

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Simon K. Tatom for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in English, English, and Philosophy presented on May 1, 2006.

Title: Fantastic Histories: How Malory's *Morte Darthur* Influenced Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*

Abstract approved:

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My thesis, entitled "Fantastic Histories: How Malory's *Morte Darthur* Influenced Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*," argues that J.R.R. Tolkien's *Silmarillion* shares distinct similarities in style and content with Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, primarily in the lack of detail in the descriptions of characters and events, as each attempts to create a "historical" work based on fantastical events and mythologies.

It is well known that Tolkien was a medieval scholar, and that he drew a great deal from the literature of that period. However, few scholars have written about his connections to Malory and his Arthurian works, beyond the fact that Tolkien thought little of them as true "fairy-story" or myth because they included Christianity. Yet, this historical style is an important connection between two of the most well-known writers of fantasy, one medieval and the other modern.

The first two chapters of this thesis provide historical and theoretical background necessary for the study of the works of Malory and Tolkien. Chapter One, "On Fantasy and Romance," provides a short history of the Romance/Fantasy genre as an introduction to the topic of the thesis. Chapter Two, "Medieval and Modern Theories of Authorship," looks at the idea of the author during the Middle

Ages and how that role has changed since then, comparing medieval theories of authorship to those of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault.

Chapter Three, “Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte Darthur*: Historicizing Arthur,” is an in-depth analysis of the historical nature of Malory’s text. Specifically, I look at Malory’s historical style, particularly in his use of descriptions, characters, and dialogue. Chapter Four, “J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion*: A History for Middle-earth,” follows the same structure as Chapter Three, applying the same analysis to Tolkien’s text. This thesis argues that the historical nature of each author’s work is readily evident through his lack of significant detail.

I conclude by arguing that Tolkien likely borrowed the style of Malory’s text as a model for his own history of Middle Earth. Each feels as if it is the record of a history long past, collected and recorded by a historian, rather than a work of fantasy. Malory’s works are clearly a model for Tolkien’s own writing, based on the similarities the works of each author share. Even if Tolkien did not think these Arthurian legends could be considered fairy-story, he still respected them as literature enough to borrow these style elements from them.

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Fantastic Histories:
How Malory's *Morte Darthur* Influenced Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*

by
Simon K. Tatom

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Simon K. Tatom, Author

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all fantasy geeks. This genre has literary merit to it, and I hope that this thesis will be one more step toward giving fantasy the respect it deserves.

PREFACE

My interest in this topic is twofold: I am a fantasy writer and I have always been interested in the Middle Ages. I am fascinated by all aspects of the time period, from clothing to weapons to living situations to, most importantly to this study, literature. As a writer, I am also fascinated by the methods authors of the time used to craft their stories, as well as the idea that writers had no intellectual rights to their works, and that many of the greatest writers, such as Chaucer and Gower, wrote very few original stories. Rather, they adapted those of others to fit their own message.

Additionally, I have been in love with the fantasy genre for as long as I can remember; it all started with *Star Wars*, which my mom saw while she was pregnant with me, and which became an obsession at a very young age. Before long, all sorts of fantasy appealed to me, from science fiction to sword and sorcery. Even so, I had not really experience Tolkien, except for the animated version of *The Hobbit*, until I was nearly finished with my Bachelor's degree at Western Oregon University. In the early part of 2000, I had shown a part of the fantasy novel I was working on to a friend (who soon became more than a friend and is now my wife), and she told me that it reminded her of *The Lord of the Rings*. She was shocked when I told her that I had not read it. "How can you write fantasy and not have read Tolkien?" she exclaimed. Well, I went right home (it turned out that I had an old copy that my dad had given me) and started reading it right away. I fell in love with the story right away. It had everything, and yet was different than any other book I had read.

It wasn't until graduate school, and my second encounter with Malory's text, that I noticed the similarities between the two authors' works, beyond some early

notice of similarities between Gandalf and Merlin. I was flipping through the table of contents in my Malory text, when I noticed two familiar names: Balin and Pellinor. These are names of knights in Malory's work, but I recognized them from Tolkien as the names of a dwarf and a battlefield. This got me thinking about the possible connections between these two works. In my research, I found that surprisingly little has been written about the connections between these two authors; in fact, I could only find one article that connected the two authors. The thesis that follows is the result of my exploration into these connections and similarities.

Fantastic Histories:
How Malory's *Morte Darthur* Influenced Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*
By Simon Tatom

ON FANTASY AND ROMANCE

Introduction

J.R.R. Tolkien did not believe that the Arthurian myth cycle could truly be classified as what he called "fairy-story," or fantasy. The problem, he stated in a letter he wrote regarding Arthurian tales, is that they contain Christianity:

It is involved in, and explicitly contains the Christian religion.
For reasons which I will not elaborate, that seems to me fatal.
Myth and fairy-story must, as all art, reflect and contain in
solution elements of moral and religious truth (or error), but not
explicit, not in the known form of the primary 'real' world.
(Quoted in Curry 122)

However, Malory's *Morte Darthur* has become the best-known telling of the Arthurian legends, the one most people think of when they think of King Arthur. It is also the high point of medieval romance, so the *Morte* is a logical place to begin the search for understanding when it comes to Tolkien's sources.

Tolkien's works share a number of attributes with Malory's, not the least of which is the style in which they are written. Each is written in a simple style, reminiscent of historical texts, that gives credibility to the text. Beyond that, though, are many other elements that connect the two works. For example, Tolkien's wizards, Gandalf in particular, share a close connection with Malory's version of Merlin. Similarly, each work has a great sword that is important to the King: Arthur's Excalibur and Aragorn's Andúril, formerly known as Narsil. And, of course, Tolkien

appears to have borrowed some names from Malory: Balin and Pellinor were knights in Malory's text, and the names of a dwarf and a battlefield, respectively, in Tolkien's. The connections between Malory and Tolkien are many, despite the low opinion the Professor seems to have had of Arthurian tales as fairy-story, and the *Morte* clearly influenced Tolkien's work on *The Silmarillion*.

Yet, few scholars have written about the connections between Tolkien and Malory, despite these apparent connections, which is why this study is so important. This thesis brings new layers of depth to Tolkien's work by connecting them to medieval literature, while at the same time showing the influence Malory has had on modern works of fantasy. In the end, the significance of both authors' works will be elevated.

A Short History of Fantasy and Romance

L. Sprague de Camp divides all fiction into two categories: realistic and imaginative. Realistic fiction "consists of stories laid in the known world, either in the present or in the historical past" (de Camp 5). Realistic fiction consists of characters doing what real people do, governed by the same natural laws as the real world. These stories are not historical truth, but what *could* have happened. Imaginative fiction is the realm of "stories that could not have happened" (6). These are stories that take place in the future, the prehistoric past, or another world; or they contain things like ghosts, magic, and miracles (de Camp 5-6). De Camp shares my opinion that anything that is not "realistic" fiction can be classified as "fantasy."

With this distinction in mind, let's go back to the beginning for a moment. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (written around 2000 BCE) is the first known instance of written literature in the world. It is over a thousand years older than Homer's *Odyssey* or the earliest parts of the Bible and was, in fact, the first *story* ever known to have been written, and it can be classified as fantasy: *Gilgamesh* tells the story of a giant warrior king in search of immortality. The *Epic* is filled with elements of magic and imagination beyond anything that can actually happen in the "real world." It is these elements that make *Gilgamesh*, and all other myths, legends, and traditional stories, fantasy. Lin Carter, in his 1973 history of fantasy, *Imaginary Worlds*, says, "Yes, fantasy was going strong centuries before [the] emergence of the novel, and fantasy was the theme of the old prose romances which the novel rose to replace, even as it was, still earlier, with the literature of epic, saga and myth which flourished before the birth of romance" (4-5). Most forms of writing have begun with stories of the fantastic, and then moved into other genres.

The mythology of the ancient Greek and Celtic cultures, the stories of the Bible, folk tales, fairy tales told to children as bed-time stories: all of these are examples of fantasy. The genre is far broader than many people realize. De Camp points out that "nearly all the stories told around primitive campfires, in ancient royal palaces, or in medieval castles and huts were what we now call imaginative fiction. Before 1700, realistic fiction...hardly existed" (7). The roots of all literature are in imaginative fiction, or fantasy.

It could be argued that all writing can be considered fantasy. Nothing that anyone writes, even biography, can be exactly accurate to what really happened; some creative license always exists. However, for the purposes of my study, I will focus only on those works that contain elements that are not true for the “real world,” those works that go beyond the everyday and let imagination, or tradition, guide the narrative in different directions. In Tolkien’s words, I will be looking at works that have “a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it” (Curry 141). Even more specifically, I will focus on those stories from the Middle Ages, and those of today that draw on medieval sources.

To this purpose, I will be looking at Malory’s medieval work, the *Morte Darthur*. Possibly one of the most popular forms of literature by the time of Malory’s writing was the Romance—stories of adventure that often included elements of magic or events of a ghostly or spiritual nature. De Camp writes that a new kind of literary men appeared as literacy developed during the Middle Ages. These men, growing bored of simply copying ancient epics, decided to try their hand at writing their own, creating what de Camp calls “pseudo-epics,” or romances (8). Geraldine Heng, in her book *Empire of Magic*, credits Geoffrey of Monmouth and his *History of the Kings of Britain* (*Historia Regum Britannie*) for the rise of romantic literature in the Middle Ages, and for giving it the form we now recognize as medieval romance. According to Heng, one of the chief attributes of Geoffrey’s text is that “historical phenomena and fantasy may collide and vanish, each into the other, without explanation or apology, at the precise locations where both can be readily mined to best advantage—

a prime characteristic of romance that persists henceforth” (2). This phenomenon, the combination of historical elements and fantasy, has become one of the cornerstones of “high fantasy” today, such as the works of Tolkien and many of those who have followed him. I believe that this is part of the reason so many fantasy works are set in medieval-like worlds.

Following Geoffrey’s popularity, authors such as Chretien de Troyes began writing chivalric romances, which became so numerous that, as Heng states, “it is easy to mistake the adventures of medieval knights and ladies as defining the entirety of medieval romance’s interests” (4). Chaucer’s “The Squire’s Tale,” from *The Canterbury Tales*, is also an early experiment in a form of epic romance, which blends many story elements together into one narrative. It was an experiment that was ended abruptly as a commentary by Chaucer that the populace was not ready for such complex tales. Yet the genre grew in popularity over the next few decades, allowing Malory’s Arthurian works to be produced.

Around 1600, however, Miguel de Cervantes, who had been in battle and knew that romances were unrealistic, wrote *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, a long novel that satirized the romance genre so much that no one would write romances for over a century afterwards (de Camp 9). This did not, however, stop the writing of imaginative fiction forever.

Fantasy returned to the mainstream in the 18th and 19th Centuries. In fact, some of the first novels, published in the mid-eighteenth century, were Gothic romances. The resurgence of fantasy can also be attributed to the discovery of what

de Camp calls “Oriental Extravaganzas,” such as *Arabian Nights*, and the collection of oral fairy tales in the 19th century. Some, like Lewis Carroll, even began to make up their own fairy tales (de Camp 10-11). By the turn of the nineteenth century, though, the popularity of the romance was dwindling, to be replaced by an interest in more historical works, such as those by Sir Walter Scott.

William Morris can be credited with once again reinvigorating the epic romance and creating what we now know as “epic” or “high” fantasy. Morris was a Medievalist in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was fascinated by all things medieval, from Gothic architecture to the literature of the period: he loved it all. His passion led him to translate the sagas of Iceland, which Tolkien would later do with Anglo-Saxon literature. He also founded the Kelmscott Press in 1891, printing books that were so well designed and beautiful that Lin Carter says, “they were among the finest works of the bookwrights’ art produced since the Middle Ages” (23).

Morris began writing historical novels in 1858, then shifted to romances in 1895 with *The Wood Beyond the World*. Carter says that “the romantic quest story laid in an imaginary medieval worldscape offered exciting possibilities: [Morris] was the first to explore them” (25). Carter also says that *Wood* was “the first great masterpiece of the imaginary-world tradition, the fountainhead from which imaginative literature springs” (25). According to de Camp, Morris combined “the antiquarian romanticism of Scott and his imitators with the supernaturalism of Walpole and his imitators, in a series of novels laid in imaginary pseudo-medieval

worlds, where magic works” (14). Morris’ works are known to have influenced Tolkien’s own writing.

Other authors followed, including Lord Dunsany, H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and Fletcher Pratt. After World War II, though, fantasy’s popularity slackened for a while. De Camp says, “For a decade after 1945, all fantasy fared badly. With the end in [early] 1954 of [the magazine] *Weird Tales* and the failure of its would-be successors, it seemed as if fantasy had become a casualty of the Machine Age” (30). During this time, the anti-hero became popular, and psychological “slice-of-life” stories replaced the “well-wrought tale” that had previously been favored (de Camp 5). Then, after a decade of decline, fantasy was revived by the publication of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first part of the greater *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, in July of 1954 (slightly later in the United States).

It was Tolkien that took Morris’ concept of the Medievalist fantasy and expanded upon it, creating a new phenomenon. Not only did Tolkien draw on Medieval and Anglo-Saxon texts, not only did he create a world to set his stories in, he also created a history for that world, one that goes all the way back to its own creation myth. This is something that few authors have done, before or since, and it is what sets Tolkien apart.

Much of the most popular fantasy today uses the formulas set in place by Morris and Tolkien, drawing also on the medieval period as an influence. For example, notice that most conventional fantasy takes place in a world and time with little technology, where swords and bows are the weapons of choice. Even the *Star*

Wars saga has a form of sword in its mythos. Why could this be? Most modern fantasy draws heavily on Tolkien, and Tolkien drew heavily on medieval romances. Medieval authors were writing as if the events were taking place in the medieval period, so of course Tolkien wrote with that same era in mind. The “high fantasy” stories we are so familiar with are direct descendants of the medieval romance. Many of the formulas, tropes, and motifs of the early romances return nearly unchanged in fantasy today.

Of course, the genre has evolved even beyond these early forms, and fantasy has grown to include stories of the modern world and alternate histories. Even science fiction is a sub-genre of fantasy. The fantasy genre is incredibly far reaching, and it deserves at least some of the respect given by scholars to other genres. Carter defends the validity of the genre against those who claim that fantasy is nothing more than “escapism” by stating:

The charge of ‘escapist reading’ is most often leveled against fantasy and science fiction, by those who have forgotten or overlooked the simple fact that virtually *all* reading—all music and poetry and art and drama and philosophy, for that matter—is a temporary escape from what is around us. (2)

He goes on to say, “I believe that a hunger for the fabulous is common to the human condition. To be a human being is to possess the capacity to dream; and few of us are so degraded or brutalized that we have no thirst for miracles” (2). Carter believed it was “lamentable” that scholars and literary historians thought so little of the genre, particularly considering the genre’s “antiquity” (5). It is far past time that this attitude was changed.

Modern fantasy does have its problems, though, particularly that many of the stories and ideas have become clichéd. A majority of today's writers have likely never studied medieval literature themselves. They know that Tolkien was great and want to emulate him, but they do not necessarily know *why* he was great. They do not understand that medieval literature is the grandsire of today's high fantasy. When today's writers emulate Tolkien, it is like they are making a copy of a copy of a copy; with each copy the quality is degraded until the original is all but lost. Before one can truly emulate Tolkien's greatness, one must know where that greatness came from. One must study the medieval texts and the literary theories behind them.

MEDIEVAL AND MODERN THEORIES OF AUTHORSHIP

Introduction

Essential to the study of any piece of medieval literature is an understanding of the theories of authorship in the Middle Ages, and how the process of writing was approached. Knowledge of modern theories is also important when comparing medieval texts to those of today. This chapter will provide a brief history of the evolution of the medieval author, as well as a discussion of the various roles involved in creating a medieval text, the importance of scribes, and some of the tools used in the Middle Ages, as a way to look at Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Finally, the modern theories of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault will be discussed and used as a lens for reading Tolkien's text. Interestingly, these theories are in some ways connected, and a combination of the two, modern and medieval, went into Tolkien's creation of *The Silmarillion*.

A Brief History of the Medieval Writer

Many things were different in the Middle Ages than what we know today; things that we take for granted, such as the ability to read and write, or the idea of an author owning his or her work, were far less common, or even unheard of at the time. Exploring this history helps us to appreciate what we have today and understand to where the roots of our modern fantasy reach back. Writing, and reading, started in the Middle Ages to become more accessible to the general public, instead of being relegated to the highest levels of the upper class and the clergy. While by no means

widespread throughout the populace, writing was starting to happen in English, instead of only Latin and French, the languages of the church and court, respectively. Of those who were literate in the Middle Ages, two of the most important roles fell to the author and the scribe. In many ways, the scribe was even more important than the author, since they were the ones who did almost all of the actual writing.

The role of the author in the Middle Ages was vastly different from what we know today. Many authors, including some of the greatest of the time, did not compose many original works, but rather adapted or translated the work of others. Even Geoffrey Chaucer, the “father of the English language,” adapted most of the stories in his *Canterbury Tales* from other sources. This adaptation was highly valued during the Middle Ages.

The majority of authors in the Middle Ages were primarily associated with the royal court, or at least a noble house. Authors of the time were not paid for each copy of a work that was sold, but rather given annuities by a lord or lady. That is to say, once a work was written, if a noble liked it, or if the work was dedicated to a lord or lady, they would often give the author an annuity, often for the rest of the author’s life. (Chaucer was once granted a gallon of wine per day for the rest of his life.) In essence, the author would only have to please one person with a work, rather than worry about appeasing a wider audience in order to make a larger profit.

The literary men (as Richard Firth Green puts it) of the earliest courts were, most often, ecclesiasts, and their language was Latin (Green 101). This means that most of the works that were heard in court were based in religion, and completely

inaccessible to the lower classes, who did not speak Latin. In addition to the ecclesiastics, minstrels also entertained early courts; their purpose was to “amuse and divert” rather than to educate (Green 103). Most likely, court minstrels performed in French, the language of the court, which would still have been inaccessible to the lower classes. The English language at the time was very informal, and was not aesthetically pleasing. Minstrels as storytellers lost almost all of their status in the court by the end of the fourteenth century, though they remained in demand as musicians; the court poet, who would become the *auctor* of later centuries, had replaced them (Green 103).

St. Bonaventure, in the thirteenth century, created a series of terms to “define more precisely the literary activity characteristic of the *auctor*” (Minnis 94). The roles, as they were given, were *auctor* (author), *scriptor* (scribe), *compilator* (compiler), and *commentator*. The literary roles of each division were distinct, and each contributed their own certain amount of originality to a work. The *auctor* was the primary source who created the original text, therefore contributing the most to the work. Conversely, the *scriptor*, in theory, contributed nothing, acting only as a copyist to distribute the work. However, scribes would often make changes to a text (intentionally or not), despite their intended role as mere copyists. The *compilator* adds no opinion of his own, either, but does have some creative power in how he arranges what others have said. Second to the *auctor* in creativity is the *commentator*, who “strives to explain the work of others, adding something of his own by way of explanation” (Minnis 94). The *auctor* is the only one with pure originality in this

group, though he does draw on the statement of others to support his views (Minnis 94-95). Tolkien was certainly aware of this hierarchical structure, and he emulated it in his own writing, as will be discussed later.

Of these four castes, only the *auctor* and the *commentator* officially add anything original, though the others were no less important, and certainly no less literate. *Scriptors*, or scribes, were very important people in the Middle Ages, since without them no author's work would be circulated, or if it was, the author would have to copy it himself and would likely never have time to write any more original works. Scribes did more than simply copy the shapes of letters onto another piece of parchment; they needed to be able to read well and write with a clear hand, as their product was the only representation of the author's work that the public would likely ever see. Scribes would have been well educated, versed in Latin and French, and able to work fast and precisely.

Still, almost all literate works were produced either for the Court or for the Church, meaning that they were inaccessible to the majority of the population, even if they were read aloud and in public, simply because the lower classes did not speak or understand French or Latin. It was not until Geoffrey Chaucer's time, in the late fourteenth century, that works were written in English.

For the most part, very little originality existed in Medieval English literature. Often, authors would simply use a pre-existing story as a source, and tell it in a slightly new way. Even Chaucer, thought of as one of the greatest writers of his time, wrote very few original stories, though he did make quite a few changes in many of

the source stories he used. That is not to say that there was no originality in the Middle Ages. Rather, for the most part, writers were more *compilers* than *auctors*, though they filled both roles.

Chaucer, especially in his *Canterbury Tales*, acted as both. Many of the *Tales* were taken from other sources, many of which were Italian; some were modified heavily, while others remained almost identical to the source. However, Chaucer did include some *Tales* that had no known sources, and the conceit of the *Tales*, a group of pilgrims competing in a tale-telling contest, though borrowed from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, is made of elements and characters that are wholly Chaucer's design. Chaucer even takes a twofold responsibility for *The Canterbury Tales*: in the "General Prologue" to the *Tales*, he writes that he claims no responsibility for what is said in the *Tales*, and that he is just reporting, or *compiling*, what others have said. In essence, he is taking on the persona of his narrator, who is one of the pilgrims on the journey to Canterbury. However, with his retraction at the end of the *Tales*, he admits to being their author, as well as the author of a number of other works. The roles of *auctor* and *compiler* seem to have become blended by the time Chaucer was writing in the late fourteenth century.

The most important detail about Chaucer, particularly when dealing with the history of literature, is not his works themselves so much as how he wrote them. Chaucer was one of the first, if not *the* first, serious poet to write in Middle English, the language of the common people, which is why Chaucer is known as "the father of the English Language." Chaucer was, in a way, a visionary in the way he used the

language and made it appealing. The ironic thing about Chaucer writing in Middle English, though, is that he borrowed quite a few words from French and Latin in order to fill in some holes in the language. By writing in Middle English, the poet became more than entertainment for nobles; writing was able to leave the bounds of the Court and the Church as it became accessible to everyone.

Of course, most people still could not read or write, but many writers would perform their works for an audience, making literature an oral and communal act. As Alberto Manguel points out, “a manuscript of [Chaucer’s] *Troilus and Criseyde* now in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, depicts a man standing at an outside pulpit and addressing an audience of lords and ladies, an open book laid out in front of him” (252). The man was Chaucer himself. Manguel also mentions “practical signs” that scribes would work into texts, so that those who read works silently could “hear” the text as if it were being read to them (253). Signs like these evolved into our modern punctuation marks. Even though most people could not read, they could still experience a work of literature as it was read aloud to them. Not only did public readings bring works to the public, but they also brought new meaning to the author, showing the works in a new light, exposing sections that needed to be emended (Manguel 255).

Even if works were primarily recited, the author would still be nowhere without his scribe, who would have copied the text into an undoubtedly more legible form. “It seems to have been common practice,” writes Michael Clanchy of twelfth century writing, “for monastic authors to write on wax and then have a fair copy made

on parchment” (91). In fact, a twelfth-century writer’s most important equipment were writing tablets, commonly made of wood and overlaid with colored wax, which were often folded into a diptych that was worn on a belt (Clanchy 91). The writer would use a stylus to write on the wax, and then it would be transferred to parchment at a later time. The wax could then be smoothed back out, or scraped off, and used again. It would have been the scribe’s duty to make the copies from the original. The thirteenth century saw slips of parchment begin to replace wax tablets for note taking, though this likely would have been more expensive than re-usable wax tablets.

Interestingly, Clanchy makes note of Robert Grosseteste, who made notes on parchment because he was not accustomed to using wax tablets, which is known because “a dispute arose about which of his works were authentic” (92). According to Clanchy:

The regent-master of the Franciscans stated that Grosseteste had made some marginal notes in manuscripts because ‘when some noteworthy thought occurred to him, he wrote it down there so that it should not escape his memory, just as he also wrote many slips of parchment [*cedulas*] which are not all authoritative.’

This statement suggests that Grosseteste was not accustomed to using wax tablets for his notes and drafts, although undue reliance should not be put on an argument from silence (92).

The fact that medieval writers needed to make notes and drafts contradicts common assumptions that writers of the Middle Ages had such good memories that they did not need them. In fact, as Clanchy points out, “Once they were literate, they had the same needs as a modern writer. Drafts on wax or slips of parchment are the equivalent of a

modern author's original manuscript, while the parchment text is comparable to a fair copy by a professional typist" (92). In this aspect, at least, little has changed over the centuries.

Interestingly, even "writers" often did not write for themselves. According to Clanchy, "The commonest way of committing words to writing was by dictating to a scribe. 'Reading and dictating' were ordinarily coupled together, not 'reading and writing'; the skill of writing a letter in proper form was the 'art of dictation' (*ars dictaminis*), a branch of rhetoric" (97). The exception, though, seems to be monks, who would write and illuminate their own manuscripts. This does not, however, mean that most writers could not, in fact, write—as mentioned above, many kept notes for themselves. Rather, for a manuscript that was legible and aesthetically appealing, one would use the services of a scribe, who was seen as an artist: "Writing was distinguished from composition because putting a pen to parchment was an art in itself" (Clanchy 97).

Medieval manuscripts are among the most beautiful texts ever produced. Not only is the hand-written text beautiful in itself, but these manuscripts were also, more often than not, illuminated, decorated with illustrations ranging from small letters within the text to large borders covering the majority of the page. The amount of time and effort needed to produce just one copy of a text far exceeded anything we know today, sometimes taking months to produce one copy. Yet, even with the difficulty in production, literary works were becoming more and more popular. By the end of the 15th century, the printing press made production far easier, and after Malory's death

the *Morte Darthur* became one of the first Romantic texts to be printed by William Caxton using the process.

Modern Theories of Authorship

Modern theories of authorship share some similarities with the medieval models, particularly in the notion that creativity comes more from retelling much older stories than from true originality. Some theorists even go so far as to say that the *auctor* does not exist, and what we think of as an “author” is nothing more than a *scriptor* or *compiler*.

One such theorist, Roland Barthes, in his 1967 essay “The Death of the Author,” claims that a text’s author does not exist within the text. Rather, Barthes argues that the text is a separate entity entirely, and it is up to the reader to find meaning in it. For Barthes, “the author is a modern figure,” the product of the value placed on the individual by society (125-6). In other words, our modern idea of an author, as a person who creates a work and is intrinsically connected to it, did not exist until recently, which certainly fits with the medieval theories of authorship. However, Barthes contends that the Author is nothing more than a *scriptor*, a scribe, writing text down but not creating it. He says:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture...

The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior,
never original. (128)

Essentially, Barthes is claiming that there are no original ideas; rather, writers simply compile bits and pieces that have always existed and combine them in a way that creates what appears to be a new story, but really is not.

Ultimately, according to Barthes, the intentions of the author do not matter, and can never be completely clear to his or her readers. Instead, the responsibility for assigning meaning to a text falls on the reader, the person “who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted” (Barthes 129). The reader interprets the meaning of any text, taking whatever message he or she finds important from it. This, according to Barthes, is the most important function of a text, and the reason that the author must be separate from it.

Closely following Barthes, Michel Foucault’s 1969 essay “What Is an Author?” looks at the author as a historical construction rather than a meaningful title (Bennett 22). Foucault says that, “even within our civilization, the same types of texts have not always required authors; there was a time [the Middle Ages] when those texts which we now call ‘literary’ (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of the author” (236). So, why do we place such emphasis on the author today? The author is a recent societal creation that “comforts us with the notion that there is a particular sense to [a] text” (Bennett 23). Knowing where a text comes from, who produced it, helps us to understand its meaning. So, unlike Barthes, Foucault does admit that there is *some* use in knowing who the author of a text is, though it is of little importance to the reading

of the text itself. According to Foucault, knowing who the author of a text is helps us to understand the text in the context of the author's life, though that knowledge is of far less importance than what is written in the text itself.

Barthes and Foucault want to look at texts as separate from their authors, where who the author is, his or her character, does not influence the meaning of the text and is, in fact, wholly disconnected from it. Both want to allow literature to stand on its own merits, each text on its own or as part of a literary community, without the taint of outside influences, including their authors.

Interestingly, both Malory and Tolkien, each writing before Barthes and Foucault published their essays, one medieval and the other modern, used the motifs of outside sources and found manuscripts in the writing of their works. Using these motifs helped to distance the authors from their texts, allowing those texts to stand on their own without the spirit of their authors hovering just above them. Having done this, both texts seem to take on lives of their own, separate from their *auctors*, allowing them to seem more credible as histories than if they were simply adventure stories told by creative men.

Essentially, Malory and Tolkien have cast aside the role of *auctor* for the somewhat less austere role of *compiler*. Yet, at least in Tolkien's case, this separation from the role of author is only a surface appearance, as Tolkien without question created his work. What does this say about Barthes and Foucault's theories? Well, Tolkien's life and beliefs certainly influenced his writing, so he is worth looking at in order to really understand the meanings of his works. At the same time, those

works stand on their own without knowledge of Tolkien's background. In fact, it could be argued that knowing about Tolkien's Catholic background influences the reading of his works and causes the reader to make connections to Christianity that are not actually in the text. After all, Tolkien believed it to be absolutely imperative to keep real-world religions separate from fairy-story, which is very similar to the idea that an author is separate from his text.

Tolkien's writing is an example of Barthes' theory, particularly in the wide range of groups who use the texts, particularly *The Lord of the Rings*, in their own lives. Everyone from conservative Christians to Wiccans to atheists, and nearly any group around the world, can claim a strong connection to Tolkien's story. This shows that the text is what is most important, not the author or his intentions. This separation, the very nature of which allows the greatest number of people to connect with the text, was certainly Tolkien's intention in his writing and is a result of Tolkien's historical style, which he achieves through specific strategies influenced by Malory's text. The next two chapters will explore, in depth, Malory's *Morte Darthur* and Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, particularly in their historical styles and the role each author takes in writing his text.

SIR THOMAS MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR*: HISTORICIZING ARTHUR

Introduction

When most people think of King Arthur, the first images and stories they remember are the versions that derive from what Sir Thomas Malory wrote in his *Morte Darthur*. Malory's pseudo-historical romance is, of course, a classic example of fantasy, though it may not have been considered as such at the time it was written. The fact that Merlin is a wizard is one of the primary clues that the text is fantasy, as well as one of the key connections between the *Morte* and Tolkien's works. Also interesting is the fact that Malory claims the role of *compiler*, rather than *auctor*, in the text of the *Morte*, which is a move that Tolkien will make in his own work centuries later.

Of all of the stories of Arthur and his knights that came before and since, why is Malory's account the one that has become the best known? How did one man's version of these stories, written while in prison, become so popular and long-lived? Part of the answer is the printing press, which would have allowed more copies to be produced in a shorter amount of time, therefore allowing wider distribution of the work. Another factor that helped to maintain Malory's endurance is that he wrote the text as if it was a true history, and in doing so the fiction seemed to become a reality. In fact, it is possible that many people in Malory's time took his version as historical fact, particularly since Geoffrey of Monmouth included a chapter about Arthur in his *History of the Kings of Britain*. Evidence of the historical nature of Malory's writing

can be seen the structure of his text, as well as his use of descriptions, characters, and dialogue.

Writing as History

Malory was trying to write a historical account of Arthur's life and times, or at least make it appear that he was. There are some shortcomings in this attempt, particularly in that many of Malory's sources were oral tales that had been passed down for generations in various countries in Britain and Europe and, therefore, were vastly different from the historical facts of Arthur's life, if he existed at all. New characters, such as Lancelot, and new adventures had been created in England and France in the centuries prior to Malory's writing. Malory collected the various tales and connected them together into one cohesive whole, creating his own biased view of the history he was recounting. The evidence is in the way the text is written—its structure, its style, and its characters. The way Malory presents his text is not that of a typical fictional narrative or a romance; rather, it is biographical, historical. Malory writes as if these events actually happened, as if the people existed, and he is simply collecting the records of their lives and compiling them into one definitive tome.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* was likely one of Malory's chief sources, as well as a model for his simple, historical style. Written in the twelfth century CE, this was Geoffrey's attempt to create a history of Britain from the time Romans first discovered the island in the twelfth century BCE to the death of the last British king, Cadwallader, before the island fell to the Saxons in the seventh

century CE. There are many differences between Geoffrey and Malory's texts, likely due to the fact that the story of Arthur and his knights had grown over the intervening three centuries.

One important difference is the character of Lancelot, who does not exist in Geoffrey's text at all. This makes for some interesting differences in the texts, particularly in relation to plot development and what leads to certain events. For example, in Malory's text, Arthur leaves Britain to settle a dispute between Lancelot and Gawayne, which all started because Lancelot had an affair with the queen. Since Lancelot did not exist in Geoffrey's time (he was, in fact a creation of either the Normans in Britain or the French), that could not have been the reason for Arthur's departure. Rather, Geoffrey has Arthur fighting the Romans in Europe.

The end result, though, is the same. In both versions Mordred usurps the throne, and the queen, while Arthur is away. Yet, here is another difference: those who fight with Mordred in Geoffrey's text were never loyal to Arthur, as they were in Malory's. The Mordred of Geoffrey's text imports warriors from Scotland, Ireland, and other parts of Europe, those who were already against Arthur, while Malory's Mordred turns some of Arthur's own knights against him.

Like Geoffrey, Malory was attempting to write a historical account of Arthur's life. Malory's focus was solely on Arthur, though, and not all of the kings of Britain. Malory also had much more to work with when putting his story together than Geoffrey did, because the stories had circulated for so long, and had grown so much during that time.

Structure and Style

One of the most intense debates regarding Malory's text is its structure. Is the text meant to be one continuous work, or is it a collection of short romances? Eugene Vinaver believed that the work was a collection of romances, despite the fact that Caxton published the text as one continuous story shortly after Malory's death. We may never know for sure what form Malory intended the work to take, but I believe that a third option exists: that Malory wrote the book as one history of King Arthur, but structured it in such a way that it could be read in its entirety, or broken into parts for more specific purposes.

Malory packed as much material as he could into the text, trying to combine his sources as comprehensively as possible. One effect of this approach, though, is that in order to fit so much information into the work, the information included loses much of its detail. This is a product of Malory's style, which most critics view as unique and original. Sir Walter Scott even called Malory's style "simplicity bordering on the sublime" (Life 19). "Simple" and "dignified" seem to be popular words used to describe Malory's style.

A side effect of the idealized history Malory creates is the lack of individualization between characters. Dorsey Armstrong states that Malory reacted to the troubles of his day by creating the Pentecostal Oath, a code of conduct or chivalric rules, for the knights to follow. Once that code had been created, Malory used the text to test it, to see if it would work (7). This code of conduct is something that does not appear in any of Malory's source materials. What could this mean? I believe that it

was Malory's attempt to unite the stories, to give them a sort of common thread. The Code also created an ideal for the knights to live up to, to represent, which allowed Malory to give little or no focus to individual characteristics of the knights and concentrate on the deeds that they accomplished.

The roots of Malory's style are in the oral tradition of England. In many ways, this accounts for Malory's lack of detail. Terence McCarthy says that Malory's style "looks back rather than ahead. It is plain, formal, stately, and more akin to older, oral modes of narration; it is never learned, sophisticated or refined" (856). In the oral tradition, too many details would get in the way of remembering a given story, particularly one as long as the *Morte Darthur*.

Another interesting aspect of Malory's style is his use of source material. Rather than claiming the work as his own, he makes frequent reference to what he calls "the Freynshe booke," indicating that the history he is relating is a translation or retelling of a work from France, or possibly the Norman courts of England, where French was spoken nearly as much as English. (Earlier Norman courts spoke French exclusively.) While, in this case, it is true that Malory was pulling from a wide variety of sources, many of which were French, it is interesting to note that this motif of a "found manuscript" shows up throughout the history of the novel, and will play a major role in the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien.

Descriptions

Malory's text is what Terence McCarthy calls a "plain history." That is, Malory expresses no desire to organize or embellish the sources he is pulling from; he uses the sober chronicle style that is appropriate for the historian that he made himself out to be (863). Malory's purpose was not to create an exciting piece of fiction, though he did want the *Morte Darthur* to be entertaining. Rather, his goal was to reduce his Arthurian source material into a single "historical" text. As McCarthy says, Malory was exhibiting a record of deeds, not elegant or decorative fiction (863). Malory "writes not so much to make us visualize, but to help us recognize," McCarthy says (864). McCarthy's argument can be clarified by asking the question, "Recognize what?" My answer is that, like any history book, the *Morte Darthur* asks us to know the deeds of Arthur and his Knights, what they accomplished in Arthur's years of rule, and how they helped to shape the England of today. Details of everyday life (eating, sleeping, going to the bathroom, and the like) do not matter, nor do the individual personalities of the characters, except where such personalities have a direct influence on the flow or outcome of the story. (For example, Arthur would not have been killed but for the treachery of Mordred, though up to that point Mordred was as noble as any other Knight of the Round Table.) Malory ignores what he considers to be insignificant details in order to focus on the events themselves; he finds these lists of facts and events important, not generalities such as the physical description of a knight.

This lack of description can be seen at Arthur's death, and in particular when Arthur asks Bedwere to take him to the edge of the lake for his journey to Avalon:

Than sir Bedwere toke the kynge uppon hys bak and so wente
with hym to the watirs syde. And whan they were there, evyn
faste by the banke hoved a lytyll barge wyth many fayre ladyes
in hit, and amonge hem was a quene, and all they had blak
hoodis. And all they wepte and shryked whan they saw kynge
Arthur. (716)

At this point, we do not know if Arthur is still wearing his armor, nor do we really know how grievous the wound to his head was. This would also be an opportunity for Malory to describe the ladies in the barge, but he does not. Rather, he says that "many fayre ladyes" are in the barge, but he does not reveal how many. Malory also says that all of them are wearing black hoods, but no other physical description is given, not even of the three queens who hold Arthur as the barge departs, one of whom is Arthur's half-sister, Morgan le Fay. The only information Malory seems willing to reveal is that the barge is full of weeping women wearing black hoods.

I submit that this lack of detail, as shown throughout the text, was likely a conscious choice for Malory in his attempt to create a "historical account" of Arthur and his knights' exploits. Malory put a great deal of work into this text, and it is difficult to believe that he would forget to describe the knights' appearances, or at least the features of key characters, such as Arthur and Lancelot. That choice may not have been the only reason for Malory's lack of detail, though. Because Malory's purpose was to combine all of these texts into one great work, he was forced to make cuts and alterations to the texts in order to make them shorter. To combine them all

unedited would have made the work far too large to manage. The first, most logical, least necessary aspect to cut out would be descriptive details of characters and locations. Such details, based on a reading of the text itself, are unimportant to the telling of the story, and up to the reader to create for him- or herself. That is, of course, if the sources had any physical descriptions themselves. Often, in the oral tradition, such details are considered extraneous and disregarded for the sake of memorization. If the sources did not have descriptions, who was Malory to provide his own?

The trouble I see with all of this, though, is that Malory's work is not history. The Arthur that appears in the *Morte Darthur* is not the Arthur that really existed, if one existed at all. Arthur would have lived long before the "Age of Chivalry," before steel armor (and possibly before steel weapons of any kind), and certainly before the Norman conquest of England in 1066. The Arthur of Malory's text is a fantastical character, an idealized version of what a king could be. He is a myth, an almost Christ-like figure with some added flaws that, in the tradition of Greek tragedy, end up bringing on his own downfall. That fact, however, is not important to the overall narrative of the *Morte*. Like the Bible, whether or not these events ever really happened is not what is significant about them. What is important is what the reader takes away from the book, what lessons are learned about life and morality.

This is another of the reasons that I believe details and personality characteristics are not important to Malory. It helps the reader to identify with the characters that much more when he can place himself into the role of the knight. The

lack of detail gives the narrative a kind of timeless quality, allowing the story to take place at any point in England's history. Timelessness is a key to the success of many literary works, allowing readers to bring the text into the present and make it just as relevant today as it was five hundred years ago.

Characters

Malory's resounding lack of detail can be particularly seen when it comes to characters' personalities and dialogue. Very rarely does any one character's dialogue set him (or her) apart from any other character. All of the knights speak the same, so speech never identifies a character or differentiates any one knight from another. McCarthy also points out that a knight's speech is appropriate to his role as a knight, not necessarily to his character (862). That is, all of the dialogue is proper, fitting speech for a knight, not "idiosyncratic discourse" that would individualize a character. Essentially, Malory has abandoned the individual in favor of the group. "Virtue and prowess," according to McCarthy's view of Malory, "involve living up to a standard, behaving in a fitting and characteristic manner, and in this Malory's style expresses his outlook well" (862-3). In Malory's opinion, all knights should share the same values, the same ideas and ideals, and therefore they would all speak in the same manner.

From this ideal, we can see evidence of Malory's subjectivity in his text. He believes that knights should behave a certain way, and he writes his knights in such a way that they do all behave in this way. Every knight in Arthur's court is the best, as

if Malory would have every knight in England be of equal skill and equal virtue. In essence, the *Morte Darthur* shows Malory's idealized courtly world, an ideal that many medieval readers would have shared. Who wouldn't like to put their faith and trust in a group of noble knights to protect them, knights who live by a strict code of conduct, and adhere to it? This ideal, though, leads to yet another missing detail in Malory's text: physical description. There is none. In fact, in lieu of a physical description of a knight, Malory gives us moral descriptions. McCarthy says that, "For Malory, to describe is to evaluate; a knight's moral worth is part of the only description Malory is interested in giving" (861). And yet, it works. We do not miss the physical description, it becomes unimportant, just as who is acting is not as important as what is being done. The greatest drawback, though, is that all of the knights really do behave in the same way, all very virtuously, so the characters can get confusing at times because of their interchangeability. In some ways, though, the knights do not really matter. This is the story, primarily, of Arthur, and which knight does what deed is of little consequence other than the fact that the deed was done.

With McCarthy's argument in mind, we can look at evidence in the text itself. In Book XXI, any knight could have been with Arthur when he died, any knight could have been the one to return Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake, but Malory chose Bedwere for the task. Was there really anything special about Bedwere? Only that he was not killed in the battle with Mordred's army, which is interesting because, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*, Bedwere is killed in the last battle with the Romans, before the war with Mordred even started. Similarly, decisions regarding which

knights chose to side with Arthur, or with Lancelot, or with Mordred were based not on the characteristics of the knights, but were either founded on familial relationships (such as Lancelot's cousins accompanying him to France, or Arthur taking the cause of his cousin, Gawayne, in his dispute with Lancelot), or seemed to be arbitrary placements of knights to give each faction enough numbers to stand against the others.

Two knights, however, shine above all of the rest throughout the work: Lancelot and Galahad. Lancelot is consistently hailed as the greatest knight in the realm, the most noble (despite his affair with Gwenyver), and the most unbeatable in battle. Within the text, Gawayne describes Lancelot's prowess when he says:

‘Ye muste remembir how oftyntimes sir Lancelot hath rescowed
the kynge and the quene; and the beste of us all had bene full
colde at the harte-roote had nat sir Lancelot bene bettir than we,
and that hathe he preved hymself full ofte.’ (673)

Gawayne (who, in other Arthurian texts, is a special character himself, set above the others) is saying that Lancelot is the best of them all, and many of them would be dead if he had not been around to save them. Lancelot is the best, and everyone knows it.

Interestingly, it is also Lancelot's flaw that sets him apart from the rest: he is the only knight to have an affair with the queen. While other knights, such as Tristram, have affairs with other queens, it is only Lancelot who sleeps with his own ruler's wife—a treachery above and beyond nearly any treason imaginable, as it is a crime not only against the monarchy, but also against a friend. Lancelot is important not only because of his strength and prowess, but also because of his weakness.

Next to Lancelot, only one knight is more esteemed: his son, Galahad.

Lancelot even tells Gwenyver, “I had passed all the knyghtes that ever were in the Sankgreall [except syr Galahad, my Sone]” (721). It was only his affair with the queen that held Lancelot back from truly being the greatest of the knights. While Galahad may not be as great a warrior as his father, he is at least better in virtue. No other knight was able to find the Holy Grail, because no other knight was as pure of soul as Galahad. Even Arthur, the great king, does not have the prowess of Lancelot or the virtue of Galahad.

This seems to go against the idea that all knights should be of equal value and skill, but it is perfectly natural to have these kinds of characters, even in a history. Throughout any history book, there are those who stand out, those who seem larger than life. These are the heroes, the ideals that all of the knights strive for, even if they can never reach it. These knights, setting aside Lancelot’s infidelities with the queen, show the ideal of Malory’s idealized world, but they are the extremes, the exceptions, and aside from their military prowess and virtue, they still have no real individual characteristics that set them apart as characters from any other knight.

Malory also portrays two knights who seem to go against the chivalric code, but only out of necessity for the story. In Book XX, Chapter 1, Malory describes Aggravayne and Mordred as “two unhappy knyghtes” who “had ever a prevy hate unto the quene, dame Gwenyver, and to sir Launcelot” (673). These two knights, whose hatred for Lancelot eventually causes the downfall of Camelot, had shown no negative traits up to this point in the text. Here, however, the fall of Arthur, and of

Camelot, is about to begin, and Malory chooses Aggravayne and Mordred as the catalyst. The fact that Mordred is chosen is of course not arbitrary, since Mordred is Arthur's bastard son with his half-sister, and it was Mordred even in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* that brought about the death of Arthur. Aggravayne, however, is included only because he is Mordred's kinsman. I believe that Malory added Aggravayne to Mordred's cause in order to give it the sense of righteousness that is needed for these knights to still be noble in their cause, rather than one knight looking to cause trouble. The only reason these two knights hold any malice toward Gwenyver and Lancelot is because they are cuckolding Arthur and they would tell the king about the affair, in an attempt to bring justice to the lovers. Aggravayne says:

'I mervayle that we all be nat ashamed by the quene. And all we know how sir Launcelot lyeth dayly and nyghtly by the quene. And all we know well that hit ys so, and hit ys sha[m]efully suffird of us all that we shulde suffir so noble a kynge as kynge Arthur ys to be shamed.' (673)

As far as Aggravayne (who is also speaking for Mordred here) is concerned, all of the knights should be ashamed of the queen's affair with Lancelot, and they should be doubly ashamed that they continue to let it happen without Arthur knowing about it. They are, in their minds, upholding the chivalric code by defending their king.

While Aggravayne and Mordred make plans to inform the king of the affair, another group, which includes their brothers Gawayne, Gaherys and Gareth, would rather protect the King from the dishonor of being a cuckolded husband, thus keeping him happy, though ignorant:

‘I lyve you well,’ seyde sir Gawayne, ‘for ever unto all unhappyness, sir, ye woll graunte. And I wolde that ye leffte [all thys,] and make you nat so bysy, for I know,’ seyde sir Gawayne, ‘what woll falle of hit.’ (673)

Gawayne knows that, if Mordred and Aggravayne tell Arthur about the affair, it will lead to a great deal of “unhappyness” and strife. As far as he is concerned, everyone would be happier if they just looked away and continued on as they have been. Essentially, Gawayne would like to avoid this revelation leading to war with Lancelot, his good friend and the only knight in the entire *Morte Darthur* who is consistently called, and hailed by all, the best of the best among Arthur’s knights.

Each group is showing an idealized notion of what a knight’s duty to his king should be, and both sides are holding to their ideals. Once again, individuality, in the form of deciding to turn against Lancelot and Gwenyver and tell the king about their affair or to keep the king blissfully ignorant, is only given to these characters in order to move the story along.

Furthering the plot, however, is not the only reason that the personality characteristics and physical descriptions are left out of Malory’s text. To help us understand, we can look at medieval history texts. There are often no physical descriptions of historical figures in those texts—such descriptions are not necessary. Rather, the focus is on what those people did. Even in many biographies there is little or no physical description of the people involved, unless it is important to the narrative. Malory used this same concept when he was writing the *Morte Darthur*. He did not need to physically describe each character, because he treated the

characters as if they existed in Britain's history. It was an inspired move, which seemed to make the text more authoritative, to give it more prestige. The effect is that the text reads like a true history, focusing on what happened rather than the personalities of who was involved. Besides, it would have been incredibly presumptuous of Malory to affix his own description of what any of these characters looked like to the text, since, if they were truly historical figures, he would not know what they looked like, nor would he want to describe them in a way that was inaccurate.

Dialogue

Malory's use of dialogue, like his use of characters, is as a means to tell the story rather than to gain insight into any character. This can be seen in a number of ways throughout the *Morte Darthur*: dialogue is often used to paraphrase or sum up elements of the story, dialogue is almost never particular to any character and could really have been spoken by anyone, and many times a group of characters speak in unison in a way that is not possible in realistic dialogue.

First of all, I have noticed that dialogue seems to be one of the primary ways of conveying the story in Malory's writing, which is an interesting way of bringing some kind of responsibility to the characters. Often, what a character is saying seems to be more of a summary or paraphrase than an actual quote. For example, in Book XX, Chapter 7, when Arthur finds out that Lancelot did, in fact, go to the queen's chamber and then killed eleven of his knights, Malory writes:

‘Jesu mercy!’ seyde the kynge, ‘he ys a mervaylous knight of proues. And alas,’ seyde the kynge, ‘me sore repentith that ever sir Launcelot sholde be ayenste me, for now I am sure the noble felyshyp of the Rounde Table ys broken for ever, for wyth hym woll many a noble knight holde. And now hit ys fallen so,’ seyde the kynge, ‘that I may nat with my worship but my quene muste suffir dethe,’ and was sore amoved. (682)

Very little of this needed to actually be spoken by Arthur. Rather, it could have been given in exposition. Dialogue such as this is used by Malory not simply to explore the characters themselves, but, more importantly, to move the story along. In this case, we see that Arthur is hurt by Lancelot’s actions, and we also have some foreshadowing of what is to come, particularly in that the fellowship of the Round Table will be broken forever because many of the knights will side with Lancelot. In addition to the breaking of the fellowship, we also see what is to come of Gwenyver: she will be executed for her crimes. This information did not need to come forth through dialogue, but that was how Malory chose to write it.

Another example comes in Book XX, Chapter 19, when Lancelot has sent a damsel to sue for peace with Arthur and Gawayne. She comes upon Sir Lucan, who tells her, “Alas,... my lorde Arthure wolde accorde with sir Launcelot, but sir Gawayne woll nat suffir hym” (701). This dialogue serves little purpose beyond explaining the views of Arthur and Gawayne with regard to Lancelot.

Another interesting aspect of Malory’s dialogue is that, in many cases, any character could be speaking. Often times, one character’s speech represents, or speaks

for, a number of other characters. Take, for example, Gawayne's speech quoted above:

'Ye muste remembir how oftyntimes sir Lancelot hath rescowed the kyng and the quene; and the beste of *us* all had bene full colde at the harte-roote had nat sir Lancelot bene bettir than *we*, and that hathe he preved hymself full ofte.' (673, emphasis mine)

Gawayne is speaking for most, if not all, of the knights of Arthur's court, as the use of "us" and "we" demonstrates. Most of the knights feel the same way about Lancelot: he is a hero, not only to the general public, but also within the ranks of the knights themselves.

A third quirk in Malory's dialogue is that, in several instances, knights respond in unison, saying exactly the same thing at the same time. An example of this can be found in Book XX, Chapter 5, after Lancelot has returned from being ambushed at the queen's chamber and those that are loyal to him swear to take the "woo" with the "weale":

And therefore they seyde, all the good knyghtes,
'Loke ye take no discomforte! For there ys no bondys of knyghtes under hevyn but we shall be able to greve them as much as they [may] us, and therefore discomforte nat yourself by no maner. And we shall gadir toyder all that we love and that lovyth us, and what that ye woll have done shall be done. And therefore lat us take the wo and the joy togydir.' (679)

All of these knights, loyal to Lancelot, are telling him that they will stand by him, no matter what. They will share whatever joys or pains Lancelot suffers, and they will go

with him wherever he goes. They are more loyal to Lancelot than to the King. This is a long statement for a group of knights to make at exactly the same time, in exactly the same words. It shows that what is said, or more specifically the meaning behind the words, and that that meaning is agreed upon by all present, is far more important than who actually said it.

Ann Dobyns states that the characters in the *Morte Darthur* share the same speech characteristics, “except when they don’t” (46). Two characters representing the same type (i.e. knights or queens) will speak in the same manner in similar contexts, but in different contexts, which require different conventions, they will show more individual characteristics. This, according to Dobyns, gives the dialogue “the appearance of plausible speech” (46). This individual characterization, though, is determined by the context of the scene or for some thematic purpose, rather than true individualization of the character. In other words, characters only have individual voices when the narrative requires them to, showing again that, in Malory’s view, events are far more important than the characters are. The story drives the characters, rather than the characters driving the plot.

Conclusion

Malory’s approach, to write the *Morte Darthur* as if it were a true history (whether it was intended to be one work or a collection of related stories), was a truly inspired move. What if, though, Malory believed that the Arthurian stories he was collecting were true? What if he was creating a text that did for Arthur what the Bible

did for Christ? How does that affect the story being told? Most people of the time believed that Arthur existed, and that he had been the greatest king England had ever known. Not only that, but many of the kings of England claimed Arthur as their ancestor. By writing the *Morte Darthur* as if it were history, Malory could have been attempting to validate not only the claims of the royalty, but also to validate the life of Arthur.

Even if Malory did not believe that what he was recounting was true, writing it the way he did added credibility to the text, making it seem to be more official than the previous oral versions of the stories and on a par with Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*. Malory took a legendary character and made him believable as a historical figure. The historical nature of the *Morte Darthur* certainly contributes to its continued success as a work of literature, and to its enduring appeal to the general public. Malory made the world of Camelot seem real, far more so than any of the earlier Arthurian writers had done, which caused this text to be the one that has been the most long-lived version of the story, the one that has been the most often adapted and remembered as the "true" version Arthur's life, though it is far from the actual truth of the historical Arthur, if he existed at all. Hundreds of years after Malory's death, J.R.R. Tolkien used many of these same techniques to make his own fantasy world come alive, as if it were a true history, adding depth to what could otherwise have been just another children's story.

J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S *THE SILMARILLION*: A HISTORY FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

Introduction

It is well known that J.R.R. Tolkien was a medieval scholar, and that he drew a great deal of inspiration from the literature of that period. Although his primary focus was on Old English tales, such as *Beowulf*, Tolkien was an expert in the range of medieval literature, and would certainly have been familiar with Malory's work; the 1934 discovery of the Winchester Manuscript of Malory's text would have been an important event during Tolkien's scholarly career, one Tolkien would have been well aware of and interested in. In fact, while some similarities between Malory and Tolkien's works could be called coincidence, the fact that the names of two of Malory's knights appear in Tolkien's work is too much to be coincidental.

However, surprisingly little has been written about Tolkien's connections to Malory and his Arthurian works, beyond the fact that Tolkien did not think of them as true "fairy-story" or myth because they included Christianity. One article, Verlyn Flieger's "J.R.R. Tolkien and the Matter of Britain," does touch on Tolkien's connections to the Arthurian tales of the Middle Ages, but makes few specific connections to Malory's *Morte Darthur*, focusing instead on the greater sweep of the Arthurian legend. Interestingly, though, Flieger does mention that Tolkien attempted to write his own long Arthurian poem, entitled *The Fall of Arthur*, but never completed it (48).

Even if Tolkien thought little of the Arthurian myth cycle as "Faërie," Malory's *Morte Darthur* is still an important literary work in the development of the

Romantic genre, based on the popularity it has sustained since its publication and the influence it has had on all subsequent Arthurian texts and stories. Additionally, along with Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, the *Morte Darthur* is one of the few romantic/fantastical histories to come out of the Middle Ages. Tolkien, recognizing Malory's significance, drew heavily on the *Morte* for inspiration in writing his own Romantic adventure, leading to the undeniable similarities that exist between the works of these two authors, particularly in their historical styles.

The Silmarillion is the work that most closely resembles Malory's *Morte Darthur* in structure and style, though Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* also shares elements. Like Malory's work, Tolkien's shows a significant lack of detail in almost all regards, particularly when it comes to character development: unless it is necessary to the story, character development does not exist. However, while Malory relies heavily on dialogue to convey his story, Tolkien uses very little, allowing the actions to speak for themselves.

The historical style that results from each author's lack of detail in his writing is a significant connection between these two literary legends. An important difference between the two, though, is that while Malory may have been trying to pass his text off as true history, Tolkien was unmistakably creating his own "secondary" world.

Creating History

In 1910, E.M. Forester wrote: “Why has not England a great mythology? Our folklore has never advanced beyond daintiness, and the greater melodies about our countryside have all issued through the pipes of Greece. Deep and true as the native imagination can be, it seems to have failed here. It has stopped with the witches and fairies” (Quoted in Curry 30-31). Tolkien blamed this lack of mythology on the Norman invasion of 1066 and its brutality, and the “culture” that pushed folk ideas into the shadows (Curry 31).

In an effort to fill England’s mythological gap, and following in the footsteps of William Morris, the man credited with bringing medieval landscapes and modern fantasy together, Tolkien used medieval storytelling techniques and images, many of which bear a striking resemblance to those used by Malory in the *Morte Darthur*, to craft his own mythology for England. Tolkien took the concept much farther than Morris, though, in that he created a complete history for his world, rather than just enough to tell the story. It is this history that makes *The Lord of the Rings* so real, and it is this history that Tolkien records in *The Silmarillion*.

According to Tolkien, part of fantasy’s role is to “sub-create,” as he calls it. Fantasy’s “Secondary Worlds” of the imagination must include both “internal consistency” and “strangeness and wonder” that comes out of their “freedom from the domination of observed fact,” which is what keeps the worlds of fantasy separate from

our real world (Kocher 117). On top of that, though, the Secondary World needs to be believable, combining the fantastic with the everyday. Tolkien says:

Faërie contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarves, witches, trolls, giants or dragons: it holds seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted. (Quoted in Kocher 117)

Paul Kocher, in his essay, “Middle-Earth: An Imaginary World?” also points out that many elements of Middle-earth are based on things in our real world: creatures and animals; stars, constellations and planets; days and years; landscapes and weather. Essentially, things must be “strange but not too strange” (Kocher 119-23). In Tolkien’s view, fantasy must have “a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it” (Curry 141). It is these elements of the familiar mixed with the fantastic that makes Tolkien’s works so believable, so real.

Also important to Tolkien’s method is that he claims not to be the creator of his work, but, rather, a “modern scholar who is compiling, editing, and eventually translating copies of very ancient records of Middle-earth which have come into his hands” (Kocher 118). This, I believe, demonstrates Tolkien’s knowledge of and connection to the medieval theory of authorship: while, in reality, Tolkien is the *auctor*, the primary source, he claims to be merely the *compiler*, a scholar collecting and compiling older works for others to enjoy. As a medieval scholar, Tolkien certainly would have known the details of the theory of authorship of the time, and working that theory into his work has helped to add a feeling of age, a medieval-ness, to his writing.

Tolkien acts like his works are histories, rather than fictions, shunning allegory in order to give the works “historical solidity,” as Lionel Basney calls it: “The link between the ‘past’ of Middle-earth and Tolkien’s work is his pretense of scholarship. The imagined transcription and translation of materials from hobbit manuscripts...make the integrity of Tolkien’s work possible” (Basney 17). This historical solidity makes Tolkien’s works far more real and believable than any other work of fantasy before, and maybe even since, particularly because he included more information about Middle-earth than any other author, such as complete new languages, detailed maps, and a calendar (Carter 119-20). All of these elements combine to make the history of Middle-earth feel as if it were truly part of our own history, rather than some far-distant fantasy world.

Structure and Style

Like Malory, Tolkien drew from older traditions in his writing, giving his works a feeling unlike those of his contemporaries. The two authors also share a certain simplicity in their narratives, a lack of detail that is characteristic of a historical writing style. Finally, both works make reference to source material, seeming to indicate that they are not original works, but translations of older texts.

The Silmarillion is composed of five “books”: “Ainulindalë,” which tells about the creation of the world; “Valaquenta,” an “account of the Valar and Maiar according to the lore of the Eldar”; the “Quenta Silmarillion,” which is the history of the elves from their arrival in Middle-earth to the time that Númenor is founded; the

“Akallabêth,” which tells of the fall of Númenor; and “Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age,” which chronicles the Third Age of Middle-earth up to the point when the elves leave the world to the care of Men. The last three in particular bear a striking resemblance to Malory’s work. These divisions, each able to stand on its own as well as contribute to the whole of the work, are one of many structural and stylistic similarities that Tolkien’s work shares with Malory’s. Felicity Riddy’s description of the *Morte Darthur*, that it is a “series of tales pulled in different directions by connected yet divergent concerns...of the fifteenth-century readers of romance” and is roughly chronological, fits *The Silmarillion* just as well as it does Malory’s work (882). One significant difference, though, is that Tolkien’s text is more unified than Malory’s collection of Arthurian adventures; the events of one section of *The Silmarillion* effect later parts in ways that are not apparent in the *Morte*.

Tolkien’s style is very similar to Malory’s “plain history,” in that it looks back rather than ahead, drawing from much older forms of narration than that of Tolkien’s contemporaries. C.W. Sullivan, III, put it best in his essay, “Tolkien the Bard,” when he wrote, “I believe that Tolkien committed a traditionally patterned narrative to paper, and that we can understand [his works] better if we look at them not through the lenses of modern critical methods, but through lenses developed for the study of earlier works” (11). This is, I believe, the best way to look at Tolkien’s writing, as his books are structured nothing like those of his contemporaries. Much like Malory, Tolkien’s writing is rooted in the oral traditions of Medieval England and draws upon the motifs and ideas of that time.

Tolkien's style also mirrors Malory's in its simplicity. Tolkien does not waste time and space with a great deal of detail, focusing instead on the stories themselves—for Tolkien, the most important elements were language and story. *The Silmarillion* is made up of a collection of shorter tales and stories, ranging from the creation of the world to the time when the elves leave Middle-earth in the hands of Men. The work covers a huge amount of time—thousands of years—in a relatively short text. Because of this sheer amount of information, the details that Tolkien is able to provide are limited if he wants to keep the text at a manageable length. If Tolkien were to have provided more details in the text, *The Silmarillion* would have been thousands of pages long, requiring multiple volumes. While Tolkien could have easily accomplished this length (as can be evidenced by the number of *History of Middle-earth* texts, which were collected from Tolkien's notes and published by Christopher Tolkien after *The Silmarillion*), the goal of *The Silmarillion* was to provide the history of Middle-earth in one easily accessible volume. This lack of detail leads to Tolkien's Malory-like historical style.

A third connection between these two authors is the use of and reference to source material. However, while Malory really did have a number of actual sources, Tolkien's were fabricated. While not as explicit in *The Silmarillion*, the forward and appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* make reference to "The Red Book of Westmarch," an imaginary text that contains the history of Middle-earth. Critics often connect the "Red Book" to texts such as *The Mabinogion*, which does share some

similarities with *the Silmarillion*, but I believe that Tolkien's references to source material are also an homage to Malory and his references to "the Freynshe booke."

One "work," other than "the Red Book," that Tolkien does site in the body of *The Silmarillion* is the "Lay of Leithian." The chapter of *The Silmarillion* entitled "Of Beren and Lúthien" begins:

Among the tales of sorrow and of ruin that come down to us from the darkness of those days there are yet some in which amid weeping there is joy and under the shadow of death light that endures. And of these histories most fair still in the ears of the Elves is the tale of Beren and Lúthien. Of their lives was made the Lay of Leithian, Release from Bondage, which is the longest save one of the songs concerning the world of old; but here the tale is told in fewer words and without song. (158)

This is the story of Beren and Lúthien, a Man and an Elf maid who fall in love with each other. Interestingly, Tolkien uses the word "history" to describe stories like the Lay, adding scholarly credence to the text. Tolkien also does something inspired in this passage. He writes "most fair still in the ears of *the Elves*," as if the text we hold in our hands was created by Elves in Middle-earth in a time long forgotten, and not by a man in the mid-twentieth century. This detail adds to the appearance that *The Silmarillion* is an ancient text that Tolkien has discovered and translated. Throughout this part of *the Silmarillion*, Tolkien makes constant reference to the "Lay," as if it were the true text of this story and he is only summarizing it here. In fact, the "Lay of Leithian" does exist in poetic form, but it was of Tolkien's creation, and was never completed (Fisher). This use of summary over direct translation, which harkens back

to Malory's references to the "Freynshe booke," where more details can often be found, appears throughout *The Silmarillion*, further developing the idea that Tolkien is collecting information from a variety of works into one all-inclusive tome.

Tolkien claims that he developed the device of the "found manuscript" before he began thinking about the actual quest that is at the heart of *The Lord of the Rings* (Basney 9). Lionel Basney says that "Tolkien at once imagines and fulfills the historical development of his world" and "could not have written the history of the Ring [or of Middle-earth] until the characters and events associated with it...had become 'historical,' that is, irredeemably past" (16). It is as if Tolkien needed to plan out the entire story before he could begin writing, as if the history needed to be complete before he could record it. Regardless of whether or not the device of the historical texts came before the story itself, it helps to make Tolkien's style unique among his contemporaries and connect his work to Malory's, adding a sense of authenticity to his fantasy world.

Tolkien drew heavily on the styles and techniques of the Middle Ages, but as Sullivan says:

Tolkien did not 'borrow' these materials from ancient prose and poetry any more than any traditional artist borrows his or her material, be it a ballad or a quilt pattern. Like traditionally recognized folk performers, Tolkien was using material that he had been conversant with, quite literally, from childhood. (12)

Here again, Tolkien was showing his affinity toward the medieval authors, who often borrowed entire stories from one another, and particularly to Malory, who collected his material for the *Morte Darthur* from other, primarily French, sources. Unlike

those predecessors, though, Tolkien did create an original story, albeit one that could just as easily have been told in the 14th century as in the 20th.

Descriptions

As with Malory's *Morte Darthur*, *The Silmarillion* is characterized by its significant lack of detail with regard to landscapes, architecture, and characters. For Tolkien, as for Malory, detailed descriptions of people and places are not nearly as important as the events chronicled in the text. As a result, detail is limited or omitted entirely.

Tolkien's writing necessarily contains more detail than Malory's, for the simple fact that Tolkien created a whole new world, Arda and Middle-earth, while Malory's was an earlier version of the Britain and Europe that he knew. However, while this is true for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, which include great amounts of detail about landscapes and locations, it is not so much the case for *The Silmarillion*. In this work, Tolkien has cut out a great deal of detail in order to fit thousands of years' worth of information and history into a manageable 303 pages, only including details in very special circumstances. For example, here is a description from *The Silmarillion* of Númenor, the island home granted to the Dúnedain, the greatest of Men in Middle-earth:

Of old the chief city and haven of Númenor was in the midst of its western coasts, and it was called Andúnië because it faced the sunset. But in the midst of the land was a mountain tall and steep, and it was named the Meneltarma, the Pillar of Heaven,

and upon it was a high place that was hallowed to Eru Ilúvatar, and it was open and unroofed, and no other temple or fane was there in the land of the Númenoreans. At the feet of the mountain were built the tombs of the Kings, and hard by upon a hill was Armenelos, fairest of cities, and there stood the tower and the citadel that was raised by Elros son of Eärendil, whom the Valar appointed to be the first King of the Dúnedain. (259)

We know from this limited description that Númenor includes two cities, Andúnië and Armenelos, a mountain with a sacred area upon it, and the tombs of the kings. Yet, more questions are raised than answered. What of the landscape? Is it rocky, hilly, forested, covered in grassy plains? And what of the hallowed place at the top of the Meneltarma? Is there an altar? Does it look like Stonehenge? Tolkien says that it is “open and unroofed,” but he does not indicate whether or not a structure of any kind exists, or if it is nothing more than an open area atop the mountain. Nor does he describe how ornate the tombs of the Kings are, or how large the cities have grown. Are the tower and citadel the only structures in Armenelos, or are they surrounded by a sprawling city? Essentially, while location is important enough to mention, and while Tolkien provides more information about setting than Malory does, it is not as important as the history of events and the languages of Middle-earth.

Some description of the land is essential to Tolkien, particularly since those lands to not coincide with any that exist in the “real” world, so that the reader has some sense of what Middle-earth is like. Even so, Tolkien rarely offers any real detail about the locations beyond a vague notion of how the area is laid out, allowing his readers to make each location their own. He provides names of places, but no real

details about them beyond the most obvious elements that set them apart from one another.

Like Malory, lists of events are what Tolkien is interested in, particularly in *The Silmarillion*, and attention to detail is sacrificed for that focus. Take, for example, the episode in “Akallabêth” about Isildur, son of King Ar-Pharazôn’s cousin, and the White Tree, Nimloth, whose fate is said to be bound to that of the Númenoreans. Isildur, hearing that this sacred tree is going to be destroyed, sneaks into the courts of the King and steals a fruit from the tree to be planted elsewhere, therefore saving the tree through its offspring:

Isildur said no word, but went out by night and did a deed for which he was afterwards renowned. For he passed alone in disguise to Armenelos and to the courts of the King, which were now forbidden to the Faithful; and he came to the place of the Tree, which was forbidden to all by the orders of Sauron, and the Tree was watched day and night by guards in his service. At that time Nimloth was dark and bore no bloom, for it was late in the autumn, and its winter was nigh; and Isildur passed through the guards and took from the Tree a fruit that hung upon it, and turned to go. But the guard was aroused, and he was assailed, and fought his way out, receiving many wounds; and he escaped, and because he was disguised it was not discovered who had laid hands on the Tree. (271)

This entire episode takes place in one paragraph, when it could have been a full chapter unto itself. All the reader learns is that Isildur enters the palace, takes the fruit, is wounded in an attack, and escapes. We also know that this event happened in late autumn, because, “At that time Nimloth was dark and bore no bloom, for it was late in

the autumn, and its winter was nigh.” Many other questions are raised, though: How did he get in? How many guards were there? How was he wounded? What did the fruit look like? All we are told is that the tree is white. These details are unimportant to Tolkien for the same reason they are unimportant to Malory: they are unimportant to history.

For Tolkien, the details are not as important as the events themselves are. This is the hallmark of this kind of historical writing, as it is the events of history that have shaped society, while the minor details have long been forgotten. Histories and biographies do exist where those details are included and explored, but that is not the kind of text that Tolkien was writing. Rather, Tolkien, like Malory, has focused almost exclusively on hard facts (though the facts are fictitious) and the larger scope of the events that he recounts.

Characters

Throughout *The Silmarillion*, the number of characters that Tolkien creates rivals that of Malory’s *Morte*. In fact, it is almost impossible to keep them all straight on the first few readings, particularly since Tolkien does not provide much, if any, detail about those characters, and when he does, it is limited to hair or eye color. This confusion is exacerbated by the fact that many of Tolkien’s characters have two or more names, which he alternates between. The characters are not included for their own sake; rather, each character serves a purpose to the greater story, or history, of Arda, the greater world of Middle-earth. The Kings of Númenor, for example, are

listed, but no detail is given. Even Ar-Pharazôn, the final King of Númenor, who brings on the ultimate destruction of the island nation, goes undescribed—almost nothing is known of him except that he is jealous of the Eldar's immortality and that he is convinced by Sauron to wage war against the Valar.

Sauron, the chief antagonist for the majority of Tolkien's works, is one character that does seem to be more developed than others:

Among those of [Melkor's] servants that have names the greatest was that spirit whom the Eldar called Sauron...In his beginning he was of the Maiar of Aulë, and he remained mighty in the lore of that people. In all the deeds of Melkor the Morgoth upon Arda, in his vast works and in the deceits of his cunning, Sauron had a part, and was only less evil than his master in that for long he served another and not himself. But in after years he rose like a shadow of Morgoth and a ghost of his malice, and walked behind him on the same ruinous path down into the Void. (20)

After the fall of Melkor, Sauron becomes the most evil being in Arda, continuing Melkor's corruption of men and beasts and performing unspeakable evils upon them. However, even though Sauron is only less evil than Melkor for having served him, and by far the most powerful of Melkor's servants, he is still only a "ghost of [Melkor's] malice," indicating that the evil of Sauron cannot compare to that of Melkor.

Yet, despite the evil in Sauron's heart, he does not have the appearance of pure evil; in fact, he is described as having a fair countenance when he is called forth by the Númenoreans to swear fealty to them, hiding his hatred and disdain for them so that he

can get close to the King, Ar-Pharazôn, and turn this once-great kingdom against the forces of good:

Yet such was the cunning of his mind and mouth, and the strength of his hidden will, that ere three years had passed he had become closest to the secret counsels of the King; for flattery sweet as honey was ever on his tongue, and knowledge he had of many things yet unrevealed to Men. (269-70)

Sauron shows depth of character in his ability to manipulate other characters, particularly Ar-Pharazôn—he is able to disguise his evil with words “sweet as honey,” becoming who- or whatever he needs in order to achieve his goals. The reason for Sauron’s depth, though, is that so much of Tolkien’s story relies on his actions. Númenor would not have fallen had Sauron not influenced the King to attack the Undying Lands to the West. Frodo’s journey to destroy the One Ring in *The Lord of the Rings* could not have happened if Sauron had not created the Ring to begin with. Essentially, almost none of the conflict that Middle-earth was enmeshed in, at least after Melkor’s final fall, would have come to be if it were not for Sauron’s manipulation and lust for power. In this way, Sauron is much like Malory’s Mordred, in that he hid his true nature from those around him and manipulated events to serve his own evil purposes. Where Mordred brought on the fall of Arthur and Camelot, Sauron brought destruction to Númenor, the ideal society of Men. One major difference between these two characters, though, is that, while Sauron is developed throughout *The Silmarillion*, Mordred shows no sign of disloyalty to Arthur, or of any distinction from any other knight, until the story requires it of him.

Another character in the “Akallabêth” that is given more detail than others is Amandil, the cousin of Ar-Pharazôn. Amandil is one of the “Faithful” of Númenor, those who remain friends with the Eldar, the Elves of Middle-earth. Even though the King no longer held those bonds of friendship with the Elves, Amandil was still considered to be a trusted advisor until Sauron came to Númenor and he was dismissed from service, “for Sauron hated [Amandil] above all others in Númenor. But he was so noble, and had been so mighty a captain of the sea, that he was still held in honour by many of the people, and neither the King nor Sauron dared to lay hands on him as yet” (271). Here we get an idea of Amandil’s character, but not of his physical appearance. As Tolkien has shown throughout the text, appearance is not important, but actions make a character worth mentioning (unless, as with Sauron, whose appearance allows him to perform his evil deeds, a character’s appearance sets him or her apart from others). Before Ar-Pharazôn can destroy the Faithful and attack the Undying Lands, Amandil gathers all that he can to escape to Middle-earth, and then takes a ship West to try and talk to the Valar. Amandil never returns from his voyage.

After the destruction of Númenor and the battle against Sauron at the end of the Second Age, Tolkien provides more information about Amandil’s grandson, Isildur, than he had previously. Isildur, also similar to Malory’s Mordred, is a noble character, son of a King, who falls to evil in the end to propel the story along. Isildur, unlike his father and grandfather, can be corrupted:

The Ruling Ring passed out of the knowledge even of the Wise in that age; yet it was not unmade. For Isildur would not surrender

it to Elrond and Círdan who stood by. They counselled him to cast it into the fire of Orodruin nigh at hand, in which it had been forged, so that it should perish, and the power of Sauron be forever diminished...But Isildur refused this counsel, saying: 'This I will have as weregild for my father's death, and my brother's. Was it not I that dealt the Enemy his death-blow?' And the Ring that he held seemed to him exceedingly fair to look on; and he would not suffer it to be destroyed. Taking it therefore he returned at first to Minas Anor...But soon he departed, and after he had given counsel to Meneldil, his brother's son, and had committed to him the realm of the south, he bore away the Ring, to be an heirloom of his house, and marched north from Gondor by the way that Elendil had come. (293)

After the battle, Isildur has the opportunity to destroy Sauron's Ring, effectively destroying Sauron in the process, for, as long as the One Ring exists, so does Sauron's power. However, despite the urgings of Elrond and Círdan, two of the highest-ranking elves left at the end of the battle, Isildur keeps the Ring for himself. All of Isildur's good deeds—saving the fruit from Nimloth, co-founding the kingdom of Gondor, defeating Sauron—are wiped away by this one act of weakness. Because of Isildur's greed, Sauron is able to come back to power at the end of the Third Age and release his malice on Middle-earth once again.

The fact that Tolkien does not explore Isildur's character traits before he comes into possession of the Ring is interesting, and the reason is simple: it did not matter until that time. No information about Isildur was necessary until his actions in history made those details important. Additionally, upon taking the Ring into his possession, Isildur's character may have changed, which would also be an important

event to record. Isildur did not destroy the Ring because he found it “exceedingly fair to look on,” which may have been the power of the Ring overcoming Isildur’s natural honor with its own desire to “survive.”

Isildur, like any of Malory’s knights, is a golden child, a hero adored by his people for his valor and strength. Yet, when the story requires, he flips, doing the opposite of what his noble nature requires by keeping the One Ring for himself. Isildur is the one character whose personality shifts within the text. Others may appear virtuous, but really be hiding their vile nature, such as Sauron or Saruman, but few begin as good and turn toward evil, except for a few Elves in the “Quenta Silmarillion.” Those elves, though, were manipulated by Melkor in much the same way that Sauron manipulated the Númenoreans. Isildur, though, is not manipulated. He has fought long and hard against Sauron’s evil and, once he sees the opportunity to take the power that Sauron wielded for himself, he takes it. Every one of Malory’s knights is called “the most noble,” and every knight is the best, in combat and in virtue. Yet, when needed, any knight could be used against Arthur, or against chivalry, to provide conflict and to drive the story along, as can be seen in Lancelot’s betrayal and affair with the Queen, or Mordred and Aggravayne’s plot to cause strife between Arthur and Lancelot. This is what Tolkien has done with Isildur—using Malory’s technique, Tolkien has used Isildur, one of the most noble Men in Middle-earth at the time, to further the story by changing his nature from selfless virtue to greed. This was the best way for Tolkien to add new layers of conflict to the story,

and to raise the stakes for the Third Age. After all, if Isildur had destroyed the Ring, the adventures of Frodo and Aragorn could never have taken place.

Most characters, however, do not even get the smattering of detail provided for Isildur and these other examples. Take, for example, Míriel, the daughter of the second-to-last King on Númenor:

And it came to pass that Tar-Palantir grew weary of grief and died. He had no son, but a daughter only, whom he named Míriel in the Elven-tongue; and to her now by right and the laws of the Númenoreans came the scepter. But Pharazôn took her to wife against her will, doing evil in this and evil also in that the laws of Númenor did not permit the marriage, even in the royal house, of those more nearly akin than cousins in the second degree. And when they were wedded, he seized the scepter into his own hand, taking the title of Ar-Pharazôn...and the name of his queen he changed to Ar-Zimraphel. (268)

She could have been seen as an important character in her own right. Yet, her only purpose in *The Silmarillion* is as a means for Ar-Pharazôn to take the scepter of the King and to show his depravity in forcing his own cousin to marry him, so that is all the information we are given about her. Her only other appearance in the text comes as the Island of Númenor sinks into the ocean, when she tries to reach the temple at the top of the Meneltarma to pray to Ilúvatar and the Valar for forgiveness. Míriel was simply not important enough to Tolkien's history to warrant any more detail or information about her life.

Additionally, the first quarter of the "Akallabêth" contains almost no specific characters, other than references to Ilúvatar and some of the Valar. Even though this

entire section of *The Silmarillion* is about the Men of Númenor, the first part speaks of them only as a group: the Dúnedain or the Númenoreans, “Kings among Men” (259). This is, I believe, strong evidence that the history is what is important, and the characters only exist when that history requires their specific actions. This treatment of characters bears a strong resemblance to Malory’s knights, in that they are only individualized or focused on when the story deems it necessary for them to be so. However, for the most part, Tolkien’s characters remain consistent in their behavior when they appear throughout the text (with some notable exceptions, like Isildur) while Malory’s change to fit the need of a particular part of the story. In this way, Tolkien puts more importance on his characters than Malory does his, emphasizing the historical value of a person’s individuality in addition to his actions.

Dialogue

Similar to the lack of detail in characters is the scarcity of dialogue throughout *The Silmarillion*. This is particularly evident in the final sections, “Akallabêth” and “Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age,” possibly because much of this information is covered in *The Lord of the Rings*. Unlike Malory, who uses it as exposition, dialogue simply is not as important to Tolkien as the actual events he is recording. Again, this attests to the historical nature of the text, as only very important speech would be recorded.

What dialogue is included feels as if it is nothing more than a paraphrase or summary of what was actually said. For example, in the “Akallabêth,” the

Númenoreans felt a desire for the Undying Lands and the immortality that they associated with them, but the Valar had imposed a Ban on them, which “forbade them to sail into the West” (262). This Ban leads to the following passage:

And [the Númenoreans] said among themselves: ‘Why do the Lords of the West sit there in peace unending, while we must die and go we know not whither, leaving our home and all that we have made? And the Eldar die not, even those that rebelled against the Lords. And since we have mastered all seas, and no water is so wild or so wide that our ships cannot overcome it, why should we not go to Avallónë and greet our friends?’ (262)

It is unlikely that this is exactly what one person in Númenor said, though it is possible. More likely is that this is a paraphrase of the general sentiment shared by the majority of the Númenoreans, who are jealous of the immortality of the Valar and the Eldar. Tolkien’s lead into the “dialogue” in this quote is evidence of this: “And they said among themselves.” This same thought is shared by a vast majority of the Númenoreans, and these discussions are happening all over the island kingdom. This passage is not unlike those in the *Morte* where one knight speaks for all those present, such as when Gawayne speaks for all of the knights about Lancelot’s skill: this dialogue is not meant to be read as a direct quote from any character or group, but as an expression of the mood of the Númenoreans, as evidence of the spread of Sauron’s darkness through their culture.

Other times, as happens in the *Morte*, entire groups seem to be saying the exact same thing at the exact same time. For example, in response to the Númenoreans’ jealousy, the Valar sent messengers to Númenor:

‘The Doom of the World,’ they said, ‘One alone can change who made it. And were you so to voyage that escaping all deceits and snares you came indeed to Aman, the Blessed Realm, little would it profit you. For it is not the land of Manwë that makes its people deathless, but the Deathless that dwell therein have hallowed the land; and there you would but wither and grow weary the sooner, as moths in a light too strong and steadfast.’
(262-3)

The King responds by asking about his ancestor, who journeyed to the Undying Lands before the Dúnedain came to Númenor,

To which they answered: ‘You know that he has a fate apart, and was adjudged to the Firstborn who die not; yet this also is his doom that he can never return again to mortal lands. Whereas you and your people are not of the Firstborn, but are mortal Men as Ilúvatar made you. Yet it seems that you desire now to have the good of both kindreds, to sail to Valinor when you will, and to return when you please to your homes. That cannot be. Nor can the Valar take away the gifts of Ilúvatar. The Eldar, you say, are unpunished, and even those who rebelled do not die. Yet that is to them neither reward nor punishment, but the fulfillment of their being. They cannot escape, and are bound to this world, never to leave it so long as it lasts, for its life is theirs. And you are punished for the rebellion of Men, you say, in which you had small part, and so it is that you die. But that was not at first appointed for a punishment. Thus you escape, and leave the world, and are not bound to it, in hope or in weariness. Which of you should therefore envy the others?’ (263)

While the first quote above could be seen as a paraphrase of what these messengers are telling the people of Númenor, the second most certainly is not. The second is directly addressing the King of the Númenoreans in response to his questions, and all of the messengers are speaking in unison. In this case, though, it was intentional. In the first part of *The Silmarillion*, “Ainulindalë,” Tolkien establishes that Ilúvatar created the world through music. With this in mind, it is possible that the messengers act as a sort of chorus, speaking together, and possibly even singing, their message.

Interestingly, the second passage, where the messengers address the King directly, uses much simpler language than the first, which indicates that it is more likely to be direct quotation of what the characters actually said. The dialogue of the first passage, with language such as, “And were you so to voyage that escaping all deceits and snares you came indeed to Aman, the Blessed Realm, little would it profit you,” does not feel as natural as that of the second, indicating a more academic paraphrase of the dialogue in the first passage. Conversely, the dialogue of the second passage, which is much more simple, is closer to direct quotation. This distinction between the two passages indicates that the first is a paraphrase or summary of what the messengers said to the Númenoreans, while the second is closer to being a direct quote of what the messengers told the King.

As the above quotes show, Tolkien does not use dialogue to set his characters apart from one another. In fact, the dialogue in *The Silmarillion* is less direct quotation of what the characters might really have said than it is paraphrase of the main ideas that are important to the history being recorded. This style, similar to

Malory's use of dialogue, is more in keeping with histories and biographies than with works of fiction, which is strong evidence that a historical style is what Tolkien was trying to achieve with *The Silmarillion*.

Even though Tolkien's dialogue in *The Silmarillion* is structured much like Malory's, in that it appears to be more paraphrase than direct quotation, Tolkien's use of dialogue is much different than Malory's. Huge portions of Malory's narration is carried out through dialogue, while Tolkien uses very little dialogue at all, and almost none of it is expository. This shows one of the major differences between the historical styles of these two authors, and may also be evidence of their separation in time: Malory was writing at a time when the oral tradition was still prevalent, when people regularly told stories verbally to one another. This connection and familiarity with oral storytelling would certainly have influenced the way Malory's characters speak, while Tolkien's hundreds of years of separation causes him to rely less on dialogue for exposition.

Conclusion

As a scholar as well as a fantasy writer, Tolkien combined these two facets of himself to create a work of fantasy that has a sense of history to it, that reads more like a history text than a novel. This was Tolkien's intent when he set out to write *The Silmarillion*, which was, even more than *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien's life's work. It took decades to write, as Tolkien worked to make it perfect. In fact, Tolkien submitted an early version of *The Silmarillion* to his publisher even before *The Lord of*

the Rings, but it was rejected (Carter 113). Even so, the text was not published until 1977, four years after Tolkien's death, just as the *Morte Darthur* was published after Malory's. Because of this delay, we may never know if *The Silmarillion* is the text that Tolkien intended it to be or not, just as we may never know Malory's true intentions with regard to the structure of the *Morte*.

Whether or not Tolkien considered the text finished, what we have is as close as he came to completion, as close to perfect as he was able to get. Of course, the text does have some flaws, some discrepancies that Tolkien may have worked out if he had had more time. However, these inconsistencies help it to resemble the Bible, as if *The Silmarillion* truly were a collection written by many individuals that Tolkien collected and translated. In some ways, those inconsistencies give the text a feeling of authenticity. These discrepancies are yet another, likely unintentional, similarity between *The Silmarillion* and the *Morte Darthur*, where knights who die in one adventure often appear in later episodes in perfect health. However, as was likely the case with Malory, these discrepancies were probably accidental.

In *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien has achieved his goal of creating a history for his sub-created world, one that is completely believable and may even have been the mythological history of our own world. As Lionel Basney says, "The way fantasy is exhausted at the close of the Third Age makes Tolkien's history possible" (16). By the end of *The Silmarillion*, Sauron has been defeated and the elves have all but left Middle-earth to the care of Men. It is not hard to believe that Middle-earth could have evolved into England as we know it today. It is the historical style woven through

Tolkien's writing that has helped his works to endure in popularity for decades, and will for decades to come, in much the same way as Malory's *Morte Darthur* has become the primary source for the Arthurian legend as we know it.

CONCLUSION

The connections between Malory's *Morte Darthur* and Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, two of the most influential fantasy/romances in the history of British literature, cannot be denied, even beyond the obvious similarities between Tolkien's wizard, Gandalf, and Malory's Merlin; or that the names of two of Malory's knights, Balin and Pellinor, appear in Tolkien's work in the names of a Dwarf and a field; or the similarities between Arthur's Excalibur and Elendil's Narsil. However, these are only the surface connections and allusions that Tolkien makes to Malory's work. The more important connection has to do with the historical style that each used in composing their works.

That historical style is what has allowed these works to endure, Tolkien's for half a century and Malory's for nearly five and a half. Each author tried to create a history for England, though Tolkien's is far more mythological shifting to legend while Malory's is legendary from start to finish. The magic that each begins with, though, is used up by the end, transitioning into what could have been the true history of the island nation. The historical feeling of each author's writing gives the texts a feeling of authenticity, and adds deeper dimensional layers to the stories than other fantasy texts are likely to achieve.

Tolkien revitalized the fantasy/romance genre in the 1950's with his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. His work continues to be popular because of the amount of detail he provides in the text, not only the descriptions of landscape provided in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but also, and more importantly, the detailed history recounted

in *The Silmarillion*. This history could not have been told were it not for the inspiration Tolkien drew from the historical style of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Tolkien's knowledge and use of medieval theories of authorship also helped him to add credibility and believability to his works. Through Tolkien's writing, the similarities and connections between the medieval and modern theories become apparent.

Fantasy has become popular in the mainstream over recent years, thanks once again to Tolkien. The film versions of his *Lord of the Rings* have shown that fantasy can be marketable, and reinvigorated the genre. New films are being produced, and old stories are being recreated for modern audiences in much the same way as Tolkien brought medieval literature into the twentieth century. Today's fantasy, like the Romances of the Middle Ages, serves an important function for society: escapism. Fantasy allows today's readers and audiences, just like the medieval readers of Romance, to forget about the troubles of the world for a time, to enter a world where good can triumph over evil, and those distinctions are clear. Fantasy goes beyond simple escapism, though. It helps to teach us the values of right versus wrong, and shows that good can triumph over evil. The valor and virtue of Arthur and his knights provided hope for the medieval reader (and today's), just as Aragorn and the others of the Fellowship of the Ring do for modern audiences. Fantasy can provide hope in times when the world seems to be falling apart. That is why fantasy is important, and that is why J.R.R. Tolkien's epic history of Middle-earth has endured, and grown, in popularity for half a century.

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APPENDICES

GLOSSARY

- Aman, the Blessed Realm-- The land of the Valar, which was removed from the world after the Númenoreans attempted to attack the Valar.
- Anárion-- The second son of Elendil and co-founder of Gondor.
- Andúnië-- The largest city of Númenor
- Andúril-- The sword of Aragorn, King of Gondor, forged from the shards of Narsil, which was broken by Sauron when he killed Elendil.
- Arda-- The mythological version of our own world in which Middle-earth is located.
- Arthurian-- Pertaining to tales of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.
- auctor-- (See: author)
- author-- The creator of a text.
- Avalon-- The legendary island to which Arthur is taken after his death.
- bard-- A professional poet, singer or storyteller.
- Camelot-- The legendary city from which Arthur Pendragon ruled his kingdom.
- chivalry-- The code of honor used by knights in the Middle Ages.
- commentator-- One who comments on the works of others.
- compiler-- One who gathers the works of others into anthologies.
- diptych-- A writing tablet consisting of two leaves of rigid material connected by hinges and shutting together so as to protect the writing within.
- Dúnedain-- "Men of the West." The Dúnedain were the most powerful of the race of Men, living longer and standing taller than others.
- Eldar-- The name given to the Elves of Middle-earth.
- Elves-- The first race to be born into Middle-earth. Elves are immortal and fair to look upon.
- Epic Fantasy-- (See: High Fantasy)
- evil-- A difficult concept to define. Essentially, the opposite of good, but what is good for one person is not necessarily good for another.
- Excalibur-- Arthur's magic sword.
- Faërie-- According to Tolkien, the realm in which myths and legends take place, and the stories about that realm.
- Fairy-story-- Tolkien's name for fantasy.

Faithful, the-- Those of the Númenoreans who remained friendly toward the Elves of Middle-earth.

Fantasy-- The genre of literature that is based on or includes elements that do not exist in the real world.

found manuscript-- The conceit that a work of fiction is a translation of a long-lost manuscript found by the author.

Freynshe booke-- The source that Malory cites throughout the *Morte Darthur*.

Gondor-- A kingdom in the South of Middle-earth, founded by Isildur and Anárion.

High Fantasy-- Fantasy stories, often serious, dealing with themes of good versus evil in a grand setting.

Hobbit-- A race in Middle-earth, similar to men, who love food. Hobbits are short, rarely taller than four feet in height, and do not wear shoes. Their feet are padded on the bottom and hairy on top.

Holy Grail-- Either the cup that caught the blood of Christ during His crucifixion or the cup used during the Last Supper.

illuminated manuscript-- A manuscript whose text is supplemented by artwork, including illustrations, borders, miniatures and initials. These manuscripts were common in the Middle Ages.

Imaginative fiction-- (See: Fantasy)

Istari-- Tolkien's five Wizards, who came to Middle-earth in the Third Age.

Knights of the Round Table-- The company of Knights created by King Arthur. They sat around a round table so that all were equal and none sat at the head of the others.

"Lay of Leithian, The"-- The story of Beren and Lúthien, a Man and an Elf maid, who fall in love.

Lucan-- One of Arthur's knights.

Maia-- Spirits of lesser power than the Valar, but still very powerful.

Medieval-- Of or relating to the period known as the Middle Ages.

Men-- The younger race created by Ilúvatar to inhabit Middle-earth. Men have been given the gift of mortality, which separates them from the Elves.

Meneltarma-- The tall mountain at the center of the island of Númenor. A temple sacred to Ilúvatar was located at the top.

Middle Ages-- The period of European history between Ancient and Modern times, commonly dated from the 5th through the early 16th Centuries.

Middle English-- The form of English used during the Middle Ages.

Middle-earth-- The imaginary land, or "secondary world," created by J.R.R. Tolkien.

minstrel-- A medieval traveling entertainer who performed music and recited poetry.

myth-- A sacred story that tells of the creation of the world and how people came to be as they are.

Narsil-- The Sword of Elendil, which is similar to Arthur's Excalibur.

Nimloth-- The White Tree of Númenor, whose fate was tied to that of the Númenoreans.

Norman Conquest, the-- Norman French invaded England in 1066, claiming the country as their own.

Númenor-- The island granted to the Dúnedain in Tolkien's Silmarillion.

Númenoreans-- The people of Númenor. (See "Dúnedain")

One Ring, the-- The Ring of Power created by Sauron in order to control all other rings of power.

oral tradition-- The tradition of remembering and telling stories orally, as opposed to writing them down.

Pellinor-- In Malory's text, Pellinor was a knight; in Tolkien's works, Pellinor was the name of a battlefield outside the gates of Minas Tirith.

Pentecostal Oath-- The oath taken by Arthur's knights to uphold the chivalric code.

Realistic fiction-- Fiction that could easily take place in the real world.

"Red Book of Westmarch, The"-- Tolkien's fabricated source for The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, and The Silmarillion. "The Red Book" was a journal kept by Bilbo Baggins and expanded by Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee during their adventures.

Romance-- A literary genre, based on traditional themes, dealing with heroic tales of adventure and often including magic.

Sankgreall-- (See: Holy Grail)

Science Fiction-- A sub-genre of fantasy dealing primarily with the future and technology.

scribe-- One who copies texts that others have written, or writes what others dictate.

scriptor-- (See: scribe)

Secondary World(s)-- The fictional realms created by authors of fantasy and science fiction, as in Tolkien's Middle-earth.

sub-creation-- According to Tolkien, the world and adventures created by a fantasy author.

Undying Lands-- (See: Aman)

Valar-- The spirits who went to Arda in physical form to oversee the development of the world and take care of it. The Valar are similar to the gods of numerous mythologies.

Wizard-- Generally, a person who uses magical arts. However, for Tolkien, this title applied only to the Maiar spirits sent to Middle-earth during the Third Age to help combat Sauron.

writing tablets-- (See: diptych)

CHARACTER GUIDE

Aggravayne (Malory)-- Kinsman to Mordred, and Knight of the Round Table. Stood by Mordred in his desire to tell the King of Lancelot's affair with Gwenyver.

Amandil (Tolkien)-- The father of Elendil, and one of the Faithful during Ar-Pharazôn's reign.

Anárion (Tolkien)-- The second son of Elendil and co-founder of Gondor.

Aragorn (Tolkien)-- Isildur's heir who, having been in hiding for most of his life, finally reclaimed the throne of Gondor during the War of the Ring at the end of the Third Age.

Ar-Pharazôn (Tolkien)-- The second son of Elendil and co-founder of Gondor.

Arthur (Malory)-- A legendary King of Britain whose life is recounted in Malory's *Morte Darthur*.

Ar-Zimraphel (Tolkien)-- (See: *Míriel*)

Balin (Malory/Tolkien)-- In Malory's text, Balin was a knight; in Tolkien's work, Balin was the name of a dwarf who became Lord of Moria.

Bedwere (Malory)-- The knight who was with Arthur when he died and returned Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake.

Beren (Tolkien)-- The first Man to fall in love with and marry an Elf maiden, Lúthien.

Círdan (Tolkien)-- The shipwright, one of the oldest Elves in Middle-earth.

Elendil (Tolkien)-- One of the Faithful during the Fall of Númenor, and also a member of the royal line. Became the King of the Dúnedain in Middle-Earth and was killed in battle with Sauron.

Elrond (Tolkien)-- One of the most powerful Elves in Middle-earth during the Third Age. Elrond's parents were each half Elf, half Human, and Elrond was given the unique choice between living as Man or Elf; he chose Elf.

Frodo (Tolkien)-- The Hobbit who finally succeeded in destroying Sauron's One Ring.

Gaherys (Malory)-- Gawayne's brother, accidentally killed by Lancelot.

Galahad (Malory)-- The son of Lancelot, Galahad is the most virtuous of all of Arthur's knights, which is how he was able to find the Holy Grail.

Gandalf (Tolkien)-- A wise Maia spirit who took the form of an old man in order to advise the races of Men and Elves during the Third Age. Gandalf is Tolkien's primary Wizard.

Gareth (Malory)-- Gawayne's brother, accidentally killed by Lancelot.

Gawayne (Malory)-- King Arthur's cousin, and a Knight of the Round Table, who was wronged by Lancelot.

- Gil-galad (Tolkien)-- A king of the Elves in The Silmarillion who is killed battling Sauron.
- Gwenyver (Malory)-- The Queen of Camelot, wife of Arthur, who has an affair with Lancelot that ultimately brings the downfall of Camelot.
- Ilúvatar (Tolkien)-- "The One." Ilúvatar created the world of Arda through music.
- Isildur (Tolkien)-- The oldest son of Elendil, co-founder of Gondor, and a hero of the Númenoreans. Isildur defeated Sauron, but was corrupted by the One Ring.
- Lady of the Lake (Malory)-- The mysterious woman who gives Excalibur to Arthur.
- Lancelot (Malory)-- The greatest in skill of Arthur's knights, and also the one who betrayed Arthur the deepest by having an affair with Queen Gwenyver.
- Lucan (Malory)-- One of Arthur's knights.
- Lúthien (Tolkien)-- The first Elf to fall in love with a Man, Beren.
- Melkor (Tolkien)-- Also called Morgoth, Melkor was the strongest of the Valar, but he turned to evil because of his desire for power and dominion over Arda.
- Merlin (Malory)-- The wise old man who helps Arthur in his early years. Merlin is also a wizard, and a model for Tolkien's Gandalf.
- Míriel (Tolkien)-- The daughter of Tar-Palantir, Míriel was next in line to be the Queen of Númenor until Ar-Pharazôn forced her into marriage and usurped the throne.
- Mordred (Malory)-- The bastard son of King Arthur and his sister, and half-brother to Gawayne, Mordred caused the fall of Camelot and the death of Arthur.
- Morgoth (Tolkien)-- (See: Melkor)
- Pellinor (Malory/Tolkien)-- In Malory's text, Pellinor was a knight.
- Sauron (Tolkien)-- A Maia spirit who was corrupted by Melkor, becoming one of the most evil beings in Middle-earth.
- Tar-Palantir (Tolkien)-- The second to last king of Númenor, Tar-Palantir tried to return the Númenoreans to the old ways and friendship with the Elves of Middle-Earth.
- Tristram (Malory)-- One of the Knights of the Round Table. Had an affair with a married Queen.

PRONOUNCIATION GUIDE

Aggravayne: ag'ra ^v ān	Gaherys: ga ^h er'is
Ainulindalë: īn'oolindaluh	Galahad: gal'ahad
Akallabêth: akal'abeth	Gandalf: gan'dalf
Aman: ah'man	Gareth: ger'eth
Amandil: aman'deel	Gawayne: go ^w 'en
Anárion: ahna'ree-on	Gil-galad: gil-ga'lad
Andúnië: andoo'nee-uh	Gondor: gon'dōr
Andúril: andoo'reel	Gwenyver: gwen'iveer
Aragorn: ara'gorn	Ilúvatar: eeloo'vatarr
Ar-Pharazôn: arr far'azon	Isildur: eeseel'doorr
Ar-Zimraphel: ar zim'rafel	Leithian: lay'thien
Auctor: oc'tor	Maiar: my'ar
Balin: ba'leen	Meneltarma: men'el tar'ma
Bedwere: bed'weer	Míriel: meer'ee-el
Chretien de Troyes: kre'tee-en doo twa'	Morte Darthur: mort dartoor'
Círdan: keer'dan	Narsil: nar'seel
Dúnedain: doo'nedine	Nimloth: neem'loth
Elendil: elen'deel	Númenor: noo'menor
Elrond: el'rond	Pellinor: pele'nnor
Frodo: frō'dō	Sankgreall: sankgrāl'
	Sauron: sow'ron ('ow' as in 'now')

Silmarillion: silmaril'eeon

Tar-Palantir: tar palan'teer

Tolkien: toll'keen'

Troilus and Criseyde: troi'lus and cre'siduh

Valar: va'lar