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**FEMALE SPACE AND MARGINALITY
IN MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR*:
IGRAINE, MORGAUSE AND MORGAN**

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**PHD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of English Literature, School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, part of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.

I declare that all written work presented here is original and has been composed by myself except where the publications, presentations or personal communications of others have been appropriately cited. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed

Phoebe C. Linton

27 February 2017

ABSTRACT

Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century prose romance, *Le Morte Darthur*, depicts public and private identity as distinct and often incompatible halves of the Arthurian courtly community. In addition, masculine and feminine identity are represented as having different roles and functions within the text. Arthurian scholarship has predominantly focused on Malory's portrayals of masculine and communal identity, as exemplified by central figures such as Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. However, in the past two decades an increasingly concentrated interest in the *Morte's* female protagonists has emerged. As a contribution to this burgeoning site of critical inquiry I offer a tripartite case study of three marginal queens in this text: Igraine, Morgause and Morgan. Despite being the mother and sisters of King Arthur, these women have attracted comparatively little attention, either as individuals or as a family. This thesis argues that Malory presents noteworthy portraits of marginality in Igraine, Morgause and Morgan, which reveal the significance of space to the formation of identity in the *Morte*. Each of these protagonists is imagined in a variety of spaces in the Arthurian world: narrative, social, geographical, physical and emotional. Such spaces are contained within two principal romance locations, the court and quest wilderness, in which protagonists' expressions and activities differ. Courts are typically governed by patriarchal authorities such as kings, knights, magicians and clerics, who privilege masculine public identity and political issues affecting the Arthurian community. By contrast, the quest wilderness encompasses places governed by what are termed 'matriarchal' authorities including queens, ladies, supernatural women and nuns, where private identity and individual emotions are more readily expressed. Marginal women speak and act in both the court and quest wilderness, but their identities are articulated differently in each. This thesis argues that Malory's text presents moments when Igraine, Morgause and Morgan are marginalised by the Arthurian community

critically, whilst the development of their individual identities in the quest wilderness is depicted sympathetically. As such, an examination of these protagonists' movements across a variety of spatial boundaries in the world of the story as well as the narrative's composite structure offers a revised reading of identity, gender and marginality in Malory studies. This thesis challenges two dominant assumptions about female voice and agency in the field. Firstly, that marginality is primarily a position of disempowerment, particularly for medieval women. Secondly, that marginal individuals are inherently subversive and threaten the Arthurian community.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration of Originality	1
Abstract	2
Acknowledgments	4
Abbreviations	8
A Note on the Edition	10
Introduction	12
<i>An Argument from Silence: Excavating Women's Emotions from the Morte</i>	12
<i>Medievalist Scholarship on Marginality and Emotion</i>	24
<i>Privacy in the Spaces of Romance: Court and Quest Wilderness</i>	44
<i>Critical Vocabulary: Central and Peripheral Marginality</i>	56
<i>Chapter Summaries: A Family of Individual Women</i>	61
Chapter One	
Speech and Silence: The Narrative Boundaries of Igraine	68
<i>The Silences of Igraine's Rape</i>	68
<i>Peripheral Co-Ruler</i>	81
<i>Central Queen</i>	84
<i>Eremitic Absence</i>	100
<i>I. Time</i>	101
<i>II. Space</i>	107
<i>Remembered Presence</i>	112
<i>Chapter Conclusions</i>	125

Chapter Two	
The Relativity of Space and Place: Morgause's Transitions Between Orkney and Carlyon	128
<i>Removing Morgause from Communal Discourse</i>	128
<i>Dutiful Daughter</i>	137
<i>(Dis)Obedient Wife</i>	144
<i>Courtly Matriarch(s)</i>	154
<i>I. Maternal Authority</i>	156
<i>II. Romantic Authority</i>	171
<i>Useful Mother</i>	178
<i>Chapter Conclusions</i>	194
Chapter Three	
Exile and Control: Morgan's Rule of Space, Time and Self	198
<i>The Internal Coherence of Morgan's Private Identity</i>	198
<i>Necromancer Nun</i>	209
<i>I. Necromancy</i>	211
<i>II. The Nunnery</i>	220
<i>Quest Agent</i>	228
<i>Peripheral Matriarch</i>	244
<i>I. Landmarks</i>	244
<i>II. Material Objects</i>	258
<i>Eternal Exile</i>	267
<i>Chapter Conclusions</i>	278
Conclusion	280
Works Cited	286
<i>Primary</i>	286
<i>Secondary</i>	287

ABBREVIATIONS

- DMF *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330-1500)*, Université de Lorraine, 2007. Web.
- ERT Helen Cooper. *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Print.
- GCC Dorsey Armstrong. *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's Morte Darthur*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003. Print.
- FOAL Fiona Tolhurst. *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Print.
- IMI Elizabeth Archibald. *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001. Print.
- KAE Carolyne Larrington. *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2006. Print.
- MED *Middle English Dictionary*, University of Michigan Press, 2015. Web.
- Morte Stephen H. A. Shepherd, ed. *Sir Thomas Malory: Le Morte Darthur or The Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of His Noble Knyghtes of the Rounde Table*. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004. Print.
- MP Takako Kato, dir., and Nick Hayward, des. *The Malory Project*. University of Leicester, 2006. Web.
- MS Corrine J. Saunders. *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010. Print.
- OED *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Web.
- PDL *Perseus Digital Library 4.0*. Medford: Tufts University, 1987. Web.

- RR Corinne J. Saunders. *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001. Print.
- TFK Fiona Tolhurst. *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Female Kingship*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.
- TG Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand. *Topographies of Gender in Middle High German Arthurian Romance*. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- UMHTI *University of Michigan Humanities Text Initiative: Le Morte Darthur, by Syr Thomas Malory, ed. H. O. Sommer (1889). (Caxton)*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1997. Web.
- WW Siobhán M. Wyatt. *Women of Words in Le Morte Darthur: The Autonomy of Speech in Malory's Female Characters*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Print.

A NOTE ON THE EDITION

The text most often titled *Le Morte Darthur* exists in only two extant medieval material forms: in the British Library Additional Manuscript 59678, known as 'The Winchester Manuscript', which was committed to paper sometime between 1470 and 1483; and in William Caxton's printed edition of 1485.¹ There have been many modern editions of the text, both popular and critical, which all tend to prefer either the Winchester or Caxton versions. Throughout this thesis I consistently cite one edition in the interests of simplicity, except where specified: Stephen H. A. Shepherd's *Sir Thomas Malory: Le Morte Darthur or The Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of His Noble Knyghtes of the Rounde Table* (2004). Shepherd's edition synthesises text from both versions to create a narrative that represents the older and possibly more original version closely but also compensates for lacunae or missing sections in the Winchester by emending gaps with the Caxton. It was necessary in the context of the present study to use an edition that incorporated sections of Caxton's version because a significant portion of Igraine's trajectory is missing from the Winchester precedent, from which several of the opening pages have been lost. In a different study, the exact ordering of sentences, spelling and other manuscript features could have the potential to problematise readings, due to the existence of conflicting or alternative presentations of dialogue. However, this thesis often emphasises the importance of what narrators do not directly report or communicate through dialogue. Whilst I acknowledge that, when Igraine, Morgause and Morgan are discussed in the same context, a slippage between textual versions is inevitable, I assert that there is nevertheless value in allowing such slippage if the result is a better understanding of the voices of marginal protagonists who are too often overlooked. Moreover, as Shepherd states, in any version, what readers 'have before them is a

¹ For dating and digitisations of both versions, see Takako Kato's and Nick Hayward's online source, *The Malory Project* (2006-16).

representation of Malory rather than an invariably authentic replication', meaning a certain ambiguity is inevitable unless an earlier or more 'original' version is found (xlv). Ultimately, this study focuses on the women depicted in the *Morte* rather than the man who narrated their stories; as such, it does not seek to make any new statements about the relative integrity or authority of different manuscripts or printed versions.

INTRODUCTION

. . . to telle the joys that were betwyxte La Beall Isode and Sir Trystramys, there ys no maker can make hit, nothir no harte can thynke hit, nother no penne can wryte hit, nother no mowth can speke hit.

– Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur* (Shepherd 299).

An Argument from Silence: Excavating Women's Emotions from the Morte

Sir Thomas Malory's refusal to describe a scene of reunion between two of the most famous courtly lovers in Arthurian literature exemplifies this author's proclivity for abbreviation, elision and the communication of private identity through silence. In the extensive fifteenth-century prose romance, *Le Morte Darthur*, moments of emotional significance for many other protagonists are frequently glossed over in similar ways, which literary devices both hinder and invite further interpretation through paralipsis. The notion that no creator or poet of any kind could represent a moment such as the one referenced above, no heart could conceive of it, no author's pen could record it, and no spoken words would be sufficient to describe it, implies that the experience of Isolde and Tristram when they are together is like none other in either written or oral tradition. Put another way, their discourse of desire as individuals is unique, in contrast to familiar modes used to relate social experiences such as song or chronicle. Isolde and Tristram are only able to act upon their desires for one another in private, since such desires are incompatible with the public roles they occupy as wife and nephew to King Mark, as well as a queen and

prince of the Cornish court.² Tensions therefore arise from this incompatibility of public and private identity, which eventually result in their deaths when Mark reacts with violence after his discovery of their marital and familial infidelity (641-2). Such deaths epitomise the fact that Arthurian courts are ultimately structured around the maintenance of communal stability and traditional constructions of identity.

Despite the premature deaths of many protagonists like Isolde and Tristram, Malory often privileges the private identities and emotions of his protagonists in certain instances by distinguishing between different spaces in the narrative as well as in the imagined landscape of the *Morte*. In the intimate moment described above, the narrator's unwillingness to provide exact details of the scene between Isolde and Tristram does so by effectively reserving a silent space of privacy for them on a textual level. Interested readers are denied further information about their heightened emotions, as are the Arthurian community, who for the most part privilege public constructions of Isolde's and Tristram's identities as figureheads with responsibilities in upholding courtly stability. The potential for meaning in such distinction between public and private identity through speech or silence respectively is the central focus of this thesis, which most emphasises the latter. It argues that the private identities of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan are not only represented in the text through abbreviation and silence as well as dialogue, but that they are crucially significant in the narrative's portrayal of marginality and its undermining of traditional categories of femininity.

Critics have remarked before upon Malory's stylistic tendency to abbreviate crucial events and the feelings of both central and marginal protagonists.³ These are more fully developed in length in the French Arthurian sources from

² Concepts of medieval privacy are complex and are considered in more detail in the section entitled 'Privacy in the Spaces of Romance: Court and Quest Wilderness' (see pp. 43-54 of this introduction).

³ For an extended consideration of the meaning of terms such as 'feelings' and 'emotion' in this context, see the relevant discussion and review of scholarship on medieval emotion on pp. 39-43 of 'Medievalist Scholarship on Marginality and Emotion' (pp. 23-43).

which he adapted material, namely the extensive thirteenth-century 'Vulgate' and 'Post-Vulgate' *Lancelot-Grail* cycles. Felicity Riddy notes that 'Malory's "reducing" of the elaborate French account' can be seen in both the earlier and later parts of the *Morte*, meaning it is characteristic of his narrative method throughout the text (37). At the same time, he often 'goes on, with grand irrelevance, to describe what the French book in fact does *not* say' (141, emphasis added). As such, gaps exist between reader's experience of Malory's version of stories and the 'auctorysed' version he frequently claims to copy during interjections (689). Therefore, for either medieval or modern audiences familiar with Arthurian texts besides Malory's, a gap also exists between his narrative and the experience of protagonists within its imagined world when other versions are contrasted with the *Morte*. Evidently, to a great extent and in various ways, the 'narrator leaves things open' (Riddy 39). Riddy suggests this results in an impression 'of the mysterious and complicated depths of human conduct [that] derives from what he leaves out as much as from what he leaves in, from the gaps between sentences and the unexplored hinterland that lies beyond the actions' of protagonists (39). However, although P. J. C. Field wrote in 1971 that '[i]f most readers finish the *Morte Darthur* with a memory of striking dignity of speech, this is because Malory's characters speak as they feel', to date an examination of marginal women's feeling, particularly in the context of Malory's 'gaps', or abbreviations, elisions and silences, has not been conducted (123). Peter R. Schroeder does consider in detail in the context of some male and female protagonists how, when they fall silent and say "'but lytyll," Malory suggests a more complex emotion than he does through his usual emotional displays' and argues this silence then 'becomes one of the formulas by which Malory alerts us to the surface inadequacy of a character's response' (43, 50). Nevertheless, Schroeder's attentions remain focused on much-discussed protagonists like Isolde and Tristram. Kenneth Hodges, too, notices this stylistic phenomenon in the *Morte* in the context of these protagonists or comparably famous protagonists:

'Malory often omits crucial scenes: Tristram's death; the first meeting and courtship of Lancelot and Guenevere; Lamerok's assassination by the Orkney brothers; even an authoritative statement of Arthur's death' ('Of Wales and Women' 46).

Despite Malory's tendency to gloss over personally significant moments, such as that in which he does not describe the 'joys' between Isolde and Tristram, much may be understood about the private identities of this courtly couple—as well as the protagonists named by Schroeder and Hodges—in other episodes when their love or periods of conflict are recounted differently and in more detail (299). Isolde and Tristram are, after all, central protagonists in the sense that their stories occupy a major portion of the total narrative space; the 'fyrste' and 'seconde boke off syr Trystram de Lyones' together span an entire third of the *Morte*, in which readers are given ample space to become acquainted with many aspects of the couple's public identities.⁴ Although the *Morte's* narrator may frequently pretend he cannot describe the private expressions of his protagonists in certain moments, his elaboration of their private identities and emotions in other instances compensates for such losses (299). Readers can effectively 'fill in the blanks' left by earlier silences, as the critics above have noted.

Still, when Malory employs the same or similar techniques in the case of protagonists who occupy significantly less narrative space and are consequently considered to be marginal to the story, it can be more challenging to infer meaning from their expressions, or to excavate signs of their private identities and emotions from the text. This thesis explores three such protagonists: Igraine, King Arthur's mother, and her two daughters, Morgause and Morgan. As the closest female relatives to the eponymous hero of the *Morte*, these women are simultaneously central and marginal to the

⁴ The books of Tristram are recounted from pp. 228 to 495 of Stephen H. A. Shepherd's edition of the *Morte*, which this thesis cites throughout (see 'A Note on the Edition' on p.62 of the Introduction for more detail).

narrative and the courtly community it portrays.⁵ I have chosen these three women from the variety of marginal figures depicted in the text, because they, in particular, are judged in the world of the *Morte* – as well as in scholarship – almost exclusively in terms of traditional constructions of femininity. Both Morgause and Morgan have three sexual partners each, rather than one, and as such their sexual activities are frequently cited as evidence of social or religious immorality and the unconventional manifestation of femininity. These are seen to compromise their roles within the community as sisters, wives, queens and mothers of the most prominent and powerful royal family in the text.⁶ Representations of their emotions have consequently been disregarded, for the most part. This thesis demonstrates how each of their trajectories is, at times, defined by similar silences, abbreviations and potentially contradictory elisions to that cited at the beginning of this introduction. Such moments suggest aspects of these women’s private identities and emotions but do not immediately allow full access to them. In several scenes Igraine, Morgause and Morgan are depicted only in their public and communal roles as queens, wives, mothers and sisters of patriarchal figures of authority such as Arthur and his allies; any signs of individual desires that exceed such roles are abbreviated or glossed over.⁷ For example, at Igraine’s marriage to Arthur’s father, Uther, she ‘held hir pees’, or ‘was silent’ (5). This reservation of private identity hides the grief she feels at the loss of her first husband, communicated to the reader elsewhere. Her silence legitimises the public status of the story’s hero by implying his parentage is unquestioned (5). Morgause is beheaded by her own son and Arthur’s

⁵ Throughout this thesis, I refer to Morgause and Morgan as Arthur’s ‘sisters’. Although in Malory’s text they are technically Arthur’s half-sisters, Arthur himself does not make this distinction and always calls them ‘sister’, as discussed in detail in the section subtitled ‘Dutiful Daughter’, on pp. 137-144 of Chapter Two.

⁶ See in particular the reviews of scholarship at the beginnings of chapters Two and Three, on Morgause and Morgan respectively.

⁷ For an explanation of the ways in which the term ‘patriarchal’ is used in this context, see pp. 50-51 of this introduction, part of the section entitled ‘Privacy in the Spaces of Romance: Court and Quest Wilderness’, which spans pp. 43-54.

nephew, Gaheris, during which scene she does not speak a word (368). Similar to her mother's withdrawal as a response to grief, when Morgan's first extra-marital lover, Accolon, dies, she 'kepte hir countenance and made no semblaunte of dole'; in other words, she too outwardly pretends not to grieve (93). She falls silent on the matter and access to Morgan's emotions is denied to members of the Athurian court and readers, once again, by the narrator's elision (93).

This seeming lack of emphasis on the private identity and emotions of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan has often been considered to constitute Malory's normative narrative practice in representing not just these protagonists but all Arthurian women, who do not directly speak or act individually in central narrative spaces as often as their male counterparts (47). Tristram is mentioned or appears almost one and a half thousand times in the text – more than once per page on average – whereas Isolde features only two hundred and forty times (and it is worth noting that she is the female protagonist most frequently named).⁸ In light of the paucity of references to and speech by women, female protagonists are often considered to be marginal and disempowered, whilst masculine identity is viewed as allegedly privileged in the *Morte*. Most notably, Dorsey Armstrong argues that in Malory's imagined Arthurian community, feminine identity is 'deliberately constructed' as 'silent, passive' and 'marginal' from the beginning of his narrative, a construction designed to ensure the primacy of 'male homosocial bonds within this patriarchal . . . social order' (*Gender and the Chivalric Community* 181, 53, 181, 48). This is most certainly true of the perspectives of some male protagonists, who attempt to sexually coerce or harm women without regard for their individual desires or expressions. For example, Mellyagaunte abducts Queen Gwenyver against her will and in a later episode

⁸ These numerical figures are taken from the University of Michigan Humanities Text Initiative results for searches 'Tristram' and 'Isoud*' in the electronic version of H. O. Sommer's edition of the *Morte* (UMHTI).

Mordred also tries to forcibly marry Gwenyver during Arthur's absence (627, 679). Numerous other female protagonists are raped or beheaded in the narrative, sometimes even before they have a single opportunity to speak, as chapters Two and Three of this thesis explore. For these reasons, the *Morte* is seen by some as a text 'that does not accord any great prominence to women's experience' and one in which female protagonists are presented as 'physically and sexually vulnerable' objects of male attention defined by their silence (Batt 85). Malory's tendency to abbreviate or elide the private experience of female protagonists through his and/or their silence—whether their reactions indicate joy, like Isolde's, or pain, as the case of other women—has led to arguments that the style in which the *Morte* is written precludes the complete or intricate articulation of female private identity and emotional expression.

Amy S. Kaufman best summarises two interconnected implications of this critical attitude to Malory's depictions of women, which are most applicable to the current study. She observes that:

two pervasive premises seem to exist in Malory studies: first, that to Malory, bonds between men are of paramount importance, and secondly, that Malory has an antifeminist agenda. Both of these factors are said to limit the possible range of his representations of women (139).

In Kaufman's case-study of one particular episode, known as that of 'Alexander the Orphan', she observes that a particular logic results from such premises.⁹ Kaufman argues that when readings 'begin with the assumption that female characters can only function as objects' in the narrative, then their expression of private identity and emotions 'can only be read as a disturbance to the "proper" course of events (140-1). In the same way, I would add that readings of Malory's text as one that might deliberately offer meaningful understandings of female private identity and emotions have, by the same

⁹ This episode spans pp. 378-88.

token, the potential to be received as disturbances to the proper course of scholarship. Indeed, Hodges alluded to this possibility in just the last decade, writing, 'the assumption that Malory's text is misogynist seems to be gaining strength' (*Forging Chivalric Communities* 40). Kaufman provides a potential reason for this opinion, suggesting that 'because bonds between men are the only ones that "count" toward the formation and maintenance' of Arthurian society, 'bonds between women are preempted as fantastical, temporary, or illegitimate, read against the "real" social significance of male relationships' (140). A competition between male and female protagonists, or readings of them, is thus established in such discussions. Certainly, this is reflected on the level of language used in critical discourse, since the question of whether the *Morte* and its author are 'misogynist', 'antifeminist' or 'masculinist' versus 'anti-misogynist', 'proto-feminist' or 'feminist' divides the critical terminology applied to, and perspectives on, Malory's portrayals of women.

On one side of the argument are situated a variety of critics. Kaufman suggests some episodes might be safely called 'feminist' without this qualifying prefix, like that of 'Alexander the Orphan'; in addition she favours Sue Ellen Holbrook's personally communicated offering of the term 'masculinist' to describe scenes that present women less positively, as a way of depressurising the tone of conversations on medieval 'misogyny' (138). Ginger Thornton and Krista May point to different sections of Malory's narrative that might similarly be called 'feminist', such as the quest for the 'Sankgreall' or 'Holy Grail', where Percival's sister plays the part of a martyr by sacrificing her life to further the quest's continuation (43).¹⁰ 'By allowing her to choose her fate', they argue, Malory 'creates a female character who, at least metaphorically, achieves the Holy Grail'; this is a rare and considerable achievement, since it is only attained completely by a single male member of Arthur's one-hundred-and-fifty-strong fellowship of the Round Table,

¹⁰ This part of the narrative is recounted on pp. 496-587 of Shepherd's edition.

Galahad (43). Also pointing to the Grail episodes, Hodges allows that '[w]hile Malory is not a modern feminist, neither is he a stereotypical medieval misogynist' (FCC 40). Herein lies a part of the complexity in ascertaining the value of Malory's portrayals of women, since as Fiona Tolhurst writes, 'the common view is that to use the word ["feminist"] in reference to any premodern text is inappropriate because the feminist movement did not begin until the modern period, and the word itself did not officially enter the English language until 1895' (*Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend* 9). Nevertheless, Tolhurst asserts that it may be used in the sense that some medieval texts 'treat female figures in progressive and positive ways' (FOAL 12). Most recently, Siobhán M. Wyatt chooses to negotiate this terminological issue by arguing that Malory is 'anti-misogynist' in a timely and positive re-evaluation of several female protagonists' voices in *Women of Words in Le Morte Darthur: The Autonomy of Speech in Malory's Female Characters* (cited ahead of publication by kind permission of the author).¹¹

However, many other critics have asserted the opposite. Though Tolhurst is responsible for a revisionary study of gender in Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century chronicle, the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (HRB), or 'The History of the Kings of Britain', her view of this text as a point of origin for positive feminist portrayals of Arthurian women does not extend to the *Morte*. Geoffrey, she argues, provides positive depictions of female power whereas Malory, by contrast, is 'a late-medieval participant' in the literary 'process of disempowering Arthurian females' that she believes began in the thirteenth century (FOAL 112). Tolhurst does not perceive women in the *Morte* as having the same 'access to political power' or being presented as exercising it 'competently' as in the HRB, nor does she believe Malory's narrative expresses a comparable 'sympathy' for their emotions (FOAL 112). Whereas Robert Stretter believes conversely that Arthurian women are portrayed positively,

¹¹ Monograph forthcoming in November 2016, published by Palgrave Macmillan.

like Gwenyver who 'wields a formidable power within her narrative world', he still also maintains that Malory should not be considered a 'proto-feminist' (523). Riddy argues Malory's composition both 'is and is not' of an 'anti-feminist' ilk, depending upon which source materials are used to compare with his protagonists and episodes in the narrative (58, 59). Nevertheless, others like Armstrong assert that his work depicts a completely, not temporarily or ambiguously, 'misogynistic patriarchy' (GCC 83).

I would point to the latter positions as examples of Kaufman's warning of the implications for scholarship on Malory, as well as the genre of romance more broadly:

[E]mphasis on the primacy of homosocial bonds in texts like Malory's can replicate the privileging of masculinity of which the text itself is accused. Even theoretical approaches that begin as an attempt to locate patriarchal bias by finding evidence of women used as collateral become, in practice, readings that are solely about men (140).

This study starts from the premise that expressions of female identity and emotion need, at times, to be disentangled from their male counterparts' rather than always being seen through them. Changing the direction of this critical focus can serve as a helpful method of uncovering the significance of individual women's presences in a narrative that is often assumed to privilege the collective identity of patriarchal communities first and foremost over women, as well as over less prominent female social groups it depicts. In addition, the notion implicitly exists that the *Morte* is a predominantly masculine space, both in the geography it portrays and as a narrative. Nevertheless, other kinds of spaces also exist in the text, which this thesis addresses; examination of these in conjunction with a change in focus privileging women can further understandings of their roles and expressions, especially where marginal female protagonists are concerned.

Igraine, Morgause and Morgan not only appear to be marginal in the imaginative world of the *Morte* itself but in the Arthurian scholarly field, since it is assumed that Malory does not portray them as having significant private identities or emotions in his text. Although in 2004 Felicia Nimue Ackerman remarked that, '[n]owadays, reading Malory's *Morte* in terms of gender is conventional rather than original', there is in fact little in-depth analysis on either Igraine or Morgause in any medieval text, let alone the *Morte*, and few book-length studies on Morgan exist, despite the fact that these women represent Arthur's closest female relatives (Review 78). Lucy Allen Paton first published *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* in 1903, in which Morgan features prominently.¹² However, no scholarly work explicitly devoted to analysis of her mother appeared until almost eighty years later when a 1985 issue of *Arthurian Literature* featured an article by Rosemary Morris on her representation in Geoffrey's *HRB*.¹³ Studies even more rarely have Morgause as their titular and/or central focus; to the best of my knowledge, the earliest ones to do so are articles published by William C. Hale and Raymond H. Thompson in 1984 and 1993 respectively.¹⁴ Collective interest in Arthurian female protagonists in general was garnered with considerably more conviction after the publication of several seminal works that positioned women as the shared or exclusive central focus of study: *Tristan and Isolde* (1995), edited by Joan Tasker Grimbert; *Arthurian Women* (1996), edited by Thelma S. Fenster; and *Lancelot and Guinevere: A Casebook* (1996), edited by Lori J. Walters; Marion Wynne-Davies's *Women and Arthurian Literature: Seizing the Sword* was also published (1996); and Anne Marie Rasmussen's *Mothers and Daughters in Medieval German Literature* (1997). These

¹² Originally published in Boston by Ginn & Company. However, this thesis cites the second edition, published in 1960.

¹³ Rosemary Morris, 'Uther and Igerne: A Study in Uncourtly Love', *Arthurian Literature* 4 (1985): 70-92.

¹⁴ William C. Hale, 'Origins: Morgaine, Morgana, Morgause,' *Avalon to Camelot* 1 (1984): 35-36; Raymond H. Thompson, 'Morgause of Orkney Queen of Air and Darkness,' *Quondam et Futurus* 3.1 (1993): 1-13.

were shortly followed by *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries* (2001), edited by Bonnie Wheeler and Fiona Tolhurst. Pioneering studies by Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand and Dorsey Armstrong subsequently established gender more broadly in Arthurian literature as a worthy topic for single-author monographs with the respective works, *Topographies of Gender in Middle High German Arthurian Romance* (2001) and *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's Morte Darthur* (2003). Then *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (2006) by Carolynne Larrington was published, which for the first time considered the family connection between Arthur and his female siblings. This work primarily focuses on the *Lancelot-Grail*, as well as other European texts, more than Malory's. There has been an increasing proliferation of feminist readings of Arthurian literature since these important publications, resulting most recently in Tolhurst's books, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend* (2012) and *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Female Kingship* (2013), as well as Wyatt's forthcoming work, cited earlier. Still, no monograph has been written exclusively on the figures of Igraine or Morgause, even though they represent two of the three women who are closest to Arthur and who form key members of the most central royal family in Arthurian texts. Two monographs have been published on Morgan, most recently in *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter* by Jill M. Hebert in 2013 and *The Myth of Morgan la Fey* by Kristina Pérez in 2014.¹⁵ However, Morgan's significance either as an individual or as a part of Arthur's female family has been of secondary interest compared to the implications of her actions for the Arthurian community and as a chief rival (or indirect aid as in some cases) of the king.¹⁶ Furthermore, no article or book-length study has considered the importance of the family connection between

¹⁵ Another study exclusively devoted to analysis of Morgan exists in the form of an unpublished doctoral thesis titled "'Wichecraft & Vilaine': Morgan le Fay in Medieval Arthurian Literature", by Zoë Eve Enstone, submitted in 2011 at the University of Leicester.

¹⁶ See review of scholarship provided in the first section of Chapter Three, 'The Internal Coherence of Morgan's Identity', on pp. 198-209.

these three women in the *Morte* as regards Malory's portrayal of their private, rather than public, identities.

As a way of contributing to the field of Arthurian and gender studies through the *Morte's* representations of these women specifically, the present study seeks to excavate previously unrecognised aspects of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan's private identities. It does so by moving away from considerations of Arthurian society, communities or gender as collective issues and focusing, rather, on how other aspects of the text can be seen to contain and influence individual expressions of identity. Specifically, this thesis attends to questions of how the identities of these marginal female protagonists are presented in a variety of different literal or figurative spaces; both in the geographical and social areas of Malory's imagined landscape as well as in conceptually distinct parts of the narrative where we may read 'between the lines' and in the margins of the text. This thesis primarily emphasises the private identities of each of the three protagonists considered in order to re-evaluate what the narrative might articulate about marginality. By analysing Igraine, Morgause and Morgan in detail this thesis challenges two common preconceptions about female voice and agency in medieval studies, that can be seen to exist in addition, though still connected, to the predominant assumptions noted by Kaufman cited earlier. Firstly, that marginality is primarily a position of disempowerment, particularly for women. Secondly, that empowered marginal figures portrayed by Malory are inherently subversive.

Medievalist Scholarship on Marginality and Emotion

'Marginality' is neither a straightforward nor an uncontested term; it has been applied to a range of related scholarly areas and discourses, including history, literature, critical theory, social anthropology, postcolonial studies and gender

studies. Definitions of the word are complicated by various considerations of race, gender, class and nation, which raise distinct as well as intersectional issues. Moreover, the vocabulary used to describe marginal figures, objects or conditions is applied differently depending upon the context. However, one recurrent feature common to almost all discussions of marginality is the importance of its associations with space, whether literal or figurative. This can be identified in the word's root, 'margin', which derives from the Latin words *marginare* meaning 'to border' or 'enclose' and *margo* meaning in a general sense an 'edge', 'brink', or 'border' (*PDL*). In Middle English 'margin' usually denoted more specifically the 'space on a page . . . between its extreme edge and the main body of written or printed matter (sometimes containing notes, references, illuminations, etc.)', as well as the line marking this space, though it had more diverse applications (*OED*).¹⁷ Significance may be drawn from the fact that a 'margin' may constitute any space – or the marker defining its limits – outside of areas considered central, whether these are geographical, social or otherwise. 'Marginality' is an ambiguous term, since it simultaneously invokes a particular space as well as the method of its control and delineation. It is differently understood as referring to states of both empowerment and disempowerment, since 'marginal' has a dual nature in meaning 'subsidiary' or 'having little effect' in its adjectival form, at the same time as 'to enter in the margin' as a verb (*OED*). In other words, to be marginal can mean 'to write' as well as 'to be written upon' and can signify the active as well as passive qualities of protagonists.

Marginality is more often approached by medieval scholars as an example of passivity; as a position of disempowerment experienced by individuals and groups, who are perceived to be secondary or subordinate in relation to conventional socio-economic, religious or geographical positions. Marginal

¹⁷ In addition, 'margine' could also mean variously the 'edge or rim of an object', 'garment or 'cloth', as well as 'the end of a bodily organ', the 'edge of a wound' or 'the shore of a sea or lake' (*MED*).

figures may coexist in the same spaces as those members of society who are considered to be fully integrated and powerful, or they may exist entirely outside of normative social structures. For these reasons, marginality is defined differently. On one end of this spectrum, Ephraim Shoham-Steiner writes that marginality may be a private, invisible experience, as for individuals who have the inner 'sense of being different or marginal' even when they 'neither express this verbally nor behave differently in public' (18). This may be used to describe Igraine's experience of marginality in a certain period of her trajectory when the depiction of her privately experienced grief for a dead husband is entirely opposite to her public expression of joy as a newlywed queen to the king responsible for that same death. Marginality may also be an outwardly manifested state, such as that which Bronislaw Geremek describes as appearing 'abnormal' to others because a person's 'way of life' does 'not respect the standards in force in society', a position in which Morgause finds herself when her sons object to her choice of sexual partner after their father's death (3). Ruth Mazo Karras defines marginality yet more strongly as the condition of being actively 'excluded from the community . . . family or . . . religious order', which corresponds to Morgan, who is a figure of exile in the *Morte*, though it is of her own choosing as much as that of others ('Prostitution in Medieval Europe' 249).

Given the overarching patriarchal structure of European society since antiquity, women represent one of the largest groups of people to be treated as, or considered, marginal, not necessarily in the sense of being literally excluded but insofar as their voices have been, on many official levels, treated as having secondary value and authority to men's. Indeed, Michael Goodich argues that in the Middle Ages women were marginal 'by virtue of their status in both secular law and Christian theology' in which they 'lacked the rights and privileges accorded to men' ('Introduction' 3). Nevertheless, as Karras observes, marginality is 'culturally constructed and relative' (*Common Women* 7). The relativity of marginality is evident in the fact that smaller subdivisions

of marginal groups could exist within broader categories such as that of 'women'. Anne J. Cruz points out that medieval women in general may have been viewed as 'morally and physically inferior by society' but minority groups like female 'gypsies' or practitioners of Judaism and Islam were 'doubly disenfranchised' due to their intersectional status as members of a marginal gender *and* being of marginal 'social standing' or religion (105). This is an important point to acknowledge, since all three women considered in this study are members of the medieval courtly British elite and do not represent 'marginal' figures in the sense of being excluded on the basis of socio-economic, religious or racial reasons. It highlights that the spaces in which marginality is imagined are layered and complex in relation to each other as well as to central structures. This is also evident in the light of other issues, such as medieval disability or criminality, in reference to which figures have both been termed 'marginal' and discounted as such depending upon the critic concerned. For instance, Shoham-Steiner and Elma Brenner both discuss medieval lepers as 'marginal' figures in Jewish and Christian contexts respectively (11; 133). However, Geremek argues that although lepers 'were excluded from society', they 'can hardly be described as cast on to the margins, since [different] people on the margins had a holy fear of approaching them' (173). Alternatively, Karl-Heinz Steinmetz discusses a variety of medieval criminals or 'nonconformists' that existed 'on the margins', who, 'because of their outlawed lifestyle . . . could not be integrated into common social patterns and structures of society' (189, 191). Again, Geremek asserts that he does not 'confuse people on the margins and criminals' either 'because the marginal fringe of society embraced elements who were vilified, but who did not commit crimes' (3). Nevertheless, I would not argue that different marginal groups are mutually exclusive in their marginality.

This thesis acknowledges that many marginal figures may occupy what appears to be a single space at the same time as being isolated in, or governing, smaller subdivisions within that same space. Therefore the present study

attempts to consider marginality both in its overarching and more intricate senses. Regardless of more specific differences between individuals or groups and the motivations for their marginalisation, their perceived position outside of spaces considered to be central or mainstream locates them as external and disempowered in some ways, in theory at least. When marginality is equated with disempowerment, any statements of resistance whether in speech, action, gesture or thought, will be perceived as inherently subversive. This subversive potential has been examined indirectly, besides the direct approaches taken by critics such as those cited above, in studies on liminality. Although not nominally concerned with marginality, these also focus on the interrelation of margins and the exercise of power, since the word 'liminal' is defined as 'being on a boundary or threshold', especially 'being transitional or intermediate between two states, situations, etc.' (*OED*). The cultural anthropologist Victor Turner coined the noun 'liminality' in his seminal work, *The Ritual Process* (first published in 1969), in which he analyses rituals of the Ndembu in Zambia as such marginal spaces in which 'threshold people', or ceremonial initiates, are empowered at various life stages by leaving and then reintegrating into their social groups (95). According to Turner, these figures are

necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial . . . Liminal entities . . . may be represented as possessing nothing. They may be disguised as monsters, wear only a strip of clothing, or even go naked, to demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system . . . It is though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers (95).

In this description of social processes as Turner sees them, members of a group are effectively marginalised – though he does not use the term himself – in a

manner that initially disempowers them before transforming them instead into powerful figures, who subsequently occupy a more elevated position in their society. These figures' subversive potential is evident in their temporary existence outside of known social structures. However, Turner frames the process as a communally-orientated one, by the end, because the newly acquired authority of liminal figures is defined by collective rather than singular constructions of identity. For instance, he observes that a liminal initiate 'must be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the *group*' (103, second emphasis added). Turner's formulation of rites of passage may easily be applied to Arthur's knights in the *Morte*, who depart from a safe courtly environment to negotiate the liminal space of the quest wilderness where they often experience trials or loss of rank but, when they successfully negotiate obstacles such as enchantments or battles, return to the fellowship having increased their reputation and standing within the Arthurian community. Still, such a framework is less easily applied to Malory's female protagonists, who never officially act as quest agents in the same way as their male counterparts. When Arthurian women undergo any kind of empowering transformation in liminal spaces, their actions can be perceived as subversive if they do not contribute to the courtly community as a whole in addition to elevating their individual status or power.

Mikhail Bakhtin's now canonised study of humour in the work of François Rabelais, a fifteenth-century French writer, incorporates the above liminal elements in his study of marginal social activities and events, as well as going further in addressing their subversive potential. Bakhtin considers the significance of medieval European rituals like feasts, festivals and carnivals, which he collectively terms examples of the 'carnavalesque' (10). In these carnivals, people participated by dressing up as 'clowns and fools', mocking traditional ceremonies through their parodic imitation of 'the initiation of a knight' or presiding over the election of a fake 'king and queen . . . "for

laughter's sake"" as well as their use of 'abusive language' and 'insulting words or expressions' (5, 16). Bakhtin argues that in this way carnivals 'offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom' (6). The 'second world' Bakhtin identifies is a marginal space, albeit one that would disappear when carnivals ended. It was also subversive, since relatively powerless members of society could temporarily inhabit the roles of the elite and undermine them by displays of insubordination.

The assumption in Arthurian criticism that marginal women who enter liminal or carnivalesque spaces such as those identified by Turner and Bakhtin are subversive is evident in a number of studies. Fries's firm categorisation of female roles, listed in the title of her seminal article, 'Female Heroes, Heroines, and Counter-Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Tradition', has been influential in this respect.¹⁸ Heroines in medieval literature are figures, Fries summarises, who perform 'a traditionally identified, female sex-role' in being 'pure, humble, and submissive' and 'neither venture forth nor return', i.e. they are static, non-liminal figures ('Female Heroes, etc.' 59-60). When this is promoted as the standard construction of female identity in Arthurian and medieval literature, women automatically appear subversive regardless of whether they are seen as positive or negative forces of marginal power in their environments. Fries argues that female heroes are women who 'assume the usual male role of exploring the unknown beyond their assigned place in society', i.e. those who enter the space of the quest wilderness ('Female Heroes, etc.' 60). In doing so, although these women are essentially 'good', they still 'reject to various degrees the usual female role of preserving order', despite the fact that they have the 'prime function of devoted service to patriarchal culture' ('Female Heroes, etc.' 66, 60). This means that social subversion by

¹⁸ In *Arthurian Women*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (New York and London: Routledge, 2000): 59-73.

women who are implicitly 'bad' by contrast is even more pronounced and serves to underline their marginality and outsider status permanently. Fries asserts: 'What goes counter to the predominant and longstanding male-glorifying bias of the tradition, such as the power of the female counter-hero, is seen as subversive' ('Female Heroes, etc.' 72). This is because the female counter-hero 'violates' the 'norms of the patriarchy' and is guilty of 'wrongful force', usually by 'magic', which is 'as likely to hurt the hero as to help him' (Fries 'Female Heroes, etc.' 61, 68). Fries also argues that the female counter-hero, most importantly, 'consistently fills roles ordinarily attributable to men' and subversively appropriates power, which Fries considers to be 'misused' in the hands of overly powerful marginal women like Morgan le Fay ('Female Heroes, etc.' 68, 70).

Melanie McGarrahan Gibson identifies a different such figure, 'Lyonet', who ostensibly acts as an antagonist to the eponymous hero of Malory's 'Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney'. Lyonet appears at Pentecost, the yearly feast held by Arthur, which Gibson argues is comparable to a Bakhtinian time of 'carnival disruption' because it empowers individual women in subversive ways, a phenomenon that is evident in Lyonet's actions and use of language (214). Gibson sees 'dark elements' in this part of the narrative, which she argues 'contrast with the tale's comedy' and support of patriarchal authority because it 'places the ability to manipulate language above the ability to fight well' (213). In other words, in Gareth's adventures the power and speech of Arthurian women are promoted over those exercised or expressed by men (214). This is seen when Gareth embarks upon a traditionally chivalric rite of passage, the quest, in order to save a lady named Lyonesse and earn fellowship status. At the end of this quest, Gareth marries Lyonesse and is duly integrated into the Arthurian court as one of its elite members. Despite the conventional overarching framework of Gareth's quest, his journey is disrupted by Lyonesse's sister Lyonet, who accompanies Gareth on his journey using 'abusive language' and 'laughter' to mock his progress (Gibson

214). Gibson argues Lyonet 'violates with apparent impunity the rules that govern her sister's behavior, and she transgresses the boundaries that contain women in her society', by which she refers to the social boundaries of patriarchal etiquette that require women's obedience and appropriate reservation of speech (214). Just as the carnivalesque or marginal figures Bakhtin identifies undermine figures of authority by temporarily assuming their roles, Gibson believes that Lyonet speaks 'perversely' because she speaks 'like the knights in her world' usually do (215). This position evidently reflects Fries's reading of the female inhabitation of male roles as subversive.

Other scholars have also interpreted marginal women in Arthurian literature as subversive, including Sheila Fisher and Geraldine Heng, who concurrently with Fries emphasise the significance of female power in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (SGGK) and the *Morte* respectively. Fisher describes Morgan as a protagonist who is 'dangerously' positioned in relation to Arthur's court in this text, whilst Heng lists several of Malory's women, including Gwennyver, Lyonesse, Lyonet, Nynyve and Morgan, as being responsible for a number of different 'disruptive gestures and energies, intrusions and interruptions' in the *Morte* ('Leaving Morgan Aside' 91; 97). Donald L. Hoffman agrees with Fries in particular and extends her argument, emphasising the absolutely 'inherent' nature of subversion in many more Arthurian women should be recognised, which he affirms is in 'all but the most subservient female roles' ('Guenevere the Enchantress' 35). Whilst Sterling-Hellenbrand is not a proponent of this wider view, she does cite isolated figures like that of Laudine in Hartmann von Aue's *Arthuriad*, *Iwein*, as an example of the 'subversive' Arthurian woman, who uses the space of her own garden and castle 'to keep Iwein from a knightly way of life' in the wider community (TG 84). More recently, Armstrong also identifies other Arthurian women in the *Morte*, whom she argues are subversive because they effect 'a transaction of feminine sexuality that subverts the conventions of patriarchy',

including Morgause and Morgan, who represent two of the three figures considered in the following chapters (GCC 53).

This thesis does not seek to argue that all the marginal women identified by critics as subversive are not, in fact, subversive after all. Each of the previous studies are products of very specific readings and scholarly moments, which have served to further my understanding of the public roles female protagonists play in medieval texts. They have advanced the movement of feminist readings and re-readings in an Arthurian context as well as in relation to medieval literature more widely. Moreover, they have done so in ways that have benefited the present argument's understanding of identity constructions and informed the foundations of its methodology. However, this thesis does maintain that in certain cases marginal women have been overlooked, as has the significance of their power and authority for medieval audiences as well as a modern readership. The fact that female protagonists in 'patriarchal contexts' are most often read as 'working *through* rather than against social institutions and rituals in order to enact their own desires', or imitating masculine behaviour, means that distinctly female spaces or roles in the *Morte* still remain unidentified and unexplored, for the most part (Kaufman 141, emphasis added). Fries's statement that Arthurian women 'are essentially ancillary' to their male counterparts and 'must therefore be considered in relation to the male heroic roles they complement or defy' has tended to outweigh Heng's contradiction to the notion that women occupy 'only a supporting place in the Arthurian society' portrayed by Malory ('Female Heroes, etc.' 61; 'Enchanted Ground' 97). As well as identifying spaces that could be termed 'female' or even 'matriarchal' in the *Morte*, this thesis distinguishes between the individual identities of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan, and their communal functions within the Arthurian court; what I term their private and public identities respectively.

Analysis of alternative spaces in the *Morte* to the usual patriarchal and central spaces considered by Arthurian scholarship requires, to some extent,

alternative methodologies of reading and interpretation. These enable a redirection of the conventional focus on masculine identity, protagonists and spaces to their female counterparts, which can help to excavate the private identities and emotions of marginal women in particular. A number of critics outwith the specialism of Arthurian studies have influenced this approach; in different ways, they demonstrate the utility of considering textual elements other than those most immediately obvious to the reader. The three main elements chosen by this thesis comprise narrative breaks or elisions, the absences or indirect presences of protagonists through other people, and abbreviated or non-verbal gestures such as silence. In these ways, I argue Igraine, Morgause and Morgan can be seen to express themselves in additional narrative dimensions besides those conveyed by the narrator through direct description or dialogue.

Firstly, the importance of narrative breaks was highlighted by Laura D. Barefield's study on *Gender and History in Medieval English Romance and Chronicle*. Barefield identifies subdivisions of narrative space that co-exist within the overarching structures of chronicle works, such as Geoffrey's *HRB*. Barefield explains that, for the most part, medieval historiography, or chronicles, are written in a primarily 'paratactic' style; that is to say they are narratives 'consisting of long strings of coordinate syntax, with incidents only loosely linked by coordinating or sequential conjunctions' (3, 12). As such, chronicles give the impression of being simply linear through their 'strict, chronological listing of the generations of kings' (12). However, there also exist 'digressions into subordinate stories' in the form of 'romance' sections that represent 'breaks in the story' from Geoffrey's overarching narrative (12, 14). Barefield argues these subordinate stories introduce a 'hypotaxis', or a more complex style, to what is otherwise a largely paratactic and straightforward narrative, since certain stories diverge from the official discourses of the main narrative, like the Arthurian portion 'at its center' (3, 12). Barefield is effectively describing marginal sections of narrative, since they provide a

secondary commentary in addition to the primary version of events presented. Barefield argues the *HRB*'s movement to subordinate, or in other words alternative, spaces and identities in certain moments plays a conceptual function in the context of male and female authority:

These rhetorical styles, parataxis, or coordination, and hypotaxis, or subordination . . . serve to mark the play of power relations in a text . . . gendered moments often mark these spaces where the subordinate narrative breaks off from the larger paratactic framework, creating a rhetorical space between history and romance that marks social and political power undergoing a process of negotiation . . . Romance figures . . . benefit from their positioning within the larger narrative, creating a more complex, conflicted, and open arena for the performance of gender roles (4-5, 14).

The interaction between official and non-official narrative discourses Barefield considers can likewise be applied to the context of public and private identity in narratives considered to belong primarily to the genre of romance like the *Morte*, which has also been classed as a 'paratactic narrative' (Scala 183). I argue that breaks in this story have an equally significant potential to complicate the primary representation of events, as Barefield suggests of chronicle. Narrative spaces in which protagonists are not mentioned by Malory can appear, initially, to be meaningless in their trajectories and communicate nothing about their identities. Nevertheless, I argue that these textual silences have much to offer readers' experience of female voice. Chapter One, for instance, considers the significance for understandings of Igraine when she disappears from the narrative for over two decades in Malory's imagined world before returning to the Arthurian court, during which time her absence is not directly accounted for.

Absences may also be read in terms of the second alternative focus, cited earlier on the indirect presences of protagonists through other people. Elizabeth Scala's work on medieval romance narrative has been especially

influential in this respect. In *Absent Narratives, Manuscript Textuality, and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England*, Scala explores the relevance of narrative time and space to readers' perceptions of protagonists within any given story, considering how 'suppressed and deferred' or 'missing' stories of marginal figures often become relevant and significant only once the whole narrative is read to its conclusion (41, 44).¹⁹ She warns that '[w]hile the very vehicle and product of narration, narrative is not a complete disclosure. Rather, narrative has to be seen as a partial gesture in which everything cannot be told or known' (14). Scala proposes that the absences of protagonists who appear to be missing and irrelevant to the story require re-evaluation once the reading experience is at an end. For example, she discusses Morgan's absence and seeming marginality in *Sir Gawain in the Green Knight*, in which Morgan is famously uncovered as being a part of the story when the Green Knight, or Bertilak, finally reveals at the end of the romance that Gawain's entire quest was covertly orchestrated by Arthur's sister all along. Scala argues her absence is meaningful because it 'gives us a story we did not know we lacked' that can only be fully understood 'in retrospect' (41, 66). She states that Morgan 'occupies a more overtly symbolic space that can be characterized most strikingly by her *absence*. And it is this absence rather than her presence that makes the mysterious story work' because without Morgan, the story is not complete (Scala 64, original emphasis). Crucially, what Scala secondarily reveals is that if a marginal protagonist can make a story 'work', they cannot logically be entirely subversive, even if in the imaginative social world of a text they are treated as such.

In the latter stages of *Absent Narratives*, Scala explores how protagonists may be indirectly present in absences in a different form, through their substitution by others. Scala notes that 'an elaborate chain of substitutions . . . serves to organize most of the action in Arthur's world' in both individual and

¹⁹ See in particular the following chapters in this work: 'Introduction' 1-36, 'The Wanting Words of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' 37-70 and 'The Death of Arthur' 167-198.

communal contexts (183). Not only do 'members of King Arthur's court find themselves in the position of others: Lancelot in Arthur's, Tristram in Lancelot's, Elaine in Guinevere's, Isode Blanche Mains in La Beale Isode's' but knights may also stand for 'institutions in various ways' as well as 'for each other' (183-4). Scala argues that the narrative itself is a compositional paradigm of substitution, due to its interlacing style where one story is interrupted by another, then completed later on when that story is similarly interrupted in turn. She explains that:

Interlaced stories operate upon a 'meanwhile' principle. That is, as we shift from one interwoven story to another, the first story does not necessarily stop at the moment we leave off. When we return to its narrative thread, it is often at a different point than the one at which we left it. Thus, interlaced stories invisibly carry forward while narrative focus shifts from one tale to another. Malory is commonly understood to have 'untied' the strands of the interwoven, French narrative as he 'reduced' his sources into more manageable units. Yet Malory's narrative can hardly be called 'linear' (188).

In this light, Scala asserts, the *Morte's* 'arrangement of the narrative, by shifting focus to a new protagonist, establishes substitution as its primary structural and signifying mode' (184). Scala considers a number of Malory's protagonists as substitutive elements of the text; for example she sees the relationship between Isolde and Tristram as a foil to that of Gwenyver and Arthur, or the book of Tristram itself as a representative commentary on the larger book in which it is contained, the *Morte* (185). However, Scala does not consider the multiple substitutions for and enacted specifically by Morgan through objects and people, nor how Morgan's substitutions can be seen as a distinct and independent set from the others she identifies in this text. As I summarise in more detail in the 'Chapter Summaries' section of this introduction, these are questions to which Chapter Three particularly attends.

Objects constitute just one component in a spectrum of non-verbal expressions along with silences or gestures that together represent the third

alternative focus mentioned earlier, which allows the identity of marginal protagonists to be approached differently. These are addressed in the collection of essays edited by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose, entitled *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* (2001), which significantly motivated certain directions in this thesis's analyses. All of the essayists in some way highlight the connection between rape and the verbal silence of rape victims.²⁰ Sometimes this silence is figurative, as in the case of the courteous language and gestures inherent to motifs or tales of courtly love. Monica Brzezinski Potkay observes how in *SGGK* the scene of seduction between Lady Bertilak and Gawain is played out along the lines of traditional courtly etiquette, in such a way that reveals the violence inherent in the language typical of discourses of desire: 'The poem shows that courtesy, the language of seduction, can all too easily slide into a language of compulsion that at least threatens the use of physical force against women' in an eliding manner that implies '[i]f words fail, perhaps force may do' (98). According to Potkay's logic, silence consequently may be read as a sign that indicates force has occurred and, in some cases, as an overt criticism of that same force. In other texts, the link between violence and silence is much more literal and overt, as other contributors to the collection demonstrate. E. Jane Burns explores the story of Philomena, a tale from antiquity that was popularly translated into different European languages in the Middle Ages. In this tale, 'Philomena is carried off, with her father's consent, by her sister's husband, Tereus, who savagely rapes Philomena and, to keep her from revealing his crime, cuts out her tongue' ('Raping Men' 129). Rape ostensibly causes the erasure of private female identity and emotions in these tales, as different literary portrayals depict women who are denied expression in direct speech. However, as a range of critics demonstrate, objects, physical gestures and

²⁰ See in particular the following: Mark Amsler, 'Rape and Silence: Ovid's Mythography and Medieval Readers', 61-96; E. Jane Burns, 'Raping Men: What's Motherhood Got To Do With It', 127-160; Nancy A. Jones 'The Daughter's Text and the Thread of Lineage in the Old French *Philomena*', 161-187.

other people serve as channels through which raped women may speak indirectly. Potkay points out that the pentangle on Gawain's shield in *SGGK* serves as a symbol of his identity, which has been forcefully moulded by Lady Bertilak's involvement in his quest (110). This object therefore represents a mirror image of the 'compelling force' of Gawain's former use of courteous romantic language in which violence is similarly 'obscured' by an 'elegant surface' (116). Potkay also proffers the Green Knight's axe as a symbol of female as well as male identity, arguing the 'nick in the neck' it causes 'destroys Gawain's integrity—as rape destroys a woman's' (118). Other material objects that can be seen as symbols of women's emotions include the 'tapestry' Philomena weaves, on which her rape is inscribed and which 'pictorial message', Burns asserts, 'redefines the terms of female expression' ('Raping Men' 129-30). Echoes of Philomena's identity are expressed through her sister Progne, too, whose presentation of a 'meal' to her husband made of their son's dead body gives 'material form' to her anger and Philomena's pain, since in 'taking away her child's life, Progne also significantly gives life to another, to Philomena, substituting for the natural birth of a male heir the metaphorical rebirth of a sister she has believed to be dead' (142, 153). Nancy A. Jones agrees that such artifacts carry 'a partially hidden meaning' pertaining to the private identities and emotions of women who have been silenced in other ways (175). As well as objects, other people and physical gestures, the very absences of these things may be read symbolically. Karen Robertson argues that William Shakespeare's Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* is modelled on the tale of Philomena, though it is much more extreme in its depiction of violence because Lavinia loses not only her 'tongue' but her 'hands, loom and a sister' too (218, 214). These changes all deny Lavinia the same gestural, personal and material substitutive outlets appropriated by her earlier analogue. Whilst Robertson argues such additional limits on Lavinia's responses to rape reflect the prohibitive nature of early modern attitudes to women—because male protagonists recapitulate what was originally a female

path of vengeance – she still suggests that ‘cutout figures have meaning and leave significant traces’ because ‘the shadow of Progne marks the text’, which invites further examination (215).

This thesis seeks to fuse the three key methodological approaches exemplified by Barefield, Scala and Robertson et al. outlined above. It combines readings of different forms of protagonists’ absences, substitutions and material objects as a way of excavating the private identity and emotions of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan from the *Morte*. Consequently, this work relates to areas of scholarship concerned with the history of emotion. Whilst Andrew Lynch allows that, in one way, it is ‘problematical to write about medieval “emotions”, given that the word is not found in its modern sense until much later’ he asserts that ‘[n]evertheless, many modern names for “emotions” – love, hatred, fear, pity, anger, envy, joy – are found in medieval texts’ (48). Such acknowledgement that the term ‘emotion’ can be meaningfully applied to a context in which it does not have the same overarching definition has gained traction in medievalist scholarship, as evidenced by the proliferation of works published on this topic in recent years. Extended studies include the following list of titles, which is selective rather than exhaustive: *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (2001) by Bruce W. Holsinger; *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (2007) by Barbara H. Rosenwein; *The Inner Life of Women in Medieval Romance Literature: Grief, Guilt and Hypocrisy* (2011), edited by Jeff Rider and Jamie Friedman; *Emotion & Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy* (2012), edited by Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro; *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture* (2015), edited by Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack and Jonathan Wilcox; *Ordering Emotions in Europe, 1100-1800* (2015), edited by Susan Broomhall; *Emotions and War: Medieval to Romantic Literature* (2015), edited by Stephanie Downes, Andrew Lynch and Katrina O’Loughlin; *Understanding Emotions in Early Europe* (2015), edited by Michael W. Champion and Andrew Lynch;

Gender and Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder (2016), edited by Susan Broomhall.

Such studies are currently furthering modern audiences' awareness of medieval expressions of emotion and their relevance to our understandings of psychological or affective experience in modern societies. However, they each in turn concentrate on a different aspect of identity to that emphasised by the current study, by considering how emotion is primarily a public and communal phenomenon. Holsinger's book treats medieval music as a vehicle for emotion, which is a particular form of 'cultural or social expression' that may sometimes include the articulation of 'dissidence' from normative traditions of behaviour but is nevertheless in dialogue with the community (9). Rosenwein, too, sees emotion as inseparable from society and in her study posits 'the existence of "emotional communities": groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue the same or related emotions' in the Middle Ages (2). Similarly, Rider considers narratives as communal spaces for readers where emotion is socially learned. He argues that 'emotional life is . . . as much an outer life as it is an inner one', involving others, meaning emotions themselves mark the point 'where inner and outer life meet' ('Introduction' 2, 3). Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro also focus mainly on the 'social situation of individuals', arguing that whilst 'emotions are experienced in a way that seems to be profoundly our own' and 'it is easy to think that emotions are essentially private experiences', nevertheless emotions inevitably 'reach outwards' ('Introduction' 1, 6). The interconnection between individual and communal is maintained in the collection of essays compiled by Jorgensen, McCormack and Wilcox, who study emotions 'as a way to ask questions about how Anglo-Saxons encountered their personal goals, values and needs within a specific cultural setting' (Jorgensen 'Introduction' 5). Spanning a high- to late-medieval context as well as the early modern period, the first of Broomhall's collections seeks to understand 'the way . . . ordering systems', such as nation states as well as the

communal discourses contained within them, shape 'the social and emotional practices and lived experiences of contemporary individuals' in later epochs ('Introduction' 4). A more specific investigation into the communal aspect of emotion across medieval and early modern periods is offered by the essay collection edited by Downes et al.; this considers the emotions of war in particular as social phenomenon and as a collective set of 'historical experiences, whose production is bound up in . . . cultural practices' ('Introduction' 3). Likewise, Champion and Lynch's book examines emotions in relation to society, as does the second of Broomhall's edited collections, which considers the 'communal' as well as 'individual' consequences that emotions could have in disordering society ('Introduction: Destroying Order' 1).

There are most definitely many interconnections between individual and communal expressions of the relationship between identity and emotion. There is much evidence these authors point to that suggests much of what people feel derives from the internalisation of social values more widely. However, in Arthurian studies there has been a predominant focus on how Igraine, Morgause and Morgan affect or relate to their communities, meaning the notion that Malory also portrays these women as individuals with private identities and emotions has been greatly denied. A focus on the intersection of emotions with communal activities often, naturally, requires a consideration of the conflict they cause with or within that same community, which leads to questions of the extent to which protagonists conform or subvert it. However, I argue this same lens and set of issues are responsible for many of the negative and morally-loaded readings of marginal Arthurian women, especially in relation to Morgause and Morgan, who are rarely, if ever, considered as distinctly desiring individuals separate from the communities in which they also play important political parts. I have therefore deliberately attempted to read the *Morte* for signs of these protagonists' individual traits, private identities and emotions.

The present study also differs slightly from a related branch of scholarship on emotion within the broader field outlined above, that of 'embodied emotion'. Embodied emotion refers to the material articulation of emotional experience through the physical body, either as a whole or through individual component parts. Key works within this sub-specialism of medieval studies have been produced by Burns, whose research into Old French literature demonstrates in a variety of ways and contexts how female bodies can be seen to speak in lieu of, or in addition to, women's literal voices. Burns's publications, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (1993), *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (2002), and *Sea of Silk: A Textile Geography of Women's Work in Medieval French Literature* (2009), have provided seminal foundations for scholars of embodied emotion. The recent publication of *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice* (2015), edited by Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington and Corinne Saunders, considers similar modes of expression by exploring how emotion is 'physically written on the body' in 'tears, illness, madness' and 'gestures' in the context of Arthurian studies more specifically (Brandsma et al. 9-10). In certain instances, this thesis does touch upon how the outer physical appearances of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan are presented by the narrator of the *Morte* in relation to their expressions of emotion. However, rather than synchronising with an inner state, this thesis argues that in the *Morte* attention to female bodies often exemplifies the absolute dichotomy of outer appearance and emotions, of public and private identity. Therefore, the term 'embodied emotion' is not applied to analyses of these protagonists, although it is cognisant of this branch of scholarship.

In relation to the emotional articulation of identities, the present study focuses chiefly on the movements of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan. These can be traced through geographical space, in the wider courtly or quest landscape; indeed, the minutiae of biological or corporeal changes they experience is rarely described, meaning it is necessary to look beyond the body

in such cases to derive emotional meaning from the text. Through spatial movement and position, analysis of these marginal protagonists' expressions of emotion more broadly complements the examination of marginality and its manifestations. Just as 'marginal' can denote both spatially passive and active states, as considered in the first half of this section, both the actions of resting within and creating outside of a certain social or textual area, Lynch observes that the word 'emotion' also implies an 'underlying sense of "motion", of "movement" . . . whether intransitive, transitive or reflexive, potentially both being moved or displaced by something and also actively moving oneself or others towards somewhere' (49). This thesis focuses on the public and private landscape through which protagonists move, with particular emphasis on the latter. Therefore, in order to establish the social and geographical parameters of my argument, an overview of the main social and geographical place types through which Igraine, Morgause and Morgan move is provided next.

Privacy in the Spaces of Romance: Court and Quest Wilderness

The primary spatial centre of medieval romances and the *Morte* is the court. In medieval terminology, a 'court' refers to the hall of a noble house, manor or castle in which official meetings are held, the 'formal assembly' of people gathered at such times, and the whole 'establishment', 'residence' or 'entourage' belonging to a governing authority, usually patriarchal figures such as a king or lord (*MED*). As such, courts are capable of being geographically movable as well as static, depending upon whether their figureheads are at home or abroad. Nevertheless, whether situated in a domestic or foreign context, the court is primarily a political space in which expressions of identity are overwhelmingly public in tone. In the *Morte*, key feasts, weddings, funerals, tournaments, battles and the initiation of knights all take place at court, and all contribute to the formation, stabilisation and

continuation of the Arthurian community. These events are usually witnessed, sanctioned or discussed by various members of the community. In addition, any events considered to be of particular historical significance are also recorded in chronicles as a way of preserving the collective history of Arthurian society over time.

The fact that the court is a primarily political and public space affects the functions of smaller subdivisions within it, when they are put to other emotional and private uses. Courtly private spaces are always eventually transgressed in some way; these are, namely, bedchambers, secret passageways or other annexes within castles that typically constitute the temporary, clandestine meeting-places of lovers. For example, the scene between Isolde and Tristram cited at the beginning of this introduction is possible because Isolde's maid brings Tristram 'prevaly . . . unto her chambir', after which he is kept hidden from Mark, in whose castle he stays covertly, 'in a turret' (299). Likewise, one of Arthur's knights, Lamerok, goes to see Queen Morgause of Orkney via 'a prevay postren' and through a 'parler' of a castle near Camelot, so that his visit may go unnoticed by other members of the courtly community (368). However, the privacy of such spaces within or attached to the court is always eventually compromised, as central protagonists at least risk, if not meet, their deaths in these same spaces. Tristram is slain by Mark in the king's court 'as he sate harpyng afore hys lady, La Beall Isode' and Morgause is beheaded when her tryst with Lamerok is disrupted by the presence of her three oldest sons (654, 368). Other instances include the moment in which Gawain and a lover, named Lady Ettarde, are almost beheaded when a romantic rival, Pelleas, discovers them sleeping together in 'hir pavylons without the yate [gate]' of a nearby 'castel' (105). Alternatively, Lyonesse and Gareth plan to sleep together in the 'hall' when it is empty (206). However, their privacy is spoiled by the lady's sister, Lyonette, who intervenes because she feels it is improper for them not to 'abyde hir tyme of maryage', a public rite that sanctifies individual bonds in the context of their

wider community (206). One of the most significant breaches of privacy occurs when Lancelot and Gwenyver are finally caught together in an adulterous meeting in the 'Quenys chambir' of Arthur's court in an ambush by over 'twelve knyghtes' of the Round Table (648-9). The political disruption between different factions of Arthur's court that subsequently follows leads to civil war within his kingdom and the death of most of his knights in the final section of the *Morte*.

Evidently, private expressions or activities within the medieval court must eventually give way to the public functions for which spaces are ultimately designed. This phenomenon could be attributed to the fact that, as Michael Camille argues, the medieval organisation of space 'lacked our predominant dichotomy of public versus private' (*Image on the Edge* 16). Nowadays, the domestic home and the bedroom in particular are seen as the ultimate symbols of privacy because they represent spaces of protection from public concerns for those who desire it. Therefore 'public' in modern English is simply denoted as meaning, 'in most of the senses, the opposite of private' (*OED*). However, in the Middle Ages conceptions of public and private were more complicated. The home, whether courtly or otherwise, comprised elements that were legally framed in different and sometimes conflicting ways, as Deborah S. Ellis explains:

The medieval English house in all its varieties . . . was essentially a combination of hall and chamber. Generally speaking, the hall was the public room and the chamber was more private. But although these units merged to form a single house, they had a surprising autonomy, forming a functional spousal metaphor of cooperative but sex-defined independence. They were, for instance, often bequeathed separately in wills, and each had the potential to subdivide or to expand in order to take on the characteristics of the other. The hall was associated with the knight and lord, while the chamber was the woman's province . . . The house is thus intrinsically ambivalent and can be characterized in terms of a sort of shifting polarity between chamber and hall, man and woman, and privacy and public life, as well as between inner and outer (105).

As well as the house overall, the apparently private bedchamber within this 'shifting' set of spaces was itself an ambiguous location. Megan G. Leitch explains that in England, 'separate bedrooms – "bowers" (from Old English), or "chambers" (a word first appearing in English c. 1300) – only become more common in the early thirteenth century, and . . . pertained primarily to the elite and established' (41-2). Leitch adds that 'the "privacy" offered by these bedrooms was . . . rather relative, since they often held multiple occupants and saw much traffic' (42). Such traffic was a feature of poorer households because, as Mary Thomas Crane explains, they often constituted 'one large open space shared by the whole family and sometimes animals', as well as the homes of the 'relatively wealthy' where 'servants were ubiquitous, and often slept in the same bedchamber as family members' (5). Still, complete privacy could not be achieved in court even by those of the highest social status. A. C. Spearing writes that 'even the royal chamber' was a space in which 'people other than the king and his wife regularly sle[pt]', such as honoured guests, for example, meaning neither its function nor boundaries were stable or exclusive (17). Moreover, notions of a distinctly feminine bedchamber versus a masculine hall counterpart are complicated by the fact that the bed within it represented a symbolic fusion of the two, as the place where 'male and female are joined' (Spearing 17). Leitch notes that in the case of royal families in particular, this site symbolised the dynastic foundations of the lineage and as such the bedchamber was 'ruled by the king from the hall' in order to ensure what was joined contributed appropriately to the family's prestige within the community (43). For these reasons, 'to obtain complete privacy, one had to do more than simply close (and lock) the door' (Leitch 42).

Privacy was more reliably found outside of the medieval home or court in the open outdoors, as Crane charts over time, 'until well into the seventeenth century' (5). Consequently, privacy was 'associated with both "wild" spaces such as forests and fields, and with cultivated gardens', two types of outdoor

spaces that offered this condition for different reasons (Crane 7). 'In truly rustic spaces', Crane argues, 'privacy is a function of isolation and solitude', meaning in this case a state defined by complete separation from other people (7-8). Gardens, on the other hand, provide a privacy that is only relative, since they constituted 'enclosed spaces which seem to have been *less* "open" to the observation of servants and other household members than the inside of the house', but were not entirely invisible or remote from them (Crane 7-8, emphasis added). This thesis considers both such conditions of privacy where the *Morte's* protagonists are concerned: complete isolation and relative distance, the latter including places where privacy is found because smaller communities or groups of people offer shelter from larger and more politically dominant courtly structures. However, the geographical spaces considered here consist only of those located entirely outside of the Arthurian court, since medieval gardens were not impermeable or completely private spaces, for similar reasons to those that compromise the privacy of bedrooms. Though seemingly positioned outside of public spaces, private gardens remain connected to them in other ways. This is also true of the language used to describe them, as Crane writes that 'gardens represent a space that blurs the distinction between concepts of inside and outside', since the words "'bowers" and "cabinets" could be found in both house and garden' (8). Arlyn Diamond also sees gardens as economic, social and sexual 'extensions' of the household rather than locations that constitute discrete spatial units with different functions (131). Their related functions are reflected in the qualities of garden space that both directly and indirectly link them to the court, since gardens are 'bounded by . . . walls that distinguish it from wilderness and agricultural field' and overlooked by castle windows, which indicate their 'connection' (Diamond 134).

It is rather upon the 'wild spaces' Crane identifies that this thesis mainly focuses; these have been designated the 'quest wilderness' for the present purposes. The quest wilderness comprises all the open and undefined spaces

outside of, or visible to, the court and any of its temporary or permanent adjoining structures. It consists variously of waterways such as seas and rivers, open terrain like wide plains, valleys or cliffs, as well as dense forests and woods; all spaces which lack the same concrete boundaries and defined limits of the court. Due to the often challenging nature of an environment that is frequently changeable and uncertain, male knights frequently encounter adventures in the quest wilderness as a way of increasing their reputation. Although these quests are publicly initiated and embarked upon as a way of increasing knights' status within the community, the experiences of individual knights during their time outside of the court is nevertheless effectively private, since they act in spaces beyond the supervision, surveillance or guidance of their king, the majority of their fellows and sexual partners. This is not to say that the quest wilderness is entirely devoid of human company; on the contrary, different groups of people may be found there as the main chapters in this thesis explore. Nevertheless, the notion that the quest wilderness constitutes a form of privacy from the court is evident in the fact that Arthur's knights are required to relate their adventures in public upon their return, for example to Gwennyver's 'queste of ladyes' by whose decree knights are 'judged' in the sight of Arthur and the court (70).

A synergy evidently exists between such peripheral geographical spaces and the emotions of protagonists in the *Morte*, which, when analysed in depth, reveals expressions of public and private identity frequently correspond with their location in courtly or extra-courtly spaces by the narrator. Moments in the specific emotional trajectories of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan are addressed over the course of each chapter in this thesis. However, many other, more central protagonists also enter the quest wilderness in order to express emotions or aspects of private identity, rather than expressing them in court. For example, when Isolde's maid Brangwayne is abducted, the queen is distressed (262). The narrator describes how she 'myssed hir mayden' and was 'ryght hevvy as evir any quene myght be' because 'of all erthely women she

loved hir beste' (262). As a direct reponse to the loss of this intimate, Isolde 'walked into the foreste to put away hir thoughtes, and there she wente hirself unto a welle and made grete moone' (262). This is a decidedly spatial articulation of emotion, as it indicates the deliberate movement from the court to a location outside of it for the purposes of individual expression. Such association of inner emotion with outer spaces is again reflected in a different moment in which Isolde hears that Tristram might be dead, when, in response, Isolde 'made such sorow that she was nyghe oute of hir mynde' (303). The putting 'away' of Isolde's thoughts in the former description is echoed in like manner by the going 'oute' of her mind in the latter, suggesting an inner spatial displacement is caused by emotion at both times. King Arthur himself, after he has a nightmare, feels 'passyng hevvy of hys dreame' and immediately goes into the 'foreste' to 'putte hit oute of thought' (30). As in Isolde's case, Arthur's distancing of himself from the court demonstrates the notion that 'thought', being synonymous with emotion in this instance, is something that does not necessarily have a place in courtly life and must be put 'oute' (30). Madness, in particular, represents a state of mind caused by emotional distress, which is always resolved by moving into the quest wilderness.²¹ Several of Arthur's knights are described as going 'madde', most prominently Tristram, who at one point goes 'oute of hys mynde in the foreyste', and Lancelot, who runs 'wylde woode frome place to place' in another (312, 317, 480). In the latter example, the 'wylde woode' serves as a semantic paradigm of the emotional functions of extra-courtly spaces, since it contains a double meaning: the slippage between 'wood', meaning 'forest', and Lancelot's state of mind as 'madness' (*MED*). In both cases, this kind of madness is caused by the emotional pain resulting from a dispute with or distance from a private

²¹ I do not use the term 'madness' in the casual sense often adopted in modern English, where it is sometimes used to refer generally to what in reality constitute a range of different and specific mental health problems. Rather, this term is directly lifted from a medieval romance context where it indicates emotional disturbance.

romantic partner whose love for them conflicts with their public role to a royal spouse.

In all the different examples above, the *Morte's* protagonists can be seen to transition from public to private spaces in order to express individual emotions or aspects of their identity that are less perceptible to the Arthurian community. Each transition coincides with a movement away from courtly spaces into the quest wilderness and emphasises individuals' need for distance from locations perceived to be communal centres. For this reason, in the current study courts and quest wilderness are referred to as figuratively 'central' and 'peripheral' locations in order to reflect the spatial change that accompanies such public and private shifts in expressions of identity.

As indicated in the review of critical discussions on privacy cited above, in medieval history as well as popular fiction central courtly spaces are most commonly governed by male authorities such as kings, lords or knights and thus may be termed 'patriarchal'. This term derives from the Latin *pater* or *patriarcha*, for 'father', which denotes the literal father and head of a family or household as well as a figurative father, or leader, of a larger community and political realm as a whole (*PDL*). It is therefore suited to a description of Arthur's rule over the fellowship of the Round Table and his many courts across Britain. Imitative, related or rival courts, such as those of King Lott of Lothian and Orkney or King Mark of Cornwall, may also be described as patriarchal, though their authority occasionally conflicts with Arthur's. In addition, I use the term 'patriarchal' in a broader sense to include extensions of these kings' authority, embodied by their knights, who, when they are abroad, usually seek to uphold the same chivalric standards as the king to whom they pledge allegiance. Figures such as bishops, monks and hermits can also manifest such extensions of patriarchal authority when they successfully support male knights in their endeavours. As well as the court, then, certain subdivisions of the quest wilderness governed by these figures may also be described as patriarchal, namely religious institutions such as an 'abbey of

monkys', 'a pore mannys house', and the many male-owned 'house-holdis' that are ubiquitous to the peripheral landscape beyond and between various Arthurian courts (96, 202, 605). These locations provide spaces of healing for male knights after difficult chivalric endeavours, namely fights or adventures, and often are the site of knightly integration or reintegration into communal courtly structures. For example, a fight between two of Arthur's knights, Lamerok and Bellyaunce, is concluded when Lamerok leads his opponent to 'an abbey' instead of killing him as he initially swears to do, where he stays and 'wolde nat departe from Sir Bellyaunce tyll he was hole' (279). During this time of healing, 'they were sworne togydys that none of hem sholde never fyght ayenste other' and after only after Bellyaunce is fully healed does Lamerok then depart, going 'to the courte of Arthur' after this mutual declaration of peace (279). In a similar demonstration of collective male solidarity, Uwain brings his fellow Lucan to 'the abbey of Ganys' after he has been wounded by Tristram, who is not yet a member of Arthur's fellowship (327). This abbey belongs to another of Arthur's initiated peers, as does the 'castell thereby' that 'hyght the Castell of Ganys, of the whych Sir Bleoberys was lorde' (327). In the latter example, a religious institution and court are once again linked together in a way that indicates shared communal values, since in this space Lancelot 'promysed all hys felowis there to mete in the queste of Sir Trystram' on behalf of Lucan (327). Hermitages and their related courtly spaces evidently often work together to link the formation or continuation of individual ties between male peers with the maintenance of patriarchal communities, which prioritise public expressions of identity.

By contrast, many subdivisions of space in the quest wilderness exist that can be described as 'matriarchal', in that they are created, governed or occupied primarily by women and privilege individual female desires and interests. I have chosen to call these spaces 'matriarchal' rather than simply 'non-patriarchal', 'neutral', or 'feminised' because each of the latter terms are problematically suggestive in different ways. To name a space 'non-

patriarchal' merely establishes it as an inverse counterpart to central Arthurian courts, potentially implying it lacks a stable system of government or is structured by a directly contrary one; both of these assumptions preclude proper investigation of its distinct structural qualities, and frame any activities seen to occur within it as inherently subversive. Application of the term 'neutral' is similarly inaccurate where the *Morte's* protagonists are concerned because it can imply passivity or impotency and so fails to reflect the directive action that often originates from female leaders of peripheral spaces. Furthermore, words like 'feminised' are at risk of being used to describe other protagonists who enter such spaces, including male knights; this is not a change I would necessarily argue occurs in matriarchal places, even when Arthurian women control the actions of men or successfully exercise authority over them. In the present context, change in matriarchal spaces has less to do with shifts in gender performance – though this can happen, of course – than with the healing and expansion of private identity that can occur in them. This is enabled when power and authority are exercised by independent female protagonists.

The most prominent matriarchal space is the 'Lake' or 'Ile' of 'Avylyon', referred to here as 'Avalon', which is a domain governed and populated almost exclusively by women and is mentioned several times in the *Morte* (37, 212). The two primary authorities and representatives of this space are the 'Lady of the Lake' and 'Nenyve', who takes over as 'chyff' Lady of the Lake after her predecessor's death (37, 78). Significantly, Avalon is the source of Arthur's magical sword Excalibur, which replaces an earlier model by the same name, and also Arthur's last known destination when he is mortally wounded near the end of the narrative (37). Avalon's inhabitants are marginal figures in the sense that they occupy a small portion of the total narrative space but, more importantly, because they are educated in, govern, and originate from a society peripheral to major Arthurian courts. As a space, Avalon might initially appear to constitute a simple mirror to Arthur's court in particular,

since the 'chyff' Lady of the Lake governs a group of many 'damesels' who travel to courts and across the quest wilderness in an analogous manner to that of Arthur's knightly community (641, 78). Moreover, in certain situations Avalonian women help to reinforce the political stability of patriarchal courts by strengthening ties between Arthurian knights. For example, the 'chyff . . . Lady off the Lake fested Sir Launcelot and Sir Severeuse le Breuse' in order to secure their 'promyse . . . never to do batayle ayenste' one another, which act serves to minimise masculine conflict (641). In these cases, Avalon can be seen as a space that is aligned with the public sphere due to its figureheads' regularly supportive attitude to Arthur. However, whilst Avalonian women may become politically involved in events throughout the Arthurian landscape in both court and quest wilderness, their native space conversely remains private and emotionally focused. References by the narrator to Avalon are indirect, rare, and withhold much from readers. Although Avalon's women feature several times in the narrative, there is only one brief description of the space itself and that does not extend past its outer facade: 'There ys a grete roche, and therein ys as fayre a paleyce as ony on erthe, and rychely besayne' (37). In this statement, the narrator pretends to describe Avalon for readers by offering a glimpse beyond the 'roche' or 'island' but actually stops short of the palace walls (*MED*). Salient features of Avalon's internal landscape and architecture are never disclosed, unlike the many patriarchal courts elsewhere in the narrative whose halls, chambers, passageways, gates, gardens and windows are described in detail. I argue this is an important distinction to make, since the narrator's protection of Avalonian women's privacy can be seen to foreshadow the emphatic privileging of private identity exhibited by ladies of the Lake, all of whom act upon their individual desires more than they serve patriarchal communities – none more so than Nynyve. When Nynyve saves Arthur's life for the first time, this of course benefits his court. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Nynyve's reasons for doing so are based upon her individual perspective and set of

emotional responses to Arthur, since she 'com thidir for the love of Kyng Arthur' as well as individual admiration for his 'prouesse' and she acts only after feeling 'grete peté' for his plight (87, 89). At another time, Nynyve indirectly deprives Arthur's court of its oldest advisor for private reasons when she permanently imprisons Merlin 'in a roche', being 'passynge wery' of the enchanter's sexual attentions (79). Furthermore, Nynyve is also responsible for removing one of Arthur's knights, Pelleas, from courtly spaces; after marrying him, Nynyve 'wolde never suffir Sir Pelleas to be in no place where he shulde be in daungere of hys lyff, and so he lyved unto the uttermeste of hys dayes with her', i.e. in the matriarchal space of Avalon rather than with Arthur (689). Ultimately, even though Nynyve is known to readers as a figure who 'was allwayes fryndely to Kynge Arthure', she acts according to her individual desires first and benefits the community second (297). Arguably, she is able to do so because her authority derives from a private matriarchal space before she is situated by the narrator in public patriarchal courts.

Besides Avalon, there exist several other smaller subdivisions space in the quest wilderness, which are also private and matriarchal, such as ships, minor castles and all-female eremitic spaces, namely nunneries. Each chapter of this thesis explores such spaces by examining different examples and revealing their common thematic emphasis on the notion that matriarchal spaces privilege the private identity and emotions of individuals in contrast to their patriarchal counterparts, which more strongly support the public identity of Arthurian communities. Marginal protagonists better demonstrate the *Morte's* spatial distinction between public and private identities because they spend proportionately more time in peripheral spaces, like Avalonian women. However, unlike these women, many other marginal female protagonists originate from or are situated in Arthurian courts and are politically central in courtly events such as marriage and the procreation of royal heirs. As such, marginality is not a single or monolithic condition but rather a state that can

occur in—and transform between—different spaces, both central and peripheral. Therefore, before summarising the content of individual chapters, it is necessary to establish the key critical terms used to distinguish between the types of marginalities experienced by the protagonists explored in this thesis.

Critical Vocabulary: Central and Peripheral Marginality

The earlier review of medievalist scholarship on marginality demonstrated how marginality may be manifested as an internally experienced condition, in addition to constituting a state imposed on an individual externally by their community. Likewise, as demonstrated in the following section, the spaces of romance may also be distinguished according to their location as socially interior and exterior, or ‘central’ and ‘peripheral’ as I term them. The court represents the main nucleus of social activity for Malory’s protagonists, whilst the more remote quest wilderness constitutes a landscape in which their individual journeys and experiences are played out in alternative or unusual ways. This thesis examines the marginal positions occupied by Igraine, Morgause and Morgan in both central patriarchal spaces and peripheral matriarchal spaces, which disempower and empower them respectively. As a way of highlighting these protagonists’ contradictory positions, in terms of power’s interconnection to their location in space, their different positions are termed ‘central marginality’ and ‘peripheral marginality’. The former term may initially appear semantically oxymoronic, whilst the latter might, out of context, be tautological. However, for the present purposes these terms help to distinguish between Arthurian protagonists who are marginal within the court, and those who are marginal entirely outside of its boundaries.

‘Central marginality’ denotes the condition of female protagonists who are forced to occupy a fixed and limited space within the Arthurian court due to

the politically useful nature of their public roles as queens, wives and relatives of key patriarchal figures. As such, their private identities and emotions are relegated to a position of secondary importance. In this way, central marginality encapsulates the modern and predominant understanding of 'to marginalise' as the action whereby an individual is 'remov[ed] from the centre or mainstream' by 'a dominant social group'; in this case the Arthurian court, which is effectively 'to belittle, depreciate, discount, or dismiss' their private identity and emotions (*OED*). As indicated by the review of relevant scholarship at the beginning of this introduction, Arthurian women in general are often seen to embody this form of marginality because much less narrative space and descriptions are devoted to the elaboration of their identities; moreover, they are often victims of both individually and communally enacted male violence. A case in point of the former can again be seen in the example of Isolde and Tristram. Shortly after the scene in which they express indescribable 'joys' upon being reunited with one another, Tristram is forced to leave Mark's court for fear of being discovered (299). Tristram 'rode hys way into the foreyste', the peripheral quest wilderness, in order to express 'the grettiste dole that ever erthely creature made' (301). He remains in this emotional quandary for 'a quarter off a yere', during which time he roams freely across the landscape, joining or leaving the 'felyshyppe' of smaller groups of people as he pleases (301). Conversely, as Mark's queen, Isolde is required to remain in court where her private identity and emotions are securely enclosed in the innermost part of the court, where she is fixed at its centre, 'syke in hir bedde, makyng the grettyste dole that ever ony erthly woman made' (300). The spatial polarisation of Isolde and Tristram is poignantly underlined by their almost identical expressions of grief; these appear to offer paradigmatic examples of the ways in which public constructions of gender roles played by men and women are respectively defined as active and passive. Evidently, centrally marginal women's movements are controlled by the patriarchal structure of the court that

requires their obedience and submission to male authorities' expectations of their public roles.

'Peripheral marginality', by contrast, is used to describe the state of female protagonists who develop their private identities outside of the court, as well as mostly acting and emotionally expressing themselves, in extra-courtly spaces. These Arthurian women are empowered by such a complete removal from the court, since their occupation of, or movements through, space is determined not by the community but by themselves; in other words, they act as individual and independent agents. Consequently, when peripherally marginal women enter the court, they do so from a position of authority because they are not subject to the same standards of communal behaviour required of their courtly counterparts. For example, when one Avalonian woman visits Arthur's court, she comes 'gurde with a noble swerde' (40). Arthur finds this inappropriate for a woman and tells her 'Hit besemyth you nought', presumably because weapons and armour are the trappings of male chivalric status (40). However, instead of removing the sword, the damsel asserts it represents a chivalric trial and sets out the terms and conditions under which the sword may be detached from her person: 'I may nat be delyverde of thys swerde but by a knyght, and he muste be a passynge good man of hys hondys and of hys dedis' (40). Similarly, Nynyve imprisons Merlin in stone, as mentioned earlier, with no political repercussions from Arthur although she frequently visits his courts. Other peripherally marginal women besides the ladies of the Lake also demonstrate this form of empowerment. For example, as Chapter Two explores in detail, Morgause publicly humiliates Arthur when she comes to Carlyon from Orkney. Her words are heeded rather than disregarded; she is neither punished nor marginalised by his court, meaning this scene provides an important example of matriarchal authority exercised in the *Morte*.

The present distinction between different forms of marginality importantly reveals that power, according to Malory's vision, is determined by the ability

to control the movement of oneself and others within space, whether this is within or outside of delineated areas. Such power is exemplified by Arthur's actions as king, as he carefully considers which individual knights are allowed to become members of his fellowship and exiles those who displease him or threaten his courtly community in some way. For example, Arthur exiles a knight named Balyn for killing his original benefactress, the first Lady of the Lake, saying 'Ye have shamed me and all my court . . . Therefore, withdraw you oute of my courte in all the haste that ye may' (44-45). Arthur similarly exiles Uwain, his nephew, whom he orders should be 'putt . . . oute of my courte' and 'discharged' (96). He exiles his sister, Morgan, in even more extreme terms by declaring his enmity with her will extend not just to his court but to 'all Crystendom' (95, 96). However, Morgan and many other peripherally marginal women are equally capable of exercising this form of power, which the text deliberately brings to readers' attentions in moments such as that when Mark asks Morgan to 'sette all the contrey envyrone with ladyes that were enchauntours' (382). Alternatively, four queens take Arthur to Avalon near the end of the *Morte*, which is an escape not available to any of the other protagonists (688-9).

Whereas patriarchal figures of authority like Arthur derive the power to control movement from central, public spaces and courtly constructions of identity, I argue women derive the same ability instead from the privacy offered by many peripheral spaces in the quest wilderness. However, as I have demonstrated, public and private issues often interact with or overlap one another. It is worth noting that the term 'secrecy' is not included as a synonym for 'privacy' in the critical vocabulary employed in this thesis. Although 'privacy' and 'secrecy' can sometimes be synonymous in both their Middle English and modern definitions, they tend to be applied to contexts that signify public or private concerns respectively. Variations on 'private' or

'privacy' are three times more common in the *Morte* than 'secret' or 'secrecy'.²² Additionally, in this text, issues of privacy almost always concern themselves with the protection of individual borders and private identity, whereas acts of secrecy are concerned with protecting communal borders and public identity. As a consequence, I argue that they represent referentially distinct terms. Although in three instances variants on 'private' or 'secret' are used in the same sentence, in all other cases they tend to describe different actions or events.²³ Unlike Isolde's desire for privacy, cited earlier, where she expresses emotions about Tristram, her desire for secrecy at a tournament relates instead to her communal image within the public sphere. She is concerned that she 'sholde beholde the justis in a *secrete* place that was *honeste for her astate*' (405, emphases added). Two other examples illustrate the same nuance between these words, both used in different instances describing meetings between Gwenyver and Lancelot. At one meeting, in a castle peripheral to Arthur's court, they manage to meet 'prevaly' and escape discovery by other members of the Arthurian community who are present (632). However, knowledge of their affair is finally made public when they are found in Arthur's court, when their meeting in a chamber is described as 'secret' (465). In the *Morte*, then, there appears to be a consistency to the outcome of private meetings and the words used to describe them, depending upon whether they occur in central or peripheral spaces. Secrecy always threatens to undermine the power and private expressions of individuals due to its close connection with the limits of community and patriarchal authorities their actions transgress. As this thesis will demonstrate, there is little that is 'secret' about Igraine, Morgause and Morgan as protagonists when they act from positions of power and peripheral marginality, even though the narrator frequently employs his characteristic devices of abbreviation and elision in their description.

²² In total, variations on the former occur around sixty five times, whereas the latter is seen approximately nineteen times (*UMHTI*).

²³ See examples on pp. 18, 371 and 379 of Shepherd's edition.

Chapter Summaries: A Family of Individual Women

Igraine, Morgause and Morgan are the first mother and daughters depicted in the narrative, both individually and as a family unit, meaning these protagonists occupy prominent positions in the *Morte*. Each may not occupy a great portion of the text, but they are nevertheless unusual and significant in certain respects. Anne Marie Rasmussen writes that ‘Arthurian heroines play numerous roles: they can be sorceresses, mothers of great men, ladies who inspire or vex the hero, attendants who counsel and assist another lady. Only rarely, however, are they daughters of mothers or mothers of daughters’ (‘Ez ist ir g’artet von mir’ 41). If ‘heroine’ is understood to mean any female protagonist in a given narrative, the significance of Igraine, Morgan and Morgause in relation to Rasmussen’s observation is evident; they provide a few such rare examples of an Arthurian mother who appears with, and may be compared to, her daughters in a single text. Occasionally they appear in one another’s company. Most often, however, Igraine, Morgause and Morgan occupy distinct social and geographical spaces, and they follow very different narrative trajectories. Therefore, this thesis is composed of three separate but interrelated case-studies, which consider the unique or specific contexts applicable to each protagonist in three main chapters.

Chapter One pieces together the brief and tonally disjointed narrative episodes in which Igraine features, which have not been considered as a coherent whole before. These begin with the opening portion of the *Morte*, which charts Igraine’s rise to political prominence as the mother of Arthur and wife of King Uther, the king of England, from whom Arthur inherits his throne. Following this is a period of absence during which Igraine is mentioned but does not directly act or speak, which spans at least two decades in Arthurian time. Finally, Igraine’s full departure from the text is marked first by an episode in which she comes to Arthur’s newly established court to publicly legitimise his royal claims as well as speak of her private experience

of the marriage with Uther. This thesis approaches Igraine's portrayal in the *Morte* primarily as a medieval rape narrative, since the premise of Arthur's birth, and the birth of the eponymous story, itself, is predicated on the rape of Igraine by his father, Uther. Igraine's rape and subsequent pregnancy are key contributing factors that enable her coercion into assuming the public role of Uther's queen within a patriarchal context that precludes female expression and the exercise of power by women. In this sense, Igraine is a paradigm of the centrally marginal Arthurian woman because her public roles as wife, queen and mother within the community are initially prioritised over her private identity as a feeling individual. In order to foreground this argument, I address various legal, social and literary attitudes to rape over time as well as linguistic complications of such discourses around it at the beginning of the chapter. In doing so, I acknowledge certain disparities or confluences between medieval and modern discourses about rape. Furthermore, at relevant points I take a comparative approach, citing analysis of female protagonists in patriarchal societies represented in classical and medieval narratives written before the *Morte* was composed as a way of demonstrating how Malory both inhabits and departs from normative discourses about rape as a narrator.

Within this primary focus, Chapter One additionally incorporates a reading of Igraine's silence and disappearance following her rape as a secular imitation of the medieval eremitic retreat or withdrawal. She occupies extra-courtly, invisible and remote spaces in the narrative as well as in the imagined geography of the *Morte* and I argue that during this period Igraine becomes a peripherally marginal figure. Drawing on multiple sources about medieval female hermits, nuns and other contemporary religious practitioners, Chapter One argues that Igraine's absence may be seen to reflect associations of retreats from the community with ideas of private healing and restoration. This argument springs from observations of the dichotomous expressions and scholarly readings of Igraine as both passive and active, as a primarily public figure and one who actively asserts her private identity too. For initially,

Igraine's private response to her rape is not communicated by the narrator and she, publicly, is silent about the individual consequences for her and serves a utilitarian role in events. However, after her long absence Igraine condemns the crimes visited upon her in a public defence, which speech concludes with the recognition of her experiences by the court as well as an emotive reunion with her son, Arthur. The radical shifts between Igraine's states of disempowerment and empowerment as a marginal figure are analysed in relation to the narrator's location of this protagonist in spaces Malory typically associates with patriarchal and matriarchal authority respectively. Though Igraine is never a matriarch in a complete or independent sense, her trajectory is nevertheless defined by its conclusion, at which point she departs from the narrative just after having exercised power in a way that can be seen to have continued resonance throughout the text. Therefore I argue that significant traces of matriarchal power exercised by Morgause and Morgan in later sections of the *Morte* can be seen to derive from different aspects of their mother's identities. In other words, though they do not appear together frequently in the text, as protagonists they resonate with one another and suggest the narrator deliberately points to aspects of inheritance or correspondence in their identities as a family of thematically interconnected women.

Igraine's public identity is primarily defined by her status as a royal mother and Chapter Two explores how this trait is developed in Malory's portrayal of Morgause. Like Igraine, Morgause shifts between centrally and peripherally states of marginality, depending upon whether she is located in her central court or in the spaces outwith it. The majority of Morgause's expressions and activities relate to her experiences as the wife and queen of one of Arthur's most significant allies (or antagonists), Lott, the King of Lothian and Orkney. Her marriage is arranged at the same time as Igraine's, and Morgause too begins her political career as a centrally marginal queen, this time in the court of Orkney. Morgause, like Igraine, is also a key royal mother who contributes

to the courtly patriline by bearing Lott four legitimate sons, Aggravaine, Gawain, Gaheris and Gareth. The oldest three of Morgause's sons frequently appeal to their mother's political status when attempting to advance their chivalric careers in Arthur's fellowship, which means that even after Lott's death her position as a centrally marginal queen is maintained on a public level by the continued presence of patriarchal authority embodied by her sons.

Morgause is differently portrayed as an empowered figure located outside of her central patriarchal court of Orkney. In Arthur's court of Carlyon, she is presented as a peripherally marginal figure and a matriarch, since in this space Morgause privileges her private identity as well as acting in authoritative and independent ways. Morgause's authority in this peripheral context is manifested in both maternal and romantic forms, which each empower her differently. Morgause's maternal authority is predicated on an emotional, rather than political, experience of motherhood when she publicly displays affection and concern for her youngest son, Gareth, who is singled out by the narrator as having a particularly close relationship with his mother. In addition, after Lott's death Morgause exercises a romantic authority over a knightly lover named Lamerok, who is a member of Arthur's fellowship. This chapter compares Morgause with different kinds of matriarchal authorities seen elsewhere in romance, such as supernatural women and fairy lovers. Re-examination of how Morgause is portrayed within her public capacity as well as an examination of hitherto undiscussed narrative sections together reveal previously unrecognised comments are made by the narrator about Morgause's ultimate imprisonment within her public roles as wife, queen and mother. In episodes in which Morgause exercises a private maternal or romantic authority, the narrator portrays her sympathetically and articulates a desire exists in the Arthurian community for private identity to be more privileged in a public context. By contrast, Morgause's final enforcement back into the publicly constructed identity as Orkney's queen, which results in her death by beheading, is cast in a critical light.

Igraine and Morgause are, at times, victims of violence by the patriarchal Arthurian community and struggle to assert their private identity over the public roles they are forced to inhabit. Furthermore, they both shift in different ways between positions of central and peripheral marginality, meaning their connection to or exercise of matriarchal power is ultimately unstable. Conversely, Chapter Three demonstrates how Morgan, Igraine's youngest daughter, completely and permanently establishes a position of matriarchal power for herself as a peripherally marginal figure of authority. At the beginning of the text, Morgan marries Uriens, Arthur's political ally, and in theory should occupy the same public roles of queen, wife and mother as Morgause and her mother before her. However, in all the episodes after her introduction Morgan repeatedly privileges her private identity and emotions over the public roles and political responsibilities she is expected to fulfil by the community by forming smaller, alternative communities in the quest wilderness and abandoning her marital family. Rather than being a victim of male violence, Morgan is more often the perpetrator of what are viewed as aggressive acts. Consequently, Arthurian scholarship on the *Morte* has predominantly approached Morgan as Arthur's chief competitor in this text and a paradigm of feminine malevolence.

Crucially, however, this chapter argues that Morgan is not ultimately portrayed by Malory as a subversive figure, despite the frequently competitive stance she admittedly takes in relation to Arthur, his knights and patriarchal communities in general. It is true that Morgan departs from normative courtly spaces and practices in a variety of ways. She is educated in a nunnery (what I argue in Chapter Three is an all-female environment), meaning that she matures in a matriarchal space and thus does not conform to patriarchal standards of government. Morgan is schooled in enchantment, which she occasionally uses to harm Arthurian knights. She entirely rejects her role as the wife of Uriens or the mother of their son, Uwain, in whose upbringing and career she plays no part. What is more, Morgan engages on a quest—a

typically male chivalric pursuit in medieval romance – as a way of achieving independence, rather than integration into the Arthurian community. However, Morgan is present in Arthur’s dying moments, when she takes him to Avalon to heal from wounds received from his son and final competitor, Mordred. Significantly, the tears that Morgan sheds over her brother’s impending death is actually the last of several scenes in the text, which demonstrate Morgan is a protagonist who is capable of forming positive emotional bonds with others. I argue that she is depicted by the narrator as a loving partner in romantic attachments, who displays intense emotions for the loss of those close to her. The recognition of emotion in Malory’s portrayal of Morgan has an important role in the rehabilitation of this protagonist in the pantheon of Arthurian women. For, this chapter argues that although Malory’s Morgan has received a considerable amount of scholarly attention, most of it has been negative. Further study is consequently needed in order to resurrect positive elements of her representation from the *Morte*, since Morgan offers an unappreciated portrayal of femininity by a male medieval author. In order to encourage a different interpretation of her complex appearances with the present study, I examine each of Morgan’s expressions of private identity and emotions in the *Morte* in detail as a way of illuminating her significance in the text as an example of an empowered and sympathetic protagonist who is a marginal woman *and* empowered.

CHAPTER ONE

SPEECH AND SILENCE: THE NARRATIVE BOUNDARIES OF IGRAINE

The Silences of Igraine's Rape

Queen Igraine is the first female figure depicted in the *Morte* and the first protagonist to speak in direct dialogue. As the mother of King Arthur and his two sisters, Morgause and Morgan le Fay, Igraine occupies a central role in the opening scenes of the narrative when the story of Arthur's conception is related, as well as later when she returns to confirm his public legitimacy as king in the newly formed Arthurian community. However, Igraine is also a marginal figure, in the sense that the narrative space she occupies is limited; she has one of the shorter trajectories of the *Morte's* queens and is described or appears in just ten of the *Morte's* eight hundred pages.²⁴ Igraine is named around twenty times in total, in contrast to more prominent queens. For instance, her daughters, Morgause and Morgan, are both referenced or named approximately eighty times. Guenever's name appears more often and is mentioned over one hundred and seventy times in the text. And, as mentioned in the introduction, the most frequently named queen in the text is Isolde, who features around two hundred and forty times.²⁵

I suggest that Igraine's spatially marginal position in the narrative is responsible for her treatment in scholarship as a 'largely silent object' or 'comparatively passive' protagonist, whose primary functions in this text are discussed in terms of the public and political (Armstrong GCC 47; Wyatt forthcoming). A few studies have considered her role in Malory, namely by

²⁴ See pp. 3-7, 12, and 30-33.

²⁵ See *UMHTI* results for 'Igrayne', 'Morgan', 'Gwen*' and 'Isoud*'. Morgause's name is mentioned very infrequently and she is instead referred to more often as the 'Queen of Orkney'.

Janet Jesmok and Dorsey Armstrong, as noted in the introduction, and most recently by Sheri Chriqui, who considers the conflict between national and regional identity for her representation in the *Morte*.²⁶ However, almost no critical studies have explored this protagonist fully as an individual outwith the Arthurian community or considered the possibility that she might be conceived to bear a private identity and emotional expressions. The majority of critics merely reference her in passing.²⁷

²⁶ Dorsey Armstrong, *GCC* (2003); Janet Jesmok, 'Guiding Lights' (2009); Sheri Chriqui, 'A "Foreign" Queen in King Uther's Court: Fifteenth-Century Insular Xenophobia and Malory's Portrayal of Arthur's Mother', *South Atlantic Review* 81.2 (2016): 72-92.

²⁷ What scholarship on Igraine does exist is primarily concerned with her representations in texts other than Malory's. As mentioned in the introduction, Rosemary Morris considers Igraine in Geoffrey's *HRB* in 'Uther and Igerne: A Study in Uncourtly Love', *Arthurian Literature* 4 (1985): 70-92; Sian Echard does too in *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998): 52-55; Fiona Tolhurst offers a different interpretation of the same material, as well as additionally considering Igraine's appearances in Wace's *Roman de Brut* (c.1150) and Lazamon's *Brut* (c.1190) in *FOAL* (2012): 18-25, 56-8, 85-89. For more studies in which Igraine's portrayal by these and other authors (excepting Malory) is the titular or partial focus, see: Lydia Miklautsch, 'Arnive und Klingsor in Albrechts Jüngerem Titurel', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift* 41.2 (1991): 214-23; Martine Thiry-Stassin, 'Ygerne entre Geoffroy de Monmouth et Wace', *Conjointure arthurienne* 20 (2000): 109-21; John Conlee, 'Warwick Deeping's "Uther and Igraine"', *Arthuriana* 11.4 (2001): 88-95; Carolyne Larrington, *KAE* (2006); Lisa M. Ruch, "'A grete abbicion for the londis name": Naming England for Igerne in an Abbreviated Middle English Prose Brut', *Arthuriana* 22.4 (2012): 94-100. Critics who mention Igraine's portrayals in various texts merely in passing include: P. J. Heather, 'Gleanings from Lazamon's *Brut*', *Folklore* 53.1 (1942): 57-71; Timothy G. Vesonder, 'Shaw's Caesar and the Mythic Hero', *The Shaw Review* 21.2 (1978): 72-79; Felicity Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987): 37-39; Wendy Tibbetts Greene, 'Malory's Merlin: An Ambiguous Magician?', *Arthurian Interpretations* 1.2 (1987): 56-63; Victoria Guerin, 'The King's Sin: The Origins of the David-Arthur Parallel', *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition*, eds. Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe (New York: Garland, 1988): 15-30; Frances Ingledew, 'The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*', *Speculum* 69.3 (1994): 665-704; Maureen Fries, 'Women, Power, and (the Undermining of) Order in Lawman's "Brut"', *Arthuriana* 8.3 (1998): 23-32; Joseph D. Parry, 'Narrators, Messengers, and Lawman's "Brut"', *Arthuriana* 8.3 (1998): 46-61; Fiona Tolhurst 'The Britons as Hebrews, Romans, and Normans: Geoffrey of Monmouth's British Epic and Reflections of Empress Matilda', *Arthuriana* 8.4 (1998): 69-87; Ralph Norris, 'The Tragedy of Balin: Malory's Use of the Balin Story in the "Morte Darthur"', *Arthuriana* 9.3 (1999): 52-67; Kimberley Bell, 'Merlin as Historian in "Historia Regum Britanniae"', *Arthuriana* 10.1 (2000): 14-26; Peter H. Goodich 'The Erotic Merlin', *Arthuriana* 10.1 (2000): 94-115; Thompson, 'The First and Last Love: Morgan le Fay and Arthur', *Arthurian Women*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (New York: Routledge, 2000): 331-344; Jerome Mandel, 'The Idea of Family in Chrétien de Troyes and Sir Thomas Malory' *Arthuriana* 12.4 (2002): 90-99; Kenneth J. Tiller, "'So precyously coverde": Malory's Hermeneutic Quest of the "Sankgreal"', *Arthuriana* 13.3 (2003): 83-97; Corinne J. Saunders, 'Violent Magic in Middle English Romance', *Violence in Medieval Courtly Literature: A Casebook*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York and London: Routledge, 2004): 225-240; Felicia Nimue Ackerman, "'Your charge

Igraine's status as a royal mother usually directs readers to consider her public identity as the one of primary importance, the reasons for which are evident in a summary of her trajectory in the *Morte*. Its narrative opens by recounting the latter stages of the reign of Uther, who is the king of England at this time. He falls in 'love' with Igraine but she is already married to the Duke of Cornwall (3-4). The narrator's first description of Igraine notes that she is 'called a fair lady', provided as Uther's reason for desiring her, which signals that the outwardly perceived quality of beauty is her most important attribute in a public context. Igraine's beauty, readers may understand, is discussed in society at large, which suggests her public renown and the pre-Arthurian community's interest in her physical appearance will feature more prominently than her emotions. When Igraine comes to Uther's court with her husband, Uther 'lyked and loved [her] well . . . and desyred to have lyen by her' but Igraine 'wold not assente' (3). Igraine returns to Cornwall, where she is enclosed in the castle of Tintagel by her husband for protection (4). Uther then declares war on Cornwall and seeks the help of the enchanter Merlin, who devises a supernatural disguise enabling the king to spend a night and have sexual intercourse with Igraine, looking exactly 'lyke the duke her husband' (5). As Merlin predicts, 'Kyng Uther lay with Igrayne . . . and begat on her that nyght Arthur', though the narrator makes clear that Igraine herself is unaware of being with anyone other than her first husband (5). During this same night, the Duke of Cornwall dies in battle with Uther's forces, leaving Igraine a widow. Shortly afterwards, Igraine is coerced into marrying Uther so that the warring regions of Cornwall and England may be unified once again, which additionally legitimises Arthur's status as the future king when

is to me a plesure": Manipulation, Gareth, Lynet, and Malory' *Arthuriana* 19.3 (2009): 8-14; Michael W. Anderson, "'The honour of bothe courtes be nat lyke": Cornish Resistance to Arthurian Dominance in Malory' *Arthuriana* 19.2 (2009): 42-57; Anita Obermeier, Review of *Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus*, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* by Gretchen Mieszkowski 108.1 (2009): 117-19; Ryan Muckerheide, 'The English Law of Treason in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*' *Arthuriana* 20.4 (2010): 48-77; Jill M. Hebert, *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

he is born. Arthur's conception and birth effectively divide the text into distinctly different pre-Arthurian and Arthurian eras, though the former is only described in brief.²⁸ I use the term 'pre-Arthurian' to indicate a society that is related to and informs public constructions of identity in the *Morte* but predates Arthur's assumption to the throne, and contrasts with the particular courtly community he develops.

The pre-Arthurian community's focus on Igraine's roles as queen, mother and wife, as well as on her outer physical appearance, cements her presence as one of a publicly constituted identity. This marginalises and elides a crucial event in the private experience that I suggest can be gleaned from the *Morte's* narrative. The supernatural disguise or bed-trick that substitutes Uther for Igraine's first husband is variously and most frequently described by scholars as an 'assignation', a 'deception', 'treachery', 'seduction', 'union', 'sexual encounter', 'tryst', 'affair' and an act of 'love'.²⁹ Such terms imply either that the bed-trick is not unduly violent or even that there is a degree of mutuality and emotional value to the incident. Armstrong goes further in allowing that Uther's actions resemble a 'semi-rape' (GCC 51). However, to the best of my knowledge, Saunders and Jesmok are the only critics to call the bed-trick unequivocally a full 'rape' and an 'abuse' of Igraine's individual rights ('Violent Magic' 233; 'Guiding Lights' 38). Nevertheless, I agree that this is exactly what happens to Igraine.

Catherine Batt proposes that in the context of other cases of rape, terms like 'semi-rape', or 'half-rape' as she puts it, as well as analogous or evasive alternatives, are 'not . . . aberrant' in this narrative, since 'the book, like the

²⁸ Armstrong uses the comparable term 'Arthurian prehistory' to differentiate between the reigns of Uther and Arthur (GCC 44).

²⁹ In chronological order of publication: 'seduction' (Morris 85); 'assignation' (Greene 57); 'treachery' (Riddy 38); 'union', 'trickery' and 'encounter' (Norris 63, 63, 64); 'tryst' (Goodrich); 'affair' and 'love' (Thompson 'The First and Last Love' 331); 'union' (Lopez 'Uther and Igraine'); 'union' (Lupack 'Igraine'); 'seduction' and 'sexual encounter' (Armstrong GCC 28, 47); 'adulterous father [Uther]', 'scandal' and 'deception' (Larrington KAE 77); 'deception' (Ackerman "'Your charge is to me a plesure" 12).

culture in which it was written, does not deploy a vocabulary of violation with any precision' and 'from the very beginning, the *Morte* lacks a consistent terminology for rape' (88). This chapter will argue that the impression a rape has occurred during Igraine's time with Uther is nevertheless communicated to readers thematically and through imagery or intra-textual resonances with other protagonists, despite the fact that no Middle English variant on the Latin word *raptus*, from which our modern word derives, is used by the narrator. Nevertheless, in order to foreground this later thematic reading of Igraine's rape, it is first necessary to survey the range of definitions for words historically used to describe violence against women.

The modern word 'rape' has a lengthy history of ambiguous usage in linguistic, legal and literary discourses, dating from its origins in Latin through to its transmutations in French and English in medieval Europe. In the Middle Ages, the word *raptus* had several connotations for different audiences and the elision of Igraine's rape in scholarship may be attributed to the fear of applying an overly loaded term that is considered to be better suited to modern discourses on gender violence. Caroline Dunn clarifies that the translation of *raptus* as 'rape' in the modern sense of forced sexual intercourse was first made by scholars writing in the twentieth-century but 'actually denoted three modern-day offences: sexual assault, abduction, and theft' (19). Dunn observes that the 'Latin terms *rapere* and *raptus* dominate the language of the 1,213 ravishment references for the period 1100-1500', which is also the period when Arthurian literature appeared and flourished in written form (19). A developing awareness of the consequences of the ambiguity inherent in *raptus* terms began to develop in the fifteenth century, when, 'increasingly,' there was 'the replacement of Latin by the vernacular' in English legal petitions that wished to 'avoid allusions' to rape 'and employ[ed] the more definitive verbs "took" or "led away" where there is no potential misinterpretation' (Dunn 43, 44). Yet this development would not have been consistent nor necessarily widespread when Malory was composing the *Morte*,

since the conflation of different *raptus* crimes into one category 'still accounts for over half of all fifteenth-century abduction complaints, and a quarter of all ravishment narratives' (Dunn 43).

An added complication in negotiating modern understandings of the term 'rape' in a medieval context is that of female agency. Perhaps a radical notion for modern readers, certain *raptus* crimes could occasionally be the result of, or even actively initiated by, women, who had expressed their private and individual desires. Elizabeth Robertson explains that 'abduction for the purposes of marriage' could involve 'a woman's expression of her own choices' and is included 'among the few occasions in medieval culture where female consent and agency are affirmed in the public domain' (282). For, once a woman was publicly believed to have engaged in sexual intercourse with a man, she was legally required to marry him if not married already. This meant that *raptus* laws could be manipulated by women in order to promote their own choice of partner when faced with the prospect of marrying an undesirable partner. Ambiguities such as these around the definitions of and motivations for *raptus* partially explain why Malory's text does not address Igraine's rape directly by applying a particular term to the bed-trick; after all, in the author's vocabulary 'rape' represented a spectrum of acts that might include female consent.

Despite, or perhaps even because of, the range of definitions for 'rape' and *raptus*, sexual consent and women's choice in marital partners featured prominently in social discussions throughout the high to late medieval periods. Tolhurst finds that a twelfth-century audience would have had a 'more generous view' of supernatural bed-tricks because they relied on the Galenic discourse that 'a woman would not emit her seed unless she experienced pleasure during intercourse' (22). This was the period in which the earliest extant Arthurian stories were recorded in written form, namely in Geoffrey's *HRB* (c. 1136), which includes the episode of Igraine's supernatural bed-trick adapted by Malory. Therefore, crimes like Uther's may not have been

consistently viewed as rape by contemporary readers. However, Anne Howland Schotter points out the importance of remembering that there was equally not one monolithic attitude towards rape and its consequences but two 'opposing strands of thought in the twelfth century' (242). Whilst the view that 'women want to be raped, had long been held in the Middle Ages', still the idea 'that women, as well as men, desired and deserved a choice in partners, was . . . being debated at the time by theologians and canon lawyers', Schotter informs (242). This discrepancy in ignoring or considering female consent arguably derives from tensions between public and private needs and desires. As Dunn points out, medieval laws throughout the Middle Ages generally do 'not consider the emotional or personal consequences for the woman, and have no need to distinguish between rape and abduction because they focus on familial consequences rather than the individual female perspective' (Dunn 42). These familial consequences primarily revolved around questions of familial legitimacy, heirs and inheritance. Georges Duby describes these issues as 'the main foundation of public peace', which provided a clear place and role for members of medieval society (35). Disturbances to this peace by *raptus* crimes and the problem of how to resolve their implications in the public sphere were a 'preoccupation' from as early as the ninth century (Duby 38). At the same time, an awareness that the individual, private perspectives of women had to be taken into account as well is evident in the fact that 'rape was one of the few crimes that women—even married women—could prosecute independently . . . until the Statute of Rapes of 1382' (Dunn 53). The above contrasting positions on different historical sources reveal three things: firstly, that from the period during which Arthurian narratives begin to appear in written form, the ambiguity around terms for 'rape' and its consequences were known to be problematic; secondly, that consent was an issue taken into consideration by some of the social discourses around sexual practice, regardless of their absence in official legal records; and thirdly, that the

language of, and approaches to, violence against women were affected by tensions between public and private identities or needs.

In the context of the *Morte* specifically, understanding the purpose and meaning of descriptions of rape in the narrative as a whole is a supremely challenging issue in Arthurian studies. What little is known of Malory's biography suggests the author himself may have been guilty of this crime. If the author of the *Morte* is accepted as being the knight 'Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel', a legal indictment against him in 1451 'included two accusations of rape' perpetrated on a woman named 'Joan Smith', which Christina Hardyment examines (294-5). Whilst these accusations cannot be considered conclusive, given the existence of intersecting complications – such as Malory's pre-existing political enmity with Joan's husband, the Duke of Buckingham – these records nevertheless permanently and unavoidably leave open the possibility that the author may have been guilty of the crime of rape (Hardyment 290). The idea that Malory may have been a rapist is problematic in the light of the *Morte's* ideological stance in relation to violence against women. The particular chivalric tenets of Arthur's fellowship of the Round Table in this text, collectively termed here the 'Pentecostal Oath', purport to value the 'ryghtes' of 'ladyes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes' and include the specific prohibition 'never to enforce', or 'rape' them (77; MED). Armstrong therefore remarks upon the dark 'irony', 'that it is while imprisoned for . . . rape . . . that Malory composes a massive text seemingly dedicated to the glorification of chivalry' and 'protection' of women (GCC 5, 95). Hardyment also struggles to reach a conclusion as to how readers are to negotiate the discrepancy between imagined social standards in the *Morte* and the possibility that its author was guilty of 'the most shocking crime a knight could commit against a woman' (291).

The recurrence of such anxieties are what cause Batt to observe that instances of rape in the *Morte* present a 'hermeneutic difficulty (in this case, for other scholars) of reconciling author and text' (79). 'At the root of concern

over establishing who and what Malory was', she argues, 'lies perhaps a humanist anxiety about how to reconcile "great writing" with a writer deemed "unethical"' (80). In other words, readers can either decide that Malory was not guilty of rape, as evidenced by the Pentecostal Oath's clear condemnation of this crime, meaning that the *Morte* must accurately reflect the life and actions of its author. Alternatively, readers can decide that Malory *was* guilty of rape, meaning that acts of violence against women are necessarily seen as normalised in the text as a reflection of the author's disregard for female agency and emotion. These binary and dichotomous positions, 'left unexamined', produce what Batt terms a 'critical impasse', since the issue of rape's significance in the text and for modern audiences remain irresolvable (80). This study attempts not to be guilty of the same impasse by arguing that – regardless of whether or not Malory was a rapist – valuable insights into private female experiences of rape and the emotional expressions by women about its effects nevertheless exist in the *Morte* and can be productively used in discussions of medieval rape narratives.

Previous studies have tended to focus on rape's significance within the *Morte* for male, communal identity. This is because, as Batt notes, there is an added ambiguity in the text and readings of it, besides the language it employs, between the definitions of 'rape as part of a masculine definition of social parameters, made real through the use of women's bodies, but not necessarily taking account of "real" women' and 'rape as relating primarily to women's interests and the integrity of women as autonomous individuals' (83). Such a discrepancy naturally 'makes possible rather different interpretations of the same material' in ways that suggest an incompatibility of the two positions (Batt 83). I suggest there has been a tendency to prefer one at the expense of the other. Batt argues that as 'the transgression of bodily integrity, rape . . . has a broad significance, throughout the *Morte*, as the violation of a moral order' or 'social system' (83, 87). This 'order' or 'system' is patriarchal in structure, being publicly discussed and defined primarily by

Arthurian men. It is for this reason Batt concludes that the *Morte* 'does not accord any great prominence to women's experience' (85). Malory ultimately, she argues, 'appropriates the language of sex, power and coercion' as a way of articulating 'anxiety, and perhaps disillusion, over the possible comforts for the masculine of the . . . Arthurian project' (93-4). The notion that rape in the *Morte* is symbolically valuable for understandings of male rather than female identity serves to explain in part why Igraine's rape, her subsequent silence and temporary narrative erasure have only been cursorily explored. Ackerman assumes in passing that Malory's first narrative removal of Igraine constitutes an endorsement of her rape, since 'the deception of Igraine serves the greater good of conceiving Arthur' ('Your charge is to me a plesure' 12). Similarly, Peter H. Goodrich includes Uther's rape of Igraine as one of several 'tryst-making' instances, each of which 'overcompensates the threat that eros poses to the [male] political and social order with the goodly [male] offspring of their nights' work' (100). Armstrong also sees the political alliances created after Igraine's marriage to Uther as evidence that the narrative 'sanctions the king's actions', since the simultaneous marriage of her daughters, Morgause, Elayne and Morgan to the allies of Lott, Nentres and Uriens, is designed to strengthen male networks of authority within the Arthurian community for his son (GCC 48; 6).

Readings such as these are implicitly based upon the notion that male voice and authority constitute the most successful assertions of identity and that female silence either constitutes consent, or indicates a protagonist is unimportant. To demonstrate, Armstrong calls Igraine a 'largely silent object' who vocalises 'no objection' before disappearing (GCC 47). Riddy, too, ultimately sees Igraine's silence as indicative of passivity and powerlessness; although she reads this protagonist as 'self-possessed', Riddy pronounces Igraine is ultimately 'a voice, no more' (38). This is due to the fact that Igraine's part is greatly reduced in narrative space from one of Malory's primary French sources, the Vulgate *Merlin* portion of the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle. The earlier

narrative, Riddy points out, features a 'leisured analysis' of Igraine's 'response to Uther's attentions to her over a period of months', whereas Malory 'collapses all this into a few sentences' (38). Riddy believes that Igraine's lack of overt emotional response in the *Morte* by comparison positions her in an 'unlocated' space in the narrative (38). Ralph Norris agrees for the same reason, describing Malory's representation of Igraine as 'understated' (Review 479). Nevertheless, I argue that the extended version of this episode in the Vulgate *Merlin* does not necessarily contribute to a portrayal of Igraine as a more active or sympathetic protagonist. Although a much larger portion of narrative space is devoted to this protagonist's overt thoughts, speech and emotions, the even lengthier descriptions of Uther's feelings also allow more space for the traditionally misogynist view that when a woman does not consent to sex at first, she will eventually. In fact, the French text communicates explicitly: 'That is how a worthy lady should answer . . . a good lady was never won over . . . quickly' (Pickens 68).

To date, Jesmok is the single critic to offer a radically different approach to the *Morte's* representation of Igraine and her rape, redefining her as a 'model of noble action who influences' the court through the communication of her private 'abuse' by Uther ('Guiding Lights' 34, 38). Instead of focusing on Igraine's silence, Jesmok considers the moment when she speaks about her experiences to the newly formed Arthurian court. In doing so, Igraine highlights 'the gender inequality' in her son's society that provides real evidence for the importance of 'behavior, breeding, and gentleness' for both Arthur's knights 'and the audience' (Jesmok 'Guiding Lights' 38, 35). I agree with Jesmok's interpretation insofar as her attribution of moral power to Igraine elevates her beyond a merely silent and passive protagonist to one who exercises a certain authority. I also agree that Igraine represents 'Malory's nod toward the importance of heredity' because her 'impeccable moral qualities are evident in Arthur's more noble actions as king' in contrast to Uther's, as

the final section of this chapter explores ('Guiding Lights' 36).³⁰ Still, too heavy an emphasis on Igraine's status as a 'model' of chivalric conduct or 'moral and spiritual guide' for the Arthurian public risks framing her as a figure of purely communal rather than individual interest and obscures the suggestions of her private identity in the narrative (34, 38).

This chapter attempts to reach a synthesis of Riddy's idea of the 'unlocated space' Igraine occupies in conjunction with the authority she exercises, as highlighted by Jesmok. It examines Igraine's silences and absences in the text in conjunction with an exploration of her private, rather than public, identity, as well as examining her individual actions in addition to considering her place within the community. This approach reveals that Igraine is represented differently by the narrator depending upon her location in centrally or peripherally marginal spaces. As I will demonstrate, Igraine's public and private identities are, in turn, each privileged over one another depending upon whether she is positioned inside or outside of the pre-Arthurian and Arthurian courts. This chapter's analysis of Igraine is correspondingly divided into four distinct parts, titled for the purposes of this argument: 'Peripheral Co-Ruler', 'Central Queen', 'Eremitic Absence' and 'Remembered Presence'. It is worth noting that I use these titles merely in order to highlight the contrast between Igraine's public and private identities as expressed in different spaces, not as an attempt to suggest a set of coherent categories overtly identified by Malory himself.

'Peripheral Co-Ruler' offers a revised reading of Igraine's introductory episode in the *Morte* during her marriage to the Duke of Cornwall. In this part of pre-Arthurian history, which is only briefly outlined by the narrator, Igraine and her husband the duke are identified with the region of Cornwall, a peripherally marginal space in relation to England at this time. She is

³⁰ In this section I discuss the importance of commemorations of female pain and the repetition of imagery used to frame violence against women by knights critically, which both serve to remind readers indirectly of Igraine's rape every time Arthurian women are harmed in public.

presented in this context as an empowered individual who shares social and political parity with her husband, as well as demonstrating vocal superiority as a leader. By contrast, in 'Central Queen' I discuss how Igraine's assumption of a central public role in England's royal patriline politically removes her from the peripheral and empowered position she occupied as duchess of Cornwall. Such centralisation comes at the cost of Igraine's silence about her rape and its emotional impact on her private identity in the first instance. However, this part of the chapter offers an alternative reading of how the *Morte's* narrative complicates the public presentation of Igraine's rape by comparing its description with other rape narratives known to contemporary medieval audiences. Malory's text at once stylistically imitates traditional literary motifs of rape and undermines them through the design and framing of the *Morte's* narrative structure. This section compares Igraine's representation by Malory with critics' analyses of literary analogues that were well-known to authors and readers of popular literature in the fifteenth-century. Next, 'Eremitic Absence' discusses the subsequent period of narrative inactivity and invisibility for Igraine as a protagonist, where she is only mentioned twice by members of the pre-Arthurian community (12, 32). I suggest Igraine's absence from the text at this point represents a secularisation of medieval religious ideals that associated marginal silent spaces occupied by hermits and other alternative practitioners – what I term 'eremitic spaces' – with emotional restoration and the development of private identity. 'Remembered Presence' finally considers Igraine's return to court, which represents the last scene in which she features in the text. This part of the chapter examines how Igraine's final public appearance in the Arthurian court finally reveals the private consequences of Uther's rape in speech, which concludes with the resolution of her estrangement from Arthur and the synthesis of her public and private identities.

Ultimately, by examining Igraine in this light we are offered a different window into how visible female emotion and private identity are in a work

that in many ways seems to privilege masculine public identity and normalise violence against women. This chapter demonstrates that rape is central to patriarchal spaces and marginalises women. However, it also reveals that the *Morte's* women are neither necessarily central nor marginal in uncomplicated ways left uncontested by the text and its narrator.

Peripheral Co-Ruler

This part of the chapter examines Igraine's portrayal as an authoritative figure, who directs the opinions and actions of her first husband, the Duke of Cornwall, occupying a position in this marriage that Norris concurs is 'strong' (Review 478). Not only is Igraine the first protagonist to speak by means of direct dialogue in the *Morte*, but she speaks far more than the Duke, who remains unnamed in this text except for his public title. By contrast, Igraine's private identity is immediately communicated when she and her husband come to Uther's court in response to his official summons. It is revealed that the king

lyked and loued this lady wel and he made them grete chere out of mesure and desyred to haue lyen by her. But she was a passyng good woman and wold not assente vnto the kyng (3).

In the Vulgate *Merlin*, Uther's feelings are recounted at length and Igraine is presented as lacking authority over the situation, as she initially decides to 'hide' her sexual harassment by the king (Pickens 67). By contrast, in the *Morte* Igraine immediately communicates her intentions to the duke and leads their joint reaction: 'I counceille yow that we departe from hens sodenly' (3). The narrator supports Igraine's position by interjecting that she 'was a passyng good woman and wold not assente unto the Kyng', in order to prevent readers from sympathising with Uther, as it might be possible for some

readers of the French version (3). Such support for Igraine's expression of private identity means readers may infer a negative judgment about Igraine's silence later on, a point to which I return.

That Igraine appears as a 'good' individual, rather than virtuous *de facto* as one half of a worthy partnership constitutes a further distinction made by the author's clear delineation between Igraine and her husband. She does not need to be told by her husband what is honourable or not, since she states spontaneously, '*I suppose that we were sente for that I shold be dishonoured*' (3, emphases added). Jesmok's extrapolation that Igraine is 'a wise woman who guides her less perceptive husband in trying to evade Uther's adulterous designs' is somewhat problematic insofar as the reader cannot be sure whether the duke is wise or not, since information about his qualities is entirely omitted from this text ('Guiding Lights' 36). To assume that strong female figures in medieval romance only appear when patriarchal authorities are weak or deficient in some way is to fundamentally undermine narrators' presentation of women as independent forces within the text. In this context specifically, to change the standard of measurement by which the pair's combined intelligence is evaluated is to minimise the importance of Igraine's private identity, which this chapter argues is so strikingly illustrated in the *Morte*. I concur instead with Jennifer Ward, who explains that a 'distinction has to be drawn between the subordination of women found in ecclesiastical and legal writing and what was often the situation in practice' (5). Although 'didactic treatises stressed the virtues of meekness, humility and obedience, and emphasised women's religious duties', other records prove 'many women found that in practice they needed to be active, forceful and energetic' (Ward 5). Such activity, force and energy is illustrated when Igraine's rejection of Uther's advances is considered in more detail. Her full response is recounted as follows:

thenne *she told* the duke her husband . . . '*I counceille* yow that we departe from hens sodenly, that we maye ryde all nyghte unto *oure*

owne castell'. And in lyke wyse as *she* saide, so they departed (3, emphases mine).

In the *Morte*, the verb to 'counceille' represents an almost exclusively masculine advisory service amongst knights.³¹ As a noun, it is also most frequently used in the phrase 'pryvy counceille', denoting a group of male advisors upon whom kings rely.³² The use of this term to describe Igraine's words imply that she plays a similar role in in this instance, which together with the Duke's deference portrays her assumption of power in a positive light. Furthermore, it is significant that Igraine and the duke's expressions as a couple are primarily determined by *her* agency, desires and beliefs; in this respect, their relationship could be described as 'matriarchal'. Though Igraine is never an independent or permanent matriarch, I argue the exercise of different forms of matriarchal authority by Morgause and Morgan can be traced back to the directive position their mother occupies in her first marriage. The fact that Igraine is more empowered when occupying a position within the Cornish court, which is peripherally marginal to Uther's realm of England, is consistent with the *Morte's* division of space throughout where the development of female authority most successfully occurs in private spaces outside of courtly centres.

Of crucial importance is the fact that at this point in the narrative, Igraine's public and private identities are synthesised and not in competition with one another. Igraine's ability to 'counceille' her husband implicitly points to the fact that, through her husband's support, she also wields substantial political influence in their courtly community. If Igraine has the power to advise her husband, she also indirectly commands an army. Malory distinguishes between Uther's central court in this section of narrative, which privileges

³¹ The electronic version of Sommer's edition of the *Morte* records around one hundred and fifty results for the search terms, 'counceyl*' and 'counceil*', which apart from a few instances are only used in scenes that involve male protagonists (*UMHTI*).

³² For examples, see pp. 3, 143, 244, 266, 366 and 373.

public over private identity, and the peripherally marginal Cornish court, which is governed by Igraine's private identity. Uther is described as not being 'ware' of their departure because he fails to see Igraine as the individual privately responsible for directing her own courtly community. He is unable to reference Igraine without first identifying the Duke of Cornwall as the primary figure of negotiation: 'he called to hym his pryvy counceille and told them of the sodeyne departyng of the duke and his wyf' (3). Moreover, when Uther's council 'avysed the Kyng to send for the duke and his wyf by a grete charge', they anticipate only what will happen 'yf *he* [the Duke] wille not come at your somons' without considering Igraine's leading role in their departure (3, emphasis added). The narrator conversely privileges Igraine's private identity in the Cornish partnership by omitting description of any negotiation in returning to their 'owne' court by her husband (3). This suggests Igraine's decision is final. Indeed, directly after Uther's summons to return are received, 'the messagers hadde their ansuers – and that was thys, shortly: that neyther he nor his wyf wold not come at hym' (3). In this way, the public voice of the Cornish courtly community reflects and supports Igraine's private identity when they occupy a peripherally marginal space.

Central Queen

Malory's depiction of Igraine deliberately contrasts her expressions of identity in two qualitatively different marriages, which are associated with central and peripheral spaces respectively. The device of marital juxtaposition is achieved by the author's decision to highlight both the public and private aspects of Igraine's identity in the relationship she shares with her first husband, which then makes the comparative absence of her voice and emotions in the marriage with Uther more apparent. This section discusses how Igraine's peripherally marginal and empowered position as duchess of Cornwall changes radically

when her home court becomes the central focus of Uther's attention. Igraine is exclusively figured as the 'wyf' of the duke of Cornwall and no longer acts in the capacity of a private advisor (4). In response to Uther's martial advances, the duke physically fixes Igraine at the centre of his courtly sphere of authority by enclosing her in the 'castell of Tyntagil' (4). As I explore in detail, Uther's entry into Tintagel by disguise enables the rape of Igraine, which results in the conception of Arthur. When the war is lost and the Duke of Cornwall dies, Igraine is coerced into marrying Uther by the collective power of public figures, at which point her private identity is visible only in abbreviated forms.

Spatial changes generated by Uther's pursuit of Igraine and her rape mark the first division of her public and private identities, which are represented in the text by a dichotomy of her body and emotions when fixed in a central space. Uther is described as being sick 'for grete love of fayr Igrayne', which once again emphasises her outer appearances. The king and his community both focus their attention on Igraine's public identity, meaning her emotional desires are superimposed by the physical nature of their attention. This dichotomy is heightened when Igraine is enclosed in a tower by the duke, who put 'his wyf Dame Igrayne . . . in the castell of Tyntagil, and himself he putte in the castel of Terrabyl' (4). From this moment, direct access to Igraine's private identity is removed from the reader; she does not speak or contribute to political decisions from this point onwards until her next marriage. However, the fact that Igraine's expression of identity here – or lack thereof – is different from the first episode draws attention to her transfer to a place of silence precisely through the clear contrast between her formerly empowered and latterly disempowered positions.

Igraine's silence is compounded in the defining moment of her rape in a supernatural bed-trick orchestrated by Merlin. The absence of space, which would enable her private identity and emotional desires to be articulated, is reflected in the fact that the scene is almost entirely narrated from the point of

view of Uther and the other male protagonists involved. Merlin's description of Igraine's rape turns seamlessly from plan into reality, as he predicts:

This nyght ye shalle lye with Igrayne in the castel of Tyntigayll; and ye shalle be lyke the duke her husband, Ulfyus shal be lyke Syre Brastias, a knyghte of the dukes, and I will be lyke a knyghte that hyghte Syr Jordanus, a knyghte of the dukes . . . Soo this was done as they devysed . . . the duke hymself was slayne or ever the Kynge cam at the castel of Tyntigall. So after the deth of the duke, Kyng Uther lay with Igrayne more than thre houres after his deth, and begat on her that nyght Arthur; and, or day cam, Merlyn cam to the Kynge and bad hym make hym redy. And so he kist the lady Igrayne and departed in all hast. But whan the lady herd telle of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dede or ever Kynge Uther came to her, thenne she merveilled who that myghte be that laye with her in lykenes of her lord. So she mourned pryvely and held hir pees (5).

Igraine is presented as being unaware of her rape in the moment in which it occurs, which provides one reason why few scholars explicitly label the event as such; the protagonist herself does not openly speak of the act as one of sexual violence in the first instance, so readers are not necessarily required to. Nevertheless, the violence inherent in the bed-trick is pointed to by the narrator's repetitive style of describing three key protagonists who replace the figures closest to Igraine in her own court, superimposing the relation of a domestic and loving scene with a strange and unfamiliar substitute. The descriptions of Uther, Ulfius and Merlin as each being 'lyke' the figures we may assume are most protective of Igraine—since the replacement of these figures enables access to her bedchamber—highlight the falseness in the scene's appearance. Likewise, the kiss Uther gives Igraine as he leaves constitutes a dark parody of parting scenes between other images of courtly lovers in the text as a false gesture of respect that insults, rather than honours, its recipient. Moreover, the lack of consent to the kiss that follows their equally consentless sexual intercourse is revealed when Igraine expresses retrospective pain upon realising the man that 'laye with her in the lykenes of

her lord' was not, in fact, her lord at all (6). In other words, she would not have consented if she had known, which is clarified earlier before any of these events transpired when the narrator notes that 'she was a passynge good woman and *wold not assente* unto the Kyng' (3, emphasis added). Evidently, Igraine's speech represents part of the impediment to Uther, which partly explains why Merlin tells him not to 'make . . . many questions with her' on this night; silence delays Igraine's revelation and precludes her objections to Uther in the moment of her rape (5). However, for readers silence cannot be taken as a form of tacit consent, since the narrative includes a description – albeit characteristically abbreviated – of her silence as a gesture of grief, since she 'mourned pryvely and held hir pees' (5). This represents the first moment in the text when silence is equated with the concealment of emotion within a private space, but it is a stylistic device seen many times throughout the *Morte* as a whole, meaning it is vitally significant.

The silence that characterises Igraine's rape contrasts with the later discursiveness of the community about the event as seen from a public perspective. For both pre-Arthurian and Arthurian communities, the fact that Uther's heir and their new king is supposedly conceived 'more than thre houres after' the death of Igraine's first husband means that, technically, Arthur is not conceived in adultery (5). However, the specificity of the three-hour interval is referenced more than once in conversations between members of the pre-Arthurian and Arthurian courts, implying a recurrent anxiety about the veracity of this fact that is not only widely shared in the community but also persists over time. When it is still believed that Arthur is of 'lowe blood' many years later, Merlin is required to state publicly that 'After the deth of the duke, more than thre houres, was Arthur begotten; and thirteyn dayes after, Kyng Uther wedded Igrayne; and therfor I preve hym he is no bastard' (12). Public insecurities reveal how crucial Igraine's body is to her marginalisation within a central courtly space: she needs to be imagined by the pre-Arthurian and Arthurian communities not just as desirable – as the future wife of

Uther – but as a physically free and available space even though, privately, she is not, so that Arthur’s later legitimacy may be confirmed. This effectively erases the consequences for Igraine’s private identity and emotions within the chivalric community. It also exemplifies Barefield’s observation that in medieval chronicle, the public need for an official ‘genealogy . . . whose subject is the production of generations’ often ‘elides the place occupied by mothers in both reproduction and in the politics of succession’ (13). She adds that ‘[s]ubmerging women’s roles can be, in fact, integral to the smooth passing of generations and the accomplishment of narrative itself’ (13). It is because of such elisions that Saunders believes ‘[a]ctual rape is found only on the margins of romance’, responding ‘to the shadow of rape rather than its reality’ (*Rape and Ravishment* 187). Likewise Armstrong calls rape in the *Morte* specifically as ‘the alien threat from the outside’ and ‘the threat from the margins’ (GCC 11, 20). Whilst these observations hold true in some cases, to term the act of rape itself as ‘marginal’ fails to provide as full a picture as possible of how protagonists’ movements through different marginal geographical and narrative spaces affect whether the identity they express is public or private. This in turn has the potential to affect how rape is seen to be viewed both internally and externally to the text. Igraine’s enclosure in the tower of Tintagel and subsequent marriage to Uther demonstrates the fact that, more often than not, rape occurs at the centre of the court; only *after* it has happened are the consequences for female private identity and emotions pushed to the margins of public awareness by the Arthurian community.

The centrality of rape in many medieval chivalric romances like Malory’s has only recently been emphasised, namely by Amy N. Vines. Igraine’s experience represents just one of many in the genre more broadly, as well as in this text, that Vines argues exemplifies ‘the male physical aggression that surrounds and often penetrates’ women’s bodies, exhibited through acts of rape, sexual aggression or other forms of violence which collectively represent ‘fundamental aspects of the socialization that solidifies individual knightly

identity' ('Invisible Woman' 162). Vines challenges the assumption in medievalist scholarship that 'rape and the chivalric feats that follow are two distinct sets of actions performed by two different people: the rapist and the hero-knight', where the 'reprehensible act of one provides the catalyst for the laudible reparations of the other' (162). In many cases, rape 'is the act that both inaugurates and cultivates the hero's knightly reputation' ('Invisible Woman' 162). This is true of Malory's Arthur in the *Morte*, since although the king never commits rape himself, his birth is nevertheless the direct result of rape and as such it should be considered an unavoidably central issue in this text.

The centrality of rape and the male chivalric trajectory in romance is inherited from a much older narrative tradition in which violence against women precipitates, or is connected to, issues of masculine identity. Namely, tales from Roman antiquity were popularly translated throughout the Middle Ages and formed much of the reading material for medieval audiences. They follow an almost formulaic pattern whereby the origins of stories frequently spring from acts of violence—in many cases sexual—committed against women. A case in point provided by Burns is the popular Old French *Philomena* from the twelfth-century, which is based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

The tale of Philomena, in both antique and medieval versions, is shockingly brutal. The innocent virgin Philomena is carried off, with her father's consent, by her sister's husband, Tereus, who savagely rapes Philomena and, to keep her from revealing his crime, cuts out her tongue . . . The tale of her violation, the French account tells us, [is woven] into a tapestry that she sends to her sister, Progne ('Raping Men' 129).

Few images are clearer in communicating that if women speak out about rape they threaten the identity of patriarchal authorities, for which potential defiance they are punished with silence and marginality. Robin L. Bott considers the story of Virginius and Virginia in Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century *Physician's Tale*, where Virginia is not only silenced like Philomena but murdered after her rape. 'Such destruction of the female body', Bott argues,

'reveals an attitude towards these raped women analogous to attitudes towards disease or diseased tissue—the damaged body part must be excised in order to prevent further harm to the whole' (190). The 'whole' Bott identifies is the public sphere; in other words, raped women are forced to occupy socially and physically marginal spaces or states so that they do not contaminate the central political arena governed by men. As another example, Robertson discusses the figure of Lucrece, a Roman woman who commits suicide after being raped. In Chaucer's version of the story in *Troilus and Criseyde*, 'the female subject internalizes the culture's view of her as the valued, and then violated, property of her husband; death by suicide after rape becomes her only available choice of response within the logic of her society' (282). As is evident from these examples from popular medieval literature, the bodies of raped women are commonly seen as 'damaged' or 'diseased' in relation to public constructions of identity. The solutions sought by these women's communities typically range from silence at best and death at worst, where each outcome privileges public over private expression and desires.

In such literary instances where rape and the subsequent silence or deaths of women serve as plot propulsions, moving the narrative forward, an element of intellectual complicity is introduced to the reading process. Potkay also writes on this subject, considering how the mere act of reading may be seen as a kind of 'rape', particularly in the genre of romance where rape as a literary device or *topos* 'is central to its very fabric' (97, 98). Effectively, readers' desire for the progression of narrative and for the story's continuation in some cases risks ignoring the private pain and emotion expressed by individual female protagonists in response to crimes visited on them by the community. A more specific example is provided by Mark Amsler who describes how in medieval retellings of Ovid, '[c]ommentaries and mythographies appropriated' stories of raped women 'for cosmological, euhemeristic, or moral purposes' and recontextualised them, usually for the purposes of educating male readers within the clergy (67). Rape in medieval literature, Amsler explains, was

sometimes used 'as a signifier of other behaviors with other, frequently gendered, meanings', namely 'male cosmological creativity', the particularly masculine authority to imagine and act in the world (68). If, as Amsler observes, rape stood not only for something other than a sexual crime and was approached from the perspective of the perpetrator rather than the victim, the portrayal of violence against women ceases to be pertinent to female experience.

Burns writes that the above examples of narrative traditions, which literally or figuratively silence women through acts of sexual violence, as well as the vocabulary used to describe them, exist in innumerable 'accounts of rape in literature, fairytales, folklore, classical myth, and the visual arts through the ages' ('Raping Men' 128). Their number and widespread effect on the collective imagination 'remind us brutally that sexual violence is not only a violation of individual rights but a systemic feature of our cultural heritage' – (Burns 'Raping Men' 128). This was unavoidably the heritage in which Malory composed the *Morte*, as is evident from his use of the rape *topos* as a central feature in the story of Arthur's conception. Yet as Vines points out, because acts of rape or sexual aggression 'occur primarily at the beginning rather than at the conclusion of romances, they are often dismissed as challenging and problematic moments of weakness' either in the world of the text or as seen by readers, which are eventually 'overcome through the fine-tuning of the knight's chivalric process' ('Invisible Woman' 162). I suggest it is exactly for this reason that Igraine's rape has received so little attention in scholarship, since it happens so early on in the text in its pre-Arthurian form. Although rape has been acknowledged to represent a problematic aspect of the text, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, whether readers negotiate it by separating the author from his work completely or by discussing rape as a symbol of public masculine identity, in both cases the private expressions of female protagonists themselves are considered to be of secondary importance. Nevertheless this chapter will now demonstrate how the *Morte's* narrative

both inhabits and departs from normative narrative styles of depicting rape, through its alternative presentation of these themes and their related imagery. In so doing, the centrality of rape is underlined. Crucially, this is managed in such a way that female private identity is ultimately privileged and not elided in favour of male chivalric development within the community.

One traditional image associated with rape is that of death, as rape is often seen to result in, either literally or figuratively, the death of a protagonist's private identity. Given that speech is a salient feature of Igraine's private identity at her introduction to the text, her retreat into silence after rape can be seen as a kind of death that occurs in response to this negation of her individual desires and emotions:

But whan the lady herd telle of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dede or ever Kynge Uther came to her, thenne she merveilled who that myghte be that laye with her in lykenes of her lord. So she mourned pryvely and held hir pees' (5).

Importantly, here Igraine is portrayed as having – just not sharing – a private reaction to her forced intercourse with Uther and the death of her first husband. To 'hold one's peace' is to be 'silent', rather than denoting a lack of conflict (*MED*). As discussed more fully in the introduction to this thesis, silence in the *Morte* is frequently employed as an abbreviated gesture for emotion in connection with the desire for privacy and literally 'holding', or 'withholding', information from the community. In the light of Malory's tendency to use silence to indicate the removal of private emotion from the public sphere in his depictions of other figures, Igraine's silence also invites similar interpretation.

The pre-Arthurian community at this juncture has suffered from the 'grete warre made on bothe partyes' that has resulted in 'moche peple slayne' (4). Therefore, immediately after Igraine 'mourned pryvely' for the Duke of Cornwall, then 'alle the barons by one assent prayd the Kynge of accord betwixe the Lady Igrayne and hym [Uther]' as a way of ending this public

conflict (4, 5). The assumption that Igraine is a free and available space onto which the community may inscribe their own desires, mentioned before, is clearly expressed in patriarchal protagonists' recurrent focus on her outward appearance as a 'passynge fair lady' and the potential inherent in their perception of her public identity as a future queen (5). The barons observe that Uther is 'wyveles', which implies that Igraine is similarly husbandless. This apparently provides adequate reason for their marriage and the king 'put alle the trust in Ulfyus', one of these barons, 'to entrete bitwene them. So by the entreté, at the last the Kyng and she met togyder', after which 'they were maryed in a mornynge with grete myrthe and joye' (5).

John Conlee supposes that since Igraine is married 'with grete myrthe and joye', to 'the man who has essentially murdered her husband, devastated her lands, and used her sexually . . . we might offer comments about the powerlessness of women in the Middle Ages' (89). Similarly, Armstrong suggests Igraine 'offers no objection' to Uther's proposal (GCC 47). Igraine's coercion does indeed correlate with historical pressures sometimes exercised by medieval communities on widows, who could be encouraged to remarry. Ward states that, although 'from about 1200 the widow had the freedom to choose whether or not to remarry, pressure could still be applied', something reiterated by Anne Crawford, who explains this could happen because, ultimately, 'marriages were made for the benefit of the family and community rather than the individual' (15; 6). Liz Herbert McAvoy emphasises that this was particularly the case the more highly a woman was situated in the social scale, as 'more often than not' noblewomen 'were remarried quickly', rendering them 'valuable commodities through which could be constructed formidable alliances between some of the most powerful lordships in the land' (*Medieval Anchoritisms* 151). Given that Uther's barons so obviously act according to these views, I would argue that the 'grete myrthe and joye', assumed by critics to be Igraine's, constitutes a formulaic representation of public identity. After all, Igraine performs these emotions 'and' – which often

meant 'with' in contemporary usage—'alle the barons', which precludes an uncomplicated reading of her expression (5; *MED*). Therefore, this is a crucial example in the text of the narrator's use of paralipsis, which indirectly invites scrutiny of the text's representation of events in the same moment as he purports to downplay their importance through abbreviation.

Barons in the text as a whole may be seen as an example of the narrator's proclivity for abbreviation, since they are ubiquitously present at public, communal events like Igraine's marriage. A 'baron' in the Middle Ages referred to a man who ranked below an earl and above a knight (*MED*). Rather than having value as a referent of social status, however, in the *Morte* barons seem to have more of a thematic purpose within the courtly community that distinguishes them from protagonists exclusively referred to as 'knights', who are more often portrayed as individuals. In the *Morte*, I argue 'barons' represent a literary type or motif that represent an abbreviated signifier for public and communal power. This is established early on in the narrative; soon after Igraine's marriage to Uther, when Arthur takes the sword from the stone and seemingly has won the throne of England the 'barons were sore agreed' and they repeatedly 'put of' re-enactments of this feat for several months, delaying his succession (10). Their collective sway is so significant that barons can even outrank those of higher status in some instances. For example, in one matter of public conflict King Mark lists them as the first of three reasons why his nephew Tristram must leave, with whom he is still on good terms at this point: 'I may nat mayntayne you in this contrey with my worship but that I sholde displese many of my *barownes* and my wyff and my kynne' (242, emphasis added). Barons appear to provide a public, monolithic identity that is referenced when courtly decisions need to be made or confirmed in contrast to the private, specific and varied relationships protagonists form with each other individually. As a different example, once established as king, Arthur is under a similar pressure to marry as Igraine when he complains, 'My *barownes* woll let me have no reste but nedis I *muste* take a wyff', which implies marriage

is something he does not privately desire at this particular moment (62, emphases added). Even the addition of members to Arthur's fellowship are dependent upon communal approval, since initiates to the Round Table are 'chosyn by the assent of the barouns' in many cases (83). As well as approving the inclusion of members to Arthurian communities, barons can be responsible for their exclusion, which may be observed in the barons' treatment of the wife of Mark's neighbouring king, Melyodas. When she tries to poison Tristram, it is not Tristram himself or even his uncle Mark who vilify her for this violence—indeed, their intentions are to be merciful—but the barons, by whose 'assente' she is decisively 'dampned . . . to be brente' (230). In such examples, the barons' collective public voice is privileged over the voices of individuals. Their connection with, and power over, the community is evident in the fact that central patriarchal figures of authority are frequently accompanied by barons when acting in the public sphere, as is evident in the ubiquitous mentions of kings and barons together.³³

I argue that Igraine's expression of 'grete myrthe and joye' upon her marriage to Uther should be read as a public performance of identity prompted by the barons' presence (5). Other indications in the narrative suggest this too. For example, Igraine agrees to the barons' 'entreté' only 'at the last', which indicates a lack of speed to negotiations and possibly a private reluctance on her part (5). Conversely, once the marriage is agreed to, it is organised in the public sphere 'in alle haste' (5). The narrative emphasises the collective, plural weight of the community versus Igraine's power as an individual, since the negotiations are described as settled when 'alle the barons by one *assent* prayd the Kynge of accord betwixte the Lady Igrayne and hym' (5, emphasis added). The public 'assent' of the barons to this marriage pointedly contrasts with the original use of 'assent' employed by the narrator, which denoted Igraine's *lack* of consent when she first became aware of Uther's

³³ For examples of kings and barons described as appearing together in a supportive context, see pp. 5, 7, 12, 14, 20, 40, 232, 234, 237, 243, 266, 267, 306 and 498.

intentions, a duality highlighted by this word's contronymic use in the narrative (5, 3). Furthermore, unlike Igraine, who mourns 'pryvely' and speaks in the first person, the barons' spokesperson, Ulfius, speaks in collective pronouns, such as 'we', 'our', 'us' and 'all', that persistently remind Igraine – and readers – of the public body he represents:

Now will we do well. Our Kyng is a lusty knyghte and wyveles,
and my lady Igrayne is a passynge fair lady; it were grete joye unto
us all and hit myghte please the Kynge to make her his quene' (5).

The fact that such patriarchal figures of authority express their desires in terms of public rank underlines their disinterest in Igraine's private identity in favour of her public role as 'quene' to their 'Kynge'.

Once married, Igraine's centrality as queen is further cemented and her private identity is embedded within a wider nexus of public concerns. An obsessive focus on Arthur's paternity is initially reduced to an issue of masculine identity as critics have noted, since the brief nature of the period of time between Igraine's first and second husbands is cause for public anxiety over the legitimacy of the English patriline. As conveyed by Igraine's silence upon hearing of her first husband's death, aspects of private identity and emotions can also be inferred by her silences in moments when the legitimacy of Arthur's conception is questioned. When Uther 'asked hir, by the feith she ought to [tell] hym whos was the child within her body', she is 'sore abashed to yeve ansuer' (6). Igraine's initial silence of 'sore' embarrassment indicates the tension between her public role and private experience. Now married to Uther and denied the parity of interests and authority she exercised in her first marriage, Igraine emphasises public duties rather than the emotional attachment the reader understands she felt for the Duke of Cornwall, previously indicated by her silent mourning in private:

Syre . . . I shall telle you the trouthe. The same nyghte that my lord
was dede – the houre of his deth, as his knyghtes record – ther came

into my castel of Tyntigaill a man lyke my lord in speche and in countenaunce, and two knyghtes with hym in likeness of his two knyghtes Barcias and Jordans. And soo I went unto bed with hym as I ought to do with my lord; and the same nyght, as I shal ansuer unto God, this child was begotten upon me (6).

Igraine's explanation of how she went 'to bed' with the man whom she thought was her husband—a description of physical rather than emotional contact with the duke—her qualification 'as I *ought* to do' appeals to the notion that she was unable to reject sexual intercourse. For, according to public medieval formulations of marriage, wives were legally required to obey their husbands in everything (6, emphasis added). Jesmok argues that by

stressing conjugal duty . . . she [Igraine] expresses what her society deems to be a woman's duty to her husband, while, perhaps, subtly questioning that duty. Must a woman reciprocate each time her husband desires her? ('Guiding Lights' 37).

Igraine's explanation to Uther fails to correspond with Malory's earlier portrayal of Igraine as a loving wife who actively desired the company of her first husband and 'mourned' his death in a relationship that was emotional as well as physical (5). For this reason, I question the extent to which Igraine should be viewed as privately feeling the 'grete joye' she performs in front of Uther after hearing the child is his. Rather, it could be argued that Igraine's reaction is indicative of the relief she feels at discovering she is pregnant with a son, who will be publicly recognised as legitimate instead of the 'bastard' the pre-Arthurian community fears he is (6, 12). Consistent with this reading, Igraine's publicly-orientated performances are continued throughout this episode where she occupies a centrally marginal position. When Uther dies, not long after Arthur's birth, Igraine is described once more as 'fayre', the epithet used to invoke her publicly constituted identity and when she 'made grete sorowe' it is not 'pryvely' as she grieved for her first husband but once more '*and [with] alle the barons*' (5, 7, emphasis added). Igraine's performance

at Uther's death thus constitutes a communal display of queenship rather than an individual rite of mourning.

A final way in which Malory depicts Igraine and the erasure of her private identity differently from the traditional treatments of other raped women in medieval narratives, such as Philomena, Virginia and Lucrece, is in his use of disease and its associations with death. According to traditional literary associations of raped women with 'disease' considered earlier, Igraine is triply a site of contamination for the courtly community (Bott 190). In the public eye, not only is Igraine potentially adulterous and an object of rape but she falls pregnant with a son whose paternity is questionable. Doubt remains even for Igraine herself; notably information of the duke's death was instead revealed to her in the collective 'record' of 'his knyghtes', not through her own individual knowledge (6). Despite the official validation of Arthur's parentage, which is achieved through Igraine's marriage to Uther, the potential taint of illegitimacy still hovers over Arthur, whom members of the public believe to be of 'lowe blood' (12). Discussing the public implications of illegitimacy in the tenth to twelfth centuries, Duby goes so far as to say that the idea, for medieval audiences, 'that children of a blood different from that of the master of the house might one day bear the name of his ancestors and succeed to their inheritance' was the 'worst danger of all' (47). This is conveyed by the Arthurian community's obsessive discussion about the questionable three-hour interval between Igraine's marriage to the Duke of Cornwall and her conception of Arthur by Uther, mentioned earlier in the chapter. Nevertheless, what differentiates the *Morte* from classical precedents and their rewritings in medieval literature is the narrator's decision to make Igraine's absence temporary rather than permanent. She is returned not only to the story but, figuratively speaking, to the site of her rape – a central court – despite her threatening status for the community as a corrupting marginal element in the public sphere.

Paired with this departure from most precedents, where raped women are permanently killed, silenced, or otherwise removed from their own stories, is a reversal of the conventional figuring of the female body as diseased; instead the male perpetrator, Uther, is figured as the source of disease rather than Igraine. In fact, the image of physical disease is applied not once but twice to this king. First, he is imagined, albeit performatively, as a site of sickness before he visits Igraine, since Merlin directs Uther to pretend he is 'diseased' when disguised as the Duke of Cornwall in order to avoid engaging in 'many questions', or conversation, with Igraine (5). Second, Uther dies of a mysterious illness in what may constitute a gesture of moral judgment for crimes which, in the narrator's view, are the opposite of the 'good' qualities Igraine possesses: 'within two yeres, Kyng Uther felle seke of a grete maladye. And in the meanwhyle hys enemyes usurpped upon hym and dyd a grete bataylle upon his men and slewe many of his peple' (3, 6).

Uther's swift removal from the story after his marriage to Igraine by being 'usurped' echoes notions of rape in two ways. Firstly, in Middle English 'usurpen' could mean the act of 'stealing' or to 'seize (a kingdom, an empire, etc.). . . by force', which corresponds with meanings of 'rape' and *raptus* as 'theft' or actions denoting 'to seize' (*MED*; Dunn 19). Secondly, Uther's removal from the narrative after he contracts a disease mirrors the murder or erasure of women after rape. Arguably, Uther's death is portrayed as a kind of *raptus* by the narrator. The competition between different kinds of theft in this episode raises the possibility that thematic correspondences exist between Igraine's experience and the usurping of Uther, indirectly connecting her story to historical as well as contemporary *raptus* narratives. These resonances are additionally clear in the light that 'usurpen' also means to 'claim falsely . . . as one's own' or to 'pretend', since this is exactly what Uther does by taking on the appearance of the Duke of Cornwall in order to rape Igraine (*MED*). Most importantly, Uther's death and silence in the narrative after a *raptus* are permanent, unlike Igraine's.

Eremitic Absence

During Igraine's temporary removal from the narrative after Uther's death, the central narrative strand of the text focuses on Arthur's gradual assumption of the English throne as he struggles to unify the surrounding regions. Information about Igraine is almost entirely withheld from the reader, meaning figuratively she occupies a marginal space within the structure of the narrative and in the reader's mind. Conlee has commented on the fact that Igraine appears 'powerless' in this episode because she is silent (89). Likewise Armstrong notes how Igraine is 'helpless' and 'vulnerable' and offers 'no objection' before disappearing (GCC 47). However, Igraine does object – and in public – much later in her life when she returns to Arthur's court after over twenty three years (32). Jesmok writes that in this last part of Igraine's trajectory she is imbued with a 'moral stature' that elevates her status in the narrative ('Guiding Lights' 37). As demonstrated by the contrasting readings of this protagonist as passive or active, vocal or silent, Igraine's appearances differ in tone and activity considerably before and after her absence. To the best of my knowledge, Igraine's absence has not been analysed in Arthurian scholarship before as a formative stage in her trajectory. I argue that the radical change in her representation may be attributed to her time and distance away from the community. In order to do so, this part of the chapter considers how Igraine may be seen to reach the authoritative position in the Arthurian court first highlighted by Jesmok for two reasons. Firstly, during her absence Igraine ages and returns as a middle-aged woman, which I explore in the context of studies that consider the significance of processes of time and ageing to medieval representations of womanhood. Secondly, this section proposes that Igraine's disappearance constitutes an unofficial form of eremitic retreat and relies upon studies of contemporary adoptions of religious practices by the medieval laity in literature and historical analogues for secular purposes. As a whole, this section argues that the intersections of time and space in Igraine's

trajectory at this narrative juncture together contribute to a portrayal of her identity as marginal in a qualitatively different way from her previous appearances in pre-Arthurian. Unlike her centrally marginal position in the marriage with Uther, Igraine's removal entirely outside of the main narrative focus and courtly activities makes her a peripherally marginal figure during this period.

I. Time

This part of the chapter provides a detailed timeline calculating the minimum duration of Igraine's absence from court between the reigns of Uther and Arthur in order to emphasise the prolonged nature of its duration. I argue that Igraine is imagined in the text as having reached middle age by the time she returns to Arthur's court. This is partially necessary to explain the individual power and private emotion she suddenly manifests in stark contrast to her previous silence and central marginalisation.³⁴ In excavating a coherent timeline from the *Morte* during Igraine's absence, I do not wish to suggest that Malory himself intended to develop an exact chronology, since time in the genre of romance is notoriously elastic and sometimes contradictory. Nevertheless, the lack of what is now considered to be historical preciseness due to the fluidity of romance time does not preclude its emotional or narrative significance for protagonists.

There is utility in piecing together the time taken for events to transpire during Igraine's absence since its duration of at least twenty three years lies at the extreme end of the *Morte's* spectrum of durations typically tolerated or resisted by members of the Arthurian community. Years may be glossed over in a sentence by the narrator and cannot be described as naturalistic in relation

³⁴ I have relied upon Bridget Ann Henisch's study of *The Medieval Calendar Year* and Shepherd's notes on medieval time in his edition of the *Morte*, in order to construct this chronology of events.

to modern historical representations or readerly experiences of time. However, references to discrete temporal units are nevertheless rife in the text and reflect an intense preoccupation with the social implications for protagonists of the passing of time.³⁵ Shorter periods of time include units as little as ‘halfe an owre’, ‘two dayes’ and ‘three’ to ‘seven wykes’ (72, 511, 677, 512). Longer periods of time range from just ‘a monthe’ and ‘two monethis’ to the ubiquitous ‘twelvemonth’ or ‘twelvemonth and a day’ of romance and folkloric narratives (30, 458, 223, 240). The most prolonged durations, either of absences or relationships, are ‘two yeres’, ‘three yere’, ‘fyve yere’, ‘seven wynters’, ‘eyght yere’, ‘ten yere’, ‘twelve yere’, ‘fifteen yere’, ‘foure and twenty yere’, which may or may not exceed the indeterminate interval of ‘many yerys’ (6, 27, 463, 121, 84, 585, 153, 210, 607, 56).³⁶

Longer absences or journeys in this scale – usually those exceeding six months – are specified by members of the court particularly when they or their loved ones have endured physical and emotional tribulations during such times. For example, after the final battle in an arduous quest followed by Uwain, Arthur’s nephew, the knight ‘dwelled’ with a lady ‘nyghe halfe a yere – for hit was longe or he myght be hole of his grete hurtis’ (111). The emotional remoteness caused by geographical and social distance is highlighted by courtly members’ expressions of anxiety about individuals they have not seen for a long time. In the above example of Uwain, his absence, along with that of his chivalric companions Gawain and Marhalt, is revealed to be of great concern for Arthur in a messenger’s communication that he ‘had sought hem well-nyghe a twelve-monthe thorowoute all Ingelonde, Walis, and Scotlonde’ on behalf of the king (111). Arthur’s desire for Uwain’s absence

³⁵ The electronic version of Sommer’s edition of the *Morte* finds around seventy results in the text of both ‘hour*’, and ‘month*’ or ‘moneth*’ each, as well as over one hundred and twenty results for ‘yere*’ and eight hundred results for ‘day*’ (*UMHTI*).

³⁶ This survey only considers units of time referring to how it is experienced socially and emotionally. References to protagonists’ ages or retrospective interpretations of time are not included, such as the ‘foure and twenty yerys’ Nacien tells Ector Lancelot has been the servant of the ‘devyll’ based on a dream he experiences during the Grail Quest (542).

to come to an end is reflected in the effusiveness with which he is welcomed 'unto the courte' where 'were they all glad', which indicates a patent relief that such a prolonged and extensive search has ended (111).

A more extreme example of female responses to temporally induced anxiety exists in Morgause's appearance at Arthur's court to search for her son Gareth, whom she has missed for 'a twelvemonth' (210). When Morgause sees Gareth for the first time following his absence she 'sodeynly felle downe in a sowne and lay there a grete whyle lyke as she had bene dede' (210, 223). Her emotional reaction is so extreme that she may only be consoled by Gareth, who 'recomforted hir in suche wyse that she recovirde' (223). This episode is considered at greater length in the 'Courtly Matriarch(s)' part of Chapter Two. However, this vignette already serves as evidence that prolonged absences are not easily tolerated by members of the Arthurian community. Significantly, as this thesis demonstrates, many protagonists' reactions to them underline their desire for aspects of emotional and private identity to be integrated into public experience, despite the tensions that frequently arise between them.

The first example of this is seen in Igraine's trajectory, when her return is preceded by a lengthy absence. First, a 'long whyle' is described as having passed between Uther's death and Arthur's retrieval of the sword from the stone, which he performs on 'Newe Yeers Day' (7, 8). Although Arthur is termed a 'boye' on this day, nevertheless the fact that he accompanies his foster father and brother, Ector and Kay, to a tournament, suggests Arthur is at least a squire by this point, since Kay is already taking part in 'justes' (10, 8). Squires in the Middle Ages were usually adolescent boys or men in their 'late teens' (Orme 6). It is likely that Arthur is at least fifteen years old at this point, an equivalent number of years to those during which Igraine has been absent.

After Arthur pulls the sword from the stone on New Year's Day, the period of time it takes for him to be accepted as the new king of England can be understood to take approximately five to six months in total. Confirmation of Arthur's right to the sword is first delayed until 'Twelfth Day', identified as

'January 6, the twelfth day after Christmas' (10, n.10). The barons' continued ambivalence further delays proceedings until 'Candelmas', February 2, when they demand that 'the hyghe fest of Eester' or 'Pentecoste' should now be passed (10, n.10). Easter, unlike Christmas was a 'movable' date in the ecclesiastical calendar, 'celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox' and could occur any time after mid-April (Henisch 216, 219). Since Pentecost or 'Whit-Sön' had to fall on the 'seventh Sunday after Easter' this day could arrive as late as the end of June (*MED*). By this point, Igraine can be understood to have been absent for around fifteen and a half years.

Following Arthur's coronation period 'within fewe yeres after, Arthur wan alle the North, Scotland, and alle that were under their obeissaunce; also Walys' (11). It is unclear whether this means 'within *a* few years after' or 'within *not many* years after', but in either case the reader can understand Arthur's territorial expansion to take 'years' in a plural sense, which I have conservatively estimated as three. Once Wales is won, Arthur holds a feast at Pentecost (May or June), adding another six months. So far this brings the duration of Igraine's absence to around nineteen years (11).

It is then announced that new allies will come 'before All Halowmasse', which is the same as All Saints' Day on November 1 meaning they arrive at Arthur's court at least six months later (16, n.8). Multiple battles ensue following their addition to Arthur's forces, which could be assumed to take years, although Malory does not specify exactly the length of time Arthur takes to subdue three quarters of 'three score thousande' enemies (26). The most conservative estimate could reasonably add another six months to the total and so it can be safely assumed that Igraine's absence totals at least twenty years by this point in the *Morte*, if not more.

In addition, the next gesture to the passage of time in the narrative is Merlin's prophecy about a 'space of three yere' during which he predicts Arthur will not struggle further with his adversaries (29). Since the narrator

recounts that after this 'all the batayles' were recorded by Merlin's master 'Blayse', it can be assumed that the period of three years does indeed pass before Arthur's next meeting with his advisor (27). The time between this juncture and Arthur's instalment in the court of Carlyon is not specified but events are brought to a critical point when his sister Morgause comes to stay for 'a monthe', with whom he engages in a sexual relationship (30). Neither know during this period, in Malory's version, of their shared familial connection. When this royal incest is discovered, the social crisis it precipitates causes for Igraine to 'be sente for . . . in all haste' to decide the matter of their parentage definitively (32). Without adding more time to this reconstructed chronology, by this point Igraine can be understood to have been absent from central courts for a minimum total of twenty three years.

At first glance, it would be possible to interpret Igraine's prolonged absence as reflecting a disinterest in a female protagonist of middle age, especially given that her purported impetus for returning to court is merely the necessary confirmation of Arthur's legitimacy as king. Moreover, by this point Igraine has been widowed twice and, having already produced four children, is no longer of use as a royal child-bearer. The correlation between Igraine's age and a seeming decrease in narrative interest in her as a protagonist could reflect contemporary attitudes about older women revealed by other literary portrayals in which femininity is primarily rooted in youth and fertility. Sue Niebrzydowski states that in the Middle Ages, although for 'both men and women, the autumn of life signalled the passing of youth and onset of ageing', for 'women uniquely it meant loss of beauty and physical attraction—deficiencies that apparently did not trouble the male sex' because it 'affected a woman's fertility' and her impact in the public sphere ('Introduction' 6). Historically, women have been powerfully defined by the relative intactness and public functionality of their bodies. It is perhaps no surprise, that when considering questions of female identity it is the '[m]ost difficult of all . . . to define the subjectivity of middle age' for the female protagonists represented

in many medieval texts (Niebrzydowski 2). Sara Elin Roberts observes in her studies of Welsh medieval writing that the laws 'show little interest in women' once they are legally separated from their husbands and in literature 'although we get an occasional glimpse of an older woman in the Middle Ages, it seems that the focus, at least in the creative literature, is on youth. There appears to be a general lack of interest in older women' (33, 36).

Other critics have explored the conditions of medieval middle age differently, framing it as having the potential to represent the apex of a person's intellectual strength and public influence, not as a period during which individuals become invisible in the wider community. Niebrzydowski explains how, '[b]asing their work on Aristotle (384-822 BC), medieval biologists saw human life in terms of three stages; *augmentum*, *status* and *decrementum*; youth, middle age and old age respectively, with each being defined by a different physiological state' (3). The word for 'status' derives from this categorisation based on age, as Aristotle and his followers stressed that '*status* or middle age was the best age to be and was that in which one was at the height of one's powers, morally and physically' (4). Far from being an age of privilege reserved exclusively for men, some scholars believe women also experienced an unofficial 'coming-of-age' at this intellectual zenith. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker writes that in medieval Europe women obtained the "'power of persuasion" when they had reached the age of discretion at forty', which she demonstrates in her study could have more effect on a woman's assumption of a new role than widowhood (21).

Crucially, an awareness of the medieval 'age of discretion' may be used to facilitate readings of female protagonists who express themselves differently depending upon the particular time and juncture of womanhood in which they are situated. Whilst Mulder-Bakker allows that medieval legal and political institutions were 'a man's world', she argues that the written law 'is not the only structuring layer' of society and 'other fields of action can be discerned . . . such as the economic, social and cultural arenas, not to mention

the spiritual', in which women may have played unofficial but authoritative roles (21). It was not so much the case that female 'silence was held up as a virtue' without exception (Goldberg 6). Rather, women had to express themselves in the context of what was considered temporally and spatially appropriate according to public constructions of identity. I argue Igraine's disappearance from the *Morte's* narrative for over two decades can be interpreted as reconstructive of her private identity because it brings her past the crucial age of forty and the age of discretion. Though Igraine may not be officially involved in the formation of public Arthurian values, represented by the Pentecostal Oath, indirect resonances with her words and those used in this chivalric ideology may be noted, as the last part of this chapter considers further.

II. Space

In turning to space in this analysis of Igraine's absence, the present reading has been influenced by Lisa Perfetti, who considers the non-verbal expressions and gestures of female figures in medieval comic literature. Namely, Perfetti argues that the 'laughter of maidens and matriarchs alike marks a space in which women, less able to record their voices alongside those of men of their age, speak "off the record"' (125). Silence, like non-verbal laughter, represents another kind of 'off the record' utterance. By combining readings of female gesture and aging, then, Igraine's silence after Uther's death should be read less as a departure into a publicly inactive widowhood than as a kind of private, empowering retreat. In addition, Scala writes that the 'primary function of the medievalist is to locate missing stories', which can often be found in the 'silence' of protagonists (1, 8). Through silence, Scala suggests, protagonists are simultaneously absent and present and, as such, their importance can only be fully understood in 'retrospect' (66). I propose that Igraine's absence is meaningful in a similar way. Conceptually, shorter story

episodes – as well as protagonists’ absences – are to the main narrative what the questing space is to the court in Arthurian geography: both are positionally marginal to central structures and are often associated with silence, or at least distance from communal discourse.

Malory’s larger questing space incorporates within it what I call ‘eremitic’ spaces, as mentioned in the introduction. By this I mean any locations occupied by hermits and other religious or semi-religious figures. This chapter is particularly interested in how protagonists use eremitic spaces in secular ways, in order to develop aspects of private identity. This is in part due to the fact that, although there are distinctions between the spaces and practices of historical hermits, monks, nuns and anchorites, in the *Morte* they tend to be conflated. Many religious spaces serve the common function of healing through privacy and distance from the courtly community, which is most often the source of individual protagonists’ pain in the first instance, as it is for Igraine. For example, knights retreat to heal in abbeys where nuns ‘fecch lechis’ and ‘search’ their ‘woundis’ after tournaments, and they are described as ‘well rested’ after staying in such places (92; 95). Female figures are also said to be ‘recoverde’ in forest nunneries, meaning eremitic spaces are available for the development of female as well as male private identity. Importantly, as well as the obvious physical benefits of resting in such places, the frequent connection of ‘fyeble’ bodies with a damaged ‘wytte’ or ‘mind’ adds an emotional dynamic to eremitic spaces (483). The author himself states that ‘ermytes hylde grete house-holdis and refreysshed people that were in distresse’, distress in Middle English connoting ‘anxiety’, ‘grief’, or the pressure of ‘coercion’, which is especially pertinent to Igraine who is pressured into marrying her rapist by his barons (605; *MED*).

The occupation of eremitic spaces for secular reasons can be seen in other romances and historical anecdotes. For example, in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s German romance, *Parzival*, the queen ‘Herzeloyde’ withdraws as a widow to the wasteland of Soltane in a move that Sterling-Hellenbrand

interprets as motivated by 'self-centredness', since Herzloyde does so in order to have exclusive rights over the company of her son, rather than with the aim of becoming an official or publicly recognised religious figure ('Women on the Edge' 59). Such secular usage of eremitic space is in fact consistent with known historical, as well as literary, examples. Retreats into marginal, isolated spaces are most commonly associated with officially established hermits and anchorites but non-official lay members of society also undertook temporary withdrawals from society. These withdrawals were spent in silent, secluded and/or private spaces and had two salient functions: first, to provide a social space where private identity might be privileged over public identity; and second to create a space where the individual could develop beyond their role within the community.

The first of these functions is apparent in examples of women who, in lieu of remarrying after widowhood, would retreat to some form of religious life that offered them an honourable avenue of activity once they no longer needed to fulfil the role of wife. In the Middle Ages noble widows commonly spent 'disposable income on religious foundations or retired to them' (Hanawalt 66). Becoming 'vowesses' was a respectable alternative to remarriage, inspired by canonical models such as St Bridget of Sweden (Hanawalt 66). Sometimes these women might be formally accepted into a particular religious tradition as a nun or anchoress, but it has also been shown that some women would not take official vows but occupy these positions only temporarily. Rotha Mary Clay confirms that '[o]bedience in the monastic sense' was not always required (88). Furthermore, of the many eremitic and anchoritic sites in medieval Britain, McAvoy clarifies, the most isolated locations would likely not have been a permanent anchorage for women but rather the location of 'temporary religious retreat' for pious individuals wishing to escape society for a finite period of time ('Anchorites in Medieval Wales' 213).

Alternatively, women sometimes decided to live a spiritual life in secluded subdivisions of space within much more populated areas and central areas of

the lay community. Mulder-Bakker reveals this in her studies of women of the merchant class in Northern Europe. One such woman was Katharina Tucher (c.1380-1448), who 'converted to a more or less devout life style, without however entering a cloister or convent' after her husband died (15). Having taken 'no vows' and 'not following a rule', Katharina '[i]ndependently and informally . . . lived her religious life in her own house' (18). It is important to emphasise both the temporary nature of some of these retreats for women mentioned by McAvoy, as well as the less defined lay forms of religious life evidenced by Mulder-Bakker's case-study. What is important about both forms of unofficial activities, whether in time or space, is their demonstration that secular imitations of religious eremitic practices could be – regardless of how often they were – performed outside of publicly sanctioned limits. The above critics suggest that withdrawals from public life were undertaken by women in order to avoid transitioning from one central role to another; from widow to wife or nun. By choosing to follow more marginal forms of religious or specifically eremitic vocation, these women often fulfilled individual, emotional goals by tailoring their environments to personal tastes rather than following canonical religious models within the wider community.

Whilst such literary and historical examples do not necessarily describe equivalent activities, a private nature and focus on individual development is common to them all. Their consistency in this respect demonstrates how marginal spaces were widely identified as beneficial and empowering. Given that Igraine's public role and private voice become separated upon her pursuit by and marriage to Uther, I argue that her prolonged absence of over twenty three years – together with the marginal space she occupies in the narrative – points to meaningful intersections of narrative space, both physical and temporal. Though perhaps not a conscious construction on Malory's part, the assertion of private identity and emotions by Igraine following her absence cannot be a purely coincidental factor in her apparently sudden empowerment either. I suggest that Igraine embodies the instinctive connection medieval

authors (and readers by extension) clearly made between silent spaces and emotional healing, specifically through the development of private identity.

When Igraine reappears from the margins of the *Morte* after a prolonged absence, the narrator makes no explicit references as to how and where she has spent her time. Yet Malory's choice of Morgan as the protagonist who accompanies Igraine on this visit to Arthur's court is, I argue, highly significant: 'she broughte with her Morgan le Fay, hir doughter' (32). Morgan, as the reader is told after the description of Igraine's marriage to Uther, 'was put to scole in a nonnery' before her marriage to King Uriens of Gore (5-6). As a protagonist, Morgan fulfils no other function in the text nor at this particular moment, nor does she speak, so it can be assumed that she is still unmarried at this point because at other public events Malory takes care to mention wives appear alongside their husbands. Therefore, I argue that Morgan's presence in this moment constitutes an abbreviated indication that Igraine has spent her prolonged absence in a nunnery. Given Malory's conflation of religious figures and spaces in the *Morte*, this indirectly associates Igraine with the eremitic spaces of the quest wilderness. Returning to Scala's theory of presence in absence noted earlier, I propose Igraine's absence should be read 'in retrospect' as a space in the narrative that acts as a form of eremitic retreat (Scala 66). Consistent with contemporary notions that eremitic spaces could represent locations of private restoration and healing, when Igraine returns to the narrative after a long absence she speaks as a newly empowered individual, having developed beyond the public roles she previously occupied in the courtly community.

Remembered Presence

This final part of the chapter considers Igraine's last appearance in the *Morte*, during which she speaks openly of the emotional impact Uther's rape has had on her private identity. In this scene, Igraine acts as a peripherally marginal figure rather than the centrally marginal queen she was before. She enters the court not as a wife but as an erstwhile eremitic practitioner, who has benefited from the restorative, empowering qualities of private spaces that offer distance from the community and public constructions of femininity. The suggestion that this protagonist has undergone a period of healing is manifested in Igraine's independent defence against two of Uther's key public spokesmen, Merlin and Ulfius (32-3). Igraine is required to defend herself because Arthur has unwittingly conceived a child on his 'syster' Morgause during her absence, being unaware of his true parentage (32). However, she turns the focus from Arthur's political place within the community onto her emotional experiences as an individual. After this moment, as this section will demonstrate, references to Igraine's private identity can be seen to be made indirectly throughout the rest of the narrative.

Arthur is taken away from Igraine moments after his birth and so, when Uther dies soon after, his identity and face are unknown to the pre-Arthurian public. I suggest that the scene prior to Igraine's final appearance foregrounds her words sympathetically by establishing Arthur's preference for her word about his parentage over that of several other patriarchal figures of authority. In a moment before her arrival, Arthur receives a limited amount of information from Merlin, who obliquely references Igraine by saying: 'ye have lyene by youre syster' (Morgause) (32). Merlin is described as accompanying Arthur: 'the kyng mounted on his horse and Merlyn on another and so rode to Carlyon' (32). However, the revelation of concrete facts is left to Ector and Ulfius, who 'tolde hym how Kynge Uther was hys fadir and Quene Igrayne his modir' (32). Arthur's reply, 'So Merlion tolde me' indicates an inability to

fully believe them (32). Indeed, Merlin's lack of involvement in their discussion at this moment undermines his reliability as a source, since he appears reluctant to repeat in private his previous public assertion that Arthur was conceived 'three houres' after the Duke of Cornwall's death (12).

Significantly, Arthur wishes to understand the facts of his parentage directly from his mother; he asks that she 'be sente for, that I myght speke with hir; and if she say so hirselff, than woll I beleve hit' (32). A conditional tone to Arthur's statement is implied by the words 'if' and 'than', which indicate his trust of public record will not be secure until Merlin's story of his conception and birth are supported by Igraine. Arthur clearly expresses a preference for private and individual knowledge over the public and collective version of events in this case. That Igraine is sent for 'in all haste' also communicates a sense of urgency to his actions (32). Indeed, Arthur's search offers a counter-example to Peggy McCracken's observation that usually in romance narratives, '[i]f the missing father inspires his son to seek out a patrimony . . . the absence of a mother does not provoke any quest' (35). Arthur's trust in his mother's word can be compared to the Duke of Cornwall's deference to Igraine discussed at the beginning of this chapter, since Arthur celebrates her coming 'in the best manner' by staging a 'fested' event, or 'feast', a public gesture of respect for her honour (32). Igraine's return occasions an event of both public and private significance for Arthur, for the king as an individual son as much as king and the central figure in his courtly community (32).

Despite Arthur's emphasis that Igraine's arrival should be characterised by respect, Uther's old retainer Ulfius immediately accuses her of being the 'causer' of public harm, attempting to transform the court from a space of Arthur's individual festivity into one of communal prosecution:

Ryght so cam Ulfyus and saide opynly that the kyng and all myght here that were fested that day, 'ye are the falsest lady of the worlde and the most traitresse unto the kynges person . . . here is my glove to preve hit upon any man that will say the contrary that this quene Igrayne is causer of your grete damage and of your greate werre.

For and she wold have uttered it in the lyf of kyng Utherpendragon of the byrthe of yow and how ye were begoten ye had never had the mortal werrys that ye have had for the most party of your barons of your realme knew never whose son ye were nor of whom ye were begoten and she that bare you of her body shold have made it knowyn openly in excusing of her worship and yours and in lyke wyse to alle the realm. Wherefore I preve her fals to God and to yow and to al your realm and who will say the contrary I will preve it on his body' (32).

Ulfius's repetition of details he wishes had been 'opynly' available to 'all' dichotomises ideas of open and closed knowledge, in other words private information that should have been public. Ulfius thereby privileges communal over individual identity, which is underscored by the use of several terms that reference public status in relation to the community, such as 'lady', 'quene', 'king', 'barons' who have responsibilities towards the 'realme'. Ulfius echoes Uther's previous focus on Igraine's physical beauty by locating the source of the community's woes in 'her body' and framing it as a public issue for 'the moste party' of the barons and 'all the realm' once more. He again frames the public sphere's superiority in terms of outer demonstrations of power, rather than inner aspects of identity such as spiritual honour in his challenge to Igraine, by predicating the veracity of his words on a material object, his 'glove', as well as on his physical desire to 'preve' it on the 'body' of any who might contradict him. In this case the body he identifies is Igraine's, since she is his named opponent; in other words, Ulfius implicitly threatens to re-enact Uther's original rape in verbal form.

Igraine's reply to Ulfius is lengthy compared to her previous statements or gestures, demonstrating the retrospective function abbreviation has in the text as a paralytic device.

Than spake Igrayne and seyde, 'I am a woman and I may nat fyght; but rather than I sholde be dishonoured, there wolde som good man take my quarell. But,' thus she seyde, 'Merlion knowith well – and ye, sir Ulphuns – how Kynge Uther come to me in the castell of Tyntagyl in the lykness of my lorde, that was dede three owres

tofore, and there begate a chylde that nyght uppon me; and aftir the thirteenth day Kyng Uther wedded me. And by his commaundement

– whan the chylde was borne, hit was delyvirde unto Merlion and fostered by hym. And so I saw the childe never aftir, nothir wote nat what ys hys name – for I knew hym never yette’ (32-3).

In this speech, Igraine refers to herself in the first person and uses personal pronouns ten times, which through frequency alone indicates her representation by the narrator is radically different than before, when she was predominantly silent. Also significant is the fact that, rather than immediately referring to her rank, title or marital position, Igraine speaks simply as a ‘woman’, not a queen, as she was in her first marriage to the Duke of Cornwall. The phrase ‘rather than I shold be dishonoured’ actually echoes the first of her expressions in the narrative, ‘I suppose that we were sente for that I shold be dishonoured’, reinforcing the inference of similarity between the two periods before and after her contact with Uther (3). In addition, the return to an almost identical vocabulary suggests that references to dishonour can be seen as an abbreviation of Igraine’s inner values and private identity in contrast to her outwardly ‘fair’ appearance, which is cited so often by or in reference to the community (3).

The juxtaposition of the forced dichotomies of outer and inner, public and private, physical and emotional, is reflected in the antithetical result of Igraine’s response to Ulfius’s challenge, which ends with their eventual synthesis and resolution. Jesmok argues of Igraine’s speech, ‘[v]oicing that she cannot fight is her way of fighting’, which highlights the socially constructed contrast between male action and female inaction (‘Guiding Lights’ 38). I would add that in emphasising Igraine’s lack of ability to fight like male knights, she downplays her physicality, which in turn directly invites the courtly community in the world of the *Morte* – and the reader – to consider instead her emotions (‘Guiding Lights’ 38). Rather than focusing on public and political anxieties about Arthur’s legitimacy, Igraine expresses the

implications of the rape not for her status as a queen but for her feelings as a bereaved parent whose child was forcefully stolen. What small lip service Igraine pays to the communal narrative of Arthur's conception undermines its veracity due to the pointedly imitative nature of her individual recounting of the statement that Arthur was conceived 'more than thre houres' after the Duke of Cornwall's death (12). More important is the compact way in which Igraine relates this chronology for her private identity, which underlines the brevity of time between her first and second husbands, as well as between bereavement, pregnancy and the loss of a child: 'my lorde, that was dede *three owres tofore*, and there begate a chylde *that nyght* uppon me . . . *whan* the chylde was borne, hit was delyvirde unto Merlion' (32-3, emphases added). The impersonal manner in which Igraine describes Arthur as 'the' rather than 'my' 'chylde' and 'hit' underlines their separation, whilst her repetitive use of the negatives 'never', 'nothir', 'nat', and 'never' again stress the emotional loss caused by having never even known the name of her son, let alone formed a maternal bond with him. Such loss is further underlined by the narrator's indication that even in Arthur's presence she fails to recognise her own son, as she reiterates 'I bare a child by my lord kyng Vther but I wote not where he is become', in his very presence (33). Igraine's ignorance of her son's identity is reflected by Arthur as well, as when her speech is finished he has to ask: 'Ys this my modir?' (33). When Merlin tells the king 'this is your moder', the above inferences of potential emotion and Igraine's private identity are made explicit in the tearful expression of their grief and its resolution in the same moment: 'therewith Kyng Arthure toke his modir Quene Igrayne in hys armys and kyssed her, and eythir wepte uppon other. Than the Kynge lete make a feste that lasted eyght dayes' (33). The feast that ends their tears symbolises the reunion not just of king with his bloodline but parent with child, in other words the synthesis of public and private identity. Moreover, Arthur's acceptance of his mother's words and their festive celebration demonstrate what Mulder-Bakker argues could happen when a woman reached the age of

discretion in medieval society and '[i]nstitutional power met with relational right' (24). Igraine's position as Arthur's now middle-aged mother and his relation are privileged over the pre-Arthurian institutional power represented by Uther, Ulfius and Merlin.

This eight-day feast plays an essential part in the inscription of Igraine's private identity onto Arthurian public identity more widely, through celebrating it in a traditionally communal way. Malcolm Vale writes that it was 'normal practice in princely and aristocratic households to celebrate the major feasts of the liturgical year (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, but also Michaelmas, Candlemas, All Saints, and so on) in especially lavish and ceremonious style', which Derek Brewer writes in romance have symbolic value as signs that the 'emerging adult' has achieved 'successful passage' in their quest for social integration (28; 40). Igraine's reunion with Arthur sees the successful completion of a hero's passage from boy to king, typical of the romance journey for noble male protagonists. Yet the feast holds additional meaning for Igraine, who emerges from youthful queen to what might be termed a 'second adulthood' at the age of discretion. Both Igraine and Arthur transition from figurative and social spaces of loss to those of health; Igraine in particular does so through the journey from silence to speech.

The date of the eight-day feast celebrating Arthur's reunion with Igraine is not specified, however I propose it yields further meaning through its indirect connection to the feast of Pentecost, the most important of feasts in the *Morte*. Despite Pentecost's importance for Arthur's knights, who return every year to renew their vows, the first description of a feast at Pentecost in the text is anticlimactic. Although Arthur's retrieval of the sword from the stone is supposedly accepted by the public, as mentioned before when he then 'lete crye a grete feste that . . . shold be holdyn at Pentecost after the incoronacion', some of the most powerful kings – Lott, Uriens, Nentres and Carados – refuse to attend or receive his gifts (12). This first Pentecostal feast effectively fails as a celebration of Arthur's right to be king because the primary remaining

witness of his paternity is missing; the eight-day feast in honour of Igraine's return can be seen to rectify and fulfil what the first did not. Pentecost is the most frequently named feast in the *Morte*, but this is the only time in the narrative that a positive feast's duration is specified.³⁷ The eight-day feast's status as the first successful ceremony legitimating Arthur's reign, added to its inordinate length compared to other subsequent feasts, additionally invokes and elevates Igraine's identity in the text as it does each time a Pentecostal feast is held afterwards.

Another, more crucial connection between Igraine's eight-day feast and the *Morte's* Pentecostal feasts can be made. Soon after this final legitimation of Arthur as king, he establishes a formal chivalric fellowship whose members are required to swear to a set of specific commandments every year at Pentecost, which is followed by a feast:

the Kyng stablysshed all the knyghtes and gaff them rychesse and londys – and charged them never to do outerage nothir mourthir, and allwayes to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy, uppon payne of forfiture of their worship and lordship of Kyng Arthure for evirmore; and allwayes to do ladyes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes socour, strengthe hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them, uppon payne of dethe. Also, that no man take no batayles in a wrongfull quarrell, sworne of the Table Rounde, both olde and yonge; and every yere so were they sworne at the hyghe feste of Pentecoste (77).

Never to do 'outerage', is the very first of Arthur's commandments. Although this word can mean 'wrongdoing' or any 'violent deeds' in general, when applied to women the word also means more specifically the crime of 'rape' (*MED*). His equation of 'outerage' and 'mourthir' as crimes links rape to the death of private identity discussed earlier, and the punishment for either is

³⁷ The only other feast that is described as lasting longer, though it does not occur at Pentecost, is the one hosted by Mordred when he steals the throne from Arthur (679). This is said to last 'fifteen' days but in this case the length of the feast undermines his legitimacy since it becomes a travesty of ceremonial celebrations of authority, which Mordred has unlawfully stolen (679).

'forfeiture' of Arthur's 'lordship', i.e. excommunication from the fellowship 'for evirmore', an extreme punishment. Next, at the centre of the set of oaths is the prohibition 'to enforce' women and this time, a word that has multiple meanings is specifically applied to women and can only denote 'rape' specifically (*MED*). In the *Morte*, the punishment for 'enforcing' women is death, the most extreme of punishments for what is implicitly the most extreme of crimes. The third commandment never to engage in 'wrongfull quarrell', does not come with any punishment attached; of Arthur's three injunctions, the prohibition to rape women and the commandments to support their rights are positioned as the most important.

The Pentecostal Oath's clear stipulation that rape should be punished by death is less equivocal than historical shifts over the Middle Ages and changes in the sentences dealt by different law courts in any given period. Most common in twelfth-century canon law were the punishments of 'excommunication, public penance, imprisonment, whipping, money fines, and . . . enslavement, or some combination of these' (Salisbury 'Chaucer's Wife' 81). Secular law, on the other hand, 'defined rape as a violation of a woman against her will and against the peace of the king, making it essentially a crime against the crown punishable by death or mutilation' (Salisbury 'Chaucer's Wife' 81). However, by the late medieval period, the 'gradual restructuring' of legal courts and processes 'by the Normans' had 'profound implications for women' as Saunders explains (*RR* 51). These new legal practices 'eroded' the 'high legal status' and value granted to women in the early medieval Anglo-Saxon codes (Saunders *RR* 51). Marriage became an 'increasingly . . . political institution' rather than an agreement where individual desires might also be considered (Saunders *RR* 51). With this increasingly outward focus on the significance of marriage for the community and the public sphere came a decrease in the emphasis on rape as a crime that deserved the most severe punishments. Devastatingly, 'the Church's concern over sexual violence was limited to rape and abduction of virgins' only by the

end of the Middle Ages (RR 52). The *Morte's* Pentecostal Oath therefore elevates the protection of women and their individual interests – in theory if not always in practice – beyond the level legally held in the fifteenth century when Malory was composing the *Morte*. The author not only positions women's rights and violence against women as primary narrative concerns but does so in a way that must have been noticeable and striking for some contemporary readers.

The commandment 'never to enforce' ladies, damsels and gentlewomen is particularly meaningful in the context of Igraine, since this could mean 'rape, which is the exact nature of the crime committed by Uther (MED). Although Armstrong notes that the annual performance of the Pentecostal Oath is 'an event unique to Malory's text' and 'a compulsion to fulfill these ideals drives the narrative of the *Morte d'Arthur* forward', critics usually attribute the connection between Igraine's rape and Arthur's injunction against its perpetration by his knights to an inconsistency in the text as demonstrated earlier (GCC 1). This inconsistency can be resolved by framing the oaths' relevance in terms of male rather than female identity, as Batt argues: 'in the context of the Oath, and in the rest of the narrative, the preservation of Woman's "wholeness" can serve rather to figure an individual knight's integrity, and the consolidation of the rule of law, than to illuminate individual women's relation to their environment' (806). Nevertheless, just as the discrepancy between the chivalric ideal not to 'enforce' women and the reality for many Arthurian women is obvious to a modern readership, I argue it would also have been visible to medieval audiences. The contrast draws attention to the issue of rape by including it as an event in Arthurian society, making it a more prominent concern than if all Malory's knights had perfectly realised their ideals and made rape a moot issue in their community. To the best of my knowledge, Jesmok is the first and only critic so far to make a causal connection between Igraine's story and the Pentecostal Oath not to 'enforce' women beyond simply observing a hypocritical narrative discrepancy (77).

She argues that because 'outrage' to women 'is *first* done to Igraine . . . Malory uses her words dramatically to interrogate women's condition in the chivalric world' ('Guiding Lights' 38, author's emphasis). I would add that, rather than simply making Igraine the single paradigm of the negative consequences of 'enforcing' women, the narrative does what Jesmok suggests also through the symbolic repetition of this idea, which is referenced every time there is any feast in the *Morte* or violence towards women by men is exhibited.

I propose that every time there is a feast or Pentecostal initiation, Igraine's private identity is indirectly evoked. After all, Kavita Mudan Finn has recently shown in her discussion of queens in a variety of medieval chronicles and romances that contemporary audiences understood the symbolic and inter-referential relationship that female protagonists shared with one another across any given narrative. Finn writes that one representation of a woman 'embeds a reminder' of every figure similar to her depicted afterwards, reminding readers of the former women's traits and actions each time a new female protagonist is portrayed (20). Other critics have consistently emphasised the importance of memory and repetition specifically in the swearing of the Pentecostal Oath in the *Morte*. For example, Elizabeth Archibald confirms: 'the fact that the oath is repeated every year at Pentecost shows that this is no temporary warband, but a permanent society with formal rituals and rules', rules that are resworn and performed for as long as the Arthurian community persists ('Malory's Ideal of Fellowship' 317-8).

The repetition of these rituals imbues the narrative with what Armstrong calls a 'nostalgic' tone (GCC 7). As well as '[s]entimental longing' for a time, 'nostalgia' also denotes the 'regretful memory of a period of the past' and this is a phenomenon seen frequently, specifically in the context of regretting 'outrage' to women (*OED*). Nostalgia in the latter sense is, I suggest, created every time knights fail to uphold the Pentecostal standards in their treatment of women. For example, Balyn beheads the first Lady of the Lake, to whom Arthur is 'much beholdyng', setting in motion a chain of events that lead to

his death (43). Balyn is not as respected a knight as others within the community, such as Lancelot, Gawain and Gareth. However, he is one of the few knights to receive a personal inscription on his tomb written 'with letters of gold' and his sword is later reused by Galahad in the Grail Quest (60, 61). I argue Balyn's inscription references the Lady of the Lake's suffering as much as the knight's, marking the Arthurian landscape with the memory of an example of 'outrage' done to women. Likewise Gwennyver, the leading public figure of female authority in Arthur's court, is 'gretely displeased with Sir Gawayne' for the 'sleyng' of a lady during his quest (70). Gwennyver's

queste of ladyes . . . juged hym for ever whyle he lyved to be with all ladyes and to fyght for hir quarels, and ever that he sholde be curteyse, and never to refuse mercy to hym that askith mercy (70).

The phrase 'fyghte for her quarels' is qualitatively similar to the Pentecostal commandment to 'strengthen hem in hir ryghtes' and the order 'never to refuse mercy to hym that asketh mercy' anticipates 'to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy' (77). Both of these incidents occur before the Pentecostal Oath is instated, and add a collective power to Igraine's words as the first example of violence against women that is arguably referenced whenever evidence exists of the vows' failure. For instance, late in the narrative Elaine 'of Ascolate', who dies of unrequited love for Lancelot, writes a 'letter' explaining the story of her private emotional suffering that is read by Arthur's court (617). As well as passing through the Arthurian landscape in a 'barget' on the river so she is seen across the land by many, Elaine is 'worshypfully' interred in the Arthurian court, inscribing the private identity of a woman in public memory in like manner to Igraine and the first Lady of the Lake (617).³⁸

³⁸ This phenomenon is seen in other extended Arthurian narratives besides Malory's. As Sterling-Hellenbrand argues that, although the lady Sigune in *Parzival* dies pining for her lover, its author 'does not intend to let the audience forget her, as he insistently brings her sorrowing and mournful figure back into the narrative', which means this protagonist's presence hovers 'on the edge of Parzival's consciousness' in death as well as in life by constantly appearing to him in visions he experiences on his quest ('Women on the Edge' 62).

The *Morte's* central chivalric ideology is thematically consistent for romance, which is not necessarily more illuminating about certain themes than other contemporary or generic examples. Indeed, Duby writes that 'how men ought to behave toward women' is one of romance's greatest concerns (219). Nevertheless, I would emphasise that it is through the repetition of the Pentecostal Oath and its commemoration in the Arthurian public sphere that Malory develops his own particular and heightened 'rhetoric for rape as signal of the anti-social' (Batt 806). The sheer length of the *Morte* compared to other Middle English romances is partly what allows it to develop this rhetoric through repetition, since this enables it to be self-referential over narrative time. Time itself is highlighted as an issue, since although Arthur's knights fail on many levels in their chivalric careers, those initiated into Arthur's court and fellowship via the Pentecostal Oath never commit the crime of rape (219). Sir Pellinor has sex with a married woman 'be force' before Arthur's particular conception of chivalry becomes an official institution (65). Pellinor is never punished for this, and his son Torre's later inclusion into the fellowship could be seen to elide the crime by glorifying its positive outcome. Arguably, however, Arthur's institution of the Pentecostal Oath for the first time immediately after Torre becomes one of his knights in a way reminds readers of the negative consequences for Igraine of his own conception through rape. The resonances between Torre and Arthur in fact reinforce, through their very similarity, a criticism of the implications that women are compensated for rape by giving birth to miraculous sons or chivalric prodigies.

It is worth discussing the fact that rape in the *Morte* transcends gender boundaries. Batt astutely remarks that 'although in the *Morte* rape does relate to female integrity, sexual violation is neither the only means of representing woman's wholeness, nor is it an experience unique to women' (803). The existence of a male victim of rape in the *Morte*, Lancelot, offers a second type of 'embedded reminder', to use Finn's term, further reinforces the role of memory in privileging private identity. This complicates the dismissal of rape

in the *Morte* as an issue the narrative suggests only has relevance for male identity. Lancelot is the only male protagonist in Malory who is raped but he is also arguably its most prominent male figure, especially if we agree as Hardyment suggests that he, not Arthur, is the 'true hero' of the *Morte* (24). In an episode where Lancelot is the victim of a bed-trick by Elaine of Corbyn, he is unintentionally faithless to Gwenyver in an exact reversal of the gender roles involved in Igraine's rape. In place of the male magician, Merlin, in this episode a woman named Brusen devises an enchantment to deceive Lancelot so that Elaine may conceive a child by him. Just as Arthur's greatness is promised to Uther by Merlin, Brusen tells Elaine 'that that same nyght sholde be bygotyn Sir Galahad' who is the leader of the Grail Quest'; by implication, Lancelot can be understood as honoured in this way (465). Lancelot is described as being 'glad' in Elaine's arms because he believes he is with Gwenyver (465). However, when he discovers the truth of what has happened his reaction is extreme. He wishes he were dead, exclaiming 'Alas . . . that I have lyved so longe', echoing the connection between *raptus* and death discussed earlier (465). Lancelot threatens to draw his 'swerde' and kill Elaine because he has been so 'shamed' (465). He calls her a 'false traytours' and expresses the feeling that he has been 'betrayed' (465). Lancelot's verbal and emotional reaction to his rape contrasts with Igraine's silence and her observation that she could not 'fyght' to defend herself as Lancelot himself expresses he is capable of doing. Lancelot's words may be used to retroactively substitute Igraine's silence, explicitly challenging the crime of rape that, in its first instance, is expressed through silence and space rather than through words. Lancelot poignantly figures the tensions between public and private inherent in relationships when he says prior to this incident to Arthur: 'love muste only aryse of the harte self, and nat by none constraynte' (617). Arthur agrees, saying that he who is 'bonden . . . lowsith hymselff' (617). The repetition of the word 'self' in their conversation highlights a respect for individual desire. The return to this focus in times of conflict demonstrates

that the issue of rape in the *Morte* is not only useful for the moral education of the courtly community, nor is it an act that impinges only on public identity. It serves rather as an intermittent but significant evidence of the fact that public identity, when overly powerful, is destructive when privileged over private identity.

In summary, public memory and social commemoration both in the imaginative world of the *Morte* as well as in the text's narrative structure appear, perhaps paradoxically, to be integral to an articulation of the impact of rape on the private identity and emotions of protagonists. The narrative, in a variety of ways, invites readers to read retrospectively and re-interpret silences or spaces that might otherwise be assumed to communicate nothing significant. Igraine could be compared to other silent queens of history whose private identities are overridden by public concerns. As Finn observes, literary portrayals of women that emphasise 'paciencē' and suffering echo narratives from a subgenre of literature called the "'narrative of the accused queen' – figures such as Griselda, Constance, and the empress of Rome' (30). However, Igraine's resonance in the *Morte* with both this category of women in medieval literature *and* the more privately empowered figures of medieval eremitic spaces suggests that her portrayal resists categorisation by responding to these very traditional stereotypes of women who are physically and emotionally violated.

Chapter Conclusions

Distinct periods may be seen in Igraine's trajectory that correlate to the spaces in which this protagonist is located: Igraine's first appearance in the text is defined by her private identity and emotions, which are synthesised with the public role she shares with the Duke of Cornwall; then, during Igraine's second marriage the pre-Arthurian community exclusively privileges her

public identity for political reasons, which results in her silence and emotional disempowerment. By contrast, Igraine's silence and removal to the narrative periphery after Uther's death can be likened to eremitic absences of individuals who sought refuge from the community as a way of healing; finally, in Igraine's last appearance her once dichotomised identities are synthesised again when she relates her private pain in public before Arthur and his court. As these oscillations in Igraine's representation as a protagonist demonstrate, silence is meaningful in different ways, depending upon whether it is expressed in centrally or peripherally marginal spaces. When Igraine occupies a central court position she is no more than a marginalised body, whose emotions are pushed to the outer courtly consciousness; upon her return she reverses this spatial dynamic by entering the public sphere from outside, bringing with her and embodying the energies constructive to private identity developed in her eremitic absence.

The location of Igraine's expressions of emotion or political performances in different spaces enables readers to perceive aspects of her private identity previously unappreciated in scholarship are deliberately emphasised by the narrator, who juxtaposes them starkly with her public role. In doing so, he creates a narrative that structurally undermines Igraine's violent treatment in public by pointing sympathetically to her location in and use of privacy as a space of healing. Communal violence in public is unavoidably integral to Igraine's trajectory but she is neither portrayed purely as a victim nor does the text ultimately erase her private pain when representing her return as a healed and empowered individual. As such, the *Morte* provides one example of several medieval texts that Vines observes 'expose how rape can be central to the chivalric process, and perhaps expose it *in order* to criticize or undermine it' (emphases added).³⁹ I would add that peripherally marginal figures perhaps best lend themselves to such a criticism precisely because of their

³⁹ Cited from written material received in personal communications during the period 20 July-15 August 2016, by kind permission of the author.

often unstable and insecure positions in relation to patriarchal chivalric structures.

Most importantly of all, as a potential critic of the Arthurian community, Igraine's undermining presence and resistance in the speech she gives prior to her exit from the text is not portrayed as subversive or dangerous – despite her calumny by key patriarchal figures – but something that is eventually encouraged by and allowed space by the narrator. Given that Igraine's daughters, Morgause and Morgan, are often considered by scholars to conflict with the Arthurian community, this is a vital point to consider. The next two chapters will propose that, though Morgause and Morgan are portrayed very differently from Igraine as well as from each other as protagonists, the seeds of these women's public and private identities can nevertheless be traced back to their mother, as can their different stages of central and/or peripheral marginality. As the next two chapters explore, both Morgause and Morgan differently articulate the complexity of negotiating the Arthurian community as marginal individuals because the narrator similarly takes care to distinguish between their public and private expressions of identity and emotion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RELATIVITY OF SPACE AND PLACE: MORGAUSE'S TRANSITIONS BETWEEN ORKNEY AND CARLYON

Removing Morgause from Communal Discourse

Morgause represents one of the most centrally marginal queens as Igraine's first daughter, Arthur's oldest sister, and the wife of King Lott, who is Arthur's primary and most powerful adversary in the early portions of the *Morte*. This position is reflected simply – yet starkly – in the fact that her name is never mentioned once in the *Morte* without being accompanied by the titles 'sister', 'mother', 'queen' or the epithet 'of Orkney', which all pertain to her public status, family and courtly position. The sense that Morgause's identity is predominantly, if not exclusively, public is largely communicated by the actions and discourse of her three oldest sons by Lott: Gawain, Aggravaine and Gaheris.⁴⁰ Not only do these members of the imagined Arthurian community privilege her public role, but traditionally in scholarship Morgause's seeming inseparability from her sons has remained a central focus in critical discussion. Thus Morgause is centrally marginal both within and without Malory's text. This chapter offers a revised reading of Morgause with the aim of illuminating rarely-examined episodes and moments in the text that shed light on her representation by Malory, in which she is also peripherally marginal. The most important aspect of this protagonist's portrayal is the revelation that matriarchal authority can be manifested in different ways.

A summary of Morgause's trajectory in the *Morte* demonstrates, as in Igraine's case, how a focus primarily on the Arthurian community frames her

⁴⁰ Morgause's son by Arthur, Mordred, is also added to this group after her death, as this chapter notes in more detail in 'Useful Mother'.

identity as a primarily public construction. Morgause is first introduced to the narrative when her marriage to Lott is described (5). This union is organised by Uther and serves a political purpose in the imagined world of the text, as Morgause's marriage temporarily achieves the integration of 'Lowthean and of Orkenay' into England's territories (5). Morgause bears four sons by Lott: 'Gawayne, Gaheris, Aggravayne, and Gareth', who successively join Arthur's court as Knights of the Round Table and occupy prominent, influential positions within the community (30). As mentioned in the previous chapter, however, Morgause's connection to Arthur, like Igraine's, is lost when Uther dies (7). As a consequence, when Morgause arrives in Arthur's court on a state visit, she is unaware the king is her brother and enters into a relationship with him (30). Their union results in the conception of Mordred, who is described by Merlin as a product of 'fowle' incest (32). Though Mordred joins Arthur's fellowship like his older brothers, Merlin predicts he will 'destroy' his father 'and all the knyghtes' in the Arthurian community (32). This prophecy is eventually fulfilled and once Arthur dies the narrative is swiftly brought to its conclusion (686-98). Morgause does not live long enough to witness the damage done by her fifth and youngest son because she is killed much earlier by Gaheris for engaging in a relationship with one of Arthur's knights, Lamerok. Gaheris beheads Morgause because he believes Lamerok's father killed his own (Lott) and, so in his eyes, Morgause's relationship with Lamerok brings 'shame' to the royal family and court of Orkney (369).

The marked emphasis on Morgause's public identity within the *Morte's* imaginative world is continued outside of the text in medievalist Arthurian scholarship. Historically, the issue of 'incest' has dominated discussions of Morgause, since she gives birth to Arthur's future murderer and the destroyer of his fellowship.⁴¹ The 'adultery' of Morgause's relationship with Arthur and

⁴¹ For references to Morgause in connection with the 'incest' or 'incestuous' relationship with Arthur, see (in chronological order): Moorman 'Courtly Love in Malory' (175); Mahoney (648); Cochran (49); Hoffman 'The Ogre and The Virgin: Varieties of Sexual Experience in Malory's *Morte Darthur*' (19); Greene (58); Forker (13); Adderley (3); Fries 'Commentary' (92); Goodrich

her extra-marital affair with Lamerok is the next most frequently discussed issue.⁴² Incest and adultery, whether addressed together or separately by scholars, are considered to represent overwhelmingly problematic features of Morgause's portrayal as a protagonist, because these issues are judged by the public, communal values encapsulated by the institution of marriage, with which they inevitably clash. Incest was and is seen to constitute an act of social aberrance. As such, Morgause is generally considered, as Armstrong puts it, 'pivotal to an understanding of the rise and fall of Arthur's kingdom' because her 'illicit relationship' with Arthur has a directly 'negative impact' on the 'chivalric community' ('Malory's Morgause 150). Michael W. Anderson agrees with Armstrong, including Morgause's incest with Arthur in his discussion of a group of important 'occluded truths' that 'have major repercussions for Arthurian society' (53). Armstrong specifies that in Morgause's case these repercussions entail the attempted recreation of the 'sin' of incest – when Mordred tries to force Gwenyver to marry him in Arthur's absence – and the 'final battle at Salisbury Plain, in which Arthur and his nephew/son mortally wound one another' (GCC 49). However, in respecting the narrator's own attitude to his protagonists, the notion that Morgause is responsible for the incest and its consequences is revealed to be spurious when Malory unambiguously exonerates Morgause by stating: 'that caused Sir Aggravayne' (645). Wyatt agrees, confirming that 'Malory gives no judgement on her actions, directly or through any of the other characters, and certainly removes any suggestion that she may have wittingly committed incest' (forthcoming).

'The Erotic Merlin' (98, 100); Morse (50); Wilson-Okamura (25); Archibald *IMI* (203, 132); Nelson (268); Kennedy 'The Idea of Providence' (8); Armstrong 'Malory's Morgause' (150); Huber ('Morgause'), Armstrong *GCC* (24); Cherewatuk 'Pledging Troth' (37); Larrington *KAE* (33); Anderson (53); Lexton (193).

⁴² For references to, or discussions about, adultery in Morgause's representation by Malory, see (in chronological order): Lumiansky (91), Moorman 'Courtly Love' (175); Silver (699); Morse (50); Wilson-Okamura (25); Adderley (3); Kennedy 'Adultery' (67, 71); Norris 'The Tragedy of Balin' (63); Armstrong, 'Malory's Morgause' (150); Kennedy 'The Idea of Providence' (8); Huber ('Morgause'); Armstrong *GCC* (24, 28); Larrington *KAE* (130); Jesmok 'Guiding Lights' (36).

'Morgause's role as mother of the enemy' does not 'necessarily' depict her in a 'negative light' (Wyatt forthcoming). In addition, Wyatt observes that Malory's portrayal of adultery, not just in Morgause's case but in his other depictions of extra-marital couples in the *Morte*, is 'anomalous' in contemporary literary and historical contexts, since he has an unusually 'sympathetic attitude towards adulterous lovers' (forthcoming). Notably, Malory 'never uses the term "adulterer" or any Middle English equivalent to refer to Guinevere and Lancelot's or Isolde and Tristram's relationship: they are simply "lovers"' (Wyatt forthcoming).

Due to the prevalence of such issues in critical debate about Morgause, most medievalists have only discussed the protagonist herself in passing and there are few studies that suggest her identity has any meaning or manifestation outside of the public sphere. Morgause's status as an individual is almost always of secondary focus, since this protagonist is repeatedly discussed only in connection with her sons, husband, brother or sister.⁴³ Ruth Morse argues that Morgause's primary significance as a protagonist lies in her procreation of a 'bastard son', which means 'she becomes the threatening matrilineal claimant to Arthur's throne, an agent of rebellion and disruption' (50). Armstrong agrees, in an analysis of Morgause that is the most in-depth and recent but also offers the most critical reading of Morgause's expressions of identity and power. Armstrong exaggerates the degree to which acts of incest and adultery are considered issues of providential concern by the Arthurian community in the *Morte* itself. Her reading also distorts views of Malory's

⁴³ For example, Laura K. Bedwell references Morgause in the context of her discussion of Arthur's performance of kingship when he does not punish Gaheris more severely for murdering his mother and merely banishes him from the community temporarily (11). In addition to this primary focus on male protagonists, Bedwell considers only the private identity and emotions of 'jealousy' of Gaheris and his brothers' feelings regarding Lamerok's relationship with their mother, rather than the emotions of Morgause herself, which are described in the text (14). When Morgause is more rarely considered outside of this patriarchal context, she is still interpreted in the light of other protagonists. Larrington, for instance, states that Morgause lacks 'the magical skills of her sister' in medieval texts and is less powerful by comparison, whilst Jesmok believes Malory's Morgause does not always make 'the correct moral decisions' like her mother (KAE 122).

representation of Morgause by over-emphasising the function of this protagonist's adultery within the community, as exemplified by the following excerpt:

When viewed through the lens of Morgause, we see that the idealized patriarchal order of the chivalric community is undone by its refusal to recognize that the exchange of women on which its structure depends may be threatened by those very objects of transaction, should they resist their particular identity construction as commodities to be exchanged . . . While critics have long rightly looked to Arthur's incestuous and adulterous relationship with Morgause as the source of one of the destructive forces that will cause the collapse of the Arthurian community, their focus – on Arthur's sin – has been entirely wrong. The chivalric social order is not primarily damaged by the actions of the king in begetting the traitorous Mordred. It is not even Mordred, villainous as he is, who is fully to blame: Morgause's behavior is a much more important force in the undoing of the chivalric community . . . [because] Morgause is an *active* player in the adultery – she is not seduced, or deceived as Igrayne is. Rather, she *agrees* to commit the sin of adultery. It is her agreement, her active role in the exchange of her body, that threatens the patriarchal social order of Arthur's kingdom (GCC 49-52, original emphases)

Critics oscillate between magnifying aspects of Morgause's public identity in this way and radically downgrading her to a mere narrative device or element of plot. As an example of the latter, Archibald summarily dismisses Morgause, asserting that 'Mordred's mother plays . . . a small part in the story' (*Incest and the Medieval Imagination* 211). She considers it merely part of the natural narrative course that, since 'Arthur must be the hero, and Mordred the villain', Morgause necessarily 'disappears from the story early on, reappearing only to come to a bad end when her sons murder first her and then her young lover' (*IMI* 133 n.62). In either case, Morgause's private identity is lost amongst the nexus of public concerns promoted by scholars, who focus on the Arthurian community over the individuals contained within it.

In contrast to previous scholarly approaches this chapter argues that Morgause's private identity and emotions in fact feature strongly in certain

moments—albeit briefly, as regards the narrative space allotted to their description. In order to foreground this position, I begin by re-evaluating the commonly discussed episodes of Morgause’s incest and adultery with Arthur and approach them with a view to excavating signs of her private identity from their purely public appearance on a surface level of the text. Other scenes in which Morgause can be seen to act and speak forcefully, which have gone virtually unnoticed in scholarship, are then considered. A second key way in which the present reading differs from previous analyses is in its argument that Morgause does not offer a single or stable portrait of queenship. Rather, I suggest that her movement between the two court centres of Orkney and Carlyon illustrates how the different conditions of these spaces are responsible for her manifestation of alternating identities and authorities in each.

The two court centres in this chapter’s title are named ‘Orkney’ and ‘Carlyon’ because, although Lott is described as king of Lothian *and* Orkney, ‘of Orkeney’ is used exclusively as Morgause’s geographical epithet and the only other court in which she appears in the text is Carlyon (29).⁴⁴ As the Queen of Orkney, Morgause is centrally marginal; her identity is publicly constituted according to the traditional roles of wife, mother and queen in this space and in the eyes of protagonists native to it. Outside of Orkney, Morgause acts in the empowered manner of other peripherally marginal figures in the *Morte* as well as in the genre of romance more broadly by asserting her private identity in the capacity of a sister and lover. Consistent with the *Morte*’s spatial delineation of identity, Morgause’s public and private identities are developed

⁴⁴ Every time Morgause’s public status as a queen is invoked it is invariable tied to her regional governance ‘of Orkeney’, as demonstrated by the references on pp. 29, 210, 211, 215, 223, 294, 295 and 368. Also, whilst Arthur has many courts across English, Scottish and Welsh territories, including ‘the cyté of Carlyon’, ‘London’, ‘Camelot’, ‘Cardolle’, ‘Kynkekenadoune’ and ‘Cardyeff’, of these Arthur receives Morgause only at Carlyon on two different occasions (8, 63, 79, 79, 177, 297). These occasions occur in the text firstly when Morgause comes to Arthur’s court and engages in a relationship with him, and secondly when she returns to Arthur much later, in search of her youngest son, Gareth (29, 210).

differently depending upon the courtly centre she acts within at any given time: her own, or Arthur's.

In order to compare and contrast Morgause's transitions between Orkney and Carlyon, this chapter is separated into four subsections entitled 'Dutiful Daughter', '(Dis)Obedient Wife', 'Courtly Matriarch(s)' and 'Useful Mother'. The inspiration for these titles comes from Duby's categorisation of womanhood in his seminal study of marriage in medieval France from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest* (1983).⁴⁵ These publicly conceived categories, which Duby argues provide the foundation for marital models in European society long afterwards, he originally terms: *pia filia*, *morigera conjunx*, *domina clemens* and *utilis mater* (234). Duby employs these categories in order to clarify the different functions a woman had within her family, writing she:

was all her life subject to a man: father, husband, brother-in-law – whoever ruled over the house where she lived. Until she married she was a dutiful daughter [*pia*]; she accepted the husband chosen for her. Her destiny being that of a wife, she then became what all wives should be: meek, obedient, *morigera*. But she was also a *domina*, or a mistress of a household, endowed with considerable power, for her husband had come to live in her house, the house of her ancestors, and it was from her that he derived the greater part of his power . . . [as] mother she had to be *utilis*. "Useful" to whom? To other men, to her own sons (234, original emphases).

Writing a decade later on Arthurian chronicle sources of the twelfth- to thirteenth-centuries, Martin B. Shichtman and Laurie A. Finke agree that these categories strongly defined aristocratic women's lives in particular because their 'sexuality had to be strictly controlled in order to assure the legitimacy of any heir. An aristocratic woman had to be a virgin upon marriage and after marriage could have no sexual partners except her husband' (23). The most

⁴⁵ In this thesis, I refer to the translated edition of Duby's work in English, which was published after its original publication in French as *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre: le mariage dans la France féodale* (Paris: Hachette, 1981).

recent and comprehensive study on such issues is *Queenship in Medieval Europe* by Theresa Earenfight (2013), which surveys queens and their power across an immense period of time, c.300-1600. Earenfight demonstrates that, despite shifts in royal female agency and involvement in monarchical decisions over the centuries, one of the queen's functions that remained consistent was her role in 'legitimizing the dynasty through marriage and children' (187). In other words, for the medieval public the queen's function within the community was of paramount importance and was defined by and through the figures of male authority in her life.

In structuring the present discussion into four discrete categories of femininity, it must be noted that I reference such traditional markers not because the *Morte* necessarily represents her exclusively in the light of these public roles. Instead, they are simply designed to highlight the tensions between public and private constructions of identity created by Morgause's unstable inhabitation of them, an instability that arguably derives from her transitions between Orkney and Carlyon. For, like her mother Igraine, Morgause occupies positions of both central and peripheral marginality. However, unlike Igraine, the order of Morgause's centrally or peripherally marginal positions in her trajectory is reversed; her private identity is most empowered in the second and third sections of narrative in which she appears, whilst public constructions of her identity disempower her in the first and last scenes. The subtitles chosen for this chapter are designed to reflect both the confluence and instability of Morgause's public and private identities, invoking as well as interrogating the public categories of daughter, wife, sister and mother that are made so inseparable—both from her trajectory in the *Morte* and discussions of this protagonist in Arthurian scholarship. Though medieval queens' identities were unavoidably public, as Earenfight points out, medieval audiences nevertheless possessed an awareness that there were at least 'three', not just one, 'spheres of a queen's life—*self*, family and subjects' (199, emphasis added). Earenfight cites Christine de Pizan's letter of 1405 to

Isabeau of Bavaria, wife of Charles VI of France, as an example, in which Pizan 'appeals to the queen's emotions' as well as to her 'sense of justice and charity' in an encouragement to intercede during the king's conflict with the Duke of Burgundy (199). This demonstrates that medieval queens' individual perspective and abilities were recognised by audiences as potential assets in the fulfilment of public, communal roles or responsibilities. Since the latter have been thoroughly considered by scholars up to now, it is the 'self', or private identity, of Morgause that this chapter seeks to illuminate.

'Dutiful Daughter' considers Morgause's first appearances in the *Morte*. There, her age and rank within Igraine's family as the oldest daughter establish her public role to be of primary importance for the pre-Arthurian and Orkney communities. These appearances include scenes in which she is wife, 'wedded' to Lott, mother of 'foure sonnes', and widow at Lott's 'enterement' (5, 30, 51). '(Dis)Obedient Wife' suggests alternative interpretations of the 'love' between Morgause and Arthur, which reveal aspects of Morgause's emotion and identity beyond the thoroughly-discussed issues of incest and adultery. This part of the chapter additionally considers Morgause's involvement in giving Mordred to Arthur for the 'May Day' massacre of children, which is organised to help avoid the deaths predicted by Merlin (29, 39). 'Courtly Matriarch(s)' examines Morgause's appearance at Arthur's court in search of her son Gareth. In certain respects, her interaction echoes Arthur's support of the defence Igraine offers to the court when countering Ulfius. In others, it introduces a competitive element to Morgause's expression of identity, since she speaks as a ruler of another court in a manner that publicly shames Arthur due to her implied critical comparison of their values (210-11). Morgause's private perspective on motherhood and her expression of maternal emotions synthesises with her public commentary on rulership and political courtly etiquette in a way that articulates the validity of individual, rather than communal, vision. Finally, 'Useful Mother' argues for a re-evaluation of the dynamic between Morgause and her three oldest sons,

highlighting the public standards they embody—which result in her beheading—in contrast to those aspects of private identity suggested by her interactions with Arthur, her youngest son, Gareth, and Lamerok (368-9).

Dutiful Daughter

Morgause is, in some respects, portrayed as inheriting and fulfilling the conventional public responsibilities of public medieval womanhood as a daughter who appropriately matures into a wife, mother and queen. This part of the chapter therefore considers the relevance of Morgause's age, parentage and the type of marriage she forms, to her centrality in the political careers of her three oldest sons, Gawain, Aggravaine and Gaheris.

Morgause is the oldest of Igraine's three daughters. Pérez notes that in this respect Malory is faithful to the version seen in the Vulgate *Merlin* portion of the *Lancelot-Grail*, where Morgause first appears as 'the eldest of . . . Igerne's five daughters, making her Morgan's older sister' (186). In the *Morte*, 'Morgawse', 'Elayne' and 'Morgan', are mentioned together after Igraine; Morgan is specified as the 'thyrd syster', which unambiguously presents all three as the daughters of Igraine in Malory's version as well:

Kynge Lott of Lowthean and of Orkenay thenne wedded Margawse that was Gaweyns moder, and Kynge Nentres of the land of Garlot wedded Elayne. Al this was done at the request of Kynge Uther. And the thyrd syster, Morgan le Fey, was put to scole in a nonnery . . . and after she was wedded to Kynge Uryens of the lond of Gore (5-6).

Shepherd differently notes in his edition that 'Margeuse is sister to Igrayne' (5 n.7). However, the descriptions and language in the *Morte* elsewhere do not support the idea that Igraine has three sisters in all other cases where Morgause is referenced. Malory specifies later on that she is 'syster on the

modirs syde' and 'sister' is a term applied by Arthur himself, as well as other protagonists, at least fourteen times (30).⁴⁶ Gawain, Aggravaine, Gaheris and Gareth should be, by Shepherd's formulation, Arthur's cousins and not his 'nevewys', which they are titled at least seventeen times.⁴⁷ Morgause's position as Arthur's sister is additionally communicated through the titles of 'sistirs son' or 'syster-sonnes', which are used by Arthur at least seven times in lieu of, or in addition to, the term 'nephew'; Shepherd confirms elsewhere this means 'nephews' rather than 'cousins' (99).⁴⁸ As readers of Malory know, the middle daughter, Elayne, does not feature again in his text and her disappearance serves to highlight the contrast between Morgause's and Morgan's expressions of identity as well as their age.

Morgause's status as the oldest daughter of Igraine is important. Just as the oldest sons of families legally inherited first, so too does Morgause primarily inherit the public half of her mother's identity and the greatest political responsibilities, as this chapter demonstrates. This corresponds with Anne Marie Rasmussen's observation that in medieval German literature, the 'goal of the mother's teaching is for the daughter to adopt and fulfill her mother's teachings, in other words, for the daughter to replicate her mother' ('ez ist ir g'artet von mir' 44). Most pertinent to the present study of Morgause is Rasmussen's statement that the 'mother/daughter relation is set up to act out a concept of femininity that guarantees continuity at the expense of distinct identities', which is indicated symbolically by the simultaneous marriage of Morgause to Lott and Igraine to Uther ('ez ist ir g'artet von mir' 44).

Uther's 'concept of femininity', as Rasmussen puts it, privileges public over private identity. By marrying Igraine, Uther thereby replaces the Duke of Cornwall and becomes Morgause's legal father, which means that the issue of

⁴⁶ Arthur calls Morgause his 'sister' on pp. 211 and 395; their sibling relation is mentioned by other protagonists on pp. 30, 32, 37, 51, 69, 195, 204, 369 and 679.

⁴⁷ For uses of the term 'nephew', see pp. 63, 69, 223, 224, 278, 328, 411, 500, 579, 623, 677, 681 and 683.

⁴⁸ For uses of 'sister-son' see pp. 63, 99, 104, 329, 647, 681 and 683.

this protagonist's paternity is more complex than has previously been recognised. Scholars have occasionally discussed how in Morgause's different literary incarnations 'she is sometimes the daughter of Uther, elsewhere daughter of the Duke of Cornwall'. However, they have not extrapolated further significance from the fact that Malory ambiguously portrays both as Morgause's father in different ways in the *Morte* (Larrington KAE 122). Morse, Archibald, Armstrong and Pérez all agree that Morgause is Arthur's 'half-sister' by Igraine's first husband, a development Archibald clarifies occurred at least as early as the 'thirteenth-century' and would have been an established element of Arthurian myth by the time Malory composed the *Morte* (50; GCC 28; IMI 132; 186). In the context of this thesis's attendance to questions of identity location in both geographical and social senses, I suggest noting the presence of not one but two fathers in this family helps understand the direction of Morgause's trajectory, which, overall, prioritises and concludes with her central marginality. That Morgause is married 'at the request of Kyng Uther' means she transitions from a peripherally marginal position to a centrally marginal one, when Uther effectively adopts the Duke of Cornwall's authority over his daughter and arranges a marriage as her acting father in public (5). The shift in Morgause's paternity indicates her inheritance of the marginal-to-central movement across social and geographical space first embodied in Igraine's rape and marriage to Uther, discussed in the previous chapter. I therefore agree with Armstrong's observation that the proliferation of marriages – those of Igraine, Morgause, Elayne and Morgan to Uther, Lott, Nentres and Uriens respectively – points 'to the importance of such unions in affirming social bonds' insofar as their condition as public performances of identity are concerned (GCC 48). However, her conclusion that 'the occurrence of these other marriages at the same time as Uther and Igrayne's sanctions the king's actions' and that the narrative 'supports and reinforces' the validity of these public performances is less secure (48). The fact that these women are 'silently' placed in central positions, which privilege patriarchal and public

authority, undermines—by the fact of their very silence—any imagined constructive value of such marriages when their shared resonances across the text and this family are considered (Armstrong GCC 48). This is especially evident when considering the negative implications inherent in the silence of Igraine, who ‘mourned pryvely’ moments before in the text, in addition to the later privileging of her private identity in the narrative (5). Subtle indications of concealed emotion critically draw attention to the narrative’s one-sided public portrayal of events. The emotion implicit in Igraine’s silence and the recent death of her husband (and Morgause’s father) imbues the scene of Morgause’s marriage with a funereal rather than a celebratory atmosphere. This is reflected in the recurrent references to deaths that have occurred in the pre-Arthurian community around the same time. For instance, the reader’s experience of Morgause’s nuptials is overshadowed by the very recent memory of the ‘dede’ Duke of Cornwall and the deaths of other ‘moche people’, who have been ‘slayne’ during Uther’s pursuit of Igraine, deaths that have directly led to these particular marriages’ creation as a solution to such communal hardship (4-5). These marriages are also followed afterwards by many more deaths caused by ‘enemyes’ that ‘slewe many . . . peple’ (4-6).

Evidently, from its very inception, the *Morte* implies marriages made for political reasons of state represent only the public identity of the protagonists involved and are often unsuccessful even in this respect. Just as the ‘joye’ experienced by the barons at Igraine’s wedding to Uther is not indicated as being reflected by Igraine as an individual, Morgause is also silent and emotionally expressionless in public when married to Lott for the benefit of both their communities (5). Not only do politically beneficial marriages imply a lack of synchrony in private, but they consistently indicate a decided lack of emotional fulfilment in comparison to the many extra-marital relationships Malory depicts elsewhere. Wyatt supports this notion, arguing:

Malory’s comment that the weddings took place at Uther’s command emphasises the absence of love from these unions, which

equates Morgause with Guinevere and Isode to some extent; none of these queens voice any suggestions of affection towards their husbands. Malory consistently equates troubled marriages with such an absence of emotion, and this perhaps prepares the reader for Morgause's affairs (forthcoming).

In other cases, too, the author takes great care to elaborate the emotional circumstances of relationships that are made for private reasons. For example, the contract between Morgause's youngest son Gareth and his future wife 'Lyonesse' is made 'prevyly' and is described in both emotionally and physically effusive terms (206). Lyonesse promises him 'sertaynly to love hym and none other dayes of hir lyff' and they 'brente bothe in hote love' so much 'that they were acorded to abate their lustys secretly' (206). The phrase 'eythir made grete joy of other' is common in the *Morte*, used here as well as many times elsewhere to indicate private emotion and consent, whether or not the relationship is sanctioned in public (206). Indeed, almost the same words are used to describe Morgause's reaction to seeing Lamerok in private when 'she made of hym passynge grete joy, and he of her agayne, for ayther lovid other passynge sore' (368). The 'either/other' formula indicates the mutual and shared expression of emotion, as does the word 'betwyxe', which is used here and in a scene between King Melyodas and his wife Elizabeth, the parents of Tristram, who share 'grete joy betwyxte hem' and grieve each other's loss (228).

The emotional depth to these relationships points to the consistently superficial condition of matches represented exclusively in public spaces. The prioritisation of political benefit perceptibly gained by such marriages is additionally undermined by their frequent failure to deliver their public promise. It is true that, theoretically, Morgause dutifully contributes to the strengthening of public patriarchal authority by marrying Lott and adding the court of Orkeney as an ally to Carlyon, as well as Arthur's many other courts. However, the 'social bonds' Armstrong argues are created by Morgause's obedience and public performance of feminine duty are not overly successful

in practice (GCC 48). Despite the reasons for Morgause's marriage to Lott, after Uther's death the public is unaware of her status as Arthur's sibling and the adolescent king is forced to win the 'obeissaunce' of 'Scotland' himself without relying on the connections Morgause's marriage was designed to provide (11). Once this ally is supposedly established, Lott is in fact the very first protagonist to undermine Arthur at his initial attempt to hold an 'incoronacion' (11). Lott attends the 'feeste' with an extensive public force of 'fyve hondred knyghtes' who, along with 'Kynge Uryens of Gore, with four hondred knyghtes' and 'Kynge Nayntres of Garloth, with seven hondred knyghtes' refuse to 'receyve' the 'presentes' sent to them by Arthur (11-12). The public purpose of the marriages of Morgause, Elayne and Morgan to these kings is evidently unfulfilled, which is apparent in the repetition of references to these kings in connection with each other as Arthur's antagonistic triad. Lott in particular is publicly vocal in his rejection of Arthur by undermining the chief witness to his paternity and their marital connection, Merlin, calling him a 'wytche' and a 'dreme-reader' (13). Arthur and Lott encounter each other more directly in Lott's 'lodgyng' in private, where 'Kynge Lot smote doune Kynge Arthur' (13). Although Lott is regained as a public ally and out of 'twelve kynges' is buried the best, or 'passynge rychely', the repeated displays of antagonism for which he is responsible before his death illustrate the discrepancy between communal expectations and the practice of individuals (51).⁴⁹

Lott's behaviour undermines the extent to which Morgause's public performances of obedience as his wife in public are believable for readers. Nominally, Morgause's public function as Lott's wife is one of the most prevalent in the courtly community's consciousness. The titles 'wyff', 'quene',

⁴⁹ The re-establishment of this alliance is never explicitly described, but is nevertheless implicitly suggested in two moments. The first is when Arthur 'put mo kyngis in all the marchis off Walis and Scotlonde with many good men of armys . . . and ever alyed hem with myghty kynges and dukis' (29). The second is when the eight-day feast following Igraine's defence is held (33).

and 'moder of 'Lowthean and Orkenay' all situate Morgause as a central queen in this court; her centrality is then duly evoked every time these public positions are mentioned, which together occur at least thirty six times.⁵⁰ Notably, Morgause's name is never once mentioned separately from these public titles. Nevertheless, all references to Morgause as 'quene' occur after Lott's death, which coincide both with her strong position in relation to Arthur when in Carlyon and the elaboration of her love for Lamerok, despite the fact that she is beheaded for this affair.

In summary, the first part of this chapter has illustrated how Morgause is initially introduced to the text as a dutiful daughter whose identity is constructed as primarily public and predicated on her position in relation to a variety of patriarchal figures: as the adopted daughter of Uther, the sister of Arthur, the wife of Lott, the mother of Gawain, Aggravaine, Gaheris and Gareth, and queen of their territories. Family relationships and public duty are commensurate for this side of Morgause's identity, which she fulfils by attending communal events like weddings and funerals. However, whilst critics such as Mark Lambert and Dhira Mahoney see Morgause's 'lineage' as the 'central fact about her' and the only way in which her 'identity is defined', this chapter demonstrates how these concerns represent only one side of her story (21; 648). In contrast to the family relationships produced by Morgause's marriage to Lott, the few but significant bonds she develops outside of Orkney, namely with Arthur and Lamerok, display an altogether different form of identity expressed in peripheral and private spaces.

⁵⁰ For references to Morgause as Lott's 'wyff' see pp. 29, 30, 39 and 51; for references to Morgause as 'Quene' and/or 'of Orkenay' see pp. 29, 210, 211, 215, 223, 224, 294, 295 and 368; and for references to Morgause as the 'moder' of Gawain, Aggravaine, Gaheris and Gareth, see pp. 30, 51, 99, 104, 210, 329, 647, 681 and 683.

(Dis)Obedient Wife

Though Morgause is a centrally marginal queen in her own court, she is a peripherally marginal figure in Arthur's. This spatial discrepancy demonstrates the relativity of marginality as a space or position. I argue that Morgause's transitions between Orkney and Carlyon can explain her oscillation between disempowerment and empowerment in these places respectively, as well as the slippage between her performances of 'obedience' and 'disobedience'. The contingency of Morgause's private empowerment on her situation in peripheral spaces and her disempowerment in Orkney is illustrated by two episodes: one in which she engages in a month-long affair with Arthur; and the moment when she sends her youngest child to be included in Arthur's May-Day massacre of courtly newborns (30, 39).

Morgause's peripherally marginal position in relation to Arthur is highlighted just prior to her first appearance in Carlyon when several geographical territories are established in a manner that figures different patriarchal courts as distinct and central in unique ways from Arthur's. First, after the battles in which Arthur fights to secure his kingship are concluded, his allies Ban and Bors:

toke *there* leve to go into *hir owne* contreyes, for Kynge Claudas dud grete destruction on *their* londis. Than seyde Arthure, 'I woll go with you.' 'Nay,' seyde the kyngis, '*ye* shall nat at thys tyme, for *ye* have much to do yet in *thys* londe. Therefore *we* woll *departe*. With the grete goodis that *we* have gotyn in *this* londe by *youre* gyfftis *we* shall wage good knyghtes and withstonde the Kynge Claudas hys malice, for, by the grace of God, and *we* have nede, *we* woll *sende to you* for succour; and *ye* have nede, *sende for us*, and *we* woll nat tarry, by the feythe of *oure* bodyes' (28-29, emphases added).

Malory states these kings are from 'Benwic' and 'Gaule', 'that is, Fraunce' (14). In the above passage, concepts of 'here' versus 'there' are underscored by the juxtaposition of 'ye' and 'we', or 'youre' and 'oure', which spatially

distinguishes between their bodies, courts and identities as near to or far from—central or peripheral to—Arthur’s primary courtly spheres of authority. Secondly, another ‘eleven’ of Arthur’s kings ‘returned unto . . . Kyng Uriens londe’ (29). Uriens is ‘of the londe of Gore’, which Christopher W. Bruce identifies as a ‘wild northern kingdom’ bordering ‘on North Wales or Scotland’ in works whose authors adopt the Arthurian geography imagined by Chrétien de Troyes (229). The eleven kings are situated in these externally marginal locations, as the narrator specifies that they ‘kepe all the marchis of Cornuwayle, of Walis, and of the Northe’ in Arthur’s absence (29). Thirdly, these allies obsessively identify and guard the borders of these lands: they set ‘foure thousand men of armys to wacche bothe watir and the londe’ of ‘Nauntis of Bretayne’, in France, then ‘fortefye all the fortresse in the marchys of Cornuwayle’ and finally ‘put mo kyngis in all the marchis off Walis and Scotlonde’ (29).

The ‘Northe’ and ‘Scotland’ include Morgause’s central residence of ‘Orkney’, from which location she travels to Carlyon (29). Consistent with Malory’s delineations of space and power, Morgause enters the court as a peripherally marginal figure. This not only enables but foreshadows her performance of private identity—like that of Igraine’s when she speaks in court after her eremitic imitation. Moreover, the italicised sections below highlight how the narrative indicates the presence of Morgause’s private motivations; these undermine the public image of her projected within the courtly community up to this point:

thydir com . . . Kyng Lottis wyff of Orkeney in maner of a message, but she was sente thydir to aspye the courte of Kyng Arthure, and she com rychely beseyne with hir foure sonnes, Gawayne, Gaheris, Aggravayne, and Gareth, with many other knyghtes and ladyes, for she was a passynge fayre lady. Wherefore the Kyng caste grete love unto hir and desired to ly by her. And so they were agreed, and he begate uppon hir Sir Mordred. And she was syster on the modirs syde, Igrayne, unto Arthure. So there she rested hir a monthe, and at the laste she departed. Than the Kyng dremed a mervaylous dreme

whereof he was sore adrad. But all thys tyme Kynge Arthure knew
nat that Kynge Lottis wyff was his sister' (29-30).

Ostensibly, a traditional wifely obedience and passivity can be inferred from Morgause's actions, since as 'she was sente thydir to aspye the courte of Kynge Arthur', so she 'thydir com'. Morgause's public signifiers of identity are overtly displayed, as she 'com rychely beseyne . . . with many other knyghtes and ladyes' as befits a queen of her status. What is more, at the forefront of this entourage is her progeny, indication of a productive marriage with Lott. The presence of Morgause's sons represents physical proof of her marital obedience and the fulfilment of her duty as a wife. Moreover, Morgause's directive to spy on the 'court' of Arthur highlights the original political goal to her journey as conceived by her husband.

In spite of these visual and narrative elements, the introductory qualifier that Morgause comes 'in *maner* of a message' undermines the authenticity of her public performance as perceived by the community. 'Manner' is a word that connotes 'outward behavior', or the 'common . . . practice . . . of a group' (*MED*). As a 'kind' or 'style' of communal behaviour, Morgause's manner indicates that her public performance is merely a facade (*MED*). Although, according to Lott, her underlying intention is to 'aspye', the narrative's distinction between overt and covert motivations opens up the text to further scrutiny of her private identity. Indeed, though Lott has sent his wife on an errand that has political implications for himself, Morgause's distance from her husband creates a space in which emotion, namely love, may be expressed. Indeed, when Arthur 'caste grete love unto hir', not only does Morgause reciprocate, as indicated by the fact that she 'agreed', but she willingly stays a whole 'monthe' in comparison to the Post-Vulgate version, where she is more passively 'kept' by Arthur for two (30; Asher 3). Malory's portrayal of their relationship thus implies more emotional depth as well as a mutual condition, despite the fact that it may not quite exemplify the 'true love' of long-term partners in the *Morte* as Wyatt notes (30; forthcoming). Moreover, a private

reluctance to leave is implied by the description of Morgause's departure from Arthur as occurring 'at the laste', since 'laste' denotes 'finally' or 'to the fullest extent' (*MED*). Morgause is therefore a disobedient wife in private, since seducing the individual king whose court she was sent to spy upon was not part of her directive by Lott.

Previously, critics have either compared this union with the rape of Igraine by Uther or focus on the negative consequences of Morgause's 'willing participation' in the affair with Arthur. Although Saunders agrees that Morgause's relationship with Arthur 'is one not of force but of desire', she also concludes that their conception of Mordred acts as a 'dark counterpart' to the circumstances of his own birth from the rape of Igraine by Uther (*RR* 239). Reading the *Morte* in the light of biblical themes in Geoffrey's *HRB*, which articulate anxieties about the potential for children to inherit parental models of behaviour, Victoria M. Guerin comes to the same conclusion. She argues that 'Arthur is doomed to repeat, in all innocence, his father's sin of adultery in a far more serious form', which has a negative impact on his community (20). Whilst Armstrong attributes more significance to Morgause's actions as an individual in contrast to previous scholars, she still agrees that the 'Uther-Igraine and Arthur-Morgause episodes follow in many ways a similar pattern' (*GCC* 51). She even sees a third-generation correspondence with Mordred's desire to 're-create' the same family sins of Uther/Igraine and Arthur/Morgause by attempting to force Gwenyver's hand in marriage (*GCC* 51, 49).

Besides the highly negative view of Morgause's private identity encouraged by these comparisons, even more significant is the lack of attention drawn to the parity she shares with Arthur, which is present from the beginning of their relationship. Nevertheless, I argue that the mutuality and emotional depth implied in this scene represent two key features that offer clues to understanding Morgause's private identity. Crucially, they are absent from the Vulgate *Merlin*, though Malory's use of this French source and its Post-

Vulgate continuations is often cited in Arthurian scholarship. For example, Norris J. Lacy writes that 'the most substantial evidence of French romances [on English literature] is offered by Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*' and his work in particular provides 'persuasive evidence that, even at the end of the Middle Ages, the French romances in prose remained, to a considerable extent, the authoritative standard for Arthurian authors' ('The evolution and legacy' 178, 180). However, Lacy takes care to note that:

Though relying heavily on his sources, Malory does not follow them slavishly. He often works from two or more sources to construct his own account of events, and he never hesitates to alter or simply suppress material that does not accord with his vision. He thus redefines character, event and the tone of the work as a whole ('The evolution and legacy' 179).

Helen Cooper concurs, arguing that whilst the *Morte* is 'the closest English equivalent' to this French cycle, '[e]quivalence in scope . . . does not imply mere translation or adaptation' and Malory's version is certainly not 'the most faithful' ('The *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*' 147). Despite such scholarly awareness of the differences between Malory's primary source and his own *Arthuriad*, there has been a lack of adequate emphasis on the difference between the Vulgate and Post-Vulgate *Merlin's* depiction of Arthur's rape of Morgause and Malory's rewriting of this episode into what is effectively a love story. Armstrong and Wyatt both remark upon the fact that Malory's emphasis on Morgause's 'agreement' in the *Morte* is not a feature of the Vulgate, but only consider the implications of her complicity in the context of its impact on the community ('Malory's Morgause' 152; forthcoming). It should nevertheless be pointed out that the Vulgate *Merlin* depicts a bed-trick visited on Morgause that is almost identical to Igraine's rape in the *Morte*:

Arthur, who had noticed that the king had gone away, got up and went to the lady's bed and lay down with her. And after he had got in bed with her, he turned his back to her . . . And it so happened that the lady awoke and, still half asleep, turned toward him, for

she truly thought that he was her husband, and she put her arms around him. When Arthur saw that she had embraced him, he understood that she had not noticed who he was, so he put his arms around her and lay with her fully, and the lady gave him much pleasure, and she did it willingly, for she thought that he was her husband (Pickens 130).

Interestingly, Malory differentiates between his portrayals of Igraine and Morgause despite the fact that his French source presents both as acts of sexual coercion at best and rapine at worst. He clearly distinguishes between the first as non-consensual and the second as consensual sexual intercourse. Malory's version of events is additionally significant given that he specifies Morgause and Arthur spend a prolonged amount of time together. Their connection is a 'love' relationship rather than a brief or purely sexual encounter that occurs near the end of her sojourn in Carlyon, as in the version presented by the *Merlin*.

In the *Morte*, Morgause is one of three women Arthur is said to 'love', and whilst their relationship is not the longest of these, neither is it the shortest; these three women are Lyonors, Morgause and Gwennyver.⁵¹ Morgause is the third of Arthur's lovers to be described in the narrative and the second in its imagined chronology but, I suggest, the first in terms of equality when in Carlyon. Whilst Arthur is said to have 'great love' for all of these women, who are all 'passing fair', there are distinctions between the portrayals of their relationships from which significance may be extracted. Arthur's first love is briefly described in the passage below:

there com a damesell that was an erlis doughtir; hys name was Sanam and hir name was Lyonors, a passyng fayre damesell. And so she cam thidir for to do omage as other lordis ded aftir that grete batayle. And Kynge Arthure sette hys love gretly on hir, and so ded she uppon hym, and so the Kynge had ado with hir and gate on hir

⁵¹ Arthur's first meetings with these women are described successively in a short passage of text, from, 'Than in the meanwhyle there com a damesell' on p. 28, to, 'at the laste she departed' on p. 30.

a chylde. And hys name was Borre, that was aftir a good knyght,
and of the Table Rounde (28).

This encounter is mutual in private and the outcome is also of benefit to the Arthurian community, since Lyonors's son is described as a 'good knyght' who is later included in the fellowship. Still, their encounter is brief and Lyonors is never mentioned again in the *Morte*, nor is her son. Second, shortly after, 'there had Arthure the firste syght of queene Gwenyvere, the Kyngis doughter of the londe of Camylarde, and ever afftir he loved hir. And aftir, they were wedded' (28). In Arthur's recitation of Gwenyver's qualities he describes her as 'the moste valyaunte and fayryst that I know lyvyng, or yet that ever I coude fynde' (62). Worth noting, however, is that it is during the 'space of three yere' after Arthur first sees Guenever and before he marries her that his relationship with Morgause transpires, who 'rested' with him a 'monthe' (29, 30). The use of the term 'rested' evokes the emotionally constructive qualities of eremitic spaces in the text where protagonists may enjoy a different kind of socialisation in private than that offered by their communal network in public. Conversely, Arthur and Gwenyver are a couple whose identity is primarily public, political and located in central courtly spaces, since her true love in private is Lancelot.

I propose that Morgause is framed positively by the narrative in another way, too. As mentioned earlier, Merlin describes her relationship with Arthur as 'fowle dedis' that have angered 'Goddis wylle' and predicts their child 'shall destroy you and all the knyghtes of youre realme' (32). Still, when Ulfius calumniates Igraine raised in public before Arthur's court, the worst 'damage', 'or shame', he feels has been caused by the concealment of Athur's parentage is not Morgause's act of incest but the 'mortall warrys' that have been waged up to this point (32). As demonstrated in Chapter One, the resolution of these scars is achieved by Arthur's acceptance of Igraine's speech and the eight-day feast in celebration of their reunion. What has not been considered is the possibility that Morgause is also vindicated, by association, at the same time.

Since her husband Lott represents the head of the 'moste party of the barownes' who 'knewe never' Arthur's parentage, the same ignorance may be assumed of Morgause (32). Just as Igraine never knew the identity of her son because he was taken away and 'named' immediately after she delivered him, by the same token Morgause would not have seen or known her brother's identity (6). Morgause's innocence is further directly indicated both in Merlin's naming of Mordred, not her, as the person who 'sholde destroy' Arthur and the narrator's citation of Aggravaine as the one who 'caused' the destruction of his kingdom (39). Finally, it is worth noting that Morgause's relationship with Arthur and her conception of Mordred is never discussed by other members of the community as a perceived failing in either her public or private identities.

If Morgause is interpreted as effectively being pardoned by the narrative in both direct and indirect ways, the question that remains is why Morgause herself plays a part in giving up Mordred to be killed in the May Day massacre. This is another aspect of Morgause's unique representation by Malory that has not been addressed previously in Arthurian scholarship, since the resonance between Arthur and his biblical analogue, King Herod, naturally turns the focus away from Morgause to her brother where filicide is concerned. For example, Amy Varin considers male heroic analogues who are also 'thrown into the sea at birth, like Oedipus, Atalanta, Perseus, or Romulus and Remus' (167). Similarly, readings of the episode in the context of the *Morte* specifically focus only on 'Arthur's attempts to kill the infant' (Rushton 141). Whilst such interpretations are fruitful in the context of masculine chivalric trajectories, they do not allow for the potential significance of Morgause's agency and role as Mordred's mother. Moreover, Morgause is simultaneously Arthur's and Lott's wife, in practice if not legal formality, meaning she must be seen to play some part in Mordred's near death, regardless of whether that part is active or passive.

The ambiguity of the passage describing Morgause's involvement in Mordred's attempted killing once more plays on public and private tensions, which can be used to illuminate the private facet implicit in Morgause's performances of identity:

Than Kyng Arthure lette sende for all the children that were borne in May Day, begotyn of lordis and borne of ladyes; for Merlyon tolde Kyng Arthure that he that sholde destroy hym and all the londe sholde be borne on May Day. Wherefore he sente for hem all, in payne of dethe, and so there were founde many lordis sonnys and many knyghtes sonnes, and all were sente unto the Kyng – and so was Mordred sente by Kyng Lottis wyff. And all were putte in a shyppe to the se; and som were foure wekis olde and som lesse. And so by fortune the shyppe drove unto a castelle, and was all to-ryven and destroyed the moste party, save that Mordred was cast up (39).

In this passage, although the emphasis is on Arthur and Merlin as the instigators of the decree for infanticide, the fact remains that 'so was Mordred sente', apparently willingly, by Morgause. A potentially horrifying implication hovers in the text: that a mother has knowingly and willingly sent her own son to be slaughtered. Seemingly, just as Morgause and Arthur 'were agreed' in their relationship, the fact that Mordred is 'sente' by his mother upon Arthur's request raises the possibility that this interaction is also mutual and consensual (39).

Given the extremity of Morgause's protectiveness of Gareth, which is explored in depth in the first half of 'Courtly Matriarch(s)', the planned murder of Mordred seems incongruous with her representations elsewhere as a loving and emotionally effusive mother.⁵² I offer an alternative interpretation predicated on the established qualities of the space Morgause occupies when participating in Mordred's violent disownment. Now at Lott's side, Morgause is once more situated in a centrally marginal position as his queen of Orkney,

⁵² See part I. of this section, 'Maternal Authority', on pp. 156-71.

where the public obligations of her role may be reinforced. Shepherd observes that in the *Lancelot-Grail*, 'Lot's enmity is said to stem from his resentment over Arthur's killing of the May Day children . . . not his adultery' (51 n.7). Yet in Malory's version the author explicitly states the opposite: 'because that Kynge Arthur lay by hys wyff and gate on her Sir Mordred, therefore Kynge Lott helde ever agaynste Arthur' (51). Evidently, it is Morgause's disobedience and expression of emotion in private that fuels Lott's resentment in the *Morte*. The use of Morgause's royal title 'Kynge Lottis wyff' when she 'sente' Mordred to Arthur supports such a reading, since the use of her title implies she acts on her husband's orders, in a public capacity, rather than of her own private volition. Indeed, the title 'Kynge Lottis wyff' is always used when Morgause appears at public events and ceremonies in the text on behalf or in honour of her husband, rather than the title 'queen', which is applied when she acts independently.

In summary, Morgause's transitions between Orkney and Carlyon reveal a different emphasis on her public and private identities when she occupies each space. Morgause's marriage to Lott, as with Uther and Igrayne's, may be interpreted as one of public utility for the pre-Arthurian community. It does not resemble the many other partnerships portrayed in the *Morte*, which are entered into privately and offer spaces in which emotion is expressed. Although Lott's trajectory is brief and his dialogue highly limited in contrast to his appearance in the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle, Malory maintains a sense that strong constraints on Morgause's public identity result from her marriage. These are visible in the description of Lott's funeral:

So at the enterement com Kyng Lottis wyff, Morgause, with hir foure sonnes, Gawayne, Aggravayne, Gaheris, and Gareth; also there com thydir Kynge Arthur's syster—all thes com to the enterement. But of all the twelve kyngis, Kynge Arthure lette make the tombe of Kynge Lotte passynge rychely, and made hys tombe by hymselff (51).

The epithet, 'Kyng Lottis wyff', reminds the reader that this funeral constitutes a public performance that does not necessarily correspond with her private identity, similar to Igraine's show of 'grete sorowe' that is made 'and', or 'with', the barons at Uther's funeral (7). Moreover, the catalogue of Morgause's sons in order of age underlines their successional position as well as their collective power, which enables them to perpetuate the established patriarchal standards of Orkney-governed spaces.

Courtly Matriarch(s)

After Lott's death, Morgause is portrayed as a courtly matriarch with two different forms of authority: maternal and romantic. Morgause is left as the single and highest-ranking member of the Orkney royal family when Lott dies, as the mother of four legitimate heirs. In this sense, she is a 'matriarch' by virtue of constituting the female centre and chief parental representative of the family. However, I argue that this form of matriarchal authority is purely public in nature and still ultimately patriarchal due to its inseparability from her sons' patriarchal authority and communal expectations of women's use of their bodies.

Morgause's maternal authority differs depending on the space she inhabits when her status as a mother is invoked, and on the protagonists who invoke this same status. When Morgause's central community, represented by her three oldest sons, invoke her status as mother, her function is purely public. However, she also expresses a much more private view of motherhood, when Morgause comes to Arthur's court in search of her son Gareth, whom she knows has spent 'a twelvemonth' with his uncle but is now missing (210). Morgause has heard that Gareth was kept in Arthur's 'kychyn', rather than officially included in the fellowship (210). For this, Morgause publicly humiliates Arthur, criticising his practices as a ruler and pronounces Gareth's

treatment a 'shame' on them 'all' (210). Critics usually only remark upon this episode in passing. For example, Paton cursorily mentions that while Gareth is 'absent on his quest, his mother, Morgause, comes to court, reveals his true name and chides Arthur for his treatment of her son. When the young knight returns from his adventure, dame Morgause at sight of him falls down in a swoon' (142). Likewise, Helaine Newstead remarks that Morgause 'demands her son' from Arthur, but before elaborating turns to consider how Gareth's masculine and public 'identity' is developed by his quest as a knight incognito (804). And whilst the notion that language as a 'weapon' has significance for Gareth's identity is argued in the context of his quest guide, Lynet, who verbally abuses him, it is not extended as a frame of reference for Morgause's public condemnation of Arthur (Pigg 23). Nevertheless, I argue that Morgause's search for Gareth reveals essential information about the portrayal of her private identity and, indeed, represents the moment in the narrative when her individual voice is strongest.

Two key points may be noted from the outset in analysis of this episode. Firstly, that information about Morgause's private identity may be gleaned by reversing the focus of the communal lens through which the *Morte's* individual protagonists are typically viewed. Rather than considering the effect that Morgause's actions have on her sons' communal identities, by contrast this part of the chapter examines the effect that her sons' actions have on Morgause's individual identity. Secondly, though Morgause's criticism of Arthur could be interpreted as competitive, and where her presence might signify a moment of political rupture between Carlyon and Orkney, their interaction can instead be seen to represent another important moment in Arthurian communal history when the public and private identities of individuals are constructively synthesised. This occurs when an alternative model of rulership to Arthur's is offered, one based on private identity and emotion rather than on public and political concerns. These two points are made in the context of Gareth and his trajectory specifically because I suggest

he, unlike his brothers, is deliberately associated with the private and emotional aspects of Morgause's identity.

As well as exercising maternal authority, Morgause can be seen to possess a form, here termed 'romantic' to indicate its presence in moments when Morgause is portrayed as a lover. Morgause engages in an extra-marital relationship with Lamerok, a knight of Arthur's fellowship, over whose private identity she exercises authority in a manner that exceeds his influence by patriarchal authorities. In certain respects, Morgause shares correspondences with otherworldly matriarchs common in medieval romances that circulated before and after the *Morte's* composition, which this part of the chapter explores. It argues that such female figures typically symbolise the empowerment of private identity for both knights and ladies when relationships are developed in peripherally marginal spaces.

I. Maternal Authority

John Carmi Parsons observes that, historically in medieval Europe, 'a queen's career depended in great measure on the relevance and strength of the official relationships that determined and were reinforced by her marriage' (7). However, the apex of Morgause's career is reached in the *Morte* when she appeals to her natal rather than marital connections with Arthur, as his 'syster' (210-11). Morgause can be seen to inhabit but also transform the publicly conceived positions of mother and sister. In doing so, she articulates aspects of her private identity as an individual in a manner that transcends public configurations of her role as Lott's wife and the mother of his heirs.

The contrast between Morgause's individual vision of her public and private roles versus their perception within the Arthurian community is much more striking in Malory's version than in the *Lancelot-Grail*. In the Vulgate *Merlin* portion, Morgause is never named and known only as 'the wife of King Lot of Orkney' (Pickens 436). 'Gawainet, Agravain, Guerrehet and Gaheriet'

are always known as the sons of their 'father' rather than their mother (138).⁵³ By contrast, in the *Morte*, these four men are only described as their father's sons a few times.⁵⁴ Excepting these isolated references to Lott's paternity, Morgause's sons always rely upon the public prestige available to them through their mother. An additional nuance introduced in Malory's text is the distinction between Morgause's oldest sons, Gawain, Aggravaine and Gaheris, and her youngest son by Lott, Gareth. Mordred is added to the former group; despite their difference in paternity they are frequently seen as a quartet, a point to which I return in the final part of this chapter, 'Useful Mother'. This part demonstrates how Malory's separation of Morgause's sons into two categories aligns neatly with his distinction between her public and private identities, in conjunction with their expression in central and peripheral spaces throughout the text.

The public role of Morgause's older sons can firstly be considered. The connection between Gawain, Aggravaine and Gaheris's status as her sons and their ownership of Orkney is repeatedly invoked in the courtly community.

⁵³ The most varied range of examples in which the Orkney knights are described as the sons of Lot, rather than their mother, who is unnamed in *The Lancelot-Grail*, are found in the portion, *The Story of Merlin*. In this text they are collectively renowned for being 'the sons of King Lot of Orkney' and 'King Arthur's nephews', being frequently mentioned together (Pickens 193, 209, 428). These men also frame themselves in terms of a father-orientated kin group, particularly Gawainet, who is most often described specifically as a 'son of King Lot of Orkney' (Pickens 197, 331, 341, 372, 422, 429). Lott, too, directly introduces himself to strangers as 'king of Orkney, and . . . those four knights were his sons', or 'King Lot of Orkney and his four sons' (Pickens 379, 391, 397, 370). Furthermore, not only Lot and his sons but in addition their 'first cousins' as well as many other 'close kinsmen' name and claim their relationships within the Orkney patriline (Pickens 104, 214). Lot's paternal authority over his sons, which is privileged over their maternal heritage, lasts until the very final portion of the cycle; in *The Death of Arthur* portion of the *Lancelot-Grail*, Gawain's public identity is once again tied to 'his father, King Lot' (Lacy 102).

⁵⁴ Malory's Gawain only introduces himself as 'the Kynges son Lotte of Orkeney' and references Lott as his 'fadir' in three times in the whole of the *Morte*; in all cases Morgause is also mentioned, meaning Gawain's parentage is not seen in the exclusively masculine, singular form by which it is framed in the *Lancelot-Grail* (69, 103, 681). Gareth directly refers to his parentage even less, calling Lott his 'fadir' just once (195). Again, he also gives the name of his mother but both are revealed unwillingly; this reluctance fails to convey the pride with which Gawain references their paternal connection (195). In addition, when a herald names Gareth as 'Kynge Lottys son of Orkeney' this is 'discoverde' without Gareth's consent, which downplays its importance for Gareth's public identity (219).

Gawain originally receives 'worship' from Arthur because he is his 'sistirs son' and only strives to earn prowess independently after this is publicly acknowledged (63). Gawain employs the public influence available to him through his mother many times. In one instance, when he and Gaheris are imprisoned for his crime of beheading a lady he is released because he informs them, 'my modir ys Kyng Arthurs sister' and 'Kyng Arthurs nevew', for whose 'love' they are treated more leniently and escape prison (69). Similarly at another time Gawain is treated with 'all the chere' that lay in the 'power' of a knight who hosts them when he 'wyste' that one of 'Kyng Arthurs syster-sonnes' is in his company (99). Aggravaine, too, uses Morgause's family status when he tells Arthur that Gwenyver's relationship with Lancelot affects them all, saying 'we be your syster-sunnes . . . we may suffir hit no lenger' (647). Of all Morgause's sons Gawain invokes Morgause's familial position the most often and identifies with the communal prestige this offers him for the longest period of time, even describing himself in the letter he composes just prior to his death as 'Sir Gawayne . . . systirs sonne unto the noble Kyng Arthur' (681-2). More distant male relations even appeal to their connection with Morgause through her sons. For example, Uwain, Morgause's nephew through Morgan, criticises Gaheris for agreeing to fight with him, since this constitutes an infringement of a public 'oathe' that he would never 'have ado with none of youre felyship wyttyngly' because he knows they are 'syster sonnes' (329). Also in another instance, 'two bretherne' named Edward and Sadok, 'cousyns unto Sir Gawayne' ask Arthur if they 'myght have the fyrste justis, for they were of Orkeney' (432). In all these examples, Morgause's titles and roles are used to advance or assert the chivalric public status of her oldest dependent male relatives within the Arthurian community, and aspects of her emotions or signs of a private dimension to their relationship are rarely, if ever, described.

Conversely, Morgause's youngest son, Gareth, never spontaneously offers information about his mother, nor uses her titles to advance himself publicly

in the same way. This difference is demonstrated when Gareth first comes to Arthur's court at 'the hyghe feste of Pentecoste' and does not reveal his identity, even though Arthur requests it of him, sensing that he is 'com of men of worshyp' (177, 178). Gareth then stays a whole 'twelvemonth' without revealing Morgause is his mother (179). He next follows the court to Carlyon where Arthur holds the next Pentecostal feast, only revealing his family position when Lancelot refuses to give him 'the order of knyghthod' without knowing 'of what kyn ye be borne' (182).⁵⁵ Similarly, Gareth only describes his mother once more as 'Kyng Arthurs sister' when pressured by a group of knights to reveal his identity – and only then on the condition that they 'kepe hit in cloce', i.e. private (195). The identity of Gareth's mother is fully disclosed after he has already proved his qualities independently of the secure position Morgause's public status provides. Gareth does so by completing a quest to save a lady, his future wife Lyonesse, from a male 'tirraunte' who has appropriated her castle and succeeding in many battles, including those against the 'Blak', 'Grene', 'Rede' and 'Blew' knights (180-195). Gareth's desire to keep his family connections private suggests their relationship is defined more by its private than public qualities. This is supported by the *Morte's* narrative structure, since the content and quality of Gareth's adventures are described before the revelation that his mother is Morgause. It is therefore fitting that, of all her sons, it is Gareth who provides the impetus for Morgause's expression of private identity.

Morgause's arrival at Arthur's court takes place 'at the nexte fest of Pentecoste', meaning it is two years since she has seen Gareth (208). This feast is described as taking place at 'Carlyon' again, which signifies that when Morgause arrives, she appears in a peripherally marginal capacity (209). Both Morgause's empowerment and the expression of her private identity are foreshadowed by the motif of a feast. The beginning of this communal activity

⁵⁵ This celebration is alternately named 'Pentecost' and, here, 'the fest of Whytsontyde', but, as Shepherd notes, both refer to the same date (10 n.1).

coincides exactly with Morgause's entrance: 'And as they sate at the mete, there com in the Quene of Orkenay with ladyes and knyghtes a grete numbir' (210). This 'grete numbir' of members in her entourage constitutes a display of power and authority in numbers, relying upon the collective, symbolic weight carried by public figures, in much the same way as kings typically rely upon their barons. The symbolic and structural importance of the feast is reflected in the formal public and ceremonial manner in which Morgause's oldest sons greet her: 'Sir Gawayne, Sir Aggravayne, and sir Gaherys arose and wente to hir modir and salewed hir uppon their kneis and asked hir blyssynge' (210). Although Morgause's presence is elevated in the narrative by her appearance at a public feast, which always signals a metaphorically significant moment, the emotional distance between her and these three oldest sons is emphasised by the detail of their prolonged absence in Morgause's life. The narrator notes that 'of fifteen yere before they had not sene hir' (210). However, Morgause herself is not described as speaking to them or gesturally reciprocating. Rather, she immediately turns to Arthur to ask about Gareth, which conveys a sense of urgency and focus to her speech, as well as a disinterest in prolonging public performances of her status as mother and queen.

The formula used to preface Igraine's defence against Ulfius, 'Than spake', is often used in the *Morte* in order to anticipate speech by protagonists that will communicate particularly emphatic or emotional statements of intent (32). It is also used here to frame Morgause's words, whose appearance has a specific motivation:

Than she spake uppon hyght to hir brother, Kynge Arthure, 'Where have ye done my yonge son, Sir Gareth? For he was here amongyst you a twelvemonth, and ye made a kychyn knave of hym – the whyche is shame to you all –

'Alas, where have ye done my nowne dere son that was my joy and blysse?' . . . 'A, brothir!' seyde the quene, 'ye dud yourself grete shame whan ye amongyst you kepte my son in the kychyn and fedde hym lyke an hogge' (210).

The words 'uppon hyght' suggest Morgause is placed in an 'elevated' or otherwise prominent position in front of the court, as well as speaking in a 'proud' or 'furious' manner that would indicate heightened emotions such as 'anger' (*MED*). Morgause exemplifies Daniel F. Pigg's view of language as 'a tool which a skillful speaker can use . . . to generate precise audience responses, including indignation and anger' (22). Anger is clearly communicated by the 'shame' that Morgause pronounces on them 'all' before repeating her question but it does not represent the only emotion in the range of feelings this speech suggests. When Morgause asks for a second time 'where' Gareth is, instead of describing him as her 'yonge' son, this time she uses the words 'dere', 'joy' and 'blysse'. The singular form of these affectionate pronouns reiterates the notion that Morgause shares a particular closeness with Gareth that does not extend to his older brothers (210). Morgause's words convey the memory of intense emotions as well as loss in the exclamation, 'Alas', which she utters before reframing her question. Notably, the possessive 'nowne' claims the emotions Morgause describes as exclusively and individually hers. Furthermore, this, added to Morgause's insistence that Gareth is 'my son' rather than Arthur's 'nephew' – as her other sons are often described by the community – maintains the court's focus on her as an individual parent rather than just one member of a collective family unit or Orkney community.

As mentioned above, Morgause's three oldest sons, Gawain, Aggravaine and Gaheris, frequently rely upon the public prestige available to them through their high-ranking mother. Conversely, Morgause's emphasis on herself as a mother in the above accusation reverses their focus and its effect by concentrating on her unique position, feelings and worth as an individual. Her words imply that her brother and three oldest sons have negatively affected the prestige available to her through *their* public roles. Morgause's pronouncement of shame on Arthur and his court is reflected in his demotion to 'brothir', whilst she remains a 'quene', echoing the position of 'hyght' with which she began their interaction. Arthur initially attempts to evade more

direct criticism by indicating that Morgause has gained honour by having a son who 'is previd a worshypfull knyght as ony that is now lyvyng' (210). However, Morgause's insistent and repetitive possession of Gareth as 'my son' implies that she does not feel honoured in the slightest but sees herself as having instead incurred the same shame she pronounces has fallen on them 'all'. Gareth's dismissal to the kitchen where he is treated like a 'knave', a 'servant' of low class, and as a 'hogge', or 'pig', in Morgause's view indicates that not only social but physical boundaries have been transgressed in a manner that is distasteful to her. Morgause identifies yet another embarrassment, saying 'I mervayle . . . that Sir Kay dud mok and scorne hym', since in failing to condemn Kay's disrespect Arthur's court has indirectly mocked and scorned her too (211).

Arthur attempts to appease Morgause by assuring her that Gareth is 'proved to be a man of worshyp', which suggests the possibility of honour for Morgause by association. Moreover, his affirmation, 'and that is my joy', attempts to figure his emotional ties with Gareth as equal to Morgause's. However, an awareness of both the public and implications of the potential for estrangement as a result of Gareth's maltreatment is conveyed by Arthur's anxious appellation 'Fayre sister' (211). Ultimately, Arthur's lament that Gareth is 'gone from us all' includes the whole court, as Morgause's words did originally, which supports the validity of her individual perspective.

Despite Morgause's view that whole Arthurian court is culpable, the individual and familial focus of her performance serves another function. Morgause's connection between her 'brother' and the repetition of the singular 'ye' in her accusations – 'Where have ye done', 'ye made a kychyn knave of hym', 'where have ye done', 'ye dud yourself grete shame whan ye amongst you kepte my son in the kychyn' – emphasise Arthur's individual responsibility for the courtly community's behaviour (210). The greatest significance of this scene lies in Morgause's transformation of Gareth's treatment from a perceived source of shame to a platform from which to stage

the question of what constitutes 'worshipful' rulership through the lens of an individual relationship.

Arthur's description of Gareth as a 'worshypfull' knight reflects his original intention to have Gareth treated 'as though he were a lordys sonne' (179). However, his inability to impose this same standard on his men, namely Kay, presents him as a weak leader since he was apparently aware for an entire year that his knights had 'scorned and 'mocked' the man whom he had ordered them to treat nobly. Arthur's awareness that this is implied as well as visible to his community is apparent in his reframing of misconduct in the conditional or past potential tense rather than as behaviour that has been realised in the present, saying 'if I had nat done well to hym, ye *myght* have blamed me' but 'he asked me three gyfftyys . . . And so I graunted hym all his desyre' (211). According to Morgause, Arthur's failure is in his objective, material negotiation of Gareth's presence and his inability to understand his emotional responsibilities to the individual knights within this community.

In addition to Morgause's general commentary on rulership, her criticisms are even more specific, since the chivalric qualities she lists Gareth as possessing indirectly echo those promoted by the Pentecostal Oath. First, Morgause states Gareth has always been 'feythful and trew of his promyse' (211). When knights swear to uphold the Pentecostal Oath, they are 'charged' to fulfil its tenets 'uppon payne of fortiture of their worship and lordship of Kyngre Arthure' and must not only keep this promise but renew it 'every yere' (77). The first of their promises is 'never to do outrage', a practice that was considered in the context of its application to 'ladyes' specifically in Chapter One (77).⁵⁶ In the broader spectrum of meaning, 'outrage' connotes any kind of social 'excess', 'breach of law or custom', 'insult', 'impertinence' and 'indignity', such as the harms done to Gareth (*MED*). Morgause's emphasis that Gareth is 'trew of his promyse' implies that Arthur's knights are not.

⁵⁶ Discussed in 'Remembered Presence', pp. 112-25.

Indeed, the fact that they are unable to uphold this tenet at the centre of their courtly value system raises the question of how they would do so further afield without the support and surveillance of the community.

Secondly, Morgause draws attention to the discrepancy between theory and practice, playing on the superficiality of the nickname given to Gareth by Kay, 'Bewmaynes' (211). Kay explains his reason for doing so is because Gareth literally has the 'fayreste handis', and is 'well-vysaged', or 'handsome' (178). Morgause, however, points to a hidden meaning, which Kay has not 'wende', or 'understood' (211). Rather than saying Gareth has fair hands, she says he 'is as fayre an handid man', reconceptualising her son's outer physical attributes as the inner spiritual principle of treating others fairly (211). Her contrast between inner and outer value echoes the Pentecostal framing of 'worship' that is found in behavioural qualities rather than in material 'worldis goodis' (77). Morgause's reminder that nobility is displayed by actions rather than physical appearance or material wealth is a common motif in medieval romance. For example, in the Middle English *Octavian* prince Clemens, who is fostered in a non-aristocratic family and has very little money, demonstrates his inner nobility by folding the 'fedurs' of a 'hawk' he buys and cares for despite his lack of other knightly trappings such as a sword, shield and armour (Hudson 673-4). Notably, Arthur complains to Morgause that she 'myght have done me to wete of his commynge', since he saw 'none' of the outer signs that would have indicated Gareth came from 'a noble house' (211). Morgause's detailed account of how she sent Gareth 'unto you ryght well armed *and* horsed *and* worshypfully besene of his body, *and* gold *and* sylve plenté to spende' is exaggerated and ridicules Arthur's need for material proof of knights' worth (211).

Morgause's comments on the etiquette and ideology of kingship means that, in one way, she represents an example of Tolhurst's model of the 'female king', who, like Morgause, 'presents male figures as deficient and men's deeds as requiring female guidance and correction' (TFK 13). I would not go so far

as to say that Morgause's words, like the queens' in Geoffrey's *HRB*, 'change the course of British history' in its entirety as presented by the *Morte* (TFK 11). However, Morgause's words do motivate the court's focus and activities for the rest of the episode, from this scene until that in which Gareth returns to court (210-227). At the same time, Morgause's expression of identity is so inextricably connected to traditional notions of femininity that, although she promises female kingship, her actual attainment of this role is never completely or satisfactorily realised in a manner that benefits her as an individual in addition to the Arthurian community.

Although Arthur silences Morgause by saying, 'lat this langage now be style', his speech throughout—and after, as this part of the chapter concludes—are conciliatory and emotionally deferent in response to Morgause's complaints. For example, Arthur expresses sorrow when he declares 'I shall nevir be glad tyll that I may fynde hym [Gareth]', offering to 'shape a remedy to fynde hym' and praying publicly that 'by the grace of God he shall be founde' (210-11). The strength of Morgause's challenge sparks the desire in Arthur to search 'this seven realmys' for Gareth, and her oldest son Gawain also requests Arthur to give him 'and his bretherne . . . leve' to 'go seke oure brother' (211). Interestingly, it is Lancelot who directs the form and manner of their search, by speaking before Arthur can answer, saying 'Nay . . . that shall not nede' (211). Rather than dismissing Morgause's fears that her son may not be 'on lyve', Lancelot's contradiction of Gawain indirectly supports Morgause's assertion of private identity (211). For Lancelot is the first knight to know Gareth's parentage and promises to keep this information private, a promise he observes by halting a public search for Gareth. Lancelot thus arguably aligns himself with Gareth and Morgause's shared emphasis on their private identities and status as individuals distinct from the Arthurian public's communal perception of them. This idea is further underlined when Lancelot's alternative to Gawain's suggested fraternal search is communication with the woman whom Gareth has vowed to love in private,

Lyonesse (211). According to Lancelot, as an individual 'she may gyff you the beste counceyle where ye shall fynde Sir Gareth', to which the king acquiesces (212). The suggestion that Arthur needs female 'counceyle' – a term that I argued in Chapter One is most often used in relation to masculine authority in the *Morte* – reinforces the strength of Morgause's words and her authority in this matter. This is further strengthened if we take into account Hyonjin Kim's assertion that Lyonesse is 'consciously' portrayed as a 'widow' by Malory due to the title 'Dame' used to describe her, since Morgause is also a widow (42).

In this part of the chapter, another reason I have not ultimately categorised Morgause's performance as that of a 'female king' is due to Tolhurst's emphasis on women's service to the community in this role; Galfridian queens acting as kings 'can benefit Britain by acting in their own interest' (*TFK* 10). Morgause's speech and actions, though they could be conceived as a criticism of Arthur as king, repeatedly turn the focus back on herself and her individual emotions for a son who represents her private rather than public identity. Moreover, she is associated in Malory's text with specifically feminine, rather than masculine, sites of authority: namely private spaces occupied by women whose identities are developed in the context of specific, individual relationships before their roles within the larger community are emphasised.

Lyonesse is one of these women. Her advice and potential status as a widow both support the notion that a specifically female and individual authority, which privileges private over public identity, is constructive. When Lyonesse receives the letter summoning her to court to provide news of Gareth, he asks that she keep the knowledge of his whereabouts private: 'I pray you in no wyse be ye aknowyn where I am' (212). Notably, he speaks of 'my modir' before 'all my bretherne', once more juxtaposing individual and communal identities (212). When Lyonesse comes to Arthur's court the narrator describes her as being interrogated, or 'sore questyonde of the Kyng, and of the quene of Orkeney' (212, emphasis added). Usually when figures of import come to court, it is Arthur and Gwenyver who question them together. Here,

Morgause's involvement implies a distrust based on her experience in relation to Gareth that Arthur is capable of performing his duties adequately. Furthermore, Lyonesse takes matters into her own hands and declares 'Sir, by your avyse I woll let cry a turnemente', which Gareth, in attending, will be reunited with his family (212). Though Lyonesse seems to speak deferentially, waiting for Arthur's 'avyse', the notion that she needs advice is undermined by the fact that she is the one to conceive and host the tournament. Indeed, Arthur's words admit her ownership of this advice, since he approves her plan by saying, 'This is well avysed', placing himself in the position of recipient (212, emphasis added). The scene concludes when the narrative focus turns from Arthur's court to Lyonesse, who 'was com to the Ile of Avylyon', an unequivocally matriarchal location as opposed to a space that is merely feminised or temporarily occupied only by women (212). The association of Avalon with matriarchal power is established early on in the *Morte*, when it is described as being ruled by the 'Lady of the Lake' or the 'Lady Lyle of Avilion' (37, 40).⁵⁷ Thus Morgause's private identity is framed supportively due to her indirect participation in a primarily female network, which is composed of different kinds of matriarchs.

In this scene, Morgause emulates her mother Igraine in the ways in which she expresses tensions between public and private, or individual and communal identity that have impacted on her level of empowerment. And like her mother, the conclusion to this episode results in a final synthesis and harmony between these opposing constructions of identity. This synthesis begins, typically, with court-wide festivities:

Kynge Arthure was commyn two dayes tofore the Assumpcion of
Oure Lady. And there was all maner of royalté, of all maner of
mynstralsy that myght be founde.

Also there cam Quene Gwenyvere and the Quene of Orkeney,
Sir Garethis mother (215).

⁵⁷ 'Lyle' is most likely not the lady's name but a conflation of *de l'isle*, meaning 'of the isle' in French.

The day during which Gareth wins the tournament and is reunited with his family occurs 'uppon the Assumpcion day, whan Masse and matyns was done' with fanfare of 'herodys with trumpettis' (215). Morgause's presentation alongside Arthur's queen further indicates she presents a competing model of authority, since Arthur is flanked not by one but two 'wives': one his married wife, the other the mother of his most publicly prominent child.⁵⁸ The narrative's reminder of the individual connection shared by Morgause and Gareth is highlighted once more by her status as his 'mother', reminding the reader of the individual who first motivated events leading to these festivities.

The scene of Gareth's reunion with his family is described emotionally in each consecutive moment he shares with estranged relations, beginning with his 'brother', continuing to his 'uncle' and reaching their apex in Gareth's reunion with his 'modir' (223). The descriptions allotted to each reunion in the narrative have relevance for Morgause's portrayal in this episode, since they privilege her private identity by imitating the language she uses when challenging Arthur. Morgause's earlier speech repeats the family appellations of 'dere modir', 'brodir' and 'sistir' and her male relations' consistent use of words like 'gladnesse', 'comforte', 'joy', 'wepte', and 'chere' echo Morgause's original description of Gareth as her 'joy and blysse' (210-11, 223, 210). This can firstly be seen in the way Gawain responds with an intense and gestural display of emotion. He 'threwe away his shyld and his swerde, and ran to Sir Gareth and toke hym in his armys, and sytthen kneled downe and asked hym mercy', saying 'I am your brother . . . that for youre sake have had grete laboure and travayle' (223). Gareth's description suggests an emotional

⁵⁸ Mordred is actually Arthur's second son, born out of wedlock, since his first brief romantic relationship with Lyonors gives birth to a boy named 'Borre, that was aftir a good knyght, and of the Table Rounde' (28). However, Borre is not mentioned again in the text; therefore, although he is technically the firstborn child of the king, Malory establishes Mordred as the more important protagonist and heir.

correspondence between them, as he 'kneled downe to hym' in like manner, asking his 'mercy' (223). Both continue in a series of affective gestures:

they arose bothe, and braced eythir othir in there armys, and wepte a grete whyle or they myght speke; and eyther of them gaff other the pryse of the batayle, and there were many kynde wordys betwene them (223).

The brothers' physical elevation together symbolises the unity of Gareth and Gawain. Their emotion is not simply evident in their tears, which last 'a grete whyle', but in their silence. Silence constitutes the individual expression through which Malory so typically communicates aspects of private identity and emotion. This is further exemplified when Arthur similarly

avoyded his horse, and whan he cam nye to Sir Gareth he wolde a spokyn and myght nat—and therewyth he sanke downe in a sowghe for gladnesse. And so they sterte unto there uncle and requyred hym of his good grace to be of good comforte. Wete you well thee Kyng made grete joy; and many a peteuous complaynte he made to Sir Gareth—and ever he wepte as he had bene a chylde (223).

Arthur's silence, his 'gladnesse', 'joy', 'peteuous complaynte' and tears demonstrate the range in the spectrum of individual emotion that is witnessed by the community as a whole.

Gawain's and Arthur's performances, of course, here provide examples of the individual fraternal relationships that are contained within the larger community as a collective identity. But in the context of this study they are more meaningful for Morgause, who is described thirdly and has the most extreme, silent and emotional reaction of them all:

So with this com his modir, the Quene of Orkeney, Dame Morgawse; and whan she saw Sir Gareth redyly in the vysage she myght nat wepe, but sodeynly felle downe in a sowne and lay there a grete whyle lyke as she had bene dede. And than Sir Gareth

recomforted hir in such wyse that she recovirde and made good chere (223).

Morgause is represented as experiencing greater emotional feeling than either Gawain or Arthur because her silence extends to her physical ability to communicate; unable to 'wepe', she experiences not just a momentary silence but one that lasts a 'grete whyle', which almost appears as a kind of death. Morgause's reaction arguably portrays her sympathetically; expressions of emotion through the physical gestures of weeping and collapse are typically displays of intimacy performed by Arthur's knights. Upon Morgause's recovery, a desire for public and private identity to be reunited is conveyed by Arthur's commandment that 'all maner of knyghtes . . . sholde make their lodgyng ryght there, for the love of his two newewys', effectively tying communal experience to the intensely personal displays enacted by him, Gawain, Gareth and Morgause (223).

The synthesis of Morgause's private identity with her public role when reunited with Gareth mirrors the synthesis between her role as individual and her place within the Arthurian community. Moreover, her expressions of identity harmonise political and emotional authority. Morgause's earlier perceived shame is overwhelmed by the repeated shows of 'omage and feauté' knights now promise to Gareth. Most significantly, the final honour is brought by 'thirty ladyes' who come to court to do him 'omage' to Gareth (226). These women are all 'wydows', whose status collectively resonates with Morgause's identity as a widow too and suggests her authority in Arthur's court is specifically feminine, rather than an authority secondarily accessed through her husband. It is the widows' statement that provides the final word, after which 'the kynges, quenys, pryncis, erlys, barouns, and many bolde knyghtes wente to mete' and commemorate Morgause's experience in a feast (226). The power of independent women's authority is placed in opposition to the collective control of men in this episode. This is further cemented by the marriage of Gareth and Lyonesse, a partnership forged in private before it is

approved with 'solempnyté' by Arthur and his community (227).⁵⁹ Furthermore, Lyonesse's request to Arthur 'that none that were wedded sholde juste at that feste' reinforces the notion that the spatial configuration of protagonists in this episode has prioritised private over public emotion and identity and has been directed by women (226).

II. Romantic Authority

Similar to the portrayal of Morgan's relationship with Arthur explored in '(Dis)Obedient Mother', aspects of Morgause's private identity are revealed in her bond with Lamerok. Charles Moorman pejoratively summarises their love as 'a parody of *l'amour courtois*', assuming Morgause must be too 'aged' at this point in the text to be desirable, either physically or emotionally (176). This fails to account for the existence of other prominent examples of mature female desirability depicted by Malory, namely Gwenyver, who could easily be considered to be in her fifties by the time her ongoing relationship with Lancelot is revealed in the public sphere.⁶⁰ However, this part of the chapter contends that, in a variety of ways, Morgause's relationship with Lamerok is one of 'trew love' as the author himself describes (368). Although Kim concedes that Morgause exercises some kind of authority over Lamerok, like Moorman he still downplays the importance of Morgause's private identity based on her economic value in the Arthurian public sphere. According to Kim, Morgause's power is primarily economical and he includes her relationship with Lamerok in a group of other knights' liaisons or marriages;

⁵⁹ Their wedding takes place at one of Arthur's other central courts, 'Kynghenadowne' (225). Presumably Morgause attends, since her word approves Gareth's marriage 'in the same wyse' as Arthur (225). However, she is not described or mentioned after this point and so I have not included 'Kynghenadowne' as one of the courts in which Morgause appears as a peripherally marginal figure.

⁶⁰ Gawain tells Elayne of Ascolat that, in the 'four and twenty yere' he has known Lancelot as a Knight of the Round Table, Lancelot has never worn a 'tokyn' of his love for a woman in public (607). This provides readers with an approximate period of time with which Gwenyver's age at this point may be estimated.

Kim suggests that this demonstrates how the 'quest for love coincides with that for landed wealth' (53). This assessment once more emphasises the public material nature of Morgause's desirability and identity. Conversely, I argue that aspects of Morgause's private identity may be noted in the consistently emotional rather than economically-driven discourse of desire uttered by Lamerok that points to a second branch of her matriarchal power: romantic authority.

Before Morgause and Lamerok are presented together in the same moment, Malory presents a scene in which both Lamerok's actions and words imply the depth of emotion he feels for Morgause. Her romantic authority as his lover is present despite her physical absence, very much in the way of traditional courtly love fictions. To demonstrate, in the private location of the 'foreyste' or quest wilderness, Lamerok overhears Mellyagaunce's complaints by a 'chapell' of his unrequited love for King Arthur's wife and later when they meet directly asks him 'why he loved Quene Gwenyver as he ded' (294). Mellyagaunce answers: 'I woll preve and make hit good that she ys the fayryste lady and moste of beauté in the worlde' (294). Lamerok immediately takes exception to Mellyagaunce's description of Gwenyver and argues instead that 'Quene Morgause of Orkeney, modir unto Sir Gawayne . . . ys the fayryst lady that beryth the lyff' (294). They immediately begin fighting in order that they may each 'preve' the other wrong (295). Ostensibly, Lamerok describes Morgause in terms that draw on constructions of identity in the public sphere typical of communal discourse, which, as this thesis argues, typifies the portrayal of marginal queens, whose value is signified by outer 'beauté' and may be physically 'preved' (295). Yet Lamerok's refusal to defer to another knight of the Round Table indicates that he is in fact privileging a private relationship over the public bond, which he should sustain with Mellyagaunce as his adopted chivalric brother. Indeed, when Lancelot witnesses their struggle he criticises them for antagonising a fellow knight 'of the courte of Kynge Arthure!' (295). His next statement, that it 'ys nat thy parte

to dispraise thy princyes that thou arte undir obeysaunce, and we all', points to their role within the community (295). Still, Lancelot's description of Arthur as a 'prince' nominally demotes the king to whom he argues they owe full 'obeysaunce', exposing the veiled competition between public and private identity in himself. For despite Lancelot's initial criticism of his fellows, he too enters the debate asserting Gwenyver's pre-eminence as *his* lady (295). Likewise Bleoberys appears, also saying 'I warne you, I have a lady, and methynkith that she ys the fayryst lady of the worlde' (295). All four knights are unwilling to relinquish their positions, which are based on privately experienced but not publicly displayed emotion for the women they love. Even though Lamerok is 'moste lothyst' to fight with Lancelot, of all the knights 'in the worlde excepte Sir Trystramys', he is still ready to defend Morgause's honour against him and prioritises their emotional connection over the political alliance he shares with the knights (295). Although in one way this represents the recurrent concern of chivalric texts with the competition between the knight's courtly lover and his chivalric peers, I suggest the significance of this scene lies in its response to a range of other, more specific concerns in the text about where and how private emotion may be expressed.

When Lamerok and the other knights communicate publicly within Arthur's fellowship they are at odds with one another, as their communal roles conflict with their individual positions as lovers in more private spaces. Interestingly, their antagonism is relieved when Lamerok resummarises the situation in terms of individual and private difference:

I am lothe to have ado with you in thys quarell, for every man thynkith hys owne lady fayryste, and thoughe I prayse the lady that I love moste, ye sholde nat be wrothe – for thoughe my lady Quene Gwenyver be fayryst in youre eye, wyte you well Quene Morgause of Orkeney ys fayryst in myne eye – and so every knyght thynkith hys owne lady fayryste (295).

Bleoberys immediately accepts Lamerok's redefinition of their views and calls his words 'reson and knyghtly' (295). I argue this is because Lamerok's repetition of 'I' versus 'ye' establishes his separation from the other knights as individuals and disperses the tension by indicating that he does not love the same lady in private as the other knights. His naming of Gwenyver, rather than Morgause, as 'my lady' points to the fact that Arthurian knights' political ties do not necessarily correspond with their emotional bonds: Gwenyver is Lamerok's lady in public, but in private his deference and love are given to Morgause. This interaction between public and private bonds articulates a desire for the existence of individual emotion to be acknowledged and approved by the community, through the revelation that public ties are primarily responsible for creating tension between individual knights more than aspects of their private identity. Moreover, the narrative elevates Morgause by setting her love for Lamerok in competition – and so comparing it – with that of Gwenyver and Lancelot, which Malory elsewhere promotes as a paradigm of 'trew' love (625). Morgause's emotional authority over Lamerok is arguably less complex than Gwenyver's over Lancelot, who is highly conflicted about his love for Arthur's queen. He values his public role almost as much as their love, if not more in certain moments. This is apparent when, after many years of loving each other, Lancelot communicates to Gwenyver the fear that his chivalric career has suffered because of their private relationship:

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 (589).

In contrast to Lancelot's ambivalence, Lamerok's argument with his fellow knights about the relative beauty of their queens unequivocally demonstrates that he, whilst acknowledging the tension between public and private bonds,

privileges his individual relationship with Morgause over his communal obligations to them.

The emotionally authoritative position in which Morgause is implicitly placed by Malory means that by loving Lamerok in private, she is doing more than 'gifting herself' to him and merely adapting her 'function as a commodity in the patriarchal chivalric community', as Armstrong argues (GCC 54). Although Armstrong allows that she is her 'own agent' in doing so, her framing of Morgause as even a self-possessed gift maintains her position as an object whose actions deliberately respond to communal rather than individual interests (GCC 53). Rather, I suggest that Malory's representation of Morgause shares certain correspondences with sympathetic depictions of other female protagonists and matriarchs, who express themselves as desiring subjects and act in their own individual interests without demonstrating an interest in the consequences of their actions within the community. Within the *Morte*, Nynyve provides one such example. She is the 'chyff lady of the laake', and Avalon's matriarch (689). Nynyve uses her unusual degree of power to effectively deprive Arthur's community of one of its best knights, as she 'wolde never suffir Sir Pelleas to be in no place where he shulde be in daungere of hys lyff' (689). However, her failure to integrate her individual desires into a patriarchal communal structure is framed positively, as Pelleas is said to have 'lyved . . . with her in grete reste' at the same time as Malory takes care to note this woman has 'done muche for Kynge Arthure' and is beyond reproach (689).

Elsewhere in romance, in the fourteenth-century Middle English version of *Sir Launfal*, the eponymous knight falls in love with an extra-courtly woman of supernatural parentage named 'Tryamour', whose father is said to be the 'Kyng of Fayrye' (Laskaya 280). Tryamour's name has associations with Saxon words for 'God', 'emperor' or 'leader', as Anne Laskaya notes (255 n.). Therefore 'Tryamour' effectively means 'leader of love'. Tryamour promises to make Launfal 'ryche' and empower him in public 'werre' and 'turnement'

(318, 331). However, this is promised on the condition that Launfal keep Tryamour's identity private; she orders him not to 'make no bost of me' in public to members of the court or else he will 'forlore', or 'lose' her favour (362, 365). In a fourteenth-century French romance about 'Ogier', a Danish knight, a version of Morgan le Fay 'shipwrecks her beloved' in order to 'bring him to her own abode' in the otherworldly realm of Avalon, away from Arthur's court in the mortal world (Paton 77). And in the fifteenth-century English version of the story *Partonope of Blois* the magical figure of Melior establishes the terms of a relationship with the knight Partonope on an enchanted 'Shipp', which she calls her 'Citee' and where the rules of their love are 'ordeyned' only by her (Buckley 63, 76, 77). Melior promises to be 'weddyd' to Partonope in future in his world on the condition that he 'neuer desyrous be / By ony crafte to haue the syght of me' (Buckley 193, 240-1). Melior polarises the visible, public realm where Partonope will 'ryse a fame' thanks to her and the invisible dimension of their private love on the ship where he is not allowed to look upon her until their marriage (Buckley 228). The promise of private happiness in a matriarchal space is also seen in the sixteenth-century *Isle of Ladies*. In this later romance, the knightly protagonist experiences a dream vision where he travels to an enchanted isle populated exclusively by 'ladyes', who are governed by a single 'mistres' (Pearsall 87, 107). This isle is a 'joieux paradise' for the knight until a chivalric superior and figure of patriarchal authority arrives and imposes traditional courtly customs, such as marriage, on this marginal space (Pearsall 128). Though distinct and varied in their representations of courtly people and mores, what these romances share is an association between peripherally marginal spaces and the expression of private identity.

Morgause is not portrayed by Malory as having any kind of supernatural powers. However, the above associations between privacy, matriarchy and emotion brought to light through their articulation in common environments across the *Morte* as well as in different romances by other authors correspond

with the portrayal of Morgause's relationship with Lamerok. Both only appear together or express individual desires for each other in the privacy of peripherally marginal locations, and Morgause's authority over Lamerok is demonstrated in the quest wilderness. Admittedly, a crucial difference between the otherworldly matriarchs and Morgause lies in the extent of her powers as a lover to be free of the communities in which their knights are a part. Tryamour, Ogier's Morgan, Melior and the governor of the *Isle of Ladies* all enjoy prolonged periods of time with their knights. They not only are directive but speak in their own voice and frequently. By contrast, in the *Morte* there is only a single and cursory description of Morgause and Lamerok together in the same space, considered in the next part of this chapter. Moreover, the tensions between the public role of the knights and the private identities of their lovers in *Sir Launfal*, *Ogier*, *Partonope of Blois* and *The Isle of Ladies* are resolved by the end of each romance and synthesise individual and communal desire without excessive damage to the female protagonists. Where damage occurs due to the knight's failure to prioritise his lady over his fellow knights or courtly community of origin, the effects are only temporary. Conversely, the matriarchal powers Morgause exercises as a romantic figure of authority is limited and its end permanent, since Morgause is beheaded and silenced by her own son, Gaheris, soon after.

To summarise, this part of the chapter has demonstrated the contrast between the different types of matriarchies embodied by Morgause, maternal and romantic. Both are spatially contingent, relying upon the power or protection offered by private and peripherally marginal spaces. As a matriarch in her own court of Orkney, Morgause's authority is based upon her position as a biological mother, which is publicly constituted by her family's vision of community. However, when speaking in Carlyon, Morgause is a peripherally marginal figure and not limited by constructions of her identity as primarily public. This position empowers Morgause to the degree that she may reimagine her role as mother in the context of her private desires and

individualistic perception of its function within the courtly community. Morgause's public humiliation of Arthur undermines his vision and practice of rulership in a variety of ways. Her words can be seen to offer a temporary replacement of patriarchal standards that most often privilege the community with a matriarchal preference for private identity. Morgause's maternal authority comes not just vertically through time but laterally in space, through the similarities she shares with other peripherally marginal women, namely widows and Lyonesse of Avalon, who support her son. In the matriarchal position founded upon romantic authority, Morgause's private identity is indirectly represented by her ability to influence Lamerok's actions through emotion. Her authority is seen in Lamerok's decision to privilege private identity over his public role on her behalf as well as on his own. Ultimately, the significance of Morgause's empowerment as a peripherally marginal matriarch in these moments lies in the fact that not only does she assert her private identity in a public space without negative consequences, but she does so in such a way that points to the constructive and positive potential inherent in the synthesis of public and private identity.

Useful Mother

Duby's assertion that first and foremost the medieval woman was publicly expected to be useful 'to her own sons' is played out vividly in the *Morte's* final portrayal of Morgause, in which the power of the Arthurian community over her individual person and identity is violently exercised (234). Gaheris beheads Morgause and later also kills her lover, Lamerok, claiming that their private relationship threatens his public position. Despite the empowerment of Morgause's private identity in her relationships with Arthur and Lamerok individually, the usefulness of her public, political roles eventually overwhelm her private and emotional expressions. Kim attributes Morgause's

death to the fact that she is 'one of the greatest landowners in Arthur's kingdom of Logres', whose son's actions ensure the exclusivity of their economic inheritance (48). However, this part of the chapter argues that the narrative's spatial positioning of Morgause rather than her economic wealth is integral to her eventual disempowerment and death, since her status as a 'landowner' ultimately fixes her in a central position within the patriarchal space of Orkney.

Even before Morgause's violent death, the power of her sons to invoke the public responsibilities of a queen is foreshadowed by Lamerok when he sorrowfully catalogues her roles within the community in an earlier moment:

O, thou fayre Quene of Orkeney, Kynge Lottys wyff, and modir
unto Sir Gawayne and to Sir Gaherys, and modir to many other, for
thy love I am in grete paynys! (347)

In this statement Lamerok lists himself last in the preceding catalogue of Morgause's responsibilities to other men in the public sphere as their queen, wife and mother. Lamerok's expression of the tensions between public and private is typically delayed until he reaches the geographical boundaries that provide access to a space where he can negotiate such emotion away from the community responsible for creating them. It is not until Lamerok reaches an edge, 'the brynke of the fountayne' in the quest wilderness, that he communicates the 'grete langoure and dole' cited above in 'the dolefullst complaynte of love that ever man herde' (347). I suggest Lamerok's 'grete paynys' come not from the private love he shares with Morgause but from the limitations placed on their love by Morgause's public functions. Lamerok names Gawain and Gaheris as her sons, omitting Aggravaine, Gareth and Mordred and replacing them with the indistinct 'many other', which exaggerates the scope of her biological motherhood as well as indicating the number of Morgause's duties as a figurative mother to the central court of Orkney's community more generally.

Whenever Morgause's sons appear, particularly together, they remind the reader of the central position she occupies within her marital community as their mother. This corresponds with Duby's assertion that for medieval communities 'a woman's real throne was the bed where she gave birth' (234). Duby's conflation of throne and bed as symbolic political constructs is also reflected in the *Morte* when Morgause is murdered for her perceived sexual transgressions as a queen—in bed.

Morgause loves a knight who is 'moche . . . preysed' in Arthur's court, Lamerok (368). However, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Morgause's oldest sons resent her relationship with Lamerok because they believe that his father, Pellinor, murdered their father, Lott. Gawain, Aggravaine and Gaheris assume their authority over Orkney as a space extends to Carlyon and that Morgause's relationship with Lamerok is viewed as equally problematic by both communities, not realising her emotional significance in Arthur's court. They decide to kill Lamerok in order to discontinue their mother's private activities, believing this will end the compromise to their own identities in all Arthurian public spheres. It is worth noting that Malory's representation of Morgause's death is one of the most extreme portrayals of violence perpetrated on a queen by her sons in medieval romance. Not only are beheadings rare in the genre overall, but when they are depicted beheadings tend to be inflicted on male protagonists and are sometimes only temporary or incomplete. For example, in *SGGK* the Green Knight does not die when he is beheaded, and Gawain's potential beheading manifests only in a small cut in his neck. Similarly, in *Amis and Amiloun* Sir Amis 'schar' or cut the 'throtes' of his two children, who are miraculously found, by the end of the romance, to be healed and appear 'Without wemme and wound / Hool and sound' (Foster 2419-20).

Besides Malory's apparently singular obsession with beheading (a point to which this part of the chapter returns), which occurs to women much more frequently in the *Morte* compared to other romances from the Middle Ages,

the violence of Morgause's death is highlighted by the speed at which events unravel. This is particularly evident when the circumstances of this moment are cited in full:

Thenne by the meane of sir Gawayn and his bretheren, they sente for her moder there besydes, fast by a castel besyde Camelot; and alle was to that entente to slee sir Lamorak. The Quene of Orkeney was there but a whyle, but sir Lamorak wyst of their beyng and was ful fayne; and for to make an ende of this matere, he sente unto her, and ther betwixe them was a nyght assygned that sir Lamorak shold come to her. Therof was ware Syre Gaherys, and rode afore the same nyght, and wayted uppon Sir Lamerok; and thene he sy where he cam rydyng all armed, and where he alyght and tyed his hors to a prevay postren, and so he went into a parler and unarmed hym. And than he wente unto the quenys bed, and she made of hym passynge grete joy and he of her agayne, for ayther lovid other passynge sore. So whan Sir Gaherys sawe his tyme, he cam to there beddis syde all armed, wyth his swerde naked, and suddaynly he gate his modir by the heyre and strake of her hede.

Whan Sir Lamerok sawe the blood daysshe uppon hym all hote – whyche was the bloode that he loved passyng well – wyte you well he was sore abaysshed and dismayed of that dolerous syght. And therewithall Sir Lamerok lepte oute of the bed in his shurte as a knyght dismayed, saynge thus: 'A, Sir Gaherys! Knyght of the Table Rounde, fowle and evyll have ye done, and to you grete shame! Alas, why have ye slayne youre modir that bare you?' For with more ryght ye shulde have slayne me I.'

'The offence haste thou done' seyde Sir Gaherys, 'natwithstandyng a man is borne to offir his servyse; but yett sholdyst thou beware with whom thou medelyst, for thou haste put my bretherne and me to a shame. And thy fadir slew oure fadir; and thou to ly by oure modir is to mucche shame for us to suffir' (368-9).

Morgause is entirely silent from the beginning to the end of this scene. However, I suggest the extremity of the violence described in the narrative deliberately juxtaposes constructions of public and private identity by following the warmth of Morgause's interaction with Lamerok so swiftly with her cold beheading by Gaheris. Furthermore, the violence of Morgause's death is figured in the narrative in ways that arguably imply a criticism of the

traditional delineations of public and private space seen to be enforced in the *Morte*.

Although Morgause asks Lamerok to come to a private place that is ostensibly distant and protected from the central court of Orkney, as indicated by the 'prevay postren' where they meet, the 'castel' is not private in the same way as peripherally marginal locations which lie entirely outside of courtly boundaries (368). For this reason Morgause may be attacked in what is often imagined as the most vulnerable and private of spaces. On one hand, Christopher R. Clason argues that the beds of the nobility encapsulated notions of 'calm, prayer, peace, sleep, and meditation' as the 'innermost realm of the court' (284). On the other, as Leitch argues, 'indoor privacy for a transgressive lovers' tryst required the transformation of a normally public space into an exclusive one', which was not always possible or successfully performed ('Enter the Bedroom' 42). Leitch adds that '[p]rivate space is not concrete, but rather produced, delimited or forestalled by negotiations of power' ('Enter the Bedroom' 43). In this case, Morgause meets Lamerok in one of Arthur's adjoining castles but, as I will demonstrate, her sons transform it into a different kind of space. Morgause's hopes of enjoying privacy with Lamerok are literally as well as figuratively misplaced in this scene.

The limitation of private female space in romance is a phenomenon seen elsewhere in romance besides the *Morte*. Leitch argues that the exercise of patriarchal power manifests in the restriction not just of the physical 'person' of a woman but of her social or architectural 'private space' and is a 'recurring mode in Middle English romance' ('Enter the Bedroom' 40). For example, in in *King Horn* and *The Squire of Low Degree* Leitch observes that:

Certain conduct is expected in certain spaces; according to the dominant interests of the kingdom, ruled by the king from the hall, the bedchamber ought to contribute to the goals of this wider sociopolitical sphere by producing and nurturing legitimate heirs and fostering chivalric alliances ('Enter the Bedroom' 43).

In keeping with Leitch's formulation of patriarchal power as contingent upon the control of spaces in which women act, I suggest the space for the confrontation between Morgause, Lamerok and her sons is similarly organised and the terms of agency defined 'by the meane of sir Gawayn and his bretheren' (368). Crucially, the fact that the 'castel' is located 'besyde', i.e. outside, Camelot, makes it an extension of Orkney and patriarchal power (368). As such, the scope of Morgause's power within this space is predetermined; she may only act as a centrally marginal queen, whose identity will be perceived in its publicly constituted state. This is reflected in the use of the term 'moder' when Morgause is 'sent for' by her sons (368). That the castle space is conditioned by patriarchal rather than matriarchal authority is implied in the directive of Morgause's sons who 'sent' for her, which echoes Lott's control over Morgause's movements during their marriage when he 'sente' her to spy on Arthur (29). As if understanding the significance of space to constructions of power, Gawain and his brothers force Morgause into a space that does not, this time, lie beyond the reach of the court of Orkney's authority. The consequences of Morgause's sons' ability to control the space in which she is enclosed, which would otherwise be private, are foreshadowed in Lamerok's wish 'to make an ende of this matere' (368). The 'matter' refers to Lamerok's 'ful fayne' desire to see Morgause but a dark irony exists in the slippage between the meanings of 'mater' as 'matter', 'story' and 'mother' (368; *MED*). For, this scene describes both the death of Morgause as a mother and the end of her trajectory as a protagonist.

Gaheris justifies the murder of his mother to Lamerok by explaining 'thou haste put my bretherne and me to a shame . . . thy fadir slew oure fadir; and thou to ly by oure modir is to mucche shame for us to suffir' (369). He reiterates a third time that Morgause has brought 'shame' on 'her chydryn' specifically (369). In other words, Gaheris cannot tolerate the idea that the body responsible for producing him and his brothers is the same body with which Lamerok, the purported murderer of their father, 'medelyst' (369). This is

conveyed by the focus on Morgause's 'blode', which as Angela Florschuetz remarks, 'was a ubiquitous marker of identity in the Middle Ages', particularly associated with public constructions of motherhood (368; 37). Blood could be figuratively 'invoked to describe or define one's character' and 'lineage', as well as having the more literal function as a signifier of 'health' (37). The close figurative relationship between a mother's blood specifically and public male identity is humorously expressed in the Middle English burde *Sir Corneus*, where Arthur exclaims in public to his court:

Of woman com duke and kyng;
I yow tell without lesyng,
Of them com owre manhed (Furrow 70-72).

Gaheris's much darker reference to his brothers as the 'chyl dren' of Morgause, whom he reduces from a living person into a concentration of 'blode', conflates her identity as an individual who experiences private emotions with her communal role as the central queen of Orkney (368). This is symbolised by the description of Lamerok's entry into the 'quenys bed' (368). The same dichotomy of body and emotions seen in the portrayal of Igraine's marriage to Uther is introduced into Morgause's trajectory by her sons. Consistent with Malory's representation of her mother, then, Morgause's earlier constructive synthesis of identities comes to an end because Gaheris exclusively privileges her public role over her private desires. In this scene, Gaheris transforms Morgause's body from a site where private identity is expressed through her emotions for Lamerok into a political ground of competition between courts and patriarchal authorities, over which her sons struggle to regain ownership.

The image of queen-as-terrain should remind readers of the consequences for Morgause's mother, Igraine, while she was enclosed in the castle of Tintagel: namely, her rape and consequent silence. When read with these spatial resonances in mind, the sexual undertones to Morgause's murder by Gaheris become apparent and contribute additional layers of meaning to the

scene and to the significance of Morgause's private identity in the narrative as a whole. To start, Morgause is specified as being in 'bed', an obvious site of sexual activity (368). Gaheris's sword is described as 'naked', which emphasises the physicality of the scene as this word is later repeated when Gaheris says Lamerok is also 'naked' (369). Morgause's state of dress is not mentioned, but given Lamerok's unclothed state the vulnerability of the queen's body can be inferred by association. The description that Gaheris 'strake of her hede' shares linguistic resonances with either the threatened or actual loss of 'maydynhode' or virginity through rape depicted by the *Morte* in other moments.⁶¹ Although Morgause is not a virgin, the sexualisation of Gaheris's presence creates a resonance between the words 'motherhood' and 'maidenhood' that presents her death as a kind of rape or *raptus*. Forms of *raptus* by family are not unheard of elsewhere in romance. For example, in *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimmild* the father of the princess Rimmild 'bete hir so pat sche gan blede', which Leitch agrees is 'redolent of rape' (Mills 499; 'Enter the Bedroom' 45). Given the significance of rape to constructions of private identity in the *Morte* already established in Chapter One, the scene of Morgause's beheading encourages a reading beyond a public level.

Signs of Morgause's private identity may be inferred from the intense imagery of blood in this passage, despite the fact that she never speaks once or communicates through non-verbal gestures. Before their meeting is 'assyned', Lamerok initially 'sente unto her', suggesting he wishes Morgause to come to him if 'unto' is understood as meaning 'for' (368). However, Morgause instead encourages Lamerok to 'come to her', which indicates her individual will and activity may be inferred beyond the surface level of the text (368). The reciprocity of private identity and emotion between Morgause and Lamerok, implied in the discussion 'betwixe' them to decide upon a

⁶¹ For example, Torre's mother loses her 'maydynhode' by 'force' (65). Merlin is infatuated with 'Nynyve', a 'Lady of the Laake' and 'allwayes he lay aboute to have hir maydynhode' (79). In a different context yet again, Sir Bors saves a lady from losing her 'maydynhode' (548).

location for their meeting, is fully disclosed when they come together in person: 'she made of hym passynge grete joy, and he of her agayne, for ayther lovid other passynge sore' (368). Morgause's assertion of private identity is evident in the fact that she is portrayed as the first one to greet Lamerok in 'passynge grete joy'. This description at least equals, if not exceeds, the description of her son Gareth as her 'joy and bliss', since she feels not just 'joy' for Lamerok but 'surpassingly great joy' (*MED*). Furthermore, the words 'passynge grete' are rarely used in conjunction with one another in this text, which means Morgause's emotion is presented here as particularly strong (*MED*).⁶²

The intensity of Morgause's expression of love is amplified by its immediate termination by Gaheris, who in the next instant 'strake of her hede' (368). The heat of her 'passynge grete joye' a moment before is instantly transferred to the 'hote' blood that pours from her body seconds later (368). Morgause's presence is both close and distant, meaning her private identity occupies a paradoxical space in the narrative. This paradox is reflected in the depiction of Lamerok's confusion, which is conveyed by his attempts to seek evidence of the life-force behind the emotions expressed so recently; rather than seeing the 'quene' or 'lady' he loves in front of him, Lamerok 'saw the blood days she uppon hym . . . whych was the *bloode* that he loved passyng well' (368, emphasis added). Although Morgause is in one sense objectified because she is reduced to nothing more than blood, the harsh extremity of this process only serves to emphasise the loss of her private identity, which was implicitly so active and passionate prior to her death. Moreover, Lamerok's preoccupation with her blood underlines in a different way the speed with which their privacy has been disrupted since her blood is still 'hote' and grotesquely pictures the recency of her presence (368).

⁶² There are only a few other examples of the superlative adjectives, 'passing' and 'great', being used in conjunction: once in the context of 'passynge grete slaughtir' in battle; once to describe the 'passyng grete dole' of Palomydes's mother, who misses her son; and once to describe the 'passynge grete and mervaylous' landscape of the Grail Quest (25, 363, 559).

Morgause's private identity continues to resonate in the text despite her untimely death, namely through Lamerok. Rather than diminishing the significance of her own identity, the closeness of Morgause's association with Lamerok enables signs of her private identity to linger in the text long after her death, to which individual members of the community respond expressively. Lamerok first removes himself from court in a typical gesture of private mourning: 'for shame and sorowe he wolde nat ryde to Kynge Arthurs courte, but rode another way' (369). When Lamerok finds himself in the company of Arthur, he emphasises the depth of their love and precludes any reading of their relationship as a temporary affair by claiming: 'Her deth shall I never forgete' (395). Lamerok later reiterates this indirectly when refuses to return to Arthur's court, which he will do 'in no wyse' and he swears 'never' to trust Gawain and his brothers for what they have done (400).

Readers are further reminded of Morgause's beheading several times afterwards in the narrative when references to this event are relived, again in the trajectory of Lamerok. In one scene, Gaheris, Aggravaine and Gawain continue to demonstrate resentment for Lamerok (and their mother's perceived public crimes) when they decide to 'be revenged' upon Tristram 'in the despyte of Sir Lamerok' (411). Soon after, Lamerok himself is eventually murdered by 'Sir Gawayne, Sir Aggravayne, Sir Gaherys, and Sir Mordred' (416). It could be assumed that this represents the end of Morgause's indirect presence in the text via Lamerok; however, the community discusses his death repeatedly. The idea that private identity is specifically at risk from these brothers is expressed in one summary of their murder of Lamerok, which, like their mother's, happens 'in a pryvy place' (416). Their ability to commandeer supposedly protective spaces is reflected in the description of these knights as 'four daungerus knyghtes' (423).

Of all the discussions of Lamerok and his death, which I suggest implicitly remind readers of Morgause by association, one figure in particular evokes her private identity: Gareth. Her youngest legitimate son makes a point of

disassociating himself from his older brothers in a way that is visible to the community, saying 'for cause that I undirstonde they be murtherars of good knyghtes, I lefte there company – and wolde God I had bene besyde Sir Gawayne whan that moste noble knyght Sir Lamerok was slayne' (416). Given that Gareth views Lamerok as 'noble', his wish that he might have prevented Lamerok's death implicitly suggests the same in his mother's case. In fact, Gareth's preface to this description contains linguistic resonances with the scene of her beheading when he states, 'I meddyll nat of their maters; and therefore there is none that lovyth me of them' (416). The author's choice to use the words 'meddyll' and 'maters' in Gareth's speech remembers Lamerok's 'meddling' with Morgause that Gaheris resents and the 'matter' ended in that scene (368). The fact that other members of the community take care to point out Gareth's absence in Lamerok's death implies that he was also 'away' when Morgause was beheaded (424).

It is important to recognise such implicit reminders of Morgause's private identity in other protagonists's words and actions, since they reinforce and enhance on a subtextual level what Arthur states explicitly more than once. Whilst Morgause's beheading represents one of the most violent deaths of any female protagonist in the text, Arthur explicitly and publicly condemns it. Arthur is first described as being 'passynge wrothe', as are 'many other knyghtes' (369). Arthur's position is potentially ambiguous in one moment, when he seems to fear the loss of his knights more than he grieves for Morgause. When Lancelot says 'here is a grete myscheff fallyn by felony . . . your syster is thus shamefully i-slayne; and I dare say hit was wrought by treson', he adds, 'I dare say also that ye shall lose that good knyght, Sir Lamerok' (369). Arthur responds to the latter comment rather than Lancelot's former profound expression of individual distress and condemnation of Morgause's death in saying, 'God deffende . . . that I sholde lese Sir Lamerok' (369). Nevertheless, Arthur's immediate exile of Gaheris for the murder of Morgause complicates such a reading, since he 'commaunded hym to go oute

of his courte' in a demonstration of public punishment (369). Laura K. Bedwell finds that this 'strong stance' is superficial, since Gaheris's exile is 'short-lived' (12). 'Not long after he is banished', Bedwell continues, 'Gaheris fights alongside his brothers in the tournament at Surluse' and Arthur 'accepts Gaheris' presence' back at court (12). However, I would counter this view by suggesting that this represents an example of Arthur's capacity to forgive, rather than his lack of feeling for Morgause necessarily. I concur instead with Wyatt, who affirms that, ultimately, 'Arthur's and the court's reaction to Gaheris' murder of his mother is one of uniform disgust and outrage, so Gaheris' justification for his actions is not representative of the Arthurian community' (forthcoming). Indeed, when the topic of Morgause's death is raised again much later, Arthur describes it as a 'grete wronge' and expresses the desire that Morgause's public and private life had been synthesised: 'Hit had bene muche fayrer and bettir that ye hadde wedded her, for ye ar a kynges sonne as well as they' (395). Arthur's potential approval of a marriage between Morgause and Lamerok arguably presents his wish that Lamerok could be 'at acorde' with Gaheris and his brothers in a more positive light with respect to Morgause (396). Rather than devaluing Morgause's private identity in the desire for the public conflict in his community to end, Arthur effectively imagines an alternative future where Morgause could have occupied a different space. In the space he imagines, Morgause might have synthesised her communal duties as a royal wife and mother *with* her individual desires as a lover. Therefore, Armstrong's assertion that the description of Morgause's death ultimately 'points up the hierarchy of transgressions and values around which the ideology of the Arthurian community is ordered', in which 'Morgause's transgression, clearly, poses the greater threat to the social order than does Lamorak's', does not allow for the nuances that render her death in a critical light (GCC 54). For, by returning to Morgause's death in a variety of different ways, the narrative draws attention to the fact that the method of constructing identity as primarily public within the court is not only an

unreliable method of sustaining a stable community but is directly responsible for its active destruction.

As mentioned earlier, the destruction of community through the maltreatment of individual Arthurian women is a recurrent theme in the *Morte*, specifically in its repetition of the motif of beheading which occurs surprisingly frequently in Malory's text compared to contemporary Middle English and French romances. Several other women, who are either peripherally marginal or appear in peripherally marginal areas of the text, are also beheaded and their deaths are condemned in similar terms to Morgause's by several protagonists.⁶³ Firstly, the original 'Lady of the Lake', who gave Arthur his second Excalibur, is beheaded by Balyn. When he 'smote of hyr hede before Kynge Arthur', in other words publicly, Arthur exclaims:

Alas, for shame! . . . Why have ye do so? Ye have shamed me and all my courte, for thys lady was a lady that I was much beholdynge to, and hyder she com undir my sauffconduyghte. Therefore I shall never forgyff you that trespasse' (43).

The similarity of the manner of the Lady of the Lake's death, as well as its proximity to Arthur, suggests a corresponding implication for Morgause. Her death so near, 'besyde Camelot', includes her figure in an imagined group of women Arthur means to protect under his 'sauffconduyghte'.

Secondly, not long after Gawain 'smote of' the head of a lady 'by myssefortune' (68). Interestingly, Gaheris is present and condemns this act as 'fowle and shamefully done!' and predicts 'that shame shall never frome you' (68). This highlights two things about Malory's portrayal of Morgause; that

⁶³ One beheading of a woman, 'Aunowre', is not comparable. This woman is a 'grete sorseres', who for 'many dayes . . . had loved Kynge Arthure, and bycause she wolde have had hym to lye by her, she cam into that contry' (297). Aunowre attempts to coerce Arthur into a sexual relationship with magic, but the king's respect for Gwenyver overcomes his opponent's powers of sorcery and so she decides instead to have Arthur 'slayne' (297). Aunowre consequently intends to cut off Arthur's 'hede', making him the original intended target of a beheading, but an intervention by Nyneve enables Arthur to behead Aunowre 'with the same swerde' instead (298).

she is a centrally marginal queen whose family has a history of beheading; and that, by Gaheris's own professed standards his later treatment of his mother in reaction to her private activities is at fault. Just as the lady Gawain beheads is killed instead of her lover, the knight whose head he originally intended to 'have strekyn of', Gaheris begins with the purpose of killing Lamerok but beheads his mother instead (68). Fries sees Gaheris's act as a merely 'ironic' element of the text ('Malory's Tristram' 612). Yet his hypocrisy has a deeper meaning and relevance for female identity in the *Morte*. In both these instances – and indeed in all the beheadings listed here – the private identities of lovers can be inferred and inform the reader's understanding of loss, primarily at the level of individual emotional experience. The implications for the community are noted afterwards and debatably appear to be of secondary importance in the narrative.

Thirdly, a woman under Lancelot's safe conduct is beheaded after her public role and private desires conflict. Lancelot is travelling 'many wylde wayes' when he sees 'a knyght chasyng a lady with a naked swerde to have slayne hir . . . she cryed on Sir Launcelot and prayde hym to rescowe her' (174). The 'swerde naked' used to behead Morgause is reminiscent of this moment and similarly is used in a context where an individual woman's body is publicly conceived as a space to which her husband (and other male family) have certain rights (368). For, in this instance the knight states the lady is his 'wyff' and she has 'betrayed' him by loving his first cousin more than she should (174). The knight tricks Lancelot into looking the other way for a moment, during which 'suddeynly he swappd of the ladyes hede' (175). Lancelot reacts by calling this a 'shamefull' act that affects both the lady's husband and him, 'me' (175). Lancelot, like Gaheris's earlier judgment, decides the memory of this lady should be respected forever. He commands the knight to 'take this lady and the hede, and bere it uppon the' making him swear 'to bere hit allwayes uppon thy bak and never to reste tyll thou com to my lady, Quene Gwennyver' (175). This command effectively produces a permanent

symbol for the community of an individual woman's suffering. Gwenyver also implies her memory should be observed forever, in private as well as in public spaces: 'and ye go to ony bedde, the dede body shall lye with you' (176). Evidently, early on in the *Morte* the notion already exists that any violence done to women will be permanently attached to both the public and private identities of knights.

Fourthly, in another episode prior to Morgause's beheading, Tristram comes to a castle where the following 'olde custom' is maintained:

whan a knyght commyth here, he muste nedis fyght with oure lorde; and he that is the wayker muste lose his hede. And whan that is done, if his lady that he bryngyth be fowler than is oure lordys wyff, she muste lose hir hede; and yf she be fayrer preved than ys oure lady, than shall the lady of this castell lose her hede (257).

Tristram calls this a 'foule custom' twice 'and an horryble' (257, 258). However, his manner of ending the tradition is unexpected in that he 'smote of' the 'hede' of this castle's lady (259). All the knights involved agree repeatedly that the castle's lord had kept a 'shamefull custom' without condemning Tristram for the same shame. It is beyond the scope of the present study to discuss all the implications of this act for Tristram and the women he encounters elsewhere in the *Morte*. However, in the context of Morgause there is a significant correspondence between the space in which Tristram beheads this lady and the space in which Morgause is beheaded. Both occur *outside* of central spaces governed by Arthur, and at this point in the narrative Tristram is not yet a knight of the Round Table.

All these beheadings occur either before the Pentecostal Oath is formally established and/or outside spaces regulated by Arthur (77). Moreover, these five beheadings of women share an intratextual relationship where each accumulatively derives more significance as the narrative progresses. Morgause is the last woman to be beheaded in the *Morte*, which once again associates a member of Arthur's female family as a paradigmatic example of

behaviour that is antithetical to Pentecostal promotion of women's 'ryghtes' (77). Though Morgause is not the first woman to be beheaded, as Igraine is the first to be raped, the fact that she is the last of five is an alternatively prominent position. Morgause's death is structurally positioned at the very centre of the *Morte's* narrative. As the most centrally marginal and last of these beheaded women, Morgause, through Malory's striking portrayal of her private desires and emotions, arguably leaves the most memorable impression of the destructive impact of public constructions of identity, both in the community imagined by Malory as well as in the reader's experience of the text.

Some critics have contended that Morgause's death is unimportant to Arthur, to the fellowship, to public notions of worship and as a consequence, perhaps also to the reader. For example, Bedwell surmises this from the fact that Arthur 'never holds the four brothers responsible' for their actions in private and 'metes out only a minor punishment in his sister's death' (17). Regarding narrative space, Kim comments that 'Malory's *Book of Sir Tristram* does not allow much space for Lamerok's love for Queen Morgause' (48). In opposition to these perspectives, this chapter has illustrated not only the existence of Morgause's private identity but the many signs that it is elevated in the narrative. The sheer number of other protagonists through whom aspects of Morgause's death are echoed suggests that private female authority is differently but equally important as that of public male authority, when considering constructions of identity and power in the *Morte* as a whole. Meaning is found in, rather than made negligible by, the contradictions between theory and practice, or by the words and actions of protagonists noted by critics above. For example, in Jesmok's discussion of beheaded women in the *Morte*, in which she includes Morgause, Jesmok writes that the reader is left not knowing what statements by protagonists they can 'trust' ('Absence of Trust' 26). I suggest that in the context of Morgause, the fact that readers may 'distrust the parity between narration and events' is what causes them to question and re-evaluate the narrative's ostensibly 'simple' or

consistent public presentation of identity (Jesmok 'Absence of Trust' 28). Indeed, the violence of Morgause's portrayal that may leave readers 'reeling' as in other instances of crimes against women, is also the aspect that underlines the tensions of public and private inherent in her identity (Jesmok 'Absence of Trust' 26). Her portrayal, as well as being significant in and of itself, suggests Malory's work as a whole is concerned with women and emotion beyond their implications purely in the context of masculine chivalric community.

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter foregrounded its examination of Morgause's expressions of identity in the *Morte* by arguing that scholars have over-emphasised the implications of her actions for the Arthurian community and public sphere. Many aspects of Morgause's private identity are also seen in the text, which have been explored in the second, third and fourth parts of this chapter in particular. When viewed in conjunction with one another, as this chapter demonstrates, the public and private identities of Morgause together articulate anxieties about the ability of individuals to find an appropriate space in which to situate their emotions amongst the broader nexus of political concerns that define the extent and limits of their role, or roles, within the community.

The dichotomy created between public and private, communal and individual, or political and emotional identities in the text allows for the articulation of the contingency of expression and power on their representations in space. Arthur's court of Carlyon is a peripherally marginal space relative to Orkney and when Morgause acts or speaks in Carlyon, she does so from a position of empowerment. All of her encounters with Arthur elevate her private identity in the imaginative world of the *Morte* as well as in the perspective of the reader, through theme, imagery and structure. In these

moments Morgause speaks and acts at least on terms of equality with the king, if not superiority, when they meet in Carlyon. Morgause is most powerful as a matriarch when exercising her authority in private, whether maternal or romantic, because she acts as an individual. By contrast, Morgause's maternal authority, when publicly constituted, is predicated on communal expectations of her duties to her late husband and their four sons, who are figures of patriarchal authority in the text. Their official centre is the court of Orkney, in which Morgause is a centrally marginal queen. Consequently, when Morgause is seen to act or speak in Orkney or in other spaces controlled by members of the court of Orkney, she is typically silent and disempowered.

Morgause's trajectory sees her gradually rise to an elevated position of power, which reaches its apex in the scene where she publicly humiliates Arthur for his treatment of Gareth. However, her fall is radically steep and pronounced when she dies as a silent and centrally marginal queen when beheaded by Gaheris. Malory's depiction of Morgause's death presents the competition between public and private identity in an unusually violent manner in the context of other medieval romances' treatment of women. Still, Morgause's private identity is described sympathetically; both as a specific event and as the last and most significant of several shameful deaths of beheaded women. This raises questions about what the *Morte* really articulates about space and identity in general, through the violence of their permeation. Morgause's beheading could be used to suggest that women in this text are expected to privilege their public roles over their private desires and not 'resist their particular [public] identity construction as commodities to be exchanged' (Armstrong GCC 49). More likely, I argue, is that Morgause's trajectory demonstrates how the Arthurian world—and perhaps, by extension, the medieval society beyond the text—ultimately offers no truly private or safe space in which individuals may be free from communal constraints but does not necessarily negate the desirability of private expression. The latter reading, then, suggests the *Morte's* depictions of violence against women uniquely as

well as collectively criticise the rigidity of public theoretical constructions of identity, by demonstrating how, in practice, the identities of individuals are fluid, changeable and complicate binary definitions of space.

CHAPTER THREE

EXILE AND CONTROL: MORGAN'S RULE OF SPACE, TIME AND SELF

The Internal Coherence of Morgan's Private Identity

Morgan le Fay is one of the most powerful female protagonists of medieval Arthurian literature, as well as the most notoriously complex in her particular representation by Malory. Traditionally, Morgan has been perceived as an incoherent, ambiguous and contradictory figure, who threatens patriarchal constructions of identity by displaying what is construed as politically and sexually aggressive behaviour. Such a perspective derives, in part, from scholarly emphasis on the public impact and consequences Morgan's acts have for the Arthurian community, as this chapter will explore in detail. For example, Morgan is critically renowned for making an attempt on Arthur's life by stealing his sword Excalibur and providing him with an imitation he uses in a fight against her lover, Accolon, as a result of which Arthur nearly dies.⁶⁴ Whilst the king's wounds are healed in an abbey, Morgan then effectively deprives him of immortality by stealing the scabbard to Excalibur, which prevents the wearer losing any blood, and throwing it into a lake where it is permanently lost.⁶⁵ Morgan also attempts to reveal Gwenyver's relationship with Lancelot to Arthur and his community more than once by sending enchanted objects to their court, which expose infidelity.⁶⁶ Knowledge of Gwenyver's adultery with Lancelot is eventually used as the catalyst for

⁶⁴ This episode is predicted on p. 52 and spans pp. 84-91.

⁶⁵ The loss of Arthur's scabbard is described on pp. 92-94.

⁶⁶ Morgan sends an enchanted drinking horn, which is capable of detecting infidelity in those who drink from it, in her first attempt to undermine Arthur (discussed in the second part of 'Peripheral Matriarch' on pp. 268-274). Morgan also sends a shield to Arthur's court depicting the love-triangle between Lancelot, Gwenyver and Arthur (discussed on pp. 333-7 of the same section).

Arthur's loss of life, fellowship and kingdom in 'The Deth of Arthur'.⁶⁷ In addition to Morgan's moments of confrontation with Arthur, she is depicted by Malory as harming his knights; she abducts Lancelot several times, temporarily imprisons Tristram and physically wounds Alexander before healing him.⁶⁸ These episodes almost always tend to be read through the lens of the Arthurian community's needs and constructions of identity. In this context they are perceived by other characters and scholars alike as exemplifying the danger of Morgan's power for the public sphere, despite her physical distance from courtly centres (see review below). In a disregard for the healing role Morgan plays in the moments leading up to Arthur's ambiguous death when she transports him to Avalon, Morgan's reputation is predominately determined by acts prior to this episode that ostensibly express aggression first and foremost.⁶⁹

Morgan is consistently portrayed as a powerful protagonist throughout her various incarnations in medieval literature, regardless of whether she appears often or prominently in any given narrative, and the *Morte* is no exception. This consistency has resulted in a range of scholarly studies about her, which may be divided into four distinct strands of inquiry. One of the most prominent is that of Morgan's literary origins, which are most commonly attributed to the mythological Celtic goddess or deity, the Morrigan. Paton was the earliest writer to posit this in her significant study, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (1903), as noted in the introduction. The popularity of this avenue of inquiry is attested by the many related studies conducted subsequently.⁷⁰ Most recently, Hebert's *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter*

⁶⁷ This part of the narrative spans pp. 646-698.

⁶⁸ Morgan forcibly imprisons Lancelot on pp. 154-5, and attempts to trap him with a company of thirty knights and ladies on p. 311. Tristram is temporarily imprisoned in a scene described on pp. 333-4. Furthermore, Morgan's interactions with Alexander span pp. 382-6. These are all episodes I explore in detail in the section subtitled 'Peripheral Matriarch', pp. 244-71.

⁶⁹ This episode is described on pp. 687-9.

⁷⁰ For other studies on Morgan's origins and potential derivation from these different deities, see Dax Donald Carver, 'Goddess Dethroned: The Evolution of Morgan le Fay' (Unpublished MA Thesis: Georgia State University, 2006); Clark Colahan, 'Morgain the Fay and the Lady of

(2013) offers an updated and comprehensive survey of the possible Celtic sources for Morgan's literary incarnations across a wide time period from her high medieval roots in chronicles such as Geoffrey's *HRB* through to later medieval romances, Victorian rewritings of Arthurian myth and her incarnations in the modern fantasy novel. Conversely, on the question of origins Larrington rejects the notion that Morgan descends from the Celtic Morrigan and attests to the strength of this protagonist's connections with Greek myths and instead offers Medea and Circe as influential models in Morgan's literary representations (*KAE* 8). Pérez also preferentially looks to Greek sources, though she takes a psychoanalytical approach and compares Morgan with the Oresteian figures, Clytemnestra and Cassandra (16). On a rare occasion, Morgan's correspondence with the Valkyrie of Norse mythology has also been considered.⁷¹ Morgan's potential derivation from Celtic, antique or Norse divinities is often used to explain how she is commonly portrayed as being able 'to cause injury and death' as well as 'to ensure health and life' because these contradictory powers evoke the capricious qualities of divinities (Hebert 16).

Besides Morgan's origins, another popular strand of scholarly inquiry compares this protagonist to supernatural figures in romance, namely 'fairy'

the Lake in a Broader Mythological Context', *SELIM: Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature* 1 (1991): 83-105; Zoë Eve Enstone "'Wicheckraft & Vilaine": Morgan le Fay in Medieval Arthurian Literature' (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Leicester, 2011); William C. Hale, 'Origins: Morgaine, Morgana, Morgause', *Avalon to Camelot* (1984): 35-36; Harf-Lancner, *Les fées Au Moyen Âge: Morgane Et Melusine: la naissance des fées* (Geneve: Slatkine, 1984); Yoko Hemmi, 'Morgan la Fee's Water Connection', *Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature* 6 (1991): 19-36; Margaret Jennings, 'Heavens defend me from that Welsh Fairy' (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, V, v, 85): The Metamorphosis of Morgain la Fee in the Romances' (Liverpool: Cairns, 1981): 197-205; Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Morgain La Fee and the Celtic Goddesses', *Speculum* 20.2 (1945): 183-203; Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Morgain la Fée in Oral Tradition', *Romania* 80 (1959): 337-367; Paule Mertens-Fonck, 'Morgan, Fee ou Deesse', *Melanges offerts a Rita Lejeune, Professeur a l'Universite de Liege*, (Gembloux: Duculot, 1968): 1067-76; Victoria Sharpe, 'The Goddess Restored', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 9.1 (1998): 36-45; Charlotte Spivak, 'Morgan Le Fay: Goddess or Witch?', *Popular Arthurian Traditions* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Popular, 1992): 18-23.

⁷¹ For a rare reading of Morgan as a Valkyrie, see Sandra Elaine Capps on 'Morgan le Fay as Other in English Medieval and Modern Texts' (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Tennessee, 1996).

mistresses and the 'loathly lady' or 'hag' figures.⁷² These women's powers are less divine and globally overarching than the goddesses' named above but they still wield a strong emotional influence over knights, often enabled by their access to lesser but still potent magical powers. As Laurence Harf-Lancner writes, from at least the twelfth century, 'supernatural women' or 'fairies' are 'more beautiful than the most beautiful among mortal women' and 'immediately inspire love' ('Fairy Godmothers' 141). Nevertheless, their power to shapeshift links them to 'loathly ladies', who, though similar to fairies in their 'self-controlled sexuality', instead have 'disgusting forms' as well as an 'out of control' and 'aggressive nature' (Hebert, 56-57). These characteristics make supernatural women concurrently desirable and 'repellent' (Stock, 128). Both reactions are evident in Morgan's publicly constituted identity in the *Morte*, since she is described by Malory as 'a fayre lady as ony myght be' who engages in a sexual relationship with Accolon early on in the narrative but later terrifies the knight Alexander, who would 'levir kut away' his 'hangers' than engage in sexual intercourse with Morgan (32, 385).

⁷² Morgan's status as a fairy or as an analogue of this type in romance is discussed by Fanni Bogdanow, 'Morgan's Role in the Thirteenth-Century French Prose Romances of the Arthurian Cycle', *Medium Aevum* 38 (1969): 123-33; K. M. Briggs, 'Human-Fairy Marriages', *Folklore* 67.1 (1956): 53-54; Edmond Faral, 'L'isle d'Avallon et la fee Morgane', *Melanges de Linguistique et de literature offerts a M. Alfred Jeanroy*. Paris: Droz, 1928: 243-53; Charles Foulon, 'La fee Morgue chez Chretien de Troyes', *FS Frappier* (1970): 283-90; Marcel Françon, 'La Fée Morgain et les Chroniques gargantuines', *Modern Language Notes* 64.1 (1949): 52-53; Marcel Françon, 'La Fée Morgain et Ronsard', *Romance Philology* 2 (1949): 2-3; Laurence Harf-Lancner (1984); Jill M. Hebert (2013); Paule Mertens-Fonck (1968); Myra Olstead, 'Lancelot at the Grail Castle', *Folklore* 76.1 (1965): 48-57; Daniel Poirion, 'Le Role de la fee Morgue et de ses compagnes dans le Jeu de la feuille', *Bulletin Bibliographique de la Societe Internationale Arthurienne* 18 (1966): 125-135; Eve Salisbury, 'Lybeaus Desconus: transformation, adaptation, and the monstrous-feminine', *Arthuriana* 24.1 (2014): 66-85; Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993): 169-71; Lorraine Kochanske Stock, 'The Hag of Castle Hautdesert: The Celtic Sheela-na-gig and the Auncian in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries*, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and Fiona Tolhurst (Dallas: Scriptorium Press, 2001): 121-148; Eugène Vinaver, 'La fee Morgain et les aventures de Bretagne', *Melanges de langue et de litterature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts a Jean Frappier, Par ses collegues, ses eleves et ses amis* (Geneve: Droz, 1970): 1077-83.

Beyond these broader categories or types, Morgan's role specifically in *SGGK* represents a third established critical avenue.⁷³ This fourteenth-century verse ostensibly centres on the eponymous hero, as well as other protagonists whom Gawain encounters directly, like Bertilak's wife. Morgan does not feature in the beginning of the text at all; the Green Knight arrives in Arthur's court offering the challenge of a duel to any willing knights, which triggers Gawain's quest. Only at the end of the poem is it revealed that Bertilak was in fact directed by Morgan, who has controlled Gawain's path remotely. Scala argues this revelation makes Morgan a 'detectable presence all along', despite her silent and marginal involvement (66). Given the covert and indirect behaviour of Morgan in this narrative, her power in *SGGK* is usually seen as that of intellectual or social manipulation. Critics describe her as having a 'seigniorial authority' as the 'generator of the romance', the 'means' of

⁷³ For literary considerations of Morgan's role in this text specifically, see Paul Battles, 'Amended Texts, Emended Ladies: Female Agency and the Textual Editing of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *The Chaucer Review* 44.3 (2010): 323-43; Denver Ewing Baughan, 'The Role of Morgan le Fay in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *ELH: Journal of English Literary History* 17 (1950): 241-51; Mother Angela Carson, 'Morgain la Fee as the Principle of Unity in *Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Modern Language Quarterly* 23 (1962): 3-16; Sheila Fisher, 'Leaving Morgan Aside: Women, History, and Revisionism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*, Ed. Thelma S. Fenster. (New York: Routledge, 1996): 77-96; Sheila Fisher, 'Taken Men and Token Women in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism*, Ed. Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989): 71-105; Albert B. Friedman, 'Morgan le Fay in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Speculum* 35 (1960): 260-74; Jill M. Hebert (2013); Douglas Moon, 'The Role of Morgan le Fay in *Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 67 (1966): 31-57; Dennis Moore, 'Making Sense of an Ending: Morgan la Faye in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Mediaevalia: A Journal of Mediaeval Studies* 10 (1988): 213-33; Elisa Marie Narin, "'Pat on . . . Pat OPer": Rhetorical Descriptio and Morgan La Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Pacific Coast Philology* 23 (1988): 60-66; Lorraine Kochanske Stock 'The Hag of Castle Hautdesert: The Celtic Sheela-nagig and the Auncian in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries*, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and Fiona Tolhurst (Dallas: Scriptorium Press, 2001): 121-148; Michael W. Twomey, 'Is Morgne la Faye in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—or anywhere in Middle English?', *Anglia: Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie* 117 (1999): 542-57; Michael W. Twomey, 'Morgain La Fée in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: From Troy to Camelot', *Text and intertext in medieval Arthurian literature*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York and London: Garland, 1996): 91-115; Edith Whitehurst Williams, 'Morgan La Fee as Trickster in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Folklore* 96.1 (1985): 38-56.

narrative and ‘the agent of Gawain’s testing’ (Twomey ‘Hautdesert’ 114; Fisher ‘Leaving Morgan Aside’ 78).

The fourth major strand of criticism on Morgan’s medieval portrayals focuses on her appearances in the *Morte*.⁷⁴ Once more, the question of her power – whether divine, supernatural, social, or sexual – represents scholars’ primary concern. Worth noting is how these readings diverge in their emphasis on the impressive extent of Morgan’s power on one hand, and assertions that this protagonist as conceived by Malory represents the end of a gradual deterioration in influence over time, from a figure who is seen as divine, then merely magical and finally mortal. Fries argues that Morgan falls ‘from a connector of life with healing, as mistress of Avalon, into a connector of death with illicit sex and wrongful imprisonment’; in other words, she metamorphoses from having ‘an entirely wholesome female image into a mainly maleficent presence’ (‘From the Lady to the Tramp’ 2, 3). Cooper

⁷⁴ Studies on Morgan’s characterisation by Malory include: Dorsey Armstrong, *GCC* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Sandra Elaine Capps, ‘Morgan le Fay as Other’ (1996); Roberta Davidson, ‘Reading like a woman in Malory’s *Morte Darthur*’, *Arthuriana* 16.1 (2006): 21-33; Elizabeth Edwards, ‘The Place of Women in the *Morte Darthur*’, *A Companion to Malory*, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996): 37-54; Zoë Eve Enstone (2012); Maureen Fries, ‘Female Heroes, Heroines, and Counter-Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Tradition’, *Arthurian Women*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (New York and London: Routledge, 2000): 59-73; Maureen Fries, ‘From the Lady to the Tramp: The Decline of Morgan le Fay in Medieval Romance’, *Arthuriana*, 4.1 (1994): 1-18; Jill M. Hebert (2013); Amy S. Kaufman, ‘Between Women: Desire and its Object in Malory’s “Alexander the Orphan”’, *Parergon* 24.1 (2007): 137-154; Carolyne Larrington (2006); Jerome Mandel, ‘The Idea of Coherence and the Feminization of Knights in Malory’s “Alexander the Orphan”’, *The Arthurian Yearbook* III (1993): 91-105; Daniel McGuiness, ‘Purple Hearts and Coronets: Caring for Wounds in Malory’, *Arthurian Interpretations* 4.1 (1989): 43-54; Henry Grady Morgan, ‘The Role of Morgan le Fay in Malory’s “Morte Darthur”’, *Southern Quarterly* 2 (1964): 150-68; Susan Signe Morrison, ‘Morgan le Fay’s Champion: Marion Zimmer Bradley’s “The Mists of Avalon” as Challenge to Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*’, *Mittelalter-Rezeption* IV, eds. Irene von Burg, Jürgen Kuhnel, Ulrich Müller, and Alexander Schwartz (Göppingen: Kummerle, 1991): 133-54; Myra Olstead, ‘Morgan le Fay in Malory’s *Morte Darthur*’, *Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne* 18 (1966): 169-70; Myra Olstead, ‘The Personality and Role of Morgan in Malory’s *Morte Darthur*. *Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne* 18 (1966): 169-70; Kristina Pérez, *The Myth of Morgan la Fey*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); MaryLynn Saul, ‘A Rebel and a Witch: The Historical Context and Ideological Function of Morgan le Fay in Malory’s “Le Morte Darthur”’, Unpublished PhD Thesis (Ohio State University, 1994); MaryLynn Saul, ‘Malory’s Morgan le Fay: The Danger of Unrestrained Feminine Power’, *Medieval Feminist Forum* 46 (2010): 85-99; Siobhán M. Wyatt (forthcoming).

attributes this shift to her gradual humanisation over time, arguing that the 'human Morgan's use of her learning is, notoriously, rarely for good . . . in her later and best-known manifestations she is largely malevolent, and her malevolence increases in proportion to her humanity' (*The English Romance in Time* 136). Morgan's humanisation is seen to bring with it a decrease in her magical powers along with her moral degradation; particularly in the *Morte*, this is seen as a 'humiliating' development, since her magic is 'mostly ineffective and always foiled' (Fries 'From the Lady to the Tramp' 13; Thompson 'The First and Last Love' 332). Conversely, Armstrong believes Morgan is still 'powerful' and 'threatening' through her use of magic in the *Morte* and poses a serious 'hazard' as her power increases over the course of the text, which 'proves a greater challenge' with each new episode (GCC 100, 103, 113). Most recently, Wyatt asserts that Malory makes Morgan 'more dangerous than her source characters', contradicting the notion that as a narrator he seeks to 'limit' her 'control', or power (forthcoming).

This chapter does not seek to expand on or contribute directly to any of the arguments made by the four main strands outlined above. Thematically, common to each of these scholarly subdivisions of inquiry into Morgan's portrayals in medieval literature is an interest in her identity as publicly constituted. Such perspectives favour examinations of Morgan's political power and her effects on the Arthurian community, rather than developing understanding of Morgan's emotions and individual desires, which this thesis argues is possible to construe and should be acknowledged, since few studies even implicitly mention her emotional agency as a significant part of Malory's depiction. To demonstrate, origin studies of Morgan as goddess consider her 'role as healer' and 'power over life and death' in the context of the 'ability to heal Arthur', which naturally has implications for the wider community he governs and readers' collective belief in Malory's depiction of a 'rex quondam rex futurus' (Hebert 6; 689). The second strand on supernatural women describes a comparatively more localised but similarly community-orientated

power according to critics like Heng, who asserts that the magical 'tissue of gifts and material objects' provided by women, usually supernatural and, including the circulation of swords or harmful enchantments, constitute 'the enabling conditions' for male chivalric activity in the *Morte* (97). Heng writes of Morgan specifically that the 'trials she provides Arthur's knights serve to increase their abilities and reputations', i.e. their public identities and communal status (107). Similarly in the third strand of scholarship concerning *SGGK*, Morgan is described as 'a mentor to knights' who 'wields authority' over 'errant knights in need of reform', teaching them how to negotiate 'a complex world of court politics' as well as 'the necessity of courtesy to women and respect for the wisdom they impart' (Hebert 55-6). Scala agrees by stating that Morgan 'serves to explain Arthur's world to itself' and thus is actively involved in the formation of communal identity (68). Maintaining a focus on communal identity and public values in the context of Malory's representation of Morgan, Armstrong argues this protagonist oppositely 'poses the greatest threat to the community's model of gender and social identity' (*GCC* 59). Whilst readings may differ in the degree of power perceived to be exercised by Morgan and scholars debate whether her power is ultimately positive or negative, all are predicated upon collective constructions of identity, which integrate the private expressions of individuals within a wider public social schema.

The persistent scholarly focus on Morgan's role within the community she aggressively rejects and on the effects of her actions in the Arthurian public sphere has resulted in a prevailing tendency to apply moral judgments to her late medieval manifestations, particularly in the *Morte*. At the least favourable end of the critical spectrum, Morgan's late medieval incarnations are most commonly described as 'evil', namely by Lucy Allen Paton, Muriel Whitaker, Maureen Fries, Sandra Elaine Capps, Raymond H. Thompson, Dorsey Armstrong, Dax Donald Carver, MaryLynn Saul, Zoë Eve Enstone and

Siobhán M. Wyatt.⁷⁵ Maureen Fries, Elizabeth Edwards and Carlyne Larrington similarly view Morgan as 'maleficent', a paradigm of 'malevolence and ill-will' or 'wickedness' ('From the Lady to the Tramp' 3; 43; *KAE* 84). Morgan is read in this way in part due to her magical abilities, which are 'daemonic' and 'threatening' according to Muriel Whitaker and Elizabeth Archibald, a position with which Corinne J. Saunders concurs by describing Morgan's powers as 'dark' and 'demonic' (66; 'Beginnings' 143; 'Religion and Magic' 211). Moral judgments are also frequently made of this protagonist based on the fact that she is sexually active with more than one partner, even though several male knights are – such as Arthur, Tristram, Lancelot, Gawain and Alexander – and often change their romantic preferences more quickly than Morgan. For example, Karen Cherewatuk asserts that women who are 'sexually active outside marriage' like Morgan 'threaten social disruption' in the *Morte* (*Marriage, Adultery, and Inheritance* 42). In this light Morgan is often reduced to hypersexualised, antifeminist stereotypes of the 'malevolent hag' or 'witch' applied by Michael Twomey and MaryLynn Saul ('Hautdesert' 103; 'Malory's Morgan le Fay' 85). All these views are based on the premise that Morgan is an active and direct threat in Malory's text, since her magic and sexuality are seen as indications of her 'lack of loyalty' to communal values (Capps 95). Saunders goes so far as to say not only is Morgan adversarial but she represents one of 'the most powerful figures' to negatively challenge Arthurian 'knights', the 'court' and even the 'world' of the *Morte* as a whole ('Religion and Magic' 201, 207, 211). Armstrong concurs, arguing Morgan 'poses the greatest threat to the community's model of gender and social identity' (*GCC* 59).

Few critics view Malory's Morgan positively save for Hebert, who argues that the 'dichotomous and type-based thought patterns' exemplified above

⁷⁵ For applications of the term, 'evil', to Morgan's late medieval and Malorian characterisations, see Paton (195); Whitaker (66); Fries 'From the Lady to the Tramp' (2); Capps (95); Thompson 'The First and Last Love' (341), Armstrong *GCC* (133); Carver (11); Saul 'Malory's Morgan le Fay' (88); Enstone (216); and Wyatt (forthcoming).

should be abandoned (154). Hebert suggests, since Morgan 'demonstrates that the very notion of "type" shifts in response to a changing social and political scene', to read this protagonist in terms of types is to follow an unhelpful methodology (154). Rather than supporting the view that Morgan's literary incarnations deteriorate from goddess to witch over the medieval period, Hebert argues her individual manifestation should be 'free from an evolutionary model of time' (154). Hebert asserts that Morgan's actions in the *Morte*—whilst 'ambiguous' and challenging—are only superficially negative because each obstacle she distributes to Arthurian communities offers a constructive 'critique' of 'court life or courtly love' (65). In presenting Morgan as a 'political advisor' rather than a 'threat', Hebert offers a fresh and positive perspective that does much to improve Morgan's standing in the pantheon of Arthurian women (70). Yet by arguing that Morgan's 'tests of chivalry are her primary occupation' the value of Morgan's actions in light of her own private and individual desires still remain largely unexplored (69).

Though I support Hebert's positive re-examination of Morgan, in the present context this study seeks to expand upon the 'personal' motivations and identity of Morgan set aside by Hebert in the constructive interests of resurrecting her perceived status within the Arthurian community (70). As demonstrated in the above review of scholarship on Morgan, a focus on this protagonist's magic and sexuality has so far been used to vilify her representation in the *Morte*. In addition, an almost exclusive emphasis on communal Arthurian concerns and public values has frequently caused critics to neglect the significance of Morgan's individual expressions and gestures in the context of Malory's presentation of female private identity and emotion in the text as a whole. The current study intentionally differs from previous approaches; rather than exploring Morgan as a supernatural and communal figure, it seeks to illuminate her significance as a mortal and a human individual, as well as emphasising her private identity much more than her public role.

Chapter Three is again divided into four parts in order to highlight distinct activities and aspects of Morgan's private identity: 'Necromancer Nun', 'Quest Agent', 'Peripheral Matriarch' and 'Eternal Exile'. This chapter argues that Morgan is Malory's most fully realised peripherally marginal female figure, whose empowerment derives from the high degree of privacy she is ascribed in comparison to other female protagonists. Malory portrays Morgan as partially occupying many traditional feminine roles – those of daughter, sister, wife, mother, aunt, widow and nun – but in each case he demonstrates her failure to conform to any one of these publicly constituted identities. In Chapters One and Two, it was suggested that time coincides with spatial constructions of Igraine's and Morgause's identities, since their voices and empowerment are perceived differently when they pass socially determined points in the female life cycle such as widowhood and the age of discretion. However, time appears less relevant for Morgan and instead the particular, literal spaces she inhabits are depicted as the sole source of her identity and power; for instance, she does not wait for widowhood before engaging in an extra-marital relationship and exercising matriarchal power.

The first section, 'Necromancer Nun,' analyses the brief and obscure reference to Morgan's fosterage and education in a 'nonnery' where she learns the art of 'nygromancye', or necromancy (6). By imagining Morgan in a nunnery, Malory associates her with the enclosed and matriarchal spaces in which he typically situates other empowered marginal women in the *Morte* and foreshadows Morgan's later activities in the text. As a literary device, Malory's motif of the nunnery implicitly references several themes that constitute integral components of Morgan's identity: the prioritisation of private over public, the exercise of matriarchal authority, an individualistic attitude and preference for alternative social networks to those provided by central Arthurian courts, as well as the occupation of peripheral spaces. Such themes are elaborated more explicitly in the second part of this chapter, 'Quest Agent', where Morgan competes with Arthur in the open spaces of the quest

wilderness after stealing his sword Excalibur for Accolon in an attempt to redefine the community according to her private desires (84-96). In this episode, Morgan is portrayed as an active quest agent, not as a merely adjunctive female guide, obstacle or tutor to her male counterparts. Next, 'Peripheral Matriarch' explores Morgan's control of landmarks and material objects in the Arthurian landscape, through which Morgan can be seen to articulate certain aspects of her private identity and emotions. Throughout her trajectory, Morgan achieves a level of individual power exceeding communal demonstrations by patriarchal figures of public authority. Morgan's power reaches its apex in the part of the narrative considered by the final section of this chapter, 'Eternal Exile', where Morgan is depicted as the leader of a group of women who take the dying Arthur to 'Avalon' near the end of the *Morte* (688). Morgan is visualised as entering a space that is once more enclosed, matriarchal and exclusively private in nature. This encourages a reading of her trajectory as cyclical in structure, since Morgan's origins in a nunnery at the very beginning are evoked by the all-female companions and matriarchal structure of the company in which she departs with Arthur into Avalon, before finally disappearing from the text.

Necromancer Nun

Morgan's first description by Malory locates her in one of the many eremitic subdivisions of space in the *Morte's* quest wilderness, as he informs readers that she was 'put to scole in a nonnery' where 'she lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromancye' (6). In Middle English, a 'clerk' meant 'a man of letters', 'writer', 'author' or 'recorder' in both secular and religious contexts, whilst 'nygromancye' was understood to be a branch of 'magical arts' (*MED*). The exact nature and extent of the necromantic skills Morgan possesses is never elaborated upon by Malory but only described in vague

terms by other protagonists as 'crauftis and enchaumentes' (86). Such imprecision means Morgan's experience in the nunnery remains private and peripherally marginal in relation both to readers of the text and the Arthurian community of which she is publicly a part. The implications of Morgan's skills as a literate protagonist and a necromancer have only been superficially explored, and never in conjunction with an analysis of her expressions of private identity in the text as a whole. However, this section of the chapter argues that Morgan's status as a necromancer nun is not only of significant use in furthering understandings of her representation by Malory, but suggests that it represents a symbolically inceptive point in the narrative for two salient features of her identity: the maintenance of privacy and the exercise of matriarchal authority. As this part of the chapter demonstrates, necromancy is inextricably connected with privacy whilst the nunnery shares associations with other, highly individualistic, performances of identity within peripheral and exclusively female communities. It should be noted here that the term 'individualistic' is never applied to Igraine and Morgause in this thesis. However, it is used to describe some of Morgan's actions in Malory's text because, rather than simply privileging her private identity in select instances or spaces she does so repeatedly, everywhere, and in ways that actively distinguish her from, and reject, the Arthurian community. It is also worth noting that the term is not used in the pejorative sense of 'selfish' but rather as 'distinguished in nature or style from others', 'independent' and 'self-reliant' (*OED*).

Whereas Chapter One considered the private and emotionally healing benefits of eremitic spaces entered into by individual protagonists after they are harmed by the Arthurian community, this chapter explores the significance of exclusively gendered eremitic spaces to the formation of identity *before* protagonists enter this same community. Morgan does not enter the nunnery after a rape or indeed any kind of physical or emotional injury like her mother. In addition, she does not enter the nunnery as an adult and a

widow but as an unmarried child or adolescent before the official stage of feminine maturity marked by her marriage to Uriens (6). Therefore I argue that Morgan's placement in a nunnery is essential to the primary construction, rather than the secondary *reconstruction*, of her private identity. However, no nunnery apart from Morgan's in the *Morte* is described as a place where 'nygromancye' may be learned, and so I suggest this detail necessitates further exploration (6). I argue that when the nunnery is explored as the symbolic and inceptive point of origin for Morgan's identity as a protagonist, her actions appear much less 'ambiguous' than they are traditionally viewed and also enable a better understanding of her expressions of private identity in the text (Hebert 15). In order to demonstrate such coherence, this section begins by exploring the historical meanings of 'necromancy', perceptions of Morgan's skills in the *Morte* and thematic associations common to depictions of necromancy elsewhere in romance. I argue that Morgan's education foreshadows her remoteness from the authority of central courts, which is reflected in the dichotomy of her public and private identities. Morgan constitutes an object of fear and gossip in public, and is perceived as a kind of exile who rejects all ties to the Arthurian community by seeking roles beyond those publicly constituted for her. However, as the rest of this chapter demonstrates, Malory portrays Morgan in private spaces as an emotionally expressive protagonist, who can ultimately be seen not as isolated but merely circulating in alternative forms of communities to those provided by central courts.

I. Necromancy

Few Arthurian scholars explore the implications of Morgan's status as a necromancer in detail, and those who do rarely extend their analyses beyond observing the singularity of Malory's usage of the term 'nygromancye', since in most cases this aspect of Morgan's education is merely implied or

referenced in passing (6).⁷⁶ Moreover, necromancy is unanimously viewed as an overwhelmingly negative source of power in the context of the *Morte*. For example, Fries argues Malory's use of the word implicitly 'illustrates the danger of educating women beyond their appropriate sphere (which is to further male interests rather than their own)' ('From the Lady to the Tramp' 10). Armstrong agrees, citing Morgan's necromancy as evidence of the extremity of her disobedience to patriarchal 'institutions' designed to maintain a 'control of the feminine' (GCC 60). Saunders goes further in arguing that Morgan's use of necromancy makes her morally aberrant, describing her as the 'inverse' to Merlin as a practitioner of magic, whom Saunders believes acts as 'a force for good' in the Arthurian world, despite the fact that his magic enables the rape of Morgan's mother (*Magic and the Supernatural* 248). Saunders also implies a connection between Malory's portrayal of Morgan and the sorceress 'Hallewes', by noting that the only other time a variant on 'nygromancye' is used in the *Morte* is when Malory names this lady's castle 'Nygurmous' (MS 252). This comparison has highly negative implications for understandings of Morgan, since Hallewes is the sorceress who helps Elaine to rape Lancelot, as discussed in Chapter One. Although Morgan does indeed imprison Lancelot and attempts to coerce him into being her lover, as explored later in this chapter, she does not ultimately use this magic to force her sexual success as Hallewes does (153-5).

Such negative views of Morgan's education derive from the common assumption that necromancy itself is inherently negative and must necessarily reflect critically upon its practitioners. Across medieval Europe, both specific and general uses of the term are used widely in a range of languages, texts and genres, as explored for example by Richard Kieckhefer, Frank Klaassen,

⁷⁶ Larrington explores the portrayal of Morgan's education in 'necromancy' in the *Lancelot-Grail* but includes no analysis of Malory's different adaptation of this narrative feature in the *Morte* (KAE 15, 178). Critics who imply or reference Malory's use of the term in passing include: Briggs (54); Whitaker (66); Fries 'From the Lady to the Tramp' (10); Armstrong GCC, (60); Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010): 248, 252.

Saunders and David Rollo.⁷⁷ When used as a specific term, necromancy does indeed consistently denote 'dark' or 'black' magic that accesses demonic powers for the purposes of casting a wide variety of enchantments, which include communicating with, or raising, spirits and the dead. This meaning derives from the Latin etymon *necromantia*, meaning 'evocation of the dead' (*OED*). Due to such derivations, during the medieval periods the term 'necromancy' became increasingly associated with dark and evil uses of magic over time. For, as Larrington notes, in the vernacular this word 'lost its connection with the literal raising of the dead for divinatory purposes' which could have positive functions in the literature of antiquity, and instead '[n]igremancy was reconstrued as containing the element *niger*, 'black', implying the darker side of magic arts' (*OED*; *KAE* 16).

However, in its general uses, 'necromancy' could be practised with unharmed or even decidedly benign effects. To demonstrate, in a fifteenth-century practical necromantic handbook examined by Kieckhefer are found a variety of directions for casting spells, which include 'gaining knowledge of the liberal arts', 'finding knowledge in sleep', 'discovering a thief or murder', 'gaining dignity and honour', as well as magic used to obtain any number of material goods such as a 'banquet', 'castle', 'boat', 'horse' or 'flying throne' (*Forbidden Rites* 27-8). The potential for necromancy to effect positive as well as negative change reflects Cooper's observation that in romance it may be a 'highly suspect' skill but is nevertheless not always treated 'as a matter of condemnation'. She explains that, despite its etymology,

⁷⁷ Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Frank Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit and Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013); Corinne J. Saunders, *MS*, (2010); David Rollo, *Glamorous Sorcery: Magic and Literacy in the High Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); David Rollo, *Kiss My Relics: Hermaphroditic Fictions of the Middle Ages*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Middle English 'nigromancy' is much less pejorative a term than the modern 'necromancy' . . . Although its derivation is equivalent to 'black magic', the word is often used for supernatural powers derived from sources other than God rather than necessarily from the devil. It can thus even appear among a list of attributes of the heroine (ERT 161).

As an example of necromantic powers used to embellish the powers or gifts of female protagonists, Cooper points to a fifteenth-century text titled *The Siege of Troy*, which 'takes a generally kind attitude to Medea', both a practitioner of necromancy and wife to its central hero, Jason (ERT 161). Cooper also argues Melior's skills in necromancy in *Partonope of Blois* are benign and have no impact on her desirability or moral virtue (ERT 161).

Although most readers of the *Morte* would not class Morgan as a 'heroine' in any conventional sense, the use of 'necromancy' in potentially positive ways elsewhere in medieval literature suggests the term contains a richer variety of meanings than has previously been allowed. In the context of this thesis, of particular interest are its associations with privacy. Given that Morgan's education in necromancy is learned in a private space, I argue a connection should be made between these two defining features of her experience. Indeed, as discussed below, in medieval literature more widely, necromancy is symbolically associated either with private spaces and/or the private realm of desire.

This thematic interconnection may be noted in many different examples, such as a piece of didactic prose entitled 'Emperor Felicianus', which was composed sometime between 'the late thirteenth' and 'early sixteenth' centuries (Salisbury 1).⁷⁸ In this text, a 'false quene' and 'wif' employs a 'nigromauncer' to murder her husband the king in a clear rejection of her public role and responsibilities and the payment asked is her 'love' in private

⁷⁸ The full title of this text in its modern published form is 'Emperor Felicianus' (How a Wife Employed a Necromancer to Cause the Death of Her Husband, and How He Was Saved by a Clerk)' (Salisbury).

(Salisbury 9-10, 15). In a different example of necromancy's effect on a king, the emotions of Charlemagne are controlled by a practitioner of this art in John Skelton's fifteenth-century poem, 'Why Come Ye Nat to Court'. Charlemagne is made to 'loue a certayne body / Aboue all other inordinatly', which engagement of his private identity conflicts with his public responsibilities (Dyce 699-700). As cited above, Cooper argues a more sympathetic portrayal of necromancy used for romantic purposes is seen in *Partonope of Blois* during Melior's courtship of Partonope. I would add that Melior also exemplifies the necessity of privacy to necromantic performances, since she ensures exclusive rights over this skill by warning Partonope not to be 'besy' with the same 'crafte of Nygromansy' that enabled the consummation of their relationship in the first instance; she retains her own individual privacy as well as offering Partonope a private space away from his courtly community and public role as long as her necromancy lasts (Buckley 695-6). The notion that necromancers possess abilities enabling them to create especially private spaces in peripherally marginal locations is also made explicit in *Lybeaus Desconus*, where two 'Clyrkys of nigermansye' construct a 'paleys' where 'nys erle nor baroun . . . durst come therin'; in other words, public and patriarchal figures of authority are specifically prevented from entering (Salisbury and Weldon 1756, 1764-6). A more metaphysical function of the connection between necromancy and privacy can be seen in a fifteenth-century poem called *The Assembly of Gods*. The poem's speaker relates a dream vision of a debate between many gods about the governance of regions and powers under their control. One of these gods is 'Nygromansy', who is only mentioned once in the poem; nevertheless, the story's narration itself might be likened to a necromantic conjuring as each of the gods are invoked individually by the speaker (Chance 867). Furthermore, although the poem ostensibly describes a communal and public gathering of authoritative figures, it actually takes place in the individual space of the speaker's mind, through a 'traunse' resulting

from the state of privacy they achieve, 'Syttynge all solytary alone besyde a lake' (Chance 15, 4).

Synonymous to the interconnection of necromancy and privacy are tensions between individual and communal desires, as evidenced by the above examples. This is also seen in the dichotomy of Morgan's public and private roles in the *Morte*, since the necromancy that Morgan learns separates her, both literally and symbolically, from the community of which she is publicly a part. Morgan is introduced to the text in the same narrative moment as her sister, Morgause, during the proliferation of weddings that follow Igraine's marriage to Uther:

Kynge Lott of Lowthean and of Orkenay thenne wedded Margawse that was Gaweyns moder, and Kynge Nentres of the land of Garlot wedded Elayne. Al this was done at the request of Kynge Uther. And the third syster, Morgan le Fey, was put to scole in a nonnery, and ther she lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromancye – and after she was wedded to Kynge Uryens of the lond of Gore that was Syre Ewayns le Blaunche Maynys fader (5-6).

Whereas in the second chapter I suggested that Morgause inherits the public aspects of her mother's identity, Morgan instead inherits Igraine's private identity and her associations with individual development in eremitic spaces. Crucially, three important implications are detectable in the description of Morgan's marriage. Firstly, though her arranged union with Uriens seemingly establishes a political ally in Gore, an area near the borders of Northern Wales and/or Scotland, this union is not included in the same category of weddings 'done at the request of Kynge Uther' (Bruce 229). Secondly, Morgan is only married to Uriens 'after' she receives individual schooling in skills to which the community does not have access. Thirdly, Morgan gains her education from female tutors. In these three ways, Malory changes readers' first impressions of Morgan significantly from her presentation in the Vulgate *Merlin*, where she is first married by Uther at the same time as her sisters to 'Neutres of Garlot', who, on 'the advice of his kinsmen . . . put her in a

nunnery' (Pickens 82). There she becomes intellectually erudite, but the magical 'necromancy' for which she is renowned is gained when she 'became friends' with 'Merlin' (272). These three differences between the *Merlin* and the *Morte* result in a depiction of Morgan as a woman whom patriarchal authorities fail to control from the very beginning of her trajectory, and as a protagonist who resists public roles promoted by the community. Malory's Morgan is radically different in this way from her French predecessor, who 'remains strictly under male control' and involves herself more closely in courtly affairs, as Larrington observes (*KAE* 15).

I argue that Malory's Morgan is not subject to patriarchal courtly authorities in the same way as Igraine and Morgause because her necromantic education in an eremitic space distances her intellectually and geographically from the central communal courts depicted. Morgan's occupation of a peripherally marginal location entirely beyond central courtly boundaries temporarily positions her as a kind of exile. Steinmetz's comparison of eremitic practitioners to other figures of exile is particularly pertinent to Morgan, since he sees all exiles as 'nonconformists', who in some way challenge public constructions of identity by failing to remain in central spaces (189). 'Every social system', Steinmetz argues, 'has a "limitative contour" that defines and establishes its identity over and against the environment' (188). Eremitic figures 'cross limitative contours of society such as city walls, the land-marks of specific territories, the coastline, or the rules and laws recorded in its statute books' and subsequently assume 'a contrary position within, or even beyond, the margins of that same society' by their failure to integrate into the community (Steinmetz 189). As a consequence, they often 'become part of urban gossip' and enter 'the collective memory of medieval society' (Steinmetz 189).

For the reasons Steinmetz identifies, Morgan becomes part of the 'urban gossip' of the *Morte*. Morgan's distance from the courtly community is best exemplified by public Arthurian discussion of her failure to inhabit

appropriately the familial roles of Arthur's sister, Uriens's wife and Uwain's mother. The focus on Morgan's communal failings is triggered not when she learns necromancy but when her plan to kill Arthur and replace Uriens with Accolon as her husband is discovered (90). This suggests that Morgan's neglect of family duty is perceived as more dangerous than her skills in necromancy, which are later glossed over in the narrative as nonspecific 'false crauftis' (90). Indeed, Arthur's condemnation of Morgan's attempt to kill him through Accolon frames her actions in terms of their insult to family values and communally defined positions: 'I have *honoured* hir and *worshipped* hir more than all my *kyn*, and more have I trusted hir than my *wyff* and all my *kyn* aftir' (90, emphases added). The consequence for this breach of trust is infamy in the public sphere and ostracism from central communities, as Arthur swears that 'all Crystendom shall speke of hit' (90). Likewise, when Arthur nearly dies from putting on a cursed 'mantle' or cloak sent by Morgan, he says to Uriens 'My *sistir*, your *wyff*, is allway aboute to betray me' and exiles her son Uwain in lieu of his mother (95, 96, emphases added). Arthur's description of Morgan as 'false' following these events is subsequently taken up by the Arthurian public's collective voice (90). She is called a 'false sorseres and wycche' by Mark's court, whilst her actions are pronounced 'shamefull and a vylounce' by Arthur's, since her status as a 'quene' and 'Kynge Arthurs systir' makes acts of 'warre uppon her own lorde' particularly unacceptable according to public constructions of her identity (269, 359, 467, 359).

Whereas Arthur's 'sister' is referred to over twenty times by members of his community and in the narrative, Morgan herself is only described as calling Arthur 'brother' twice.⁷⁹ Likewise although she is the 'wyff' of Uriens and technically under his authority as pointed out by Arthur, the term 'queen' is either used by Morgan or used to describe her almost fifty times

⁷⁹ For references to Morgan as Arthur's 'sister', see pp. 5, 51, 82, 90, 92-6, 154, 311, 336, 359, 372 and 467. Morgan only calls Arthur 'brother', herself, once near the beginning of the text and once near its end, when she takes him to Avalon (94, 688).

independently of her husband's position as 'Kyng' (96, 90).⁸⁰ Such discrepancies suggest that whilst Morgan's familial position is integral to her public identity as perceived by other members of the community, it is not essential to her independent performances of identity in private. Scholars have noted the apparent irrelevance of family and community to Morgan as a particularly noteworthy trait, given that, as Armstrong observes, 'family loyalty' is one of the key components that 'supports . . . social order' in the *Morte* (GCC 149). Jesmok also notes the failure of Morgan and her siblings to live up to the example of their mother, who 'connive for their own convenience' in contrast to the 'model of moral behavior' which Igraine provides for the Arthurian community ('Guiding Lights' 37, 38). Similarly, Enstone observes that Morgan 'prioritizes her lovers over her familial connections in several of the romances in which she appears', not just Malory's, and Paton goes so far as to say Morgan should 'not be included' among Arthur's 'kindred' at all (30, 136).

Certainly, peripherally marginal women elsewhere in Arthurian romance are often empowered at the cost of certain elements considered crucial to familial and communal integration in central spaces. Sterling-Hellenbrand's analysis of marginal women in Eschenbach's *Parzival* demonstrates that female agency in this text develops when women are 'not primarily defined by their family relationships' ('Women on the Edge' 60). Taking the example of 'Sigune' and 'Cundrie', who are female guides on Wolfram's version of the Grail Quest, she writes that though 'active and directive', these women 'never marry', 'never have children', and 'remain excluded from the "familial" utopia' celebrated by this author ('Women on the Edge' 60). Sterling-Hellenbrand adds that these women are 'essentially alone, isolated from courtly life by the fact that they exist literally on the edge of society: Sigune in the forest and Cundrie in her capacity as messenger' ('Women on the Edge'

⁸⁰ For references to Morgan as 'queen', see pp. 86, 90, 92, 93, 154, 155, 307, 310, 311, 333-7, 359, 372, 382, 384, 385, 463, 467, 688 and 689.

60). Though Morgan, Sigune and Cundrie bear a resemblance to one another, in that they are all marginal and primarily act beyond the court rather than from within it, there are three key differences between Wolfram's and Malory's depictions of individual female power. Firstly, though Morgan does take part in a quest as the next section explores, she never appears or is mentioned in the entirety of Malory's Grail Quest, the single collective Arthurian endeavour. Secondly, Morgan is a member of a large and prestigious family despite the fact that she rarely interacts with them in public or private, and does bear at least one child. Thirdly, Morgan is not 'alone' or 'isolated' even when exiled but frequently appears with friends, lovers and fellow women or sorceresses. These are all points to which I return in the course of this chapter. However, the most important to address here is the question of Morgan's relative isolation compared to other courtly women in the *Morte*. The almost unanimous perception of Morgan as a threatening, dangerous and subversive protagonist which exists is, I suggest, implicitly founded upon her status as a necromancer – notably, she is the only named practitioner of this skill in the *Morte*. Morgan is indeed, in this sense, separated from patriarchal constructions of community. Nevertheless, as the next part of this section suggests, Morgan is imagined in an alternative form of community, one which enables alternative modes of expression from those seen in central Arthurian courts.

II. The Nunnery

A distinction should be made between the community provided by Morgan's natal and marital family, and that represented by the foster family of the eremitic community in Malory's nunnery. The former includes Arthur and Morgause by birth, and Uriens, Uwain, Lott, Gawain, Aggravaine, Gaheris, Gareth by marriage. This is an interconnected, male-dominated social network, which privileges the public roles of their members first and foremost.

The latter represents an extra-courtly model of family that is, as I will propose, exclusively female and matriarchal in structure and is associated with highly individualistic expressions of identity. Variations on this model of community are seen repeatedly throughout Morgan's trajectory in the *Morte* as the following sections of this chapter explore. She is only depicted in private spaces and all-female or matriarchal groups that are entirely under her control; it is in these spaces that Morgan forms relationships with other protagonists, which replace the bonds provided by her public role as Arthur's sister, and Uriens's wife.

The nunnery in which Morgan matures would arguably have been perceived by contemporary readers as not just exclusively female in population but matriarchal in the sense of being subject to a governing female authority, due to Malory's differentiation between all-female and all-male communities in the *Morte*. Different kinds of religious institutions are rife in the *Morte*, ranging from generic 'houses of religion' to the more specifically named churches, nunneries, abbeys, minsters, chapels, priories, hermitages, which can be occupied by either men or women.⁸¹ However, in specific instances Malory distinguishes between 'abbeys of nuns' and 'abbeys of monks' to indicate spaces that are exclusively male or female.⁸² This division corresponds with historical practices in the Middle Ages, when religious institutions were segregated according to gender and single-sex education was standard. Roberta Gilchrist reveals in her survey of religious houses in early-to-late-medieval Britain that there were 'nunneries which were entirely female' as well as all-male monasteries (25). Even though some religious houses would be architecturally joined as partner institutions or 'double houses' that included men and women, these houses nevertheless 'required domestic

⁸¹ For examples of each, see 'chirch' (47); 'nunry' (112); 'pore mannys house' (202); 'abbey' (250); 'pryory' (309); 'ermytayge' (483); 'house of religion' (540); 'mynster' (581); and 'chapel' (689). For select examples of male hermits, see pp. 37, 202, 276, 483, 540, 688, 696. Female hermits are seen only infrequently, as on p. 516,

⁸² Nunneries and abbeys of nuns appear on pp. 6, 92, 93, 262, 496 and 690, whilst abbeys of monks are described on pp. 96, 506, 509, 512 and 551.

buildings which ensured sexual segregation, yielding a variety of different arrangements' (Gilchrist 25, 93). Larrington similarly finds that 'grammar or cathedral schools' were usually single-sex' in both religious and secular education systems in late medieval Europe (*Women and Writing* 191). The figures of authority, who presided over such spaces, were also divided according to gender. As Paul B. Newman writes, 'girls and boys usually attended separate schools and, generally, schoolmasters taught boys while schoolmistresses taught girls' (127). As such, these spaces were not only exclusively gendered but were predominantly either patriarchal or matriarchal in structure. Gilchrist importantly notes that, whilst some nunneries may have been nominally presided over by a male priest, 'the spatial and administrative relationship of nunneries to male houses' and their official patriarchal authority 'generally remained remote' (68).

The remoteness of nunneries from patriarchal authorities in practice associates them with notions of unusually high levels of female independence and empowerment. These qualities have been identified in Morgan but are seen to conflict with notions of community in a text where 'community' is considered to refer only to Arthur's fellowship and its connected courts. Nevertheless, this is not the only form of community depicted in the *Morte*. Malory references several exclusively female and/or matriarchal groups operating in the quest wilderness beyond the control of Arthur and his knights, with whom Morgan is associated. For instance, a magical ship inhabited by 'twelve fayre damesels' is said to appear by Morgan's 'crauftis and enchauntemente' (84, 86). She is also described as acting in the company of 'foure queenys of a grete astate' who control 'foure kngyhtes' and use them as servants to shield them from the day's 'hete' with 'cloth of grene sylke' (154). In addition to smaller groups such as these, Morgan and the 'Quene of Northe Galys' know many 'ladyes that were enchauntours' all over 'the contrey envyrone', the influence over whom increases the scope of Morgan's connections to include many matriarchal figures across the entire Arthurian

landscape besides herself (382). Indeed, Morgan's last appearance in the text describes how in Arthur's dying moments he joins his sister in a 'barge wyth many fayre ladyes in hit', which he believes is headed to 'the vale of Avylyon' (687-8). Avalon is only ever described as being ruled by 'the grete Lady Lyle of Avilion' or, after her death, the 'Lady of the Lake, that hyght Nynyve', who is also referred to as the 'chylff' or head of this community (40, 297, 689). Although on a rare occasion a male protagonist is described as living in Avalon, its ambassadors and messengers are always 'damesels' (78).⁸³ Moreover, whilst these women do occasionally aid Arthur and his court, they still do so on the basis of private inclinations and exhibit a prioritisation of their individual desires over standard communal expectations, as discussed before in Chapter Two. Since all-female spaces are not uncommon in the *Morte's* peripheral landscape, I suggest Morgan's nunnery is not only represented as an all-female space of a similar category to the others listed above, but also shares some of the same associations with individual female empowerment.

Malory's depictions of matriarchal spaces and communities would most likely have had an esoteric value for his contemporary readers because of their exclusively gendered conditions. Nunneries were the only spaces officially containing exclusively female communities and, though common in the early Middle Ages, 'were relatively rare in later medieval England, being outnumbered by monasteries for men and friaries by six to one' (Gilchrist 61). The social status of nunneries as unusual is, I suggest, conveyed by Malory's choice of this type of space as the one in which Morgan learns 'nygromancye' (6). Once more, the interpretative value of Malory's nunnery lies less in the precise form of magic that Morgan learns there, than in what its esoteric nature suggests about the heightened form of privacy figures are ascribed. Nunneries and female abbeys in the *Morte* are, as they were in Malory's social landscape,

⁸³ One 'Sir Gryngamour' is said to have 'dwelled' in Avalon (212). Although it is never made explicit, Pelleas could be argued as living there too, since he marries Nynyve (642).

rare compared to male monasteries and the various other religious spaces he depicts that are occupied by single monks. Only six are depicted in total. Four of these serve the usual healing functions common to all eremitic spaces in Arthurian geography: one in which Arthur is 'recovered' after his battle with Accolon (92-4); another in which Tristram likewise stays to 'recover' from fighting with Marhalt (112); Palomydes takes Isolde's lady Branwayne to a 'nunry' to be 'recovered' (262); and Gwenyver becomes a nun after Arthur's death where she is said to have 'fledde' due to 'grete payne and mucche disease', or hardship (691). Significantly, Malory's only two nunneries where protagonists are educated have highly specialised functions within the text that are distinct from the generic uses of eremitic spaces. The first is the 'nonnery' in which Morgan is 'put to scole' (6); the second is an 'abbey of nunmys' where Galahad, the leader of the Grail Quest and its only completely successful participant, is 'norysshed' (496). Although these protagonists occupy opposite positions within the community – Morgan is generally regarded in criticism as a social pariah, whereas Galahad is seen as a paradigm of Christian virtue – both are similar in certain respects. Morgan and Galahad are both highly individualistic protagonists where their performances of identity are concerned, which qualities I suggest Malory implies derives directly from their socialisation in private, matriarchal spaces.

The notion that matriarchal communities encourage individualised performances of identity is manifested in particular ways by both Morgan and Galahad: namely in their skills and approaches to the Arthurian community.⁸⁴ To take the first, Morgan and Galahad are both versed in more potent forms of literacy than those familiar to members of the public. Morgan is described as a 'grete clerke' of necromancy, suggesting it is a skill that requires literacy to be performed (6). All the clerks depicted in the *Morte* apart from Morgan serve under patriarchal figures of authority as their advisors, servants and

⁸⁴ The mode and description of the passing of Morgan and Galahad from the narrative are also comparable, which this chapter considers in its final section, 'Eternal Exile', on pp. 267-77.

chroniclers; in these capacities they serve the Arthurian community in a variety of publicly displayed ways.⁸⁵ Unlike these clerks, Morgan demonstrates her literacy only once when, upon the death of one knightly lover named Hemison, Morgan 'lete put hym in a tombe; and aboute the tombe she lete wryte: HERE LYETH SIR HEMYSON, SLAYNE BY THE HONDIS OF SIR TRISTRAM DE LYONES' (335).⁸⁶ The only other protagonists who independently create inscriptions in the *Morte* are Merlin, Arthur, and whatever divine providential force guides the Grail quest by causing a number of supernaturally written inscriptions to appear throughout the Arthurian landscape.⁸⁷ Although this last quest theoretically represents a communal effort because 'an hondred and fifty' knights who make up 'all' the 'knyghts of the Rounde Table' embark upon it together, in practice Galahad is the only knight to realise fully the collective Arthurian desire to see visions of 'spirituall thynges', the prime motivation for this quest (505, 586). Thus Galahad is implied to be a protagonist with access to private forms of knowledge or awareness that surpass public forms of literacy understood by the Arthurian community at large.

⁸⁵ For example, a knight named 'Gwenbaus' is described as a 'wyse clerke' and part of Arthur's 'counceyle', which consists of such major figures as 'Ulphuns, Brascias and Merlion' (17). In a travesty of this function, a 'straunge clarke' helps Mark in a war by writing 'countirfeted lettys' (402). However, most often clerks are portrayed as positive figures within the community. For example, when many 'clerkis and prestis' are killed by an earl named 'Hernox' a 'good man' laments that means 'Our Lordys servyse myght nat be seyde' (568-9). At the end of the *Morte's* most prominent quest, that of the Holy Grail, Arthur 'made grete clerkes to com before hym, for cause they shulde cronycle of the hyghe adventures of the good knyghtes' (587). A clerk is also summoned when Elaine of Ascolat's letter is read in public after her death (617). When one of Arthur's knights, Sir Urry, is miraculously healed, he 'lat ravyshe [fetch] prystes and clarkes in the moste devoutiste wyse to brynge in Sir Urré into Carlyle with syngyng and lovyng to God' (644). During the wars at the end of the *Morte* that precipitate the end of Arthur's reign, a 'noble clerke' takes a missive from the Pope to Arthur's court requesting he make public peace with Lancelot for the benefit of 'all Inglonde' (664). When Mordred attempts to force Gwenyver to marry him, a 'noble clerke' who is also 'the Bysshop of Caunturbyry' warns him not to shame 'all knyghthode' by such an action (679). When Gawain dies Lancelot gathers 'all the prystes and clarkes that myght be gotyn in the contrey', who 'sange Massis of requiem' in public (691).

⁸⁶ This episode is explored in more detail in the fourth part of this chapter, 'Peripheral Matriarch', pp. 244-67.

⁸⁷ Gawain and Ector once write an inscription together, but not independently (541).

Second, in their attitudes to the courtly community Morgan and Galahad both privilege their individual desires. Each of the many ways in which Morgan does so will be considered in more depth during the course of this chapter; here the first example suffices to highlight certain similarities between her identity and Galahad's. In her first rejection of the communally imposed roles of wife and queen, Morgan wishes to 'sle hir hubonde Kyng Uryence' and replace him with Accolon as the 'kyng in this londe', whom she has chosen independently (90). Although Galahad does not wish to kill Arthur or his knights, he likewise rejects the community in a different way and gradually erases the king's authority over them. Archibald has observed that 'the first serious threat to the unity of the Round Table fellowship comes at the beginning of the *Tale of the Sankgreal*' and observes that Galahad is the Arthurian community's 'patron' more than its 'peer' ('Malory's Ideal of Fellowship' 321, 326). I suggest Galahad's individualistic tendencies are apparent in several moments. When Galahad is found and knighted in the nunnery by his own 'desyre', Lancelot asks him: 'woll ye com with me unto the courte of Kyng Arthure?' (497). Galahad effectively rejects the fellowship in the first moment he officially becomes one of its members, as he answers: 'Nay . . . I woll nat go with you at thys time' (497). Though many knights travel with each other 'for to beare . . . felyship', Galahad frequently rejects such requests, for example when Uwain 'seyde he wolde beare hym felyshyp' Galahad tells him 'that may ye nat, for I must go alone' (499, 507). Similarly his individualism is exemplified by a lack of equivalence of response to adventures or miracles that are considered significant by the community. When Arthur shows Galahad what he and his fellowship believe to be 'a grete mervayle', a sword in a stone that floats on water, Galahad contradicts him saying 'hit ys no mervayle' (501). This is the same sword with which Balyn beheaded the first Lady of the Lake. Therefore Galahad not only denies the Arthurian community access to their collective experience but also erases a part of their history in claiming individual ownership of the sword: 'thys

adventure *ys nat theyrs but myne*' (501, emphases added). In a different manner to Morgan's attempt to eradicate the patriarchal authority designed to centrally marginalise her within the community (Uriens), Galahad symbolically replaces the highest patriarchal figurehead of the book (Arthur). For, on the night before all the knights depart to search for the Grail, he sleeps in Arthur's 'owne bedde', effectively separating the king from his habitual position within the community (504).

Despite Galahad's remoteness from communal performances of identity in these ways, he is still seen as the *Morte's* 'perfect' member in certain respects (Archibald 'Malory's Ideal of Fellowship' 326). Nevertheless, it should be noted that Galahad's 'nourishment' in a nunnery is a contributing factor in his alternative and individualistic expressions because he matures in a private space beyond central courtly boundaries. Since this same phenomenon is noted in Morgan's attitude to central Arthurian courts and patriarchal authorities, I suggest that this encourages a reading of Morgan as a female counterpart to Galahad and a kind of quest agent, who is not necessarily represented critically by the narrator of the *Morte*. Indeed, a numerical correspondence between two moments in which these protagonists appear reinforces such a reading. The enchanted 'shippe' that acts as a portal transporting Arthur and Accolon to the quest in which Morgan steals Excalibur and the scabbard is populated by 'twelve fayre damesels', just as Galahad is first sighted in the company of 'twelve nunnes' (84, 496).

In summary, Malory's vision of necromancy and nunneries in the *Morte* suggests that a multiplicity of associations with female authority, privacy and individual empowerment may be found within the text's alternative forms of communities. These are found in peripherally marginal spaces and are seen to develop protagonists' identities beyond the constraints of publicly constituted central courtly roles. From Morgan's inceptive introduction to the text as a necromancer nun, she is repeatedly depicted as a protagonist who privileges her private identity over the public roles provided by birth and marriage.

Throughout the text, Morgan creates and controls other matriarchal spaces within the quest wilderness where she maintains personal privacy and expresses herself in highly individualistic terms. Not only this, but peripherally marginal, matriarchal spaces offer insights into Morgan's emotions, which can be seen as a development of her mother Igraine's emotional development during her eremitic imitation. The interconnection of private matriarchal spaces with individual empowerment and the expression of emotion is first illustrated in Malory's representation of Morgan as a quest agent, as the next part of this chapter explores.

Quest Agent

Morgan, Accolon and Arthur participate in a tripartite quest in which Morgan steals Arthur's sword Excalibur and gives it to her lover, Accolon. The quest begins when Uriens and Accolon—Morgan's husband and lover—go hunting with Arthur in a forest (83). They ride so far from court that their horses expire and the knights are forced to search for lodging (84). A ship appears on the coast and sails towards them, which they enter and are sumptuously hosted overnight by twelve beautiful women (84). Arthur, Uriens and Accolon each occupy separate chambers and by morning they are all inexplicably transported to different locations: Uriens awakes in his Camelot bed with Morgan; Arthur finds himself in an unknown prison; whilst Accolon is removed to another location in the quest wilderness (85-6). During this time, Morgan has created an ineffective replica of Arthur's sword Excalibur and sent the original to Accolon on the agreement that he fight Arthur (86). However, the Lady of the Lake helps Arthur recover Excalibur, enabling him to overcome Accolon in battle (89). After the battle, Arthur is severely wounded and travels to an abbey of nuns in order to be healed, which Morgan visits to

reprise Excalibur once more (93). She manages to steal only its scabbard and throws it into a lake (94).

Not only is this episode significant in that it represents one of only two tripartite quests recounted in the *Morte*, but it also features a female protagonist as a principal quest agent.⁸⁸ Traditionally in Arthurian scholarship, Morgan's role in this quest is elided by readings which focus primarily on the performances of masculine identity it describes. In 1485 Caxton divided the episode into several chapters in his version of the *Morte*, which obscures the coherence of the adventures it describes. Admittedly, this fractures all of the protagonists' trajectories to an extent but its presentation of the quest is particularly detrimental to the perception of Morgan's actions as a protagonist, since Caxton assumes a narrative interest primarily in the male knights with the title of his sixth chapter: 'How kyng Arthur kyng Vryens & Syr Accolon of Gaule chaced an hert & of *theyr* meruayllous aduenture' (Sommer 9).⁸⁹ Similarly, when the Winchester MS was discovered in 1934, Eugène Vinaver made the editorial decision to frame this episode as the adventures of 'Arthur and Accolon', completely obscuring its status as a tripartite quest and Morgan's involvement as an agent (*Works* 81-93). Regardless of whether critics prefer the Winchester or Caxton versions of the *Morte*, Morgan is either viewed as the creator of a quest belonging to Arthur and Accolon, or as its adjunct and obstacle, but never as one of its agents. Larrington calls this section of narrative 'The Accolon episode' and one in

⁸⁸ The second tripartite quest directly follows this episode and features Uwain, Gawain and Marhaus as agents, recounted on pp. 96-112.

⁸⁹ Morgan's involvement is not signalled in the consecutive four chapter titles after this, which are, respectively: (7) 'How Arthur took vpon hym to fyght to be delyuerd oute of pryson & also for to delyuer twenty knyghtes that were in pryson Capitulo'; (8) 'How accollon fonde hym self by a welle & he toke vpon hym to doo bataylle ayenst Arthur capitulo'; (9) 'Of the bataylle bytwene kyng Arthur & Accolon'; (10) 'How kyng arthurs swerde that he faught wyth brake & how he recouerd of accolon his owne swerde excalibur and ouercome his enemye Capitulo' (Sommer 9). Caxton only belatedly highlights Morgan's presence and emphasises the negative aspects of her character, with the first chapter title to name her describing events in terms of 'How accolon confessyd the treason of Morgan le fay Kyng arthurs syster & how she wold haue doon slee hym' (Sommer 9).

which Morgan provides 'intrigue', but ultimately exists outside of the quest, since her power is 'rooted in magic and murder rather than in honourable combat and political challenge' (KAE 37, 34, 37). Similarly, though Hebert views Malory's portrayal of Morgan as active, when considering her part in this episode Hebert still focuses more on the action between 'Accolon and Arthur', which is 'manipulated' by Morgan from a distance (84). Hebert argues Morgan performs a 'teaching' role, but since this reading situates her '[o]utside the code' that guides knights, it also places Morgan in a position exterior to the quest (87, 85).

I argue that Morgan's replacement of Uriens presents her as a quest agent rather than a kind of tutor. Morgan's status as a quest agent is additionally unusual: as well as offering a rare example of the feminine version of this role, her participation does not evince the public concerns of other female protagonists in medieval romances who actively contribute to quests in a variety of ways. For example, Percival's sister could be described as an agent of the Grail Quest in the *Morte* because she enables the progression of events when Galahad encounters an obstacle he cannot overcome. They find a castle where a lady is ill with an unknown 'malodye', which causes the court to develop the custom of taking a 'dyshe full of bloode' from the right arm of any woman who passes in the hopes of curing their lady (570-2). Only the blood of a woman who is 'a maydyn and a clene virgyne in wylle and in worke' may heal her, meaning Galahad cannot complete this part of the quest without female involvement (571). Percival's sister offers her life, saying: 'and I dye for the helth of her, I shall gete me grete worhsip and soule helthe, and worship to my lynayge' (572). As is evident from the motivations of Percival's sister, her concerns are entirely public and orientated around familial or communal needs. Though Morgan is raised in a nunnery, she is neither a public exemplar of Christian virtue in this way nor does she prioritise family. Morgan also does not resemble other female quest agents in romance like Josian, the Saracen princess of *Bevis of Hampton*, who aids Bevis in certain adventures in

preparation for her assumption of the public roles of his wife and 'quene' at the end of the romance (4587).⁹⁰ Morgan differs, too, from the eponymous heroine of Chrétien de Troyes's 'Erec and Enide', who follows her husband abroad in an attempt to help improve his reputation at court; this is a mission that predominantly supports both public values and her communal role as Erec's wife, despite the fact that she also expresses her own private desires.⁹¹ Unlike Enide, Morgan attempts to kill her husband, rather than furthering his career in the course of her quest (92). At the same time as resisting typical articulations of female identity in extra-courtly spaces, Morgan does not adopt an officially masculine performance of secular chivalry either. One such example is seen in the eponymous female-born protagonist of *Le Roman de Silence*, who is publicly 'dubbed' a 'knight in Paris' at the age of 'seventeen and a half, / exactly at Pentecost' in a collective celebration along with 'ten others', i.e. male knights, and embarks upon a traditional chivalric career for a significant portion of the text (Roche-Mahdi 5132-36). Thus in contrast to both 'feminine' and 'masculine' performances by the female quest agents named above, Malory portrays Morgan as one who exclusively privileges her private identity over public values and the Arthurian community.

Quests usually inform readers about private aspects of private knightly identity that were previously unelaborated in the text, so in this sense revelations about Morgan's private identity are not surprising. However, at the end, any acts of individualism are almost always superimposed or contained by knights' reintegration into communal roles within a central court. Both of these tendencies are seen in Gareth's quest and inclusion into the fellowship, as illustrated in Chapter Two. Morgan's quest with Arthur and Accolon follows certain typical patterns of quests described elsewhere in the

⁹⁰ For example, Josian offers to help him fight two lions: 'She seide, she wolde that oon hoolde, / While that he that other quelde' (Drake et al. 2409-10).

⁹¹ The public image of marriage is a central concern in Chrétien's tale, since after Erec marries Enide, 'He no longer took an interest in tournaments' and, as a consequence, 'His companions were grieved' (Burns 'Enid's Disruptive Mouths' 30, 31).

Morte, since the narrative is more informative about Morgan's private identity and emotions when she is located in peripheral spaces. Radically, though, Morgan's individual identity overcomes the communal role she occupies within the court rather than serving to enhance it. As I will demonstrate, the most significant aspect of Malory's portrayal of Morgan as a quest agent is the sympathetic light in which her private emotions and individual experiences are depicted during this time, despite her failure to reintegrate into the Arthurian community. Unlike common critical perceptions of Morgan, her portrayal by the narrator as an agent informs readers of emotive and positive moments in her trajectory.

Quests in the *Morte* typically follow a narrative pattern where knights officially swear fealty to Arthur as king, often on the basis of their familial relationship. Knights seek to increase their individual reputations in doing so, but equally if they achieve acts of prowess, they also elevate and legitimise Arthur's power within the community. To these ends, knights either publicly claim or are assigned quests in order to cement their new place in Arthur's court. During quests, knights encounter supernatural challenges that are not of their own making and must be overcome. They also engage in martial combat with other knights, and develop romantic relationships with women that are often accepted by the community and sanctioned by the public rites of marriage. As well as marriage, quests usually end with the successful knights' inclusion into Arthur's fellowship of the Round Table, both of which positions often come with the king's gift of lands and wealth. This part of the chapter will demonstrate that Morgan's quest incorporates all of these elements but in alternative or inverse ways from the standard pattern and stages of the chivalric quest, which suit her portrayal as an especially individualistic female protagonist.

Morgan's participation in the narrative as a quest agent is predicted in advance by Malory, who prematurely discloses Morgan's private dissatisfaction with her position in the Arthurian community:

for grete truste, Arthure betwoke the scawberde unto Morgan le Fay, hys sister. And she loved another knyght bettir than hir husbände Kynge Uriens – othir Arthure. And she wolde have had Arthure hir brother slayne; and therefore she lete make anothis scawberd for Excalibur lyke it, by enchauntemente, and gaf the scauberd Excalibur to her love – and the knyghtes name was called Accolon, that after had nere slayne Kynge Arthure (52).

Besides foreshadowing Morgan's status as a public antagonist of Arthur, the narrator's foreword to the episode ahead of its recounting in full serves another, more important function. Malory associates Morgan with two central thematic components of the *Morte*: Arthur's potential immortality and death. First, before the narrator's interjection about Morgan's desire to be free of her husband Merlin reminds Arthur about the qualities of the scabbard to Excalibur, telling him 'ye shall lose no bloode whyle ye have the scawberde uppon you, though ye have as many woundis uppon you as ye may have' (52). Merlin's words indicate that Arthur has access to immortality through the scabbard, since he cannot die as long as he wears it. Then afterwards, Merlin tells Arthur the prophecy 'that there sholde be a grete batayle besydes Salysbiry, and Mordred hys owne sonne sholde be agaynste hym' (52). Any readers familiar with Arthurian myth know that Salisbury is the location of Arthur's final battle before his ambiguous death. The juxtaposition of these two facts not only reminds readers of the loss at the centre of the narrative but directly links them to Morgan, since it is during this episode that Arthur's key to immortality is seemingly lost due to her privately motivated actions. One of the first conventional stages of a quest, the public declaration of fealty to the king, is inversely enacted by Morgan when she privately rejects her familial connection with Arthur and attempts to decrease his power within the courtly community.

Next, Morgan rejects her familial position as the premise for her involvement on a quest. At this point in the narrative, Arthur has lost 'eyght' knights from recent battles and Uriens is one of the knights who replaces them

(82). He receives the place on account that he has 'wedded youre sistir Morgan le Fay' (82). Uriens's familial privilege, however, is not then embellished by independently earned prowess, since his position as quest agent is appropriated by Morgan (84). When Uriens passes through the extra-courtly and matriarchal space of the enchanted ship, 'on the morne' he finds himself once more 'in Camelot, abedde in his wyves armys' (84). Usually quests are full of marvel for knights, but the only 'mervayle' Uriens experiences is that of being in a domestic, courtly place when he was previously 'two dayes journey from Camelot' (84). Despite the fact that Morgan has two other partners in the *Morte*, this is the only scene in which she is depicted in bed. Usually the symbolic location of women's central marginalisation, the reliability of Morgan's depiction in her public role as Uriens's wife is undermined by readers' foreknowledge of Morgan's rejection of this communal position. Her motivations for embarking upon a quest derive from a private relationship with Accolon, a knight not of her family's choosing.

The lack of public knowledge about Morgan's private desires indicates another way in which her status as a quest agent differs significantly from patriarchal chivalric models. Morgan's presence is insinuated into the narrative implicitly and incrementally, meaning her involvement as a quest agent is withheld from the Arthurian community as well as from readers in certain instances. Whilst Larrington feels that Malory's source for this episode is more 'complex' because Morgan's involvement is 'direct', I suggest the opposite is true because Morgan's presence can be inferred in several ways even when she is not physically present (33). For example, when Arthur, Accolon and Uriens initially encounter the enchanted 'shippe', I suggest Morgan's presence is 'detectable', albeit 'in retrospect', as Scala argues of Morgan's portrayal in *SGGK* (84; 66). Malory's use of the 'twelve fayre damesels' can be seen to evoke Morgan's presence implicitly through their beauty—Morgan is described as 'fayre' earlier in the narrative—and exclusively female company (84, 32). Only later does Arthur connect the

'enchantment of the shippe' to 'his sister Morgan le Fay', meaning she retains a privacy and empowerment denied to the three knights imprisoned by her women on the ship (90). Morgan is also present indirectly when Arthur finds himself in the unknown prison the morning after. A 'damesel' visits him, telling him if he will 'fyght' an opponent of her lord's choosing he will 'be delyverded oute of preson' (85). Arthur believes her, but the narrator informs readers that she is 'one of the damesels of Morgan le Fay' and not native to this castle (85). Similarly, rather than coming to Accolon directly Morgan sends a 'dwarf', who the narrator informs readers, 'cam fromme Quene Morgan le Fay' (86).

The privacy Morgan achieves is what enables her to design and direct the quest in which she is a participant in these initial stages, which ostensibly revolve around the actions of Arthur and Accolon in enclosed, courtly spaces. Indeed, as Arthur later remarks, if he and Accolon had 'knowyn othir, here had bene no batayle nothir no strike stryken' (90). Morgan's privacy is diminished when Arthur has retrieved Excalibur with the help of the Lady of the Lake and asks Accolon how he came by the sword. Accolon's revelations contradict readings of him as an unwitting victim, as he explains:

This swerde hath bene in my kepyng the moste party of this twelvemonth, and Morgan le Fay, Kyng Uryence wyff, sente hit me yestirday by a dwarfe to the entente to sle Kyng Arthure, hir brothir – for ye shall undirstonde that Kyng Arthure ys the man in the worlde that she hatyth moste, because he is moste of worship and of prouesse of ony of hir bloode. Also she lovyth me oute of mesure as paramour – and I hir agayne – and if she myght bryng hit aboute to sle Arthure by hir crauftis, she wolde sle hir husbonde Kyng Uryence lyghtly. And than had she devysed to have me kyng in this londe, and so to reigne, and she to be my quene (90).⁹²

⁹² Armstrong argues that Accolon's actions suggest a 'lack of complicity' and imply that at no point has he 'helped in any way in the planning or the active work' of this quest (61, 62).

Morgan's main objection to Arthur is purported to be his 'worship' and 'prouesse', which qualities outrank Morgan and 'ony of hir bloode'. In other words, the power of the courtly community Arthur governs exceeds that which Morgan or any member of her family possess individually. The reference to Morgan's 'bloode' echoes Morgause's fear that Gareth and she do not enjoy the correct prestige within Arthur's community, explored in Chapter Two. However, unlike Morgause, Morgan's motivations articulate a much more extreme resistance to the traditional Arthurian prioritisation of public roles over private emotions. Both she and Morgause are described as expressing their emotions in the context of private relationships, which exceed the limits of the queens' public roles. However, Morgan is more empowered in her resistance because she constantly occupies peripherally marginal spaces instead of the central space of Orkney, to which Morgause is always returned. An additionally complex feature of Morgan's identity is that at the same time as resisting patriarchal constructions of identity she appears to *desire* certain aspects of these same communal sites of power and sees them as ways to elevate her individual reputation: worship and prowess. This point is considered in more detail in the fourth part of this chapter, 'Peripheral Matriarch'.

Morgan is seen in person for the second time on this quest within a bedchamber and there enacts a starkly different mode of identity from the earlier scene in which Uriens is transported from the quest wilderness into the court. Before, her public identity as wife was referenced, whereas in this scene Morgan's private identity is prevalent and forceful:

So on a day she aspyed Kynge Uryence lay on slepe on his bedde;
than she callyd unto hir a mayden of her counseyle and sayde, 'Go
fecche me my lordes swerde, for I sawe never bettir tyme to sle hym
than now.' 'A, madame,' seyde the damesell, 'and ye sle my lorde
ye can never ascape.' 'Care the not,' sayde Morgan, 'for now I se my
tyme is beste to do hit – and therefore hyghe the faste and fecche
me the swerde . . . Anone the damesell brought the quene the

swerde, with quakyng hondis. And lyghtly she toke the swerde and pullyd hit oute, and wente boldely unto the beddis syde and awayted how and where she myght sle hym beste (92).

Instead of being portrayed as sleeping, silent and passive, in this scene it is both male members of Morgan's marital family who are described as such. Moreover, in many other bedroom scenes violence is committed against women by men, as in the case of Morgause's beheading by Gareth. Significantly, Morgan narrowly escapes this exact death: beheading by a biological son. When her female servant informs Uwain that his mother is on the verge of killing Uriens, he responds in a similar way as Gaheris reacts to Morgause's perceived transgressions. Like Gaheris, who 'suddaynly . . . gate his modir by the heyre', Uwain also grabs his mother physically and with rapidity, as he 'lepte unto his modir and caught hir by the honde' (368, 92). Uwain then threatens Morgan with the act Gaheris does not hesitate to commit: 'And thou were nat my modir, with this swerde I sholde smyte of thyne hede' (92). Like Gaheris too, Uwain focuses on Morgan's body as the symbolic site of offence, regretting that 'an erthely fende *bare*', or gave birth to him and associates himself with Merlin, who was 'begotyn of a fende' (92). Morgan saves herself by appealing to the same bond between parent and child on which Uwain focuses, calling him 'son' for the first and only two times in the narrative at the beginning and end of her plea:

'A, fayre *son* Uwayne, have mercy uppon me! I was tempted with a fende, wherefore I cry the mercy. I woll nevermore do so – and save my worship and discover me nat.' 'On this coveaunte,' sayde Sir Uwayne, 'I wol forgyff you, so ye woll never be aboute to do such dedis.'

'Nay, *son* – and that I make you assurance' (92, emphases added).

With these words, Morgan appeals to Uwain's public role by employing their shared communal vocabulary of fairness, 'mercy', 'worship' and forgiveness.

These words echo the values that constitute the Pentecostal Oath in general, as well as the specific tenets that promote the protection of women and so this scene can be read as a transaction of public and private interests. Morgan requests privacy, by asking her son not to ‘discover’ her actions, and Uwain is saved the public ignominy of having ‘men’ –perhaps like the influential barons, who hold the power to elevate or denigrate members of the courtly community –say he was ‘begotyn of a fende’ like Merlin (92). In this way, Morgan avoids inhabiting the traditional ‘feminine’ role of women on quests who are beheaded as part of the individual male trajectory of knights like Gaheris or Gawain.

Yet again Morgan inverts a conventional stage of the masculine quest when her journey ends not in marriage to a private lover but in the end of their relationship, as Accolon dies ‘within foure dayes’ after the battle with Arthur (92). Rather than receiving the communal sanctification of an independently chosen partner, no symbolic space exists in the court for Morgan’s love of Accolon even in death as for Morgause, whose marriage to Lamerok Arthur would have approved. Rather, the description of Morgan’s bereavement is analogous to her mother’s when she privately mourns the Duke of Cornwall. For, when there ‘come tydynges unto Morgan le Fay that Accolon was dede, and his body brought unto the chirche’, her reaction almost exactly imitates Igraine’s (93):

whan Quene Morgan wyste that Accolon was dede, she was so sorowfull that nye hir herte to-braste –but bycause she wolde nat hit were knowyn oute, she kepte hir countenaunce and made no sembelaunte of dole (93).

Furthermore, Morgan also does not relate her private adventures to the court, a requisite of any quest’s completion in this text when knights return from adventures. Morgan is not absorbed back into the community, having escaped public discovery of her attempted crimes. Instead, she leaves as soon as possible to return ‘into hir contrey’ (93). Morgan asks permission from the

figure usually responsible for the judging of knights after their quests, Gwenyver. Initially Gwenyver responds according to her usual actions within this role, in attempting to keep Morgan in the community and absorb her into their central structure. For she states first: 'Ye may abyde . . . tyll youre brother the Kynge com home', where the word 'home' reflects the magnetic draw of fellowship felt by Arthur's knights when they return from peripheral spaces of the quest wilderness to this central court (93). However, since Morgan is not a knight Gwenyver does not hold the same authority over her and when asked again she replies, 'ye may departe whan ye woll' (93).

Rather than being reabsorbed into the patriarchal court as knights conventionally are after quests, Morgan at least figuratively returns to her matriarchal space of origin by going 'to the same abbey of nunnys whereas lay Kynge Arthure' (93). This abbey of nuns, or nunnery, is said to be of Arthur's 'elders foundacion', meaning an institution established by his 'parents' or 'ancestors' (92). Since Arthur's only ancestors described in the *Morte* are Igraine and Uther, I propose that this abbey might also literally constitute the same nunnery in which Morgan is educated (92). Admittedly, Malory does not specify which of Arthur's 'elders' are responsible for its founding and the detail might merely represent a descriptive coincidence or irrelevant embellishment. However, the authority with which Morgan acts in the abbey of nuns suggests otherwise, especially when her portrayal is considered in contrast to her deference in the previous courtly scene with Uwain. As soon as Morgan enters the nunnery she speaks in the imperative rather than the subservient requests addressed to Uwain and Gwenyver. Asking first where Arthur is, Morgan declares 'I charge that none of you awake hym tyll I do' (93). Morgan goes 'streyte unto his chambir', without having to wait for an opportune moment, as she must when attempting to kill Uriens (93). Unlike the disobedient female servant of her central courtly 'counceyle', these nuns 'durste' not 'disobey hir commaundement' (92, 93). As before, the threat of male violence against other women in the *Morte's* bedchambers is augured

when Morgan is described as thinking 'she had bene dede' if she awoke Arthur whilst taking Excalibur (93). However, she avoids the threat easily this time, 'toke the scawberde' and escapes on 'horsebak' (93). The reactions of 'all' the nuns to Arthur's anger upon waking and finding his key to immortality vanished is telling, since although the king is 'wroth', the nuns' collective response implies that in this eremitic community matriarchal authority is favoured over patriarchal authority (93).

In the penultimate stage of Morgan's quest, she continues to be portrayed as a particularly private and individual type of quest agent rather than conventional models who are publicly orientated towards the community. Arthur follows his sister into the quest wilderness in search of his scabbard, where Morgan's method of evading capture once again highlights the spatial resonance between public and private identity. After throwing Excalibur's scabbard into a 'lake', Morgan

rode into a valey where many grete stonys were, and whan she sawe she muste be overtake, she shope hirsself, horse, and man, by enchauntemente unto grete marbyll stonys. And anone withall come Kynge Arthure and Sir Outlake whereas the Kynge myght [nat] know his sistir and her men and one knyght frome another (94).

Hebert sees this instance of Morgan's shapeshifting in general as symbolic of her frequent 'use of multiple bodies', which 'act when Arthur cannot' (74). This reading has primarily public implications, since Hebert concludes that such multiplicity represents the 'fusion' of 'individual and collective' identity in the *Morte* (74). Conversely, I maintain that Morgan's transformation epitomises the *distinction* between Morgan's public and private identities, as well as her distance from community and the subsequent lack of control patriarchal authorities have over her. Arthur cannot differentiate between 'his sister and her men' as individual and collective identities in this scene; but after his departure a distinction clearly emerges between Morgan's power and that of

the men she controls. This is clear in her disregard for their wills in contrast to her own. The knights express a fear of Arthur's 'countenance', which 'wolde have caused us to have fledde', if it had been possible for them to do so (94). However, Morgan has ensured that none of them 'myght a stered of one stede', or 'move a single horse' (94). The image of a group of men who are forcibly enclosed in stone reverses the gender roles of instances elsewhere in the text when ladies are held hostage in castles by knights, as Gareth's future wife Lyonesse is.

Yet another quest motif is referenced when Morgan sends a knight to Arthur's court as a prisoner. This darkly parodies the actions of knights who, when abroad, frequently send defeated opponents to Arthur.⁹³ Morgan encounters 'a knyght ledynge another knyght on horsebake before hym, bounde hande and foote, blyndefelde, to have drowned hym in a fowntayne' (94). When it transpires that the imprisoned knight is a 'cosyn unto Accolon' named Manessen, in remembrance of her lover Morgan frees him by exactly reversing their situation: "'for the love of hym ye shall be delyverde – and ye shal have youre adversary in the same case that ye were in.'" So this Manessen was loused, and the other knyght bounde' (94). Morgan's declaration of feeling for Accolon is an expression of private identity constituted by the emotions of love, grief and anger. Moreover, her private identity is revealed in the same moment as her ability to alter conventional power dynamics of public figures in the Arthurian community is manifested. Morgan's redirection of a victor and prisoner to a central court constitutes a public display of defiance rather than deference. In addition, once again Morgan rejects her role as Uriens's wife by publicly declaring her extramarital relationship, as she commands Manessen to tell the whole court she rescued him 'nat for the love' of Arthur 'but for the love of Accolon' (95).

⁹³ For example, Sir Torre sends 'Sir Phelot of Langeduke' and 'Sir Petipace of Wynchilsee' as 'presoners' to Arthur during his first quest, whilst Lancelot sends three knights 'unto the courte of Kynge Arthure', where he commands them to 'yelde' to Gwennyver (70, 167).

Finally in this quest, Morgan inverts the conclusion of chivalric adventures, which usually see knights receive wealth and lands after successfully integrating into the central Arthurian community. Before she steals the scabbard, Morgan is already described as knowing that 'there sholde no golde go for hir lyff' due to her attempt to kill Arthur, which Shepherd translates as meaning 'No amount of gold could purchase her safety' (93 n.5). This contrasts with the economic security gained by knights newly initiated to the fellowship when they receive 'grete ryches' that come with the 'myghty londys' Arthur gives them, or they gain through marriage (227). Though Morgan temporarily gains the scabbard, which is 'hevy of golde and precious stonys', since she wishes to deprive Arthur of it she 'lete throwe the scawberde in the deppyst of the watir', thereby purposefully losing rather than gaining riches (94). Morgan's action is frequently repeated throughout the text; she is a protagonist who may own or create, but does not retain, material objects and signifiers of wealth, as the next part of this chapter considers in more depth. Moreover, her access to wealth does not seem contingent upon land ownership, as it does for Arthur's knights. What land she is associated with is gained through her own authority rather than Arthur's, since at the end of this episode Morgan 'departed into the contrey of Gore, and there was she rychely receyved, and made hir castels and townys stronge' (95). On one hand, the welcome Morgan receives could be attributed to ignorance of her actions, as in the prior scene with Gwenyver, who is unaware that Morgan has tried to kill both of their husbands (95). However, Malory's use of the possessive pronoun 'hir' informs readers that Morgan independently controls the court that, by marriage, should fix her position as centrally marginal. I suggest that Morgan's unusual level of empowerment is enabled by the fact that her authority derives from the intellectual and emotional skills developed in the nunnery, which form the basis of her private identity. Unlike Morgause, whose private identity is expressed through public constitutions of her physical status as a royal mother, Morgan's motherhood – in both biological

and emotional senses – is a secondary and unimportant feature of her identity. This means that Morgan's exercise of matriarchal authority is not subject to the same transitions as Morgause's when she moves between different spaces.

In summary, when Morgan's first extended appearance is compared to typical motifs or stages in the standard trajectory of questing knights, her status as an alternative kind of quest agent becomes apparent. For, the completion of Morgan's journey sees not her integration into the Arthurian community but rather her incremental removal away from it. Morgan's repeated rejection of public expressions of identity typically performed on quests effectively results in her exile. First, when Arthur discovers Morgan's involvement through Accolon's confession, he calls her 'lustes', or 'feelings', 'false' (90). He swears to be 'sore avenged upon hir, that all Crystendom shall speke of hit', which signals not just his rejection of Morgan from the Arthurian community but from all spaces considered central to official society (90). This attitude is adopted collectively by Arthur's court, who, when they hear of his adventures, 'had mervayle of the falshede of Morgan le Fay' and '[m]any knyghtes wysshed hir brente' (95). Manessen's arrival at court only exacerbates the negative transformation of Morgan's public identity, since Arthur again vows to be avenged in a way 'that all Crystendom shall speke of hit' (95). However, the Arthurian community's judgment of Morgan's failure to perform her public role as a 'kynde sister' to their king arguably serves a crucial function in her portrayal by Malory (95). Morgan's quest with Arthur and Accolon results in the clear dichotomy of her public and private identities – symbolised by each knight respectively – which are entirely incompatible and result in her exile. Morgan is a paradigm of empowered individualism because she does not experience the repercussions of tensions between her public and private identity as Morgause does. From this point onwards, Morgan only occupies the peripheral space of the quest wilderness in person, where she is increasingly empowered, even though signs of her identity remain indirectly present in central courtly spaces. This suggests that

female empowerment is contingent upon access to private space in the *Morte*. Indeed, Morgan's exile is commensurate with her widespread control of land and material objects in the quest wilderness, which the next part of this chapter explores.

Peripheral Matriarch

I have argued up to this point that Morgan's skills in necromancy figure her as a protagonist who has access to an unusual level of privacy in matriarchal spaces inaccessible to the Arthurian community. In addition, Morgan's subsequent portrayal in the adventures with Arthur and Accolon further suggest her private identity is defined by the desire to inhabit roles beyond the limits of those publicly constituted titles of 'wife' and 'queen' when she acts as a quest agent and a lover in an extramarital relationship. This part of the chapter explores how Morgan's associations with private spaces, as well as concepts of 'prouesse' and emotional authority are elaborated after her appearance as a quest agent in two distinct ways. The first of these is seen in Morgan's control of key landmarks throughout the Arthurian landscape, the second in her transmission of material objects across it. Both forms of control enable Morgan to maintain a secure level of privacy because direct access to her person is limited.

I. Landmarks

Morgan appears in a variety of castle locations in the quest wilderness that might be termed matriarchal spaces, if 'matriarchal' is understood as denoting spaces governed by a dominant female presence.⁹⁴ Moreover, Morgan is

⁹⁴ Morgan's use of one landmark has already been considered in the previous section to this, 'Quest Agent', when she imprisons Arthur in a castle, which one of her damsels pretends

publicly known to control these areas, since at one point in the text Mark asks that Morgan and her fellow 'sorserers wold sette all the contrey envyrone with ladyes that were enchauntours' (382). Cory Rushton notes how Mark's request portrays Morgan as vastly powerful, since she is able to galvanize the 'entire countryside' (145). Kaufman expands upon this point, arguing, the 'narrator's explanation that Morgan and the Queen of North Wales each has an army of enchantresses at her disposal makes this moment in the text a major revelation for the reader' because 'women of power' are seen not only to 'exist in Malory's world' but are 'interconnected' (145, 138). This interconnection is, apparently, controlled by Morgan. Given the strong association of Morgan's control with issues of land, the question of whether she can be described as owning such places must be addressed. As Leitch observes, the empowerment of other marginal women in the *Morte* can be attributed to land ownership, as in the case of Nynyve who governs the lake of Avalon (personal communication).⁹⁵ This is true of Morgan's actions in a contemporary French romance according to Rebecca Lyons, who argues that in the fifteenth-century *Chanson d'Ogier* Avalon is portrayed as Morgan's 'empire' in the same way as it is Nynyve's in the *Morte*.⁹⁶ Malory's portrayal might also be considered to present Morgan as a marginal female landowner. At the end of the *Morte* she is depicted as sharing access to Avalon with 'Nynyve, the chyff lady of the laake' and she independently governs the territory of Gore, where the 'castels and townys' are described as belonging to 'hir' rather than her husband,

belongs to her father and I do not return to this moment in the text (85). One other castle, or 'towre', this chapter does not discuss is that in which the figure Elaine of Corbyn is imprisoned by Morgan. Morgan is not present in this space, either directly or indirectly; her motivations for using the tower also remain unexplained in Malory's version of the tale; what is more, this tower marks the beginning of the Grail Quest, in which Morgan has no part and is never mentioned (463).

⁹⁵ This point was discussed during the question time following my presentation of a paper at the Leeds International Medieval Congress (IMC) Session 131 on 'Modelling Ethical Reform in Medieval Literature, I' titled 'Becoming the "rex futurus": Female Renewal and the Undoing of Chivalric Reform in Malory's *Morte Darthur*' (6 July 2015).

⁹⁶ 'Morgan's Avalon: The "Other" Empire of the *Chanson d'Ogier*', presented by Lyons in Session 224 at the Leeds IMC on 'Gendering the Empire: Arthurian Women in Medieval and Victorian Literature' (7 July 2014).

Uriens (689, 95). Conversely, according to Kim, marginal women such as Morgause may be *disempowered* by their connections to land; he attributes her death precisely to the fact that she is 'one of the greatest landowners in Arthur's kingdom of Logres' as discussed in the previous chapter (48). The issue of whether marginality and land ownership together enable female empowerment or not is evidently complex. I therefore suggest that a distinction between ownership and control should be drawn. Ownership does not necessarily entail absolute control, as exemplified by Morgause's death. Equally, control is not contingent upon ownership, since Morgan is portrayed as acting powerfully in spaces that publicly belong to others many times in the text. Morgan is only explicitly located in the place named 'Gore' once, at the end of her quest and the other spaces in which she appears are only occupied by her temporarily, being returned to their rightful owners eventually (95). Therefore, I argue Morgan's movement through and control of so many locations in the Arthurian landscape does not convincingly constitute ownership in the same way as for the *Morte's* other female protagonists, since she is not publicly responsible for the communities of different places under her control in the way that Morgause is held responsible for the court of Orkney. Furthermore, whilst the ownership of land is suggestive about the role of women's public identities, Morgan's control of geographical space serves to illustrate aspects of her private identity and emotions. I suggest that this is possible because Morgan is never permanently fixed at the centre of any one landmark.

The first of such landmarks this part of the chapter considers is called the 'Castell Charyot' (54). Morgan calls this place 'my castell' but does not occupy it again in the narrative, which represents her control as temporary (154). When Morgan and 'foure queenys' find Lancelot sleeping 'undir an appil tre', they 'began to stryve for that knyght, and every of hem sayde they wolde have hym to hir love' (154). Although all the queens are 'of a grete astate', it appears that Morgan is the most powerful, since she gives the command: 'We shall nat

stryve', which ends their argument (154). Morgan then removes the entire group away from this ungoverned space to a location controlled exclusively by her, stating 'I shall put an inchauntement uppon hym that he shall nat awake of all this seven owres, and than I woll lede hym away unto my castell' (154). As Morgan commands, 'So this enchauntemente was caste' and Lancelot, as well as Morgan's companions, are 'brought' to her castle (154). Once in this enclosed and private location, the other queens act in a more controlled manner, politely 'byddyng' Lancelot 'good morne' without competing emotionally with Morgan as they did on the previous day (155). Morgan's voice is prioritised over those of the three other queens, since she explains on their behalf 'I am Quene Morgan le Fay, Quene of the londe of Gore; and here is the Quene of North Galys, and the Quene of Estlonde, and the Quene of the Oute Isles', in which description Morgan's identity precedes those of her companions (155). Thus both the competition between these queens is lost in the transferral of their group to a space controlled by Morgan, as well as the sense of parity of their individual powers as queens. Morgan's desire for Lancelot is also a recurring theme in her trajectory, providing the motivation for her control of other Arthurian landmarks too.

Indeed, the desire for Lancelot's love influences Morgan's occupation of the next castle portrayed as being under her control. Morgan's private identity is indirectly represented by a damsel 'longynge' or 'belonging' to her, who intercepts Tristram and promises to lead him somewhere he may 'wynne grete worshyp' (310). The damsel reveals that she is but one of many women under the control of Morgan, who all similarly direct knights to her castle:

Quene Morgan, my lady, hath ordayned a thirty ladyes to seke and aspye aftir Sir Launcelot or aftir Sir Trystram; and by the traynys of the ladyes, who that may fyrste mete any of thes two knyghtes, they shulde turne hem unto Morgan le Fayes castell, sayyng that they sholde do dedys of worship. And yf any of the two knyghtes cam there, there be thirty knyghtes liyng and wacchyng in a towre to wayte uppon Sir Launcelot or uppon Sir Trystramys (311).

Morgan's creation of a space where knights may perform deeds of worship involves her in their activities by association and echoes her earlier desire for 'prouesse' stated during the quest with Arthur and Accolon (90). The castle additionally serves as a space in which Morgan may express her private desire for Lancelot. Elsewhere, the narrator explains that of all men, 'Morgan loved Sir Launcelot beste' and the above passage suggests she is also attracted to Tristram, since she commands the tower's residents to capture both knights rather than fighting with them (334). The notion that this tower serves as a symbolic representation of Morgan's private identity is reinforced when Gawain and Tristram demand she vacate it when they discover its true purpose, for just as 'the quene spake' her refusal to present herself, so do 'all the thirty knyghtes at onys' (311). The knights' reply 'at onys' imitates Malory's pre-Arthurian barons, who earlier speak 'by one assent' to Igraine and override her emotional prerogatives as an individual (5). This emphasises Morgan's increased empowerment in contrast to her mother, since she consistently controls her community in a way that privileges her individual desires.

Morgan's interest in Tristram is implied in an episode where he discovers a castle 'by adventure . . . wherein was Quene Morgan le Fay' (333). Typical of all the matriarchal spaces created by Morgan, the authority to grant or deny access to the castle is under her control. Tristram is both 'let into that castell', where he 'had good chere all that nyght' and is then told by Morgan the next morning that he is 'a presonere' (333). Usually knights' freedom from imprisonment is contingent upon physical combat with other knights. However, here Tristram's success is dependent upon Morgan, who sets the following conditions for his departure, as she states: 'ye shall abyde with me tyll I wyte what ye ar, and frome whens ye cam . . . Telle me your name, and I shall suffir ou to departe whan ye wyll' (333). What interaction Tristram does share with another knight is, in the castle, also controlled by Morgan, who 'wolde sette Sir Trystram on her one syde, and her paramour on hir other syde'

(333). Her attraction to Trystram as a potential lover might be inferred, since this causes her current 'paramour' to be 'jeleous' due to the fact that Morgan 'evermore . . . wolde beholde Sir Trystram' (333). However, Malory never confirms Morgan's attraction to Tristram as he does her desire for Lancelot. As such, I would argue that her interests are of another nature. Having promised to release Tristram, Morgan turns to the issue of prowess once more and instead of asking Tristram to be her lover as she did with Lancelot, Morgan asks the following favour:

at the Castell of the Harde Roche, where Kynge Arthure hath cryed a grete turnemente . . . I pray you that ye woll be, and to do as much of dedys of armys for me as ye may do; for at the Castell of Maydyns, Sir Trystram, ye ded mervaylous dedis of armys as ever I harde knyght do (333).

Morgan's request can be compared to that of ladies like Elaine of Ascolat, who ask knights to wear a 'tokyn' as a public statement of admiration or love (600). However, Morgan's actions arguably bear more resemblance to Arthur's when he sends knights on quests to gain worship for the community. This reading corresponds with Morgan's construction as a protagonist who desires deeds of prowess to be done in her name. Morgan's main difference from Arthur, then, lies in her desires for action to be focused on or involve her alone, rather than her community as a collective.

Morgan's private interest specifically in gaining prowess for herself – separately from the community – is further demonstrated in 'a castell that was fayre and ryche and also passynge stronge as ony was within this realme' (358-9). This castle is defended by many 'daungerous knyghtes' whom Morgan 'wytholdyth' or controls, and is used to control knights' passage through the quest wilderness, since she establishes the custom that 'no knyght' may 'passe this way but he muste juste with one knyght, other wyth two, other with three' (359). All of Morgan's knights are defeated by Lamerok. First, five knights are sent out of this castle one by one to joust with a group of Arthur's knights (359-

60). When they are defeated, 'seven knyghtes mo' are then sent out and are likewise overcome (361). Interestingly, the community of knights and ladies controlled by Morgan react with admiration to their antagonist. After Lamerok's first success they exclaim, 'Well have ye justed, knyght with the rede shyilde!' and after they praise him again in like terms, saying 'Knyght with the rede shyilde, ye have mervaylously well done as ever we saw knyght do!' (360, 361). Their praise reflects Morgan's interest in gaining individual prowess and despite her failure in this instance, the castle remains a space of protection for Morgan's private identity, since when her knights are defeated, access to this place – and Morgan – is withdrawn:

And therewith come a knyght oute of the castell unarmed, and seyde, 'Knyght with the rede shyilde, overmuche damage have ye done this same day; and therefore returne whother ye woll, for here ar no mo that woll have ado with the, for we repente sore that ever ye cam here – for by the is fordone all the olde customes of this castell.' And with that worde he turned agayne into the castell, and shett the yatys (361).

The shutting of Morgan's castle gates literally and figuratively denies the reader sight and description of her. The privacy she gains is reflected in the fact that this castle is unnamed and it cannot be located in the public geography of the *Morte*.

The final landmarks this part of the chapter considers are the two castles in which Alexander is imprisoned, another knight through whom Morgan attempts to win prowess. Few scholars have explored Morgan's role in the episode with Alexander in detail, save for Kaufman. The present analysis takes a different approach from Kaufman, who primarily considers Alexander's 'body' as an 'exchangeable' physical locus of control; it instead considers what the episode reveals about Morgan's emotional interests. No prior studies have explored what the resonances between the private identities of these two protagonists might illuminate about Morgan as an individual separate from

the implications of her actions for male members of the community.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, I argue Alexander's full title is significant in understanding Morgan's expressions of identity in the *Morte*, since he is called 'Alysaundir le Orphelyne', or 'Alexander the Orphan'; this knight's status as an orphan offers a sign of several similarities that his trajectory shares with Morgan's (382). These are, namely, that Alexander's identity is created and defined by the desire for individual prowess; his family have a history of sibling rivalry in competing for such a quality; he is an orphan, whose father dies before he reaches adulthood; he is raised in a matriarchal environment; and a material object symbolises an emotionally significant aspect of his private identity (382). Each of these similarities will be considered in turn in order to illustrate the full potential of a comparison between Morgan and Alexander to understandings of her private identity, the position she occupies compared to other female family members, and her trajectory in the *Morte* as a whole.

Alexander's uncle, King Mark, is brother to his father, Prince Bodwin, whom Mark resents for performing acts of prowess in the defence of Cornwall against 'fourty thousand' Saracens (379). Mark is described as being 'wondirly wrothe that his brother sholde wyne suche worship and honour', which make Bodwin 'bettir beloved than he in all that contrey' (379). This description can be seen to echo Morgan's earlier hatred of Arthur for being 'most of worship and of prouesse of ony of hir bloode' (90). Like Morgan, who hosts Arthur, Uriens and Accolon in the enchanted ship in an initial gesture of hospitality, Mark calls Bodwin and his wife, Anglides, to his court where he 'made them fayre semblaunte', or 'pretended to be kind' over dinner, just as Uther appears to amicably host the Duke of Cornwall before acting upon the desires that cause his death and orphan Morgan (379). Similarly, Anglides's response to her husband's death is similar to Igraine's, as she performs a rite

⁹⁷ See Muriel Whitaker, *Arthur's Kingdom of Adventure: The World of Malory's Morte Darthur* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer and Barnes & Noble, 1984): 66; Corinne J. Saunders, *MS*, (2010): 251; Dorsey Armstrong (2003): 125-6; Amy S. Kaufman, (2007); Jill M. Hebert (2013): 87-88.

of mourning in private: 'Anglydes pryvaly gate hir husbandis dumbled and his shurte, and that she kepte secretly' (379). Like Morgan, who is raised in a nunnery, following his father's death Alexander develops from a 'chylde' to a 'man' in what can be termed a matriarchal space, since Anglides flees to a castle that is described as 'her owne' and 'hers by ryght inerytaunce', where the male 'conestable' of the castle defers to her control (380). Finally, also like Morgan, as an adult Alexander's private identity is represented by a material object, the shirt in which his father died; when he embarks upon his chivalric career, Alexander 'toke with hym his fadyrs bloody sherte; and so he bare hit with hym tyll his deth day, in tokenynge to thynke uppon his fadyrs deth' (382). As well as the evident similarities between Morgan's and Alexander's performances of private identity, the last description of Alexander's motivations clearly demonstrates an awareness in the narrative that events occurring early in life are responsible for protagonists' actions as adults. Examples such as this support the present reading of the nunnery as a formative space of development for Morgan, to which aspects of her later performances of private identity may be related.

Given that so many resonances between Morgan and Alexander are suggested in the narrative, especially their private motivations for seeking prowess, it should be no surprise that Morgan takes an interest in this knight. Alexander is described as having recently won the 'gré' or 'victory' at a tournament where 'he smote down Kyng Carados and twenty of his knyghtes' (*MED*; 383). A 'damesell' who witnesses these feats reports them to Morgan 'and tolde hir how she saw the beste knyght juste that ever she saw' (383). In this way, the damsel represents an extension of Morgan's private identity, acting as her eyes and ears in places where Morgan is not present in person. Distinct from previous displays of prowess in which Morgan involved herself, Alexander's actions evince an expression of individual control that resonates with Morgan's performances of identity particularly strongly. Alexander, 'ever as he smote downe knyghtes . . . made them to swere to were

none harneyse of a twelvemonth and a day' (383). This punishment represents a deliberate assertion of prowess in a manner that elevates Alexander's power as an individual over the community's, by depriving entire groups of their 'personal fighting equipment' with which they maintain their public chivalric image for a prolonged period of time (*MED*). Indeed, Armstrong states that 'to lack armor and shield is to lack a stable masculine identity—in effect, to lose one's name, and in turn, one's place within the collective' (*GCC* 86). Proof that Alexander's prowess constitutes the primary focus of Morgan's attention is seen in her reaction to hearing of these feats, as she eagerly expresses a desire to witness them for herself: "'This is well seyde,'" seyde Morgan le Fay, "for that is the knyght that I wolde fayne se'" (383). An urgency to Morgan's words is conveyed by the immediacy of her response to the damsel's news, since she instantly 'toke her palfrey' and rides away to find Alysaunder (383). Furthermore, Morgan expends a considerable amount of effort in searching for this knight, since she is described as riding for a 'grete whyle' to find him (383). The thematic consistency of Morgan's interest in prowess is underlined by the comparison of Alexander by his admirers to the primary knights Morgan holds in high esteem: 'but yf hit were Sir Trystram othir Sir Launcelot, other ellys Sir Lameroke the good knyght, there is none that myght sytte hym a buffette with a speare' (383). It is this which convinces Morgan of Alexander's potential use as an asset to her private identity, as she states the desire to 'mete wyth that knyght or hit be longe tyme' (383). The damsel appears again, on behalf of Morgan, and offers Alexander the opportunity to win prowess by engaging in a battle of her design, to which he agrees (383). When the fight is established, Morgan 'meanewhyle' joins the damsel and 'behylde the batayle' (383).

The association between Morgan's two preoccupations explored in this section—prowess and emotional control—is demonstrated when she takes Alexander to the first castle in which she ostensibly imprisons him in order to heal from the 'sixtene grete woundis' he has received (384). Morgan promises

him 'comforte' in this private and enclosed space, which is reminiscent of the function eremitic spaces play in this narrative, like the nunnery in which she was raised. Morgan's subsequent actions initially suggest paradoxical motives, as she nearly kills Alexander before healing him:

Than Quene Morgan le Fay serched his woundis and gaff hym
suche an oynement that he sholde have dyed. And so on the morne
whan she cam to hym agayne, he complayned hym sore; and than
she put another oynemente uppon hym, and than he was oute of
his payne (384).

Readings of Morgan's level of control over Alexander's access to life or death in this scene are divided. For example, Whitaker asserts that '[b]y encountering and overcoming her evil designs, Alexander is initiated into a daemonic world that proves his powers and enables him to restore moral order' (66). Although Whitaker does not elaborate on this point, presumably Morgan's ointment suggests the 'daemonic' powers described and are seen to evoke her necromantic education. Likewise, according to Armstrong, Morgan's interactions with Alexander present obstacles to the development of his identity, since she writes that 'Morgan mostly hinders – rather than helps' him (GCC 125). These readings function through their focus on the masculine and communal. However, when read as an expression of Morgan's private identity, rather than Alexander's public career, an alternative significance may be extrapolated from Morgan's extreme oscillation between acts of harm and healing. I agree with Kaufman, who asserts logically that:

If networks of relationships between same-gendered parties are to be read as mechanisms for the maintenance of power and hierarchy, then these powers lie in the hands of women in "Alexander the Orphan". Relations between men are primarily antagonistic, and the few bonds that exist between them are broken early in the tale. Instead, networks of women allow the desires of individual women to take shape (143).

Female power is the prime focus of this episode and Morgan's desire for control is once again manifested in her temporary occupation of a castle, which she controls but does not own.

The first castle in which Morgan imprisons Alexander may be understood to belong to the damsel who originally located him, as she is called 'the damesell of the castell' (383). Morgan temporarily appropriates this space as one in which she controls the actions of protagonists. Whilst Saunders and Hebert focus on the seemingly physical nature of Morgan's control over 'bodies', I argue that such power points to an alternative and more significant emotional dimension to her identity (*MS* 251; 87). Alexander's opponent, 'Malegryne' is first chosen because he 'hath bene longe an evyll neyghboure' to Morgan's damsel, who 'woll nat suffir' her 'to be maryde in no manner' because he wishes to marry her himself and has committed violence against many other knights 'for this maydyns love' (383-4). When Alexander overcomes the knight, according to communal convention the damsel requests that he 'myght wedded me, for he hath wonne me with his hondis' (384). In contradiction to this publicly constituted identity, which typically focuses on outward appearances and physical performances of identity, Morgan tells Alexander to 'refuse this lady . . . for she is nat for you' (384). This appears to deny the damsel, whose castle this is, any control over her own life in a mere continuation of the antagonism she has experienced from Malegrin. However, Morgan in fact opens the damsel's access to another, more fulfilling marriage premised upon emotional agency. As Kaufman points out, 'Morgan's refusal to relinquish Alysaundir results in the damsel being able to choose her own spouse' (146). For, when Alexander obeys Morgan's command and refuses to marry the damsel he has saved, his supplicant then tells him: 'gyff me to a knyght of this contrey that hath bene my frende and loved me many yerys' (385). Significantly, once the damsel is married to the knight who would be the preferred third public choice but is her first choice in private, Morgan leaves the castle to its rightful owner (385). Thus her control of this castle is not

only temporary but is presented as a kind of stewardship, rather than ownership. Morgan employs the castle space for constructive private and emotional purposes rather than performing the public and politic roles enacted by central courtly figures in the same kind of location, which means her control need not be permanent.

Morgan then takes Alexander to a second castle, again controlling him by giving him 'suche a drynke that of three dayes and three nyghtes he waked never, but slepte' (385). There, she does not explain her motivations or her future intentions but merely states that if Alexander promises not to pass 'the compace of this castell' for 'twelvemonth and a day', he will 'lyghtly be hole' (385). Their agreement appears to have purely physical connotations in the first instance, since Alexander 'was sone hole' and 'repented hym of his othe' because he is effectively imprisoned (385). However, when Morgan's actions are read in the light of her female ally's treatment in the previous scene, the emotional wholeness that Alexander gains by resting in her castle is clear. Once Alexander is healed, '[r]yght so there cam a damesell' of 'Pase', who is Morgan's 'cousyn' and the owner of this castle 'by trew enherytaunce' through her uncle, the Earl of Pase (385). A private connection is immediately established between the Lady of Pase and Alexander. When she sees the knight, who is 'passynge hevvy and all sad', she expresses the desire for him to 'be myrry' and promises to communicate 'good tydynges' (385). The lady's recognition of Alexander's feeling presents their privately expressed identities as emotional counterparts and anticipates the reciprocal romantic relationship that soon develops between them. First, the Lady of Pase shares her belief that Morgan has kept Alexander a 'presonere' in order that she may 'do hir plesure whan hit lykyth hir' (385). She then promises that 'and ye wolde love me and be ruled by me, I shall make your delyveraunce with your worship' (385). In one way, the Lady of Pase's words establish a competition for Alexander between herself and Morgan by associating their images in his eyes with notions of imprisonment and freedom respectively, both of which are

differently communicated through romantic desire, or what is assumed to be romantic desire. However, I would argue that since Morgan has not expressed a desire for Alexander beyond his associations with prowess, her actions instead effect a control that allows the emotional and private identities of *other* protagonists to be fulfilled. Hebert believes that Morgan's powers are 'thwarted' with the introduction of the Lady of Pase, but I argue she loses no control in Morgan's presence (88). Just as Morgan empowered her ally in the previous scene by wedding her to a loving and faithful partner, here the lady is able to claim 'rule' over the knight of her own choice too. The control extended to her by Morgan is manifested in the implied sexual consummation of their mutual agreement, which achieves in private what has not yet been sanctioned in public: 'and than he kyssed hir and ded to her plesaunce as hit pleased them bothe at tymes and leysers' (386). The Lady of Pase and her uncle return to the castle a year later to 'destroy' it by 'fyre' as a way of reclaiming ownership from Morgan (386). The Earl of Pase's display of force is dramatic and explicitly done in the name of control, as he 'let crye that he wolde kepe that pyce of erthe' (386). However, Morgan is neither described as being harmed nor does she appear at all in the entire period of time between extracting the promise from Alexander until the castle's destruction. I argue this implies Morgan's use of the castle is not portrayed as an attempt to gain ownership over land but constitutes yet another expression of her desire for emotional control, which she passes on to the Lady of Pase. As a symbol of private, female control it is significant that this lady's agency in the destruction of her castle is immediately followed by her loss of Alexander when he sees 'La Beale Alys' and falls in love with her instead (386-7). Though the Lady of Pase follows Alexander, she never regains control over him or his love again, since he settles in 'Benoy' with Alice (388).

In summary, Morgan's control of landmarks exceeds typical forms of public female landownership represented elsewhere in the *Morte* and points to aspects of her private identity, which are defined by the desire for individual

proWess and emotional control. These desires are often communicated through other protagonists, a symbolic form of expression that is also seen in Morgan's circulation of material objects through the Arthurian landscape, as the second half of this section now explores.

II. Material Objects

In the *Morte*, a variety of material objects are directed by Morgan across the Arthurian landscape, from quest wilderness to central courts. Some have already been discussed in the exploration of Morgan's control of landmarks, namely Excalibur and its scabbard, the enchanted ship, as well as the two ointments and sleeping draft given to Alexander (86, 86, 84, 384, 384, 385). Four other objects seen in Arthurian courts also originate in spaces controlled by Morgan: a cursed cloak, an enchanted drinking horn, a non-heraldic shield and a tomb (95, 268, 334, 335).⁹⁸ To the best of my knowledge, the significance of Morgan's creation of a tomb in commemoration of a lover has not been treated in scholarly studies before. The other three material objects have been discussed but primarily in the context of their public implications – despite the fact that Morgan uses them in private spaces before their distribution in public – and are cited as paradigmatic evidence of Morgan's negative portrayal by Malory. For example, Saunders calls the objects Morgan uses 'weapons against the forces of good', which are 'destructive . . . to Arthur's court' ('Violent Magic' 233). Likewise Anderson cites them as examples of Morgan's 'ill-will' and intention to 'embarrass' the chivalric community (50, 47). Armstrong also figures Morgan's material objects as 'attacks upon communal stability', as does Cooper, who concurs they express the 'desire to damage Arthur' (GCC 113; ERT 316). Whilst these represent valid readings of

⁹⁸ Arthur receives a fifth object created by Morgan, a letter describing Gwennyver's infidelities (372). However, the space in which Morgan writes the letter is never described and is therefore not included in this chapter's catalogue of material objects.

objects' political impact for Arthur and his fellowship, they only represent the public half of Morgan's identity as portrayed by Malory. Whilst Hebert is correct in noting that by revealing tensions in the Arthurian community such objects highlight that '[p]ublic and private concerns are one' for Arthur, the same cannot be said of Morgan (78). Moreover, as William Fitzhenry points out, the 'disruptive' potential and 'destabilizing implications' of Morgan's objects originally derive from faults of protagonists within the central Arthurian community itself, rather than Morgan in the first instance (7). Rather than focusing on the effects Morgan's use of material objects has on public identity, I prefer to apply Heng's conception of an Arthurian 'tissue' of gifts, which 'point to a submerged second narrative . . . marked by a recognisably feminine' – and, I would add 'private' – 'voice' (97). Morgan's private identity may be better understood when the material objects she distributes to the Arthurian community are examined as symbols of emotional events or desires in her individual trajectory rather than as statements of purely political intent.

The cursed cloak features at the end of Morgan's time as a quest agent, when Arthur has returned to court after healing in a nunnery. Immediately after Arthur swears to be 'avengid' on Morgan for her involvement with Accolon and Arthur's near death, 'on the morne there cam a damesell on message frome Morgan le Fay' (95). With this message is brought:

the rycheeste mantell that ever was sene in the courte, for hit was sette all full of precious stonys as one myght stonde by another, and therein were the rycheeste stonys that ever the Kyng saw. And the damesell seyde, 'Your sister sendyth you this mantell and desyryth that ye sholde take this gyfte of hir – and what thyng she hath offended, she wol amende hit at your owne plesure.'

Whan the Kyng behelde this mantell hit pleased hym much . . . With that come the Damesell of the Lake unto the Kyng, and seyde . . . putt nat uppon you this mantell tyll ye have sene more – and in no wyse lat hit nat com on you, nother on no knyght of youres, tyll ye commaunde the brynger thereof to putt hit uppon hir . . . And so the Kyng made to putt hit uppon hir. And forthwithall she fell downe deede, and never spoke worde after, and brente to colys (95-6).

Hebert explores the public implications of this scene, arguing it represents Arthur's misinterpretation of outward signifiers of identity, a crucial failure in a king, which demonstrates his denial of weaknesses in the courtly community (78). She attributes political motivations to the cloak's delivery, suggesting the 'maiden's immolation . . . is analogous to Morgan's desire to burn away Arthur's denial in order to hold the kingdom together' as a collective entity (78). I would argue that Morgan is also portrayed as having an individual and emotionally motivated reason for sending this cloak, the direct retaliation for Accolon's death. After the fight with Arthur, in which Accolon dies, Arthur 'lette sende hym in an horse-bere with six knyghtes unto Camelot, and bade, "Bere hym unto my systir . . . and sey that I sende her hym to [be] a present"' (92). The cloak Morgan sends is similarly sent in a darkly ironic imitation of a 'gyfte', presenting Arthur with a corpse instead in a travesty of courtly etiquette imitating the manner in which he sent her Accolon's dead body (95).

The ability to express statements of private identity in this assertive way may be ascribed to Morgan's placement in a peripheral space, which means she is not accountable to the courtly community for the public consequences of the cursed cloak. She is outside of and beyond patriarchal control. The awareness that Morgan's occupation of space is the primary factor in her empowerment is reflected by Arthur's attempt to remove any trace of her within his own court. Directly after the cloak's effects are witnessed by the court, Arthur is 'wroth' and reacts by distancing his community from the protagonist whose identity is publicly perceived as being closest to Morgan's: her son by blood, Uwain (96). He is held 'suspecte' and temporarily exiled, which spatially associates him with his mother, who is now effectively constituted as an exile in public (96). In a gesture that reflects the attempt to reassert central patriarchal authority, Arthur commands Uriens to resume control over his son, whom he perceives to have been overly influenced by his mother: "'I charge you, *putt hym oute* of my courte.'" So Sir Uwayne was

discharged' (96, emphases added). Although Uwain is later accepted back into the court, I suggest his return is allowed, not because Arthur has forgotten the association of peripheral spaces with Morgan, but because Uwain's time in the quest wilderness is used to develop his identity in patriarchal, rather than matriarchal spaces. Firstly, Uwain leaves with Gawain, whose company enables Uwain to maintain links with Arthur's central court and associations with patriarchal authority. Secondly, they both embark upon a tripartite quest after having been 'well logged' in 'an abbey of monkys', rather than the abbey of nuns in which Arthur stayed, which negated his authority in the previous tripartite quest (96).

The next object circulated to Arthurian courts by Morgan is an enchanted drinking horn, which tests whether a woman is 'trew to her husbnde . . . if she were false, she sholde spylle all the drynke' (268). Morgan originally sends the horn 'unto Kyng Arthur', which would have revealed Gwenyver's relationship with Lancelot (268). However, the horn is redirected to Mark's court and the public light of disapproval shines instead on Isolde and other ladies who are unfaithful, whom Mark swears should be 'brente' (269). The distinction between members of Arthurian courts seen to occupy spaces 'in' or 'out' of the community, as affirmed by Arthur after receiving the cursed cloak, are once again used to privilege public over private identity. The collective force of 'barowns' is invoked, who

gadred them togedyrs and seyde playnly they wolde nat have tho ladyes brente for an horne made by sorsery that cam 'from the false sorseres and wycche moste that is now lyvyng' – for that horne dud never good, but caused stryff and bate, and allway in her dayes she was an enemy to all trew lovers (269).

Seemingly, a clear dichotomy is established between 'trew' and 'false' lovers that corresponds with members inside or outside of Arthurian communities respectively; Morgan is repeatedly situated in the periphery exterior to this boundary. Malory ostensibly appears to endorse the public 'demonizing' of

Morgan in response to her circulation of the horn, since he interjects that 'she was an enemy to all trew lovers' (Fitzhenry 6; 269). However, Malory complicates the dichotomy of 'true' community versus Morgan as an 'untrue' individual by so consistently distinguishing between public and private. The horn supports public identity, since it favours any woman who is 'trew' to her position as wife to a 'husbande' and 'lorde' (268). Conversely, Malory's interjection supports private identity, since the protagonists he terms 'trew lovers' are engaged in extra-marital relationships that conflict with the political responsibilities of lovers' public roles (269). Significantly, in private Morgan is also a true lover in the second sense, comparable to Gwenvyver and Lancelot or Isolde and Tristram, because she, like them, expresses herself in intensely emotional terms in private. For example, when Accolon dies her heart nearly 'to-braste' (93). The horn can therefore be seen to materially encapsulate the bias in judgments of Morgan that emphasise her public, political responsibilities rather than her private desires.

Morgan's emotions and private status as a 'trew' lover are best exemplified by the narrative episode that describes her creation of the third and fourth material objects, which this section considers: a non-heraldic shield and a tomb. In the castle where Morgan temporarily imprisons Tristram and expresses the desire that he perform acts of prowess on her behalf – discussed in the previous section – she also gives him a shield specifically designed by her with which to carry out this task. Her individualistic tendencies are apparent from its first description, since the shield's design fails to conform to communal heraldic standards. Heraldic arms were 'hereditary shield emblems' designed to reflect the 'name, title, and estates' of knights and, as such, 'important symbols of family pride and social honor' (Heredía 263, 265). Initially 'haphazard devices and patterns', from the twelfth century onwards blazons were made to conform to an exact 'science' in order to convey accurately the 'right of persons to bear arms' and the history of their 'pedigree' in public (Heredía 263; *DMF*; *OED*). By the time Malory was writing, these

strict conventions were deeply entrenched in chivalric martial etiquette across Europe. However, Morgan's shield depicts not public status, family or rights to land but a private relationship in direct conflict with them:

the fylde was gouldes with a kyng and a quene therein paynted,
and a knyght stondynge aboven them with hys one foote standynge
uppon the kynges hede and the othir uppon the quenys hede . . .
[which] signyfieth Kynge Arthure and Quene Gwenyver, and a
knyght that holdith them bothe in bondage and in servage (334).

The knight that holds Arthur and Gwenyver in 'bondage' is, of course, Lancelot, who did not reciprocate Morgan's desire earlier in the narrative. From its inception, the shield symbolises Morgan's desire for emotional control over Lancelot, the same control he currently exercises over Arthur and Gwenyver. Morgan is explicitly described as sending the shield as an individual 'rebuke' of Lancelot rather than as a way to destroy his community as a whole – though this is indeed a partial consequence of his infidelity at the end of the *Morte* (334).

The manner of this shield's transmission to Arthur serves to illuminate a variety of emotions that characterise Morgan's private identity in this episode: love, sorrow, fear and grief. For, her use of the shield has the secondary effect of resulting in the death of her only other lover besides Accolon and her last in the *Morte*. This is 'Sir Hemyson', the knight whom Morgan places on one side of herself during her interrogation of Tristram (334). Hemison is described as the knight that 'hylde' or 'loved' Morgan and prepares to 'folow' Tristram because he is 'jeleous' of the attention the other knight has received (334, 333).⁹⁹ Morgan immediately tells him not to 'ryde . . . aftir that knyght', telling him he will 'wynne no worshyp of hym', suggesting no political gain can come of an altercation with Tristram (334). When Hemison refuses to be deterred, Morgan resorts to a more directly emotional plea, expressing sadness at the

⁹⁹ In Middle English, 'hylde', connoted a romantic bond either between 'husband' and 'wife', or that between a couple who love each other 'adulterously' ('holden' *MED*).

prospect of his parting by exclaiming 'Alas' and calling him her 'fayre frynde' not just once, but twice (334). The use of the word 'frynde' portrays Morgan's relationship with Hemison as much more than the 'lascivious' liaisons critics perceive her partnerships to be (Enstone 132; Whitaker 58). Malory uses the word 'friend' in romantic contexts to inform readers that relationships between certain lovers are not only more than sexual but have stood the test of time, like the woman Morgan helps to marry the 'frende' who has loved her for 'many yerys', considered earlier (385). The emotional closeness of Morgan's relationship with Hemison is also conveyed by the fear she expresses at the prospect of his death. She does not believe Hemison can survive an encounter with Tristram and says 'me repentith that ye woll follow that knyght, for I feare me sore of your agayne-commynge' (334). This is a significant expression because not only is Morgan never described as openly feeling sorrow for any of her actions in the *Morte* but she rarely has cause to feel fear; she is always securely protected by the private spaces she cultivates and controls in the quest wilderness. Even though she is said to 'drad' Arthur after her time as a quest agent, fear is an emotion Morgan publicly rejects when she sends a message to her brother saying she will 'feare hym nat whyle I can make me and myne in lyknesse of stonys' (95).

The emotive narration of the grief Morgan feels when Hemison does indeed die at Tristram's hands should be included among those episodes considered most moving in the *Morte*. When Hemison realises there is 'but lytyll' life left in him, his last desire is to be with Morgan (335). Hemison commands his valet: 'brynge me to Quene Morgan—for the deepe drawghtes of dethe drawith to my harte, that I may nat lyve' (335). Significantly, Hemison's request for Morgan's presence imbues her with a pseudo-confessorial status. Whilst his wish 'I wolde speke with her fayne or I dyed' could be considered a natural inclination for any loving partner on the verge of death, the addition 'for my soule woll be in grete perell and I dye' has a quasi-religious tone that could be seen to evoke Morgan's erstwhile profession as a nun (335). Indeed,

the description of Morgan's reaction to seeing Hemyson and manner of mourning his death reinforces this association:

Whan Morgan le Fay saw hym dede, she made grete sorow oute of reson. And than she lette dispoyle hym unto hys shurte, and so she lete put hym into a tombe; and about the tombe she lete wryte:

HERE LYETH SIR HEMYSON, SLAYNE BY THE HONDIS OF
SIR TRISTRAM DE LYONES (335).

Morgan's preparation of Hemison's body before burial exhibits a respect and level of care that is quasi-religious, since the shirt to which she undresses him can be seen to serve as a shroud (335). Moreover, the description of Hemison's death can be compared to other burials of courtly figures by religious persons in eremitic locations in the text, which are scenes of private and emotional rather than public and political mourning.¹⁰⁰ Finally, when Morgan writes an inscription on Hemison's tomb, this reminds readers of the literacy she learns as a 'clerke' in the nunnery of her youth (6). Inscriptions have a significant presence in the *Morte* and are almost always associated with supernatural or divine power, due to their proliferation in the Grail Quest.

Morgan's inscription represents an abbreviated symbol of her individualism and private identity. She is the only mortal protagonist to write an inscription independently in a peripheral space, apart from one exception; in the *Morte*, tombs are inscribed by Merlin, Arthur, Morgan, and the force of divine providence that guides the Grail quest.¹⁰¹ Not even the first Lady of the

¹⁰⁰ For example, a knight and possibly his lover's headless body are 'buried in an ermytage', where a hermit is 'charged' with the 'coorse, that servyse sholde be done for the soule' (76). Similarly a pair of lovers, Lancelot and Columbe, are buried 'undir one stone' in the quest wilderness (343). When Bors's brother Lionel dies, he also looks for a 'chapell' in the quest wilderness in which to 'bury' this relation as a way of assuaging his 'sorow' (549). As a different example, a knight named Andred pretends to use an eremitic space in this way, asking a lover to lie to Mark that Tristram was 'buried by a welle' outside of the court (303). In addition, a knight named Corsabrin is 'buried in a wood' not out of respect but because he is a 'paynym', or 'pagan' (397).

¹⁰¹ As noted earlier, Gawain and Ector once are described as writing an inscription, but they act together, not independently (541).

Lake or the second, Nynyve, create inscriptions and those installed by patriarchal figures of authority tend to be made in public spaces. The fact that Morgan not only writes, but writes alone, in the quest wilderness can be seen to intensify her private experience as an individual in this scene. Furthermore, rather than expressing her private identity only temporarily as Morgan's other objects do, in this case the tomb's inscription permanently etches the memory of her private desires and feelings into the Arthurian landscape. For when Hemison's name is inscribed onto a monument in the quest wilderness where it will be found by any passing protagonists, so too is Morgan's emotional experience implicitly inscribed into the landscape by association.

Morgan's association with privacy is reinforced by the narrator's manner of concluding the scene in the narrative. Whereas at Accolon's death, Morgan has the strength to keep 'hir countenance', or true emotions, private and 'made no sembelaunte of dole', when Hemison dies Morgan 'made grete sorow oute of reson', which implies a lack of emotional control (93, 335). After the inscription is noted, no further words, gestures or actions are made by Morgan about her feelings of loss. The story abruptly changes direction, announcing 'Now turne we unto Sir Trystram' (335). This shift in focus effectively provides Morgan a space of privacy she seems not to be able to create for herself in this moment and arguably constitutes a narrative gesture of sympathy, implied by Malory's apparent reluctance to describe her emotional state further.

The fact that Morgan's emotions and sympathetic expressions of identity are most fully revealed in peripheral and private spaces means her appearance at Arthur's death is less surprising than it at first appears. When her capacity for love and tenderness are brought to light and the episodes in which she appears are examined in the context of her private, rather than public identity, a richer and more nuanced portrait of Morgan may be seen. She is controlling and often involves herself directly or indirectly in violence against Arthur's knights. However, I have argued that her actions do not necessarily exhibit the primary desire to destroy all courtly communities and their collective public

identities. Rather, readings of Morgan may achieve a more balanced perspective when her control of landmarks, people and objects are instead cast as statements of desire for a private space where she may express her identity in an alternative way to the prescribed limits of her public roles. As I argue in the next and final section of this chapter, Morgan's association with private and almost always distinctly matriarchal spaces points to the narrative function of this protagonist as imagined by Malory in the most central loss of the text: the death of Arthur.

Eternal Exile

Morgan's control of landmarks and material objects repeatedly articulate a rejection of patriarchal authority and community, which successively reinforce her public image as an exile in the *Morte*. This image is cemented by the circumstances of Morgan's final appearance when she transports Arthur to Avalon to be healed. In doing so, she permanently abandons the other protagonists and spaces that characterise this narrative's imaginary world for a completely private and matriarchal place. Critics have noted Morgan's performance of identity in this moment seems incongruous with her portrayal up to this point because she behaves like a supportive and loving sister to Arthur, whom she has previously antagonised in public. Heng calls the scene 'curiously suggestive', given the apparent discrepancy between Morgan's actions as a 'mortal enemy' and 'healer' in the same text (107-8). Hebert similarly views this dual role as presenting an 'ambiguous' and 'contradictory characterization' (15). Armstrong, too, believes Morgan's kindness must come as a 'surprise' to readers of Malory that Arthur leaves his work 'in the tender embrace of his sister and former enemy' (GCC 198). However, I argue Morgan's performance of identity is in fact consistent with her numerous previous appearances and represents the cyclical completion of her narrative

quest since her inchoate beginnings in the nunnery. This scene bears all the hallmarks of Morgan's associations with matriarchal private spaces as ones that are conducive to the expression of emotions or aspects of identity and distinguish individuals from central Arthurian communities. Morgan's disappearance into Avalon represents the zenith of her empowerment in these ways and spaces, as well as the most developed expression of freedom realised by a protagonist in the text. Significantly, Morgan's freedom—as well as Arthur's—is achieved not by further separation of private from public, but by a final, absolute assertion of private *over* public identity. As such, her matriarchal power is presented as a directly competitive counterpart to Arthurian patriarchal forms. This section addresses the emotions expressed by Morgan before leaving for Avalon and her presentation as an alternative source of authority to patriarchal models, in order to argue what significance the moment has not just for Morgan's depiction as an individual protagonist but for the relationship between narrator and readers of the *Morte*.

Morgan's final expression of private identity is narrated after Arthur discards the core symbol of his public identity, establishing once again the notion that these two halves are incompatible within central courtly spaces. Following the prophesied battle between Arthur and his son, Mordred, in which they both receive fatal wounds and lose control of the kingdom, Arthur is brought to 'a lytyll chapell nat farre frome the see' (686). When Arthur feels that his 'tyme passyth on faste', he asks the last remaining knight in his company, Bedivere, to 'throw' Excalibur into 'that water' (687). Bedivere is reluctant, but eventually does as the king asks and upon relinquishing the sword he sees 'there cam an arme and an honde above the watir, and toke hit . . . and than vanysshed with the swerde into the watir' (687). Once this is witnessed, Bedivere takes Arthur himself to the 'watirs syde', where 'evyn faste by the banke hoved a lytyll barge wyth many fayre ladyes in hit' (687). Readers are informed that 'amonge hem all was a queene'; this queen is not named as Morgan until after they disappear, meaning her identity and

company are associated with privacy from this moment onwards (688). Usually, Morgan's creation and control of matriarchal spaces is perceived negatively by the patriarchal Arthurian community, beginning with her education in necromancy in a nunnery. However, in this scene, since Arthur is no longer the figurehead of his former community, the usual conflict between masculine collective voices (like those of the barons') and Morgan's individual voice is not present.

The absence of such conflict results in the first depiction of a matriarchal space specifically governed by Morgan to be sanctioned by Arthur, the central patriarchal authority of the *Morte*. Morgan's barge is described as containing only many 'ladyes' (687). This company includes one of the three queens in whose company Morgan abducted Lancelot, the queens of 'North Galis' (689). However, replacing her two other companions – the queens of 'Estlonde' and the 'Oute Isles' – is the queen of 'the Waste Londis' and 'Dame Nynyve, the chyff lady of the laake' (155, 689). These figures are described as 'ladyes' before their titles and regional authorities are revealed, whereas Morgan is still termed a 'quene' repeatedly before she is named (688). Though Morgan may not constitute the official ruler of Avalon she is nevertheless presented as the leading authority in this scene. In addition, her control is rendered sympathetic due to the presence of her two new companions: the Queen of the Wastelands, who is none other than the aunt of Percival, the second most exemplary knight in the Grail Quest, and Nynyve, a woman whom Malory takes care to clarify at this point has 'done much for Kynge Arthure' (689).¹⁰² Morgan's control of Arthur is doubly positive through the association with Nynyve, since her actions here are juxtaposed with her associate's constructive power over her husband Pelleas, whom she 'wolde never suffir . . . to be in no place where he shulde be in daungere of hys lyff' (689). Morgan and her company are not retrospectively labelled 'fendis' as they are during her first

¹⁰² Percival's aunt says that in the past she was known by the title of 'the Quene of the Wast Landis' (521).

quest (86). Rather, Arthur's attitude to this matriarchal space and Morgan's authority over it is as sympathetic as the narrator's in this instance. Not only does Arthur explicitly state consent to being in their presence but he expresses the active desire to go with these women, since he commands Bedivere in the imperative: 'Now put me into that barge' (688). Arthur further embodies this spoken desire by placing his head in 'one' of the ladies' 'lappis'; this queen is the one that calls him 'brothir' and is later named as 'Morgan' (688, 689). Worth noting is that Arthur's new placement in a matriarchal space does not convert it into a patriarchal one. Larrington notes that in 'French *chansons de geste* Avalon appears often as a land ruled by Arthur, accompanied by his most outstanding knights—Yvain, Gawain, and, oddly enough in *La Bataille Loquifer*, Charlemagne's nephew, Roland' (KAE 47). Conversely, in Malory's version Bedivere still calls Arthur 'lorde' at this point, whereas Morgan speaks to Arthur without referencing his political rank; in this company, he is merely a man, not their leader, and potentially no longer even a king (688).

Besides being controlled by not one but several matriarchal authorities, the space of the barge is one in which female emotion is freely expressed, despite the presence of the ultimate central courtly figure of authority, Arthur. It represent a moment in the text that points to the desire for synthesis between public and private identity that is seen during Igraine's reunion with her son, as discussed in Chapter One. The women in the Avalonian barge are dressed in funereal attire, wearing 'blak hoodis, and all they wepte and shryked whan they saw Kynge Arthur' (688). They 'resceyved hym . . . with grete mournynge', after which the figure later revealed to be Morgan utters the barely verbal exclamations, 'A' and 'Alas', whilst lamenting that the 'wounde' on his head 'hath caught overmuch coulde' in attentive terms (688). Morgan's expressions of grief punctuate Arthur's last conversation with Bedivere, as 'ever the queen and ladyes wepte and shryked, that hit was pité to hyre', meaning the scene arguably focuses at least as much on Morgan as Arthur's exchanges with his last remaining knight (688). Moreover, the fact that

Morgan's emotions are expressed, in part, through shrieking as well as in verbal form positions her private identity prominently. Whilst aspects of this scene are ritualistic and could represent a public performance more than one of private identity—which I have demonstrated is often communicated through silence or abbreviated narrative devices—nevertheless shrieking is a particularly heightened form of emotional expression that is only described a few other times in the text. It is only applied to instances in which women react to harms against their private identities and the preclusion of their desires.¹⁰³

The heightened emotion colouring this scene foregrounds Avalon's construction as a private eremitic space. Arthur's journey is deliberately framed as an imitation of the eremitic retreat according to the common distinction between central and peripheral spaces made throughout the *Morte*, which is evident in the king's spoken intentions: 'I wyl into the vale of Avylyon to hele me of my grevous wounde' (688). Arthur is close to a 'chapell' in a part of the landscape that previously would have constituted an eremitic subdivision of the quest wilderness used for the exact purpose of healing (686). However, the entire geography of the *Morte* is seen to have altered following Arthur's final battle; such spaces no longer offer the protection and private restoration as they did before. Prior to entering the barge, Arthur believed he was 'resonably eased' in the chapel but then hears 'people crye in the fylde' (686). The cries are revealed to be those of criminal opportunists and their victims:

pyllours and robbers were com into the fylde to pyll eand robbe
many a full knyght of brochys and bees and of many a good ryng
and many a ryche juell. And who that were nat dede all oute, there
they slew them for their harneys and their ryches (686).

¹⁰³ The episode of Arthur's encounter with a rapacious giant at Mount St Michael details how one of his victims 'shryked wondirly lowde' in 'sorow' (121). In a different expression of sorrow, Elaine of Ascolat 'shryked' and 'sowned' when she sees Lancelot wounded after a fight, with whom she has fallen in love (609). Elaine of Ascolat also 'shryked shirly' when Lancelot refuses to marry her, from which heartache she eventually dies (614).

Morgan's private and emotional space of the barge offers an escape from the scene of public and political destruction that threatens the chapel's status as an eremitic sanctuary. Indeed, the necessity of separation from the unstable patriarchal world depicted to Arthur's future health is underlined by the description of the barge's departure, which is effected by Morgan and her female companions as they control this isolated space themselves and 'rowed fromward the londe' (688). As a place, Avalon is never described to readers in detail in the *Morte* and is usually only mentioned by name, meaning it is one of the most private spaces in the text. I suggest that it can be compared to the eremitic locations of retreats used by other protagonists. The notion that it represents a space of private refuge from the public dangers now permeating the Arthurian landscape is evident in Bedivere's lamentation, 'what shall becom of me, now ye go frome me and leve me here alone amonge myne enemyes?' (688). The use of 'myne' to describe Bedivere's enemies is additionally enlightening, since these enemies were, a moment ago, Arthur's as much as his men's. Morgan's transportation of Arthur into a matriarchal and private eremitic space removes the king from the people he governs; for the first time in the text, he appears as an isolated individual rather than the interconnected axis in a collective courtly community. Most importantly, in Avalon Morgan will also experience safety from public courtly roles and the communal suppression of individual identity they entail and, as Larrington observes, 'outlive the collapse of the Arthurian kingdom' in an escape enjoyed only by the company she controls (*KAE* 3).

Privacy and immortality are presented as mutually inclusive in this scene, since it is not only foregrounded but enabled by the symbolic reunion of Excalibur with its scabbard. Arthur's scabbard, the object which causes the wearer to lose 'no bloode', was thrown into 'the deppyst . . . watir' by Morgan in her – and Arthur's – first quest, eliminating his access to immortality (52, 94). Similarly at Arthur's death, only when Excalibur is thrown 'as farre into the watir' as possible, does Morgan's barge appear (687). The contingency of

the latter upon the former is deliberately emphasised by the narrator, since the scene prior to Morgan's appearance in the barge is described in detail. Bedivere twice pretends to throw Excalibur away because he does not wish to lose such a 'precious' and 'ryche' sword (687). Only when Bedivere discards the sword at Arthur's third request does he actually do so, after which the barge appears (687). I argue that by delaying the loss of Excalibur through Bedivere's disobedience, Malory associates private identity with immortality of identity, and the public sphere with impermanence and death. This is significant to understanding his portrayal of Morgan, since as Cooper finds, there is 'no medieval narrative of Morgan's death' (*ERT* 136). Whilst Cooper adds that, 'unlike Merlin or Arthur himself' Morgan 'never figures as one of the undead', I would disagree on this point due to her associations with Arthur's scabbard and Avalon, which are implicitly reunited at the end of the text and thus open access to a space of immortality once more (*ERT* 136). Morgan's control of space through landmarks and material items within them arguably includes the control of time itself due to her connection to Avalon and frames her exile as eternal. This suggestion of immortality perhaps distantly echoes and reminds the reader of Morgan's education in necromancy, which is a skill that includes the raising of the dead.

Morgan's final assertion of private over public identity is reflected on a narrative level, as Malory emphasises his individual narration of Arthur's passing into a place of health over communal accounts of the king's certain death. Malory employs the literary conceit of parallel stories when, having related Morgan's departure with Arthur into an inaccessible and private space, he describes Bedivere's discovery of 'a chapell and an ermytage' (688). In this chapel 'lay an ermyte grovelyng on al foure faste there by a tumbe was newe gravyn' (688). When Bedivere asks who is 'entyred' in the tomb, the hermit replies he 'wote nat veryly but by demynge', or is not certain and can merely speculate (688). On the one hand, his description of 'a numbir of ladyes' who brought 'a dede corse' echoes the matriarchal company in which Arthur

was last seen and implies he died before reaching Avalon (688). In addition, the hermit tells how these women honoured the body in a ceremonial fashion by lighting 'an hondred tapers' and giving him 'a thousande besauntes', which suggests the figure they mourn was prestigious in life (688). On the other hand, neither the gender of the 'corse' nor the identities of the women are specified, which doubtfully foregrounds Bedivere's subsequent pronouncement that the interred figure is 'Kynge Arthur' (688). The narrator competes with Bedivere's opinion, saying 'of Arthur I fynde no more wrytten in bokis that bene auctorysed, nothir more of the verry sertaynté of hys dethe hard I never rede' (689). The notion that this information is not 'auctorysed' or official implies that public knowledge is unreliable in comparison to the narrator's private revelations. Throughout the text up to this point, Malory frequently relies upon the authority of his 'Frenshe booke' in order to confirm details of episodes he relates.¹⁰⁴ However, if the French book upon which Malory self-purportedly relies does not provide an official account of Arthur's death, then the description of Morgan's transportation of the king to be healed shares parity with this authoritative source as an alternative ending to the story. This is an affectation on Malory's part as narrator, typical of his use of abbreviation or elisions such as these, which are employed to suggest additional meaning exists beyond that provided by the official and superficial level of the text. In this case, Malory's evasion serves the purpose of imitating Morgan's expressions of private identity and individualistic attitude. The *Lancelot-Grail* portion to which Malory most probably refers, the *Death of Arthur*, presents Arthur's death as far more certain when the hermit who presides over his

¹⁰⁴ Malory claims that his stories and details about protagonists are 'auctorysed' and based on events which 'the booke rehersyth in Freynsch' (697, 98). For other examples, see pp. 112, 152, 176, 237, 262, 271, 275, 291, 299, 322, 324, 327, 334, 462, 495, 587, 601, 603, 609, 622, 628, 632, 638, 639, 641, 644, 645, 647, 649, 657, 622, 664, 666, 676, 678, 681, 695 and 697. The first reference to the 'French book' occurs when Malory states that it does not provide him with the name of the church in which Arthur pulls the sword from the stone (8). However, all the other references to this source text, apart from those referring to its account of Arthur's death, serve as supporting evidence for Malory's narration of tales (whether or not he did in fact copy it).

tomb states unequivocally that 'truly' Arthur 'does' lie buried there (Lacy 129). However, Malory directly reverses the nature of the 'truth' held by the hermit, writing instead he 'knew nat in sertayne that he was veryly the body of Kynge Arthur' because the story came from 'Bedivere' rather than his own experience (689). The narrator establishes his own individual position against that of the community, by repeating in the first person 'I fynde no more' and 'Now more . . . coude I never fynde' in contrast to Bedivere who is 'a knyght of the Table Rounde', in other words a representative of the collective identity upon which Arthur's public image depends (689).

Similarly, a contemplative shift in Malory's narration of Arthur's death implies an interest less in whether Arthur is really dead or alive than in the nature of the space he now occupies. The narrator sets his own single opinion against the experience of numerous 'som men' who

say in many partys of Inglonde that Kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of Oure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wynne the Holy crosse (689).

The other place in which Arthur is publicly considered to exist by the authority of Jesus naturally evokes images of heaven and communal duty. In addition, the notion that Arthur will one day 'wynne the Holy crosse' suggests he might play a similar role to Galahad in the Grail Quest, who, upon the completion of this quest 'departed hys soule to Jesu Cryste, and a grete multitude of angels bare hit up to hevyn' (586). However, Malory disagrees, writing 'Yet I woll nat say that hit shall be so' (689). He instead counters the notion that Arthur occupies a publicly recognised divine space or role with the statement, 'I wolde sey, *here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff*' (689, emphases added). The 'other place' in which Malory imagines Arthur may therefore be implicitly understood as a private, non-official space like Avalon, Morgan's last known destination, where Arthur changes his own individual life rather than affecting the lives of others, as he once did as king. This implication reiterates

the separation of Morgan and Arthur from public concerns and authorities when the barge departs from the scene of political destruction illustrated earlier.

Malory's placement of public and private accounts of Arthur's death in opposition with one another, as well as his vision of the space Arthur now occupies, relies upon the multiple associations with Morgan he has developed accumulatively in the narrative up to this point. Morgan values private over public identity and provides a direct counterpart to the figures who support accounts of Arthur's death conflicting with Malory's, namely the hermit and Gwenyver. The hermit is twice described as the erstwhile 'Bysshop of Caunturbery', a man who is not only an official figure of patriarchal religious authority but the protagonist who sanctions Arthur's first sword in a central space, 'the grettist chirch of London', which location facilitates confirmation of his right to be king of England (688, 689, 8). Conversely, Morgan is an unofficial figure of matriarchal authority, having been raised in an unnamed and unlocated nunnery in a peripheral part of the quest wilderness. Moreover, Morgan uses peripherally marginal enclosed spaces to exercise emotional control and freedom, whereas Gwenyver, who believes that 'Arthur was dede' and is later buried in his supposed tomb, permanently becomes a 'nunne' at the centre of an official institution as an 'abbas' in order to do public 'penaunce' for her adultery with Lancelot and limit her emotional desires (689, 694, 690, 689).

I argue that Malory's narrative imitation of Morgan's associations with privacy, individualistic performances of identity and access to matriarchal authority serves a particular function within the text that may be used to inform understandings of her individual portrayal. Malory's description of Arthur's passing and his ambiguous set of observations about the king's afterlife precede the imminent conclusion of the *Morte*, the proper end of which is not this moment but after the narration of the rest of his fellowship's demise. Given that the entire narrative revolves around Arthur literally and

figuratively as the title suggests, the conclusion of the story itself may be seen to constitute a kind of death or loss for readers, whose experience must inevitably end with Arthur's. The narrator's unusually heavy emphasis on his own private thoughts and individual voice in this scene, evident in the proliferation of the first person term 'I' he uses only sparingly elsewhere, suggests a space of emotional intimacy is temporarily created for readers to share with the narrator (689). This is supported by Malory's differentiation of himself from communal figures like Bedivere, the 'Round Table' and the 'many men' whose recountings threaten to establish a public version of his story (689). The delay of the story's conclusion in conjunction with the sudden development of a private relationship between reader and narrator at this point in the text can be seen to constitute a conceptual eremitic space within readers' imaginations, where their loss of the story may be contained and healed, as so many public damages to private identity are in other eremitic spaces throughout the *Morte*. Consequently, Morgan's narrative function in the story at this point may be used to inform understandings of her portrayal in the *Morte* as positive. Malory effectively aligns his authority as an individual narrator with Morgan's associations as a protagonist in order to protect readers from the knowledge of Arthur's death. Such alignment of his identity with Morgan's effectively encourages readers to accept her habitual privileging of private identity over public roles. This is significant because Morgan's performances have been consistently condemned in public by the Arthurian community, who see her as an exile in negative terms. However, as Hebert points out in a different context, both Malory and Morgan occupy positions 'outside' the social systems of which they are a part, which suggests that Morgan at this point shares an imaginative, empathic relationship with the narrator even if she shares no bond with the central courtly community in his text (69). Thus Malory finally reveals that to be an exile can constitute a position of freedom and empowerment because it enables the expression of individual desires. For, if readers wish to remain connected with Arthur they

must support the triumph of private over public identity embodied by Morgan at her disappearance into Avalon.

Chapter Conclusions

Morgan's mutual associations with privacy and immortality, represented by the single, peripherally marginal space of Avalon, articulate a clandestine approval of, and desire for, the freedom of private identity that far exceeds the public expressions of Arthurian communities. Tensions clearly exist between the 'surface level' of the *Morte* and its subtextual narrative commentary. The significance of Morgan's portrayal as an individualistic protagonist who privileges her private expressions and desires becomes apparent when she is read as an articulation of concerns about the tensions between public and private identity in medieval society, and of anxieties about individuals' abilities to integrate into their wider community in an emotionally fulfilling or empowering way. When viewed in this way, readings of episodes in which Morgan is present, either directly or indirectly, appear more connected and relevant to one another. From the beginning of her trajectory to the end, Morgan is figured as an exile: in her time as a necromancer nun; in her actions as a quest agent; as a peripheral matriarch of the landscape and material objects found within it; and finally as the primary representative of a space no longer accessible to the disintegrated Arthurian community, Avalon. Regardless of whether Morgan acts in open, enclosed, central, peripheral, courtly or quest wilderness spaces, she consistently expresses her identity and emotions in ways that are meaningful not just to our understandings of this protagonist but to many other marginal female figures Malory depicts. Through Morgan, he implies that permanent empowerment in the *Morte* is to be found in private, matriarchal and peripheral spaces and, though these are frequently set in competition with public, patriarchal and central spaces, he

promotes the idea that freedom is the result of eternal social exile from society. Since the final moments of the text frame Avalon as gender inclusive, despite the exclusive form of its government, Morgan is perhaps used to demonstrate that such empowerment is possible for both women and men, meaning she is a vitally important protagonist not just for understandings of marginal female figures but for the *Morte's* articulations of identity and gender roles as a whole.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined Malory's intricate representations of the private identity and emotions of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan, who have in scholarship been considered predominantly in the light of their public and traditionally-conceived roles as sisters, wives, mothers and queens. It has demonstrated that, throughout the *Morte*, the narrator employs stylistic devices such as abbreviation, elision, the glossing of dialogue and various figurative elements in order to communicate these protagonists' expressions of identity outwith such roles; notably, these are most evocatively expressed through silence rather than direct speech. These stylistic devices have the effect of paralitically inviting scrutiny of moments when protagonists are silenced or marginalised by the Arthurian community, as they almost always coincide with the violent attempt by central courts to subdue women's private voices and individual emotions. Recognising the *Morte's* particular composition and stylistic constructions is essential to understanding the subtle role of figures assumed to have minor importance in the text. This thesis has therefore shown how a revisionary definition of marginality is possible.

Chapter One considered how Igraine's private identity and emotions are initially silenced and marginalised by the pre-Arthurian patriarchal courts, which facilitate and elide her rape in order to secure Arthur's public place as Uther's son and the future king of England. Conversely, after Uther's death, Igraine occupies a different marginal position outside of the court in textually and geographically eremitic spaces that are associated with individual, rather than collective, development. Following her time away from the courtly community, Igraine returns to criticise the public's treatment of her directly; she points to ways in which the gender relations between knights and ladies is flawed and encourages violence against women. Chapter Two then addressed how Morgause's position as wife of the prominent King Lott, Queen of Orkney and mother of four legitimate heirs to the throne has

similarly occluded an awareness in scholarship that Morgause is portrayed as leading a privately conceived and emotionally invested life within the text, with Arthur, Gareth and Lamerok. Outside of Orkney, Morgause can be seen to constitute an empowered figure of matriarchal authority in Carlyon, where she—like her mother—criticises aspects of Arthur’s courtly life in a way that emphasises its failure to accord appropriate prestige to women. Nevertheless, Morgause is also ultimately a victim of patriarchal courtly violence from another source when her son, Gaheris, beheads her, in a scene that shares resonances with the rape and the elision of female emotion seen in her mother’s earlier abuse by Uther. Chapter Three explored how Morgan inherits certain traits from both her mother and sister—a preference for eremitic spaces and the exercise of matriarchal power—but whose powers are significantly augmented. Rather than being the victim of patriarchal violence, Morgan evades all the traditional courtly positions of sister, wife, mother and queen that so damaged the potential for individual expression, in certain moments, for Igraine and Morgause. I argued that Morgan’s ability to permanently resist the traditional patriarchal configurations of courtly femininity and their violent consequences can be attributed to her education in a matriarchal nunnery. For, this type of space in the *Morte* and medieval romance more widely shares thematic associations with the development of individualistic and alternative expressions of identity. In this light, Morgan, in repeatedly privileging her private identity over the public roles to which she was born, acts consistently with the narrator’s delineations of space and its effects on protagonists. Like Igraine and Morgause when they are at the apex of their empowerment, Morgan’s ostensibly political statements are primarily motivated by emotional desire and feeling. However, Morgan’s empowered position is never compromised, but rather increases in scope and lasts for the duration of the narrative. This is possible because Morgan exercises absolute control and authority over matriarchal subdivisions of space within the quest wilderness, where her privacy is always maintained. In occupying such

spaces, Morgan presents challenges to Arthurian courts by occupying key landmarks in the quest wilderness that do not belong to her and through which knights often need to travel to, or from, central courts. Significantly, though, Morgan is never violently punished for her communally disloyal behaviour. Morgan is publicly exiled, but since what she most desires is privacy, exile effectively constitutes a reward because she is both publicly and privately freed from the patriarchal courts she resists from the beginning of her trajectory, which would be capable of harming her if she remained at their centre.

Igraine, Morgause and Morgan's movements through different narrative, courtly and geographical locations reveal that the condition of marginality is experienced differently depending upon whether it is imposed on an individual by their community or whether they seek it independently. As a condition, marginality also varies depending upon whether it is effected in what I have termed 'central' or 'peripheral spaces'. In the context of the *Morte*, these spaces most often constitute the court and quest wilderness respectively. However, this thesis has also revealed that, as in the case of Morgause, peripheral spaces are sometimes simply those courts to which protagonists do not intrinsically belong, revealing that marginality can be a constantly shifting and relative position rather than one of fixed empowerment or disempowerment. Indeed, although Morgan spends the majority of her life in the quest wilderness and relative freedom, as the final portion of Chapter Three argued, this space and its subdivisions are no longer as safe or well-defined after Arthur's final battle at Salisbury results in the destruction of the entire Arthurian landscape; as a consequence, the yet more distant peripheral space of Avalon becomes Morgan's new destination and space of liberation.

The fact that the private identities of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan are not only allowed space in the text but are depicted sympathetically, despite the public challenges they sometimes present for the Arthurian community, reveals that a distinction must be made between protagonists perceived as

subversive in the imagined world of the text and protagonists considered subversive by the narrator. His careful and deliberate distinctions between public and private, as well as inner and outer narrative spaces, articulates an awareness that gender roles and expressions of identity are never inherent or monolithic, but socially learned and changeable; and that to challenge one's position within society is not necessarily to be subversive but to desire the improvement of that same society for the individuals contained within it. The *Morte's* style, construction and progression suggest its narrator portrays a disaffected view of patriarchal values, since violence is so integral to masculine chivalric experience—a violence that eventually is responsible for the end of the Arthurian world and the story. By contrast, matriarchal spaces are presented as nurturing and full of limitless potential for individual development; indeed, Avalon is the single most important symbolic space in the narrative as the place where Arthur is, perhaps, saved, as well as the conceptual destination of readers who wish to imaginatively preserve their experience of the text. This is not to say the narrator portrays patriarchal and matriarchal spaces, or masculine and feminine identity, as being inherently harmful or nurturing. The inhabitation and examination of binary constructions—such as public and private, central and peripheral, patriarchal and matriarchal—serve rather to *deconstruct* the binary images of identity constituted and imposed upon individuals in the public sphere by the Arthurian community.

Together Malory's portrayals of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan reveal an awareness that public and private identity are often dichotomised in the Arthurian world he imagines. Nevertheless, these protagonists also demonstrate that matriarchal power could manifest in different forms and with varying effects in specific, unofficial contexts. Malory's portrayals of these women also provide evidence that medieval writers and audiences did not understand femininity as a single or stable category and were aware of tensions that existed between individual and communal power. Therefore, his

portraits of Igraine, Morgause and Morgan not only have significance for understandings of the *Morte's* protagonists collectively and the genre of medieval romance as a whole, but are highly relevant to ongoing discourses about social marginality, gender and identity in societies today.

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