantasy, myth, and imagination. In describing the ladies in the barge and the possibility of King Arthur being taken to Avalon to be healed, Malory is invoking the ethos of the pagan hero and not the fallen Christian king. The mysteriousness and uncertainty surrounding Arthur's death makes the story all the more intriguing and notable in the audiences' memories, for it allows for future interpretations and refashionings. Perhaps the prophecy of King Arthur returning is true in a fictional sense because Arthur does indeed continue to live on in the memories of the authors who write tales about him and the audiences who continue to read and enjoy them.

Conclusion

Remembering the dead is a key theme in both *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* because, unlike other conventional chivalric romances about individual knights and their adventures, these two texts do not just deal with the deaths of the "other" or the antagonists. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, previous scholarship has discussed

the theme of death within these romances individually, but it has neglected to discuss these two specific texts together in order to explore their interesting uses of memory in relation to death and the dead, and how these two romance texts differ from more traditional conventional romances that focus on a single knight in regard to their treatments of death. In many conventional chivalric romances, the antagonists are killed, but the text is not interested in these deaths, so while death is a part of the narrative, it is rather inconsequential, aside from showing the prowess of the protagonist knight. However, *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Le Morte Darthur* deal directly with the deaths of the protagonists, the importance of remembering and commemorating the dead, and what happens to the soul after death. These two texts complement each other well in their various explorations of death and commemoration practices; *The Awntyrs off Arthure* depicts young people being confronted by a ghost and looking to their prophesised deaths in the remote future, and at the end of Malory's work, the characters are not young, and they are experiencing death in all of its unavoidable proximity. In the first section of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, the deaths of the protagonists exist in both the past (the ghost of Guinevere's dead mother) and the future (the ghost's prophecy of the fall of Arthur's court and the subsequent deaths of the protagonists). The poet uses allusions to other works and motifs, both secular and religious, in order to provide an interesting critique of the Arthurian court and its interest in earthly matters. The poet of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* approaches the theme of death and remembering the dead through the youthful court of King Arthur, whereas in Malory's work, he recounts the full life cycle of Arthur and the deaths of the majority of the protagonists (some of whom have made it into old age). While Malory continues to ask for prayers from his audience throughout his work, his pleas turn to specifically asking for prayers for his soul in his last book, which highlights his own sense of mortality and the imminence of death. The treatment of death

in these two texts highlight the dissonance between secular and religious values; the chivalric and courtly ethos of romance is secular, but religion requires the rejection of worldliness, and this rejection of worldliness in favour of a more pious life poses issues for the characters within these romances. Both texts, therefore, ask difficult questions about the courtly and chivalric ethos. The first section of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* seems to be a critique of the secular ideals of the Arthurian court because the characters do not address the ghost's prophecy of their deaths, and they do nothing within the narrative to try to prevent it or to save their own souls. However, Malory does not seem to be condemning the chivalric and courtly world in his *Le Morte Darthur*; rather, he explores the difficulty in trying to maintain both secular and religious ideals through his characters, particularly Launcelot, who Malory focuses on in his final books. Aside from Arthur, whose death is ambiguous and seems to exist in the realm of fantasy and epic, many of Malory's characters have secured a more pious life and have worked towards saving their souls and the souls of others through prayer and commemoration practices, particularly Launcelot. Malory bestows the role of penitent commemorator on Launcelot, and Launcelot transcends his secular role of chivalric knight through his various commemorations and funerary rites for many of the deceased characters.

In their distinct and interesting treatments of death, *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Le Morte Darthur* reflect commemoration practices and beliefs in late medieval England. The belief in Purgatory was a large part of medieval beliefs concerning the dead, and it figures prominently within the first section of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. Malory also shows a concern for the future of his soul in Purgatory once he dies, and his characters also show a concern for the salvation of their souls towards the end of his narrative. Throughout his work, Malory highlights many medieval commemoration practices for remembering and praying for the dead, which this

chapter has explored. Remembering the dead helped to maintain, create, or recreate the identities of some of the characters within these two romance texts, and commemoration of the dead also influenced the progression of the narratives. Furthermore, these narratives reveal some of the authors' and audiences' own views on memory's relationship with death and the processes of remembering the dead.

Over the last few decades, the cultural practices surrounding death and dying in the Middle Ages have become a subject of increasing interest amongst medieval scholars,⁴⁴⁵ and this chapter has aimed to contribute to this body of research by exploring the ways in which remembering the dead are represented and discussed within *Le Morte Darthur* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. While there are many non-fictional accounts that exist, which highlight how influential the need to remember and commemorate the dead was in the Middle Ages, fictional literary representations, like those of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Le Morte Darthur*, that contain references to Purgatory, chantries, the tradition of *memento mori*, commemoration practices for the dead, and death in general, should not be overlooked. These texts can further help us to understand the important role that memory had in regard to religious beliefs in late medieval England and how important it was for the dead to be remembered.

⁴⁴⁵ Kümper, "Death," 314.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored some of the ways in which memory is used as a tool by Middle English Arthurian romance authors and has explored a variety of texts that were composed in late medieval England (from the first quarter of the fourteenth century up to the last quarter of the fifteenth century) in order to arrive at a broad overview of how memory was understood and deployed by a wide range of Middle English romance authors. The thesis has explored some of these uses in relation to prominent themes found in the romance corpus, such as the intermingling of oral and written storytelling traditions, truth/honour in word bonds, grief-madness, and death. The use of memory in these texts shapes and changes the meanings of these texts and influences how we read them and respond to them. The various ways in which memory is used in these romances has been underappreciated and overlooked in previous scholarship. This thesis has sought to make good this relatively overlooked role and use of memory in Middle English Arthurian romance and hopes this study will encourage future scholarship on the varied and interesting ways in which these romance authors use memory to explore some of the many overarching themes and motifs present in this literary genre. Looking at the numerous and diverse ways memory was used in these texts will open up new avenues of understanding the texts and the society in which they were composed.

One of the ways memory is used by romance authors is through their references to oral storytelling traditions, which often come in the form of asides made by the author to a listening audience (whether fictional or real). These romances most likely had a wide range of contemporary audiences, but they all include references to oral, memorial storytelling traditions. Memorial, oral storytelling traditions were used by the authors to present their works as oral compositions of past stories of Arthur and his court. Memory, orality, and written traditions all have a place in the creation of these late Middle English romances, which points to the continuing role of memory in written textual traditions. Through this interesting intermingling of orality and literacy, these romance texts show that written culture and memorial oral story-telling traditions were still very much connected in a variety of ways in late medieval England. Previous scholarship has tended to make generalisations about the composition and dissemination of these works; chapter one rejects the polarisation of much of the critical debate about this corpus, favouring instead a view which recognises the bimedial nature of late-medieval literary culture and its compositional practices.

This thesis also explored how memory is used by romance authors in relation to oral word bonds and the need to keep one's promises and oaths, focusing, in particular, on *Ywain and Gawain*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Le Morte Darthur*. The emphasis that late medieval English culture still placed on memorial, oral traditions is heavily tied to medieval English views on "treuth" and the importance of keeping one's oral promises and oaths to others. While previous scholarship has looked at the importance of keeping promises and oaths in medieval romance, it has neglected to discuss how the keeping of promises and oaths is framed in terms of memory. Middle English romance authors explore what happens when characters forget to keep their promises to others, have made conflicting promises, or feel obliged to remember and keep rashly

made promises. The authors of these romances artfully use forgetting as a narrative device. How memory is used in relation to oral word bonds therefore impacts and shapes our readings of these romances. One of the ways forgetting is used by the authors is as a way to explore the moral failings of characters who forget their promises, but sometimes these moral failing might also be more forgivable when couched in terms of forgetfulness. Failures of memory therefore add to the ambiguity of these texts: they open up a space in which motives and actions are equivocal, and can be read in multiple, sometimes contradictory, ways. The importance that is placed on keeping one's oral promises and oaths in these romances once again sheds a revealing light on the bimodal nature of late medieval society, and the ways in which it still placed great importance on oral traditions and the spoken word.

Madness is another recurring preoccupation of the romance genre, and madness is understood and represented in a variety of interesting ways within the romance corpus. While previous scholarship has discussed the representation of madness in romance knights, particularly the madness of Ywain, Trystram, and Launcelot, it has neglected to discuss how memory is used by authors in their portrayals of the knights' grief-madness. Scholars have also tended to overlook representations of female madness, and chapter three sought to contribute to this relatively neglected area of research by exploring both male and female grief-madness in *Sir Perceval of Galles*, *Ywain and Gawain*, and *Le Morte Darthur*. As chapter three discusses, memory, or the loss of memory, was regularly used as a means by which to determine if a person was suffering from a mental illness in the Middle Ages, and the characters' descent into grief-madness and subsequent amnesia seems to be reflective of contemporary views on mental illness. The realistic portrayals of grief-madness in these romances shape how the readers/audiences respond to the narrative and the characters. A character's descent into madness

elicits sympathy, as it highlights the character's frailties and vulnerabilities, and their suffering might prompt readers to look sympathetically not just on their plight, but on their previous conduct as well. Through their representations of grief-madness, these texts also explore the impossible demands made on knights, and as such they might be read as constituting (whether consciously or unconsciously) a critique of chivalric ideals.

The last chapter of this thesis explored memory in relation to death. Death is a central concern of the romance genre, especially that of Arthurian romance, as the legend of King Arthur ends tragically with the death of Arthur, the destruction of his court, and the fall of his Round Table. In romance texts that portray the death of Arthur and the fall of his court, death takes on an immediacy and proximity which is absent from more conventional chivalric romance. The ways in which memory is used in these texts reflects contemporary religious belief, particularly the belief in Purgatory and commemorative practices. The religious and ethical imperative of remembering the dead is given a centrality and prominence in *Le Morte Darthur* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, which reflects the narrative logic of the two tales, but which also heightens their affect: it contributes to their emotional power and poignancy. The first episode of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* shows memory's role in medieval ideas about Purgatory and the need to remember and pray for the dead, which is highlighted by the ghost's request for matins and masses to aid her soul. The juxtaposition of the ghost's suffering with the pleasurable life of the court also raises potentially uncomfortable questions about the compatibility of the worldly life of chivalry with religious duties and obligations. In Malory's great work, both author and his characters have a shared awareness of the proximity of their deaths, which makes death even more significant. Malory's realistic representations, moreover, of contemporary ceremonial and ritual practice associated with commemorating the dead also produces important literary effects,

and shapes reader response to both narrative and character. Launcelot, for example, takes on the role of penitent commemorator throughout the final book of Malory's work, which arguably has the effect of placing him at the centre of the action, and presenting him in the most sympathetic light.

As Clanchy argues, "The best way of understanding the modern western literature mentality is to see where it came from."⁴⁴⁶ To understand the origins of our own documentary modern culture, it is important to look to the past, specifically the point in time when a shift was taking place in the late Middle Ages from memory to written record. Although the corpus of Arthurian romance texts which form the basis of this study seem in so many ways to be remote from the current historical moment, the way the authors used memory in these works – the ways in which they not only record the past but reflect on the processes by which they record it – speaks to our contemporary situation, and in particular to the revolution in memory which we are currently experiencing. While the written record was slowly replacing the oral tradition in the late Middle Ages, our literary/documentary culture is beginning to rely on more oral technology; for example, Audible enables people to simply listen to a book being read aloud to them, and technology such as Alexa, Siri, and Google Assistant, allow users to simply speak their queries and commands. This type of technology raises questions about the independence and autonomy of writers, as technology is increasingly doing much of the work which writers have traditionally performed.

With the rise in technology, instead of people storing information in their minds, or even in books, they are relying on artificial intelligence to store the information and to perform the task of retrieving memories for them. Computers and smart phones now offer possibilities for

⁴⁴⁶ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 198.

data storage that were inconceivable in the recent past; therefore, in our own modern society, we do not have to remember as much because anything we need to know is quickly accessible through internet search engines, such as Google. Things that we might have committed to memory in the past are now readily available through technology; for example, phone numbers for our friends, colleagues, and family are stored on smart phones, Facebook reminds us of people's birthdays and upcoming events, and we can set daily reminders and alarms on our smart phones. While this easy access to information is helpful in so many ways, it is also creating a reliance on technology that is contributing to individual amnesia, whereby the information people (especially younger generations) obtain is readily forgotten because it can be easily accessed at any time. With the continuing rise and popularity of various technologies and smart devices, as well as social media (for example, the daily "Facebook Memories" option that users can use to see posts on that exact day from previous years), people have quick and easy access to information all the time. However, the ease of access to anything we want to know at any point in time and as many times as needed, is fraught with the danger that not just our personal memories, but our capacity to remember, will be fatally degraded through lack of use. An analogous transformation to the culture of memory was taking place during the later Middle Ages, and a reliance on written records was slowly displacing the culture of memory rooted in the primacy of the spoken word. However, what is interesting, is that this shift was not linear; people in the late Middle Ages still placed a great importance on their memories of things even when more things were being recorded in writing, and memory's use within romance is integral to our understanding of these texts. Therefore, in late medieval England, despite the shift from memory to written record, society remained bimedial in nature; people still did not have direct access to everything in manuscripts, so they had to rely on their memories of things much more

so than we do today.

While memory's role in what scholars believe to be a highly memorial culture in the Middle Ages has been widely discussed in a variety of interesting and seminal works explored in this thesis, more importance should be placed on the study of memory's use within medieval romance, especially Middle English Arthurian romance, given that the subject matter deals with the perceived (albeit fictional) historical cultural memory of England's own past. The authors of these romances use memory in many different ways, and by looking at how memory was explored and deployed in these texts, it provides us with new avenues in understanding and interpreting these romances, as well as various representations of how memory was used and thought about by people in late medieval England.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Amis and Amiloun. In *Amis and Amiloun, Robert of Cisyle, and Sir Amadace*, edited by Edward E. Foster. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/foster-amis-and-amiloun>.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Franklin's Tale*. In *The Riverside Chaucer 3rd Edition*, edited by Larry D. Benson, 178-189. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. In *The Riverside Chaucer 3rd Edition*, edited by Larry D. Benson, 116-122. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Troilus and Criseyde*. In *The Riverside Chaucer 3rd Edition*, edited by Larry D. Benson, 473-85. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Chrétien de Troyes. *Erec et Enide*. In *Arthurian Romances*, translated by W. W. Comfort, 1-77. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1913; repr., New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2006.

Chrétien de Troyes. *Yvain*. In *Arthurian Romances*, translated by W. W. Comfort, 157-233. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1913; repr., New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2006.

Erle of Tolous. In *The Middle English Breton Lays*, edited by Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-erle-of-tolous>.

Havelock. In *Middle English Romances*, edited by Stephen H. A. Shepherd, 3-74. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.

Lybeaus Desconus. Edited by Eve Salisbury and James Weldon. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus>

Lybeaus Desconus. Edited by Maldwyn Mills. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Lybeaus Desconus. In *TEAMS Middle English Texts Series: Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, edited by George Shuffleton, 111- 164. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008.

Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte Darthur*. Edited by Stephen H. A. Shepherd. New York: W.W.

Norton & Company, 2004.

Marie de France. *The Lais of Marie de France*, translated by Glyn S. Burges and Keith Busby. London; New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Middle English Dictionary. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary>.

Oxford English Dictionary. <http://www.oed.com>.

Shakespeare, William. *Henry V*, edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, Rebecca Niles. Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library. www.folgerdigitaltexts.org.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Edited by Daniel Donoghue and translated by Larry D. Benson. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2012.

Sir Landevale. In *Middle English Romances*, edited by Stephen H. A. Shepherd, 352-364. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.

Sir Launfal. In *Middle English Romances*, edited by Stephen H. A. Shepherd, 190-218. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.

Sir Orfeo. In *Middle English Romances*, edited by Stephen H. A. Shepherd, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.

Sir Perceval of Galles. In *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, edited by Mary Flowers Braswell (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995) <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles-and-ywain-and-gawain>

Stanzaic Morte Arthure. In *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, edited by Larry D. Benson and rev. Edward E. Foster. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/benson-and-foster-king-arthurs-death>

The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne. In *Middle English Romances*, edited by Stephen H. A. Shepherd, 219- 243. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.

The Weddyng of Syr Gawain and Dame Ragnell. In *Middle English Romances*, edited by Stephen H. A. Shepherd, 243-267. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.

Ywain and Gawain. In *Middle English Romances*, edited by Stephen H. A. Shepherd, 75-173. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.

Ywain and Gawain. In *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, edited by Mary Flowers Braswell. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-ywain-and-gawain>.

Secondary Sources

- Allen, Rosamund. "Chivalric Romance: *The Awntyrs off Arthur*." In *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, edited by W.R.J. Barron, 150-155. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001.
- Archibald, Elizabeth. "Malory's Lancelot and Guenevere." In *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, edited by Helen Fulton, 312-325. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Armstrong, Dorsey. "Christianity and Social Instability: Malory's Galahad, Palomides, and Lancelot." In *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, edited by D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Janet Jesmok, 107-126. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications, 2013.
- Armstrong, Dorsey. "Malory and Character." In *A New Companion to Malory*, edited by Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton, 144-163. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2019.
- Arnold, Morris S. "Fourteenth-century Promises." *Cambridge Law Journal* 35, no. 2 (1976): 321-334.
- Ashton, Gail. *Medieval English Romance in Context*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010.
- Baldwin, Dean R. "Amis and Amiloun: The Testing of *Treuwe*." *Papers on Language and Literature* 16, no. 4 (1980): 353-365.
- Barron, W. R. J. "Introduction." In *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, edited by W.R.J. Barron, xiii-xvii. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001.
- Batt, Catherine. *Malory's Morte Darthur: Remaking Arthurian Tradition*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Batt, Catherine, and Rosalind Field. "The Romance Tradition." In *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, edited by W.R.J. Barron, 59-70. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001.
- Battles, Paul. "Introduction." In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, edited by Paul Battles, 11-26. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2012.
- Benson, Larry D. *Malory's Morte Darthur*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Bernheimer, Richard. *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952.
- Blanchfield, Lynne S. "The Romances in MS Ashmole 61: An Idiosyncratic Scribe." In

- Romance in Medieval England*, edited by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol Meale, 65-87. Cambridge: D. D. Brewer, 1991.
- Bloomfield, Morton W. *Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language, and Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.
- Boffey, Julie. "From Manuscript to Modern Text." In *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c. 1350- c. 1500*, edited by Peter Brown, 107-122. Malden; Oxford; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Bratu, Cristian. "Patrons, Arts, and Audiences." In *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, edited by Albrecht Classen, 1381-1403. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Brewer, Derek. "Introduction." In *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, edited by Derek Brewer and Jonathon Gibson, 1-21. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997.
- Brewer, Derek. "The Paradoxes of Honour in Malory." In *New Directions on Arthurian Studies*, edited by Alan Lupack, 33-47. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002.
- Brewer, Elisabeth. "Sources I: The Sources of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." In *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, edited by Derek Brewer and Jonathon Gibson, 243-255. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997.
- Brooks, Chris, and Inga Bryden. "The Arthurian Legacy." In *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, edited by W.R.J. Barron, 247-264. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001.
- Bruckner, Matilda Tomaryn. "The Shape of Romance in Medieval France." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, edited by Roberta L. Kreuger, 13-28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Bukowska, Joanna. "Promises Kept and Broken – The Power of a Spoken Word in the Chivalric World of *Le Morte Darthur*." *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 38 (2002): 61-73.
- Burakov Mongan, Olga. "Between Knights: Triangular Desire and Sir Palomides in Sir Thomas Malory's 'The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones.'" *Arthuriana* 12, no. 4 (2002): 74-89.
- Burrow, J. A. "The Fourteenth Century Arthur." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, edited by Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter, 69-83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Burrow, J. A. *The Gawain-Poet*. Horndon; Tavistock; Devon: Northcote House Publishers, Ltd., 2001.
- Byrne, Joseph P. *The Black Death*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004.

- Caldwell, Ellen M. "The Heroism of Heurodis: Self-mutilation and Restoration in *Sir Orfeo*." *Papers on Language & Literature* 43, no. 3 (2007): 291-310.
- Carley, James P. "Arthur in English History." In *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, edited by W.R.J. Barron, 47-57. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001.
- Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Carruthers, Mary. *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Carruthers, Mary, and Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Cawsey, Kathy. *Twentieth-Century Chaucer Criticism: Reading Audiences*. Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011.
- Cherewatuk, Karen. "Aural and Written Reception in Sir John Paston, Malory, and Caxton," *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 21 (2004): 123-131.
- Cherewatuk, Karen. "Christian Ritual in Malory: The Evidence of Funerals." In *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, edited by D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Janet Jesmok, 77-91. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications, 2013.
- Cherewatuk, Karen. "Malory's Launcelot and the Language of Sin and Confession." *Arthuriana* 16, no. 2 (2006): 68-72.
- Chrism, Christine. *Alliterative Revivals*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Cichon, Michael. *Violence and Vengeance in Middle Welsh and Middle English Narrative*. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009.
- Cirilla, Anthony. "Ghostly Consolation: *Awntyrs off Arthure* as Boethian Memorial." *Ennaratio: Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 19 (2015): 68-103.
- Clark, Laura. "There and Back Again: A Malorian Wild Man's Tale." *Arthuriana* 27, no. 2 (2017): 55-72.
- Coleman, Joyce. *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Coleman, Joyce. "Reading Malory in the fifteenth Century: Aural Reception and Performance

- Dynamics." *Arthuriana*, 13, no. 4 (2003): 48-70.
- Cooper, Helen. *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Cooper, Helen. "When Romance Comes True." In *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, edited by Neil Cartlidge, 13-28. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008.
- Craig, Leigh Ann. "The History of Madness and Mental Illness in the Middle Ages: Directions and Questions." *History Compass* 12, no. 9 (2014): 729-744.
- Daniell, Christopher. *Death and Burial in Medieval England: 1066-1550*. New York; London: Routledge, 1997.
- Devlin, Zoe Louise. *Remembering the Dead in Anglo-Saxon England: Memory Theory in Archaeology and History*. PhD thesis, University of York, 2006.
- Doob, Penelope B. R. *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Duffy, Eamon. "Religious Belief." In *A Social History of England 1200-1500*, edited by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod, 293-339. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-1580*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992; 2nd edition 2005.
- Eckhardt, Caroline D. "Arthurian Comedy: The Simpleton-Hero in *Sir Perceval of Galles*." In *Perceval/Parzival: A Casebook*, edited by Norris J. Lacy and Arthur Groos, 237-252. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Edwards, Elizabeth. *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001.
- Edwards, Elizabeth. "The Place of Women in the *Morte Darthur*." In *A Companion to Malory*, edited by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards, 37-54. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996.
- Erll, Astrid. *Memory in Culture*. Translated by Sarah B. Young. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Fein, Susanna. "Introduction." In *John the Blind Audelay: Poems and Carols (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302)*, edited by Susanna Fein. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009.
<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/fein-audelay-poems-and-carols-oxford-bodleian-library-ms-douce-302>.

- Field, P. J. C. "Malory and His Audience." In *New Directions in Arthurian Studies*, edited by Alan Lupack, 21-32. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002.
- Flowers Braswell, Mary. "Sir Perceval of Galles: Introduction." In *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, edited by Mary Flowers Braswell. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995). <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-sir-perceval-of-galles-introduction>.
- Fowler, David C. "Le Conte du Graal and Sir Perceval of Galles." *Comparative Literature Studies* 12, no. 1 (1975): 5-20.
- Friedman, Albert B., and Norman T. Harrington. "Introduction." In *Ywain and Gawain*, EETS 254, edited by Friedman, Albert B. and Norman T. Harrington, ix-lxii. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Fries, Maureen. "The Characterization of Women in the Alliterative Tradition," in *The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century*, edited by Bernard S. Levy and Paul E. Szarmach, 25-45. Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1981.
- Fulton, Helen. "History and Myth: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*." In *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, edited by Helen Fulton, 44-57. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009.
- Fulton, Helen. "Introduction: Theories and Debates." In *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, edited by Helen Fulton, 1-11. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Ganze, Alison. "My Trouthe for to Holde – Allas, Allas!": Dorigen and Honour in the *Franklin's Tale*." *The Chaucer Review*, 42, no. 3 (2008): 312-329.
- Gardiner, Eileen. "Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven." In *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, edited by Albrecht Classen, 653-673. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Geary, Patrick J. *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Geary, Patrick J. *Phantoms of Remembrance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Gordon, Bruce, and Peter Marshall. "Introduction: Placing the Dead in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe." In *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, 1-16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Green, D. H. *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

- Green, Richard Firth. *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Green, Richard Firth. "Textual Production and Textual Communities." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature, 1100-1500*, edited by Larry Scanlon, 25-36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Gustafson, Kevin. "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." In *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c. 1350- c. 1500*, edited by Peter Brown, 619-633. Malden; Oxford; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Hafner, Susanne. "'He ne wiste nother of evyll ne gude': A Prelapsarian Perceval." *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 8, no. 1 (2020): 107- 127.
- Hahn, Thomas. "Gawain and Popular Chivalric Romance in Britain." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, edited by Roberta L. Krueger, 218-234. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Hahn, Thomas. "The Awntyrs off Arthur: Introduction." In *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, edited by Thomas Hahn, 169-177. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995.
- Hanks Jr., D. Thomas. "'Al maner of good love comyth of God': Malory, God's Grace, and Noble Love." In *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, edited by D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Janet Jesmok, 9-28. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications, 2013.
- Hamilton, Gayle K. "The Breaking of the Troth in *Ywain and Gawain*." *Mediaevalia* 2 (1976): 111-135.
- Harper, Stephen. "'By cowntynaunce it is not wist': Thomas Hoccleve's *Complaint* and the spectacularity of madness in the Middle Ages," *History of Psychiatry* viii (1997): 387-394.
- Harper, Stephen. *Insanity, Individuals, and Society in Late-Medieval English Literature*. Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2003.
- Haught, Leah. "Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers: Gender and Genre in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*." *Arthuriana* 20, no. 1 (2010): 3-24.
- Higham, N. J. "Early Latin Sources: Fragments of a Pseudo-Historical Arthur." In *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, edited by Helen Fulton, 30-43. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Hobar, Donald. *The Oral Tradition in Malory's Morte Darthur*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of

- Pittsburgh, 1967.
- Hodges, Kenneth. *Forging Chivalric Communities in Malory's Le Morte Darthur*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Holbrook, Sue Ellen. "Emotional Expression in Malory's Elaine of Ascolat." *Parergon* 24, no. 1 (2007): 155-178.
- Hunt, Tony. "Beginnings, Middles, and Ends: Some Interpretive Problems in Chrétien's *Yvain* and its Medieval Adaptations." In *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics*, edited by Leigh A. Arrathoon, 83-117. Rochester, Michigan: Solaris Press, Inc., 1984.
- Hout, Sylvia. *Madness in Medieval French Literature: Identities Found and Lost*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Hout, Sylvia. "The Manuscript Context of Medieval Romance." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, edited by Roberta L. Krueger, 60-77. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Innes, Matthew. "Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society." *The Past and Present Society* 158 (1998): 3-36.
- Jensen, Christopher. "The Role of the Lion in the Middle English *Yvain and Gawain*." *Arthuriana* 30, no.1 (2020): 104-124.
- Jesmok, Janet. "Reading Malory Aloud: Poetic Qualities and Distinctive Voice." *Arthuriana*, 13, no. 4 (2003): 86-102.
- Jesmok, Janet. "The Double Life of Malory's Lancelot du Lake." *Arthuriana* 17, no. 4 (2007): 81-92.
- Jirsa, Curtis R. H. "In the Shadow of the Ympe-tre: Arboreal Folklore in *Sir Orfeo*." *English Studies* 89, no. 2 (2008): 141 – 151.
- Jose, Laura. *Madness and Gender in Late-Medieval English Literature*. PhD Thesis, Durham University, 2010.
- Jose, Laura. "Monstrous Conceptions: Sex, Madness and Gender in Medieval Medical Texts." *Comparative Critical Studies* 5, no. 2-3 (2008): 153-163.
- Jost, Jean E. "Margins in Middle English Romance: Culture and Characterization in *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*." In *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, edited Albrecht Classen, 133-152. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Kelly, Robert L. "Penitence as a Remedy for War in Malory's 'Tale of the Death of Arthur.'" *Studies in Philology* 91, no. 2 (1994): 111-135.

- Knight, S. T. "The Oral Transmission of *Sir Launfal*." *Medium Ævum* 38, no. 2 (1969): 164-170.
- Knight, Stephen. "The Social Function of the Middle English Romances." In *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, and History*, edited by David Aers, 99-122. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press Limited, 1986.
- Kreider, Alan. *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Kreuger, Roberta L. "Introduction." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, edited by Roberta L. Kreuger, 1-9. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Kroll, Jerome, and Bernard Bachrach. "Sin and Mental Illness in the Middle Ages." *Psychological Medicine* 14 (1984): 507-514.
- Kroll, Jerome, and Bernard Bachrach. "Sin and the Etiology of Disease in Pre-Crusade Europe." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 41. No. 4 (1986): 395-414.
- Kümper, Hiram. "Death." In *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, edited by Albrecht Classen, 314-328. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Lachmann, Renate. "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature." In *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 301-310. New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. 2010.
- Larrington, Carolyne. "English Chivalry and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." In *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, edited by Helen Fulton, 252-264. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Laskaya, Anne, and Eve Salisbury. "*Sir Launfal*: Introduction." in *TEAMS Middle English Text Series: The Middle English Breton Lays*, edited by Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995.
<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-sir-launfal-introduction#bib>.
- Le Goff, Jacques. *The Birth of Purgatory*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer. London: Scholar Press, 1984.
- Lee, Monika H. "Conceptions of Truth in Fourteenth-Century English Poetry." *Essays in Literature* 21, no. 2 (1994): 152-165.
- Lynch, Andrew. "Malory's *Morte Darthur* and History." In *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, edited by Helen Fulton, 297-311. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

- Martin, Carl Grey. "The Awntyrs off Arthure, an Economy of Pain." *Modern Philology* 108, no. 2 (2010): 177-198.
- Mason Bradbury, Nancy. "Literacy, Orality, and the Poetics of Middle English Romance." In *Oral Poetics in Middle English Poetry*, edited by Mark C. Amodio, with the assistance of Sarah Gray Miller, 39-70. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1994.
- Mason Bradbury, Nancy. *Writing Aloud: Storytelling in Late Medieval England*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.
- McCarthy, Terence. *An Introduction to Malory*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991.
- McDonald, Nicola, ed. *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
- McGarrahan Gibson, Melanie. "Lyonet, Lunete, and Laudine: Carnavalesque Arthurian Women." In *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries*, edited by Bonnie Wheeler and Fiona Tolhurst, 213-227. Dallas: Scriptorium Press, 2001./
- McGillivray, Murray. *Memorization in the Transmission of the Middle English Romances*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990.
- McKinstry, James. *Middle English Romance and the Craft of Memory*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015.
- Mehl, Dieter. *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.
- Meyer, Ann R. *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003.
- Mills, Maldwyn. "A Medieval Reviser at Work." *Medium Ævum* 32, no. 1 (1963): 11-23.
- Mills, Maldwyn. "Chivalric Romance: *Lybeaus Desconus*." In *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, edited by W. R. J. Barron, 124-129. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001.
- Mills, Maldwyn. "Chivalric Romance: *Ywain and Gawain*." In *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, edited by W. R. J. Barron, 117-124. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001.
- Mills, Maldwyn. "Introduction." In *Lybeaus Desconus*, edited by Maldwyn Mills. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Moll, Richard J. *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

- Nelson, William. "From 'Listen, Lordings' to 'Dear Reader.'" *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 46, no. 2 (1976): 110-124.
- Neumann, Birgit. "The Literary Representation of Memory." In *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 333-343. New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. 2010.
- Nolan, Barbara. "The *Tale of Sir Gareth* and the *Tale of Sir Lancelot*." In *A Companion to Malory*, edited by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards, 153-181. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996.
- Olsen, Corey. "Adulterated Love: The Tragedy of Malory's Lancelot and Guinevere." In *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, edited by D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Janet Jesmok, 29-55. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications, 2013.
- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*. New York: Routledge, 1982.
- Parks, Ward. "The Textualization of Orality in Literary Criticism." In *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, edited by A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack, 46-66. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.
- Pearsall, Derek. *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA; Oxford, UK; Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003.
- Pearsall, Derek. "The Troilus Frontispiece and Chaucer's Audience." *Yearbook of English Studies* 7 (1977): 68-74.
- Pelen, Marc M. "Madness in *Yvain* Reconsidered." *Neophilologus* 87 (2003): 361-369.
- Philipps, Helen. "The Ghost's Baptism in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*." *Medium Ævum* 58, no. 1 (1989): 49-58.
- Pietikainen, Petteri. *Madness: A History*. New York and London: Routledge, 2015.
- Plummer, John F. "Frenzy and Females: Subject Formation in Opposition to The Other in the Prose *Lancelot*." *Arthuriana* 6, no. 4 (1996): 45-51.
- Polzer, Joseph. "Fourteenth-Century Iconography of Death and the Plague." In *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague*, edited by Daniel Williman, 108-129. New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1982.
- Pulham, Carol A. "Promises, Promises: Dorigen's Dilemma Revisited." *The Chaucer Review* 31, no. 1 (1996): 76-86.

- Putter, Ad. "A Historical Introduction." In *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, edited by Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert, 1-15. Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2000.
- Putter, Ad. *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc., 1996.
- Putter, Ad. "Arthurian Romance in English Popular Tradition: *Sir Percyvell of Gales, Sir Cleges, and Sir Launfal*." In *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, edited by Helen Fulton, 235-251. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009.
- Putter, Ad. "Middle English Romances and the Oral Tradition." In *Medieval Oral Literature*, edited by Karl Reichl, 335-352. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012.
- Putter, Ad. "The Text of *Sir Perceval of Galles*." *Medium Ævum* 70, no. 2 (2001): 191-203.
- Putter, Ad. "The Twelfth-Century Arthur." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, edited by Ad Putter and Elizabeth Archibald, 36-52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Putter, Ad, and Elizabeth Archibald. "Introduction." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, edited by Ad Putter and Elizabeth Archibald, 1-17. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Radulescu, Raluca L. "Liminality and Gender in Middle English Arthurian Romance." In *Medieval English Literature*, edited by Beatrice Fannon, 30-44. London: Palgrave, 2015.
- Reichl, Karl. "Orality and Performance." In *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, edited by Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton, 132-149. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009.
- Reichl, Karl. "Plotting the Map of Medieval Oral Literature." In *Medieval Oral Literature*, edited by Karl Reichl, 3-68. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012.
- Reynolds, Rebecca L. "Elaine of Ascolat's Death and the 'Ars Moriendi.'" *Arthuriana* 16, no. 2 (2006): 35-39.
- Rikhardsdottir, Sif. *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012.
- Robson, Margaret. "From Beyond the Grave: Darkness at Noon in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*." In *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, edited by A. Putter, and J. Gilbert, 219-236. Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2000.

- Rooney, Kenneth. *Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2011.
- Roscoe, Brett. "Reading the Diptych: *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, Medium, and Memory," *Arthuriana* 24, no. 1 (2014): 49-65.
- Rose, Patricia. "Achefflour: Wise Woman or Foolish Female?" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 46, no. 4 (2004): 452-472.
- Ross, Lia. "Communication in the Middle Ages." In *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, edited by Albrecht Classen, 203-231. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Rousseau, Marie-Hélène. *Saving the Souls of Medieval London: Perpetual Chantryes at St. Paul's Cathedral, c. 1200-1548*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2011.
- Sachiko Cecire, Maria. "Barriers Unbroken: Sir Palomydes The Saracen in 'The Book of Sir Tristram.'" In *Arthurian Literature XXVIII: Blood, Sex, Malory: Essays on the Morte Darthur*, edited by David Clark and Kate McClune, 137-154. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011.
- Salisbury, Eve, and James Weldon. "Lybeaus Desconus: Introduction." In *TEAMS Middle English Text Series: Lybeaus Desconus*, edited by Eve Salisbury and James Weldon. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013. <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-and-weldon-lybeaus-desconus-introduction>.
- Salkeld, Duncan. *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993.
- Sandidge, Marilyn. "The Forest, the River, the Mountain, the Field, and the Meadow." In *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, edited by Albrecht Classen, 537-564. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Saunders, Corinne. "Introduction." In *A Companion to Romance*, edited by Corinne Saunders, 1-9. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- Shepherd, Stephen H. A., ed. *Middle English Romances*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.
- Shuffleton, George. "Is There a Minstrel in the House?: Domestic Entertainment in Late Medieval England." *Philological Quarterly*, 87, no. 1-2 (2008): 51-76.
- Spearing, A. C. "Poetic Identity." In *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, edited by Derek Brewer and Jonathon Gibson, 35-51. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997.
- Spearing, A. C. "Sir Orfeo: Madness and Gender." In *The Spirit of Medieval English*

- Popular Romance*, edited by A. Putter, and J. Gilbert, 258-272. Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2000.
- Spearing, A. C. "The Awntyrs off Arthure." In *The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century*, edited by Bernard S. Levy and Paul E. Szarmach, 183-202. Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1981.
- Sprunger, David Allan. *Madness in Medieval Art and Romance*. PhD thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1992.
- Stanbury, Sarah. "The Gawain-Poet." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature, 1100-1500*, edited by Larry Scanlon, 139-151. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Szkilnik, Michelle. "Medieval Translations and Adaptations of Chrétien's Works." In *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, edited by Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert, 202-213. Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2005.
- Tolhurst, Fiona. "Why Every Knight Needs His Lady: Re-viewing Questions of Genre and 'Cohesion; in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*." In *Reviewing Le Morte Darthur*, edited by K. S. Whetter and Raluca L. Radulescu, 133-147. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005.
- Tracy, Kisha G. "Memory, Recollection, and Forgetting." In *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 1: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, edited by Albrecht Classen, 1020-1038. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Tracy, Kisha G. *Memory and Confession in Middle English Literature*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan Imprint, Springer Nature International Publishing, 2017.
- Trener, Claire, and Peregrine Horden. "Madness in the Middle Ages." In *The Routledge History of Madness and Mental Health*, edited by Greg Eghigian, 62-80. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Turner, Wendy J. "Introduction." In *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, edited by Wendy J. Turner, 1-16. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Turner, Wendy J. "Silent Testimony: Emotional Displays and Lapses in Memory as Indicators of Mental Instability in Medieval English Investigations." In *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, edited by Wendy J. Turner, 81-95. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Twomey, Michael W. "The Voice of Aurality in the *Morte Darthur*." *Arthuriana*, 13, no. 4 (2003): 103-118.
- Van Houts, Elizabeth. *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900-1200*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

- Weldon, James. "‘Naked as she was bore’: Naked Disenchantment in *Lybeaus Desconus*." *Parergon* 24, no. 1 (2007): 67-99.
- Wenthe, Michael. "The Legible Corpses of *Le Morte Darthur*." In *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition*, edited by Karen Cherewatuk and K.S. Whetter, 124-135. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009.
- Whetter, K. S. "Love and Death in Arthurian Romance." In *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition*, edited by Karen Cherewatuk and K.S. Whetter, 94-114. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009.
- Whetter, K. S., and Karen Cherewatuk. "Introduction" In *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition*, edited by Karen Cherewatuk and K.S. Whetter, 1-14. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009.
- Williams, Howard. *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Williman, Daniel, ed. *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague*. Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982.
- Wright, Glenn. "‘Þe Kynde Wolde Oute Sprynge’: Interpreting the Hero’s Progress in *Sir Perceval of Galles*." *Studia Neophilologica* 72, no. 1 (2000): 45-53.
- Yamamoto, Dorothy. *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Yates, Frances A. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- Zawacki, Alexander J. "A Dark Mirror: Death and The Cadaver Tomb in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*." *Arthuriana* 27, no. 2 (2017): 87-101.