10

Lifting the Veil: Voices, Visions, and Destiny in Malory's *Morte Darthur*

CORINNE SAUNDERS

> For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Corinthians 13.12)

Always rewriting and always rewritten, romance also opens onto new ways of seeing. Romance retains its power in part because, in its engagement with thinking, feeling, and being in the world, it continues to allow readers to re-vision themselves. Medieval depictions of the continuum of mind and body, the role of affect in cognition, and the physical effects of love, loss, and trauma can have powerful resonances for modern readers. Recent work in 'critical medical humanities' emphasises the importance of a long cultural perspective, and the potential of the pre-Cartesian thought world to illuminate understandings of mind, body, and affect. Thus the *Hearing the Voice* project (based at Durham University and funded by the Wellcome Trust) puts past and present into conversation, bringing together researchers in humanities, social science, and science, clinicians and 'experts by experience' to explore the phenomenon of hearing voices without external stimuli, or 'auditory verbal hallucinations'.[1] Often assumed to be a symptom of psychosis, voice-hearing is also experienced by a significant proportion of the 'healthy' population. It may not correspond with or be satisfactorily addressed by medical diagnosis, and while often distressing, it may also be benign. Literary texts offer insights into the mental and affective processes that underpin such experiences and the ways in which individuals, communities, and cultures have made sense of them over time. The medieval thought world is one in which voice-hearing – and unusual revelatory experiences more generally – are authorised, and divine, demonic, and otherworldly forces assumed. Whereas

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9781843845096.indd 189 17/08/2018 09:29

voice-hearing has come to be privileged in the modern imagination, medieval understandings of vision were multi-sensory and voices were often only one element of visionary experience. It is in the imaginative literature of the medieval period that the intersection of internal and external forces, the intervention of the supernatural in the human world, the possibilities of hearing voices and seeing visions, and the interpretative scope of such experiences, are most fully played out. In its interweaving of sacred and secular and its creative rewriting of romance tradition, Malory's *Morte Darthur* exemplifies the rich potential of visionary experience to illuminate self and world, and the complex relationship between agency, providence, and destiny. In its grand reshaping of medieval romance, the *Morte* also poses some of the most fundamental questions of human existence.

Inner Eyes and Ears

The medieval thought world assumed a multi-faceted supernatural, which included not only God and the devil, but a spirit world just beyond human reach, of angels, demons, and ghosts, which might manifest itself in visitations, visions, and miracles, or in demonic intervention and temptation.[2] Medieval thought inherited too the classical concept of *daimons*, ambiguous spirits who might be benign or malign, which lingered on in conceptions of the faery. The idea of powerful forces that might intervene is critical to medieval depictions of individual experience, while at the same time, the late Middle Ages saw a new interest in the interior processes of thought and feeling and how these might intersect with exterior influences. The senses, each with its own organ, were understood to be put together by the inner senses, situated in the ventricles of the brain. Thoughts were made up of 'forms', sense impressions involving perception and response, which, according to Avicenna's model in *De anima* (translated into Latin in the twelfth century), passed from the front cells of the brain (the inner senses and temporary memory) to the middle (the cells of imagination and cognition) to be stored at the back in the memory.[3] Such models of the brain allowed for the existence of an inner eye and ear, and offered explanatory paradigms for visionary experience and hearing inner voices. They also allowed for the combination of supernatural

2 See Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*, Studies in Medieval Romance 13 (Cambridge, 2010), in particular chapters 1–3.

3 See Jacqueline Tasioulas's lucid summary in '"Dying of Imagination" in the First Fragment of the *Canterbury Tales*', *Medium Ævum* 82 (2013): 212–35 (216–17), and Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, IL, 2011), in particular 41–45. For Avicenna, see *Liber de anima seu Sextus de naturalibus*, ed. Simone van Riet, 2 vols (Leiden, 1968–72), and the detailed discussion in Ruth Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Warburg Institute Surveys 6 (London, 1975), 43–64.

9781843845096.indd 190 17/08/2018 09:29

and physiological explanations: thought-images might result directly from sensory perception or be retrieved from memory, but might also occur, as with dreams, through the imprint of the divine or the demonic on the ever-susceptible imagination.[4] These ideas resonate with Augustine's notions of different levels of vision – bodily, intellective, and spiritual. Sensible and intellectual seeing are the norm, although the Christian sees also with 'the eye of the heart' ('oculum cordis'), 'through a glass dimly' ('per speculum in aenigmate'). Yet the 'spiritual eyes' ('spiritalia … lumina') may afford the power 'to see incorporeal things as well' ('ut videant et incorporalia'), which, Augustine argues, all will have in the future life.[5] In the temporal realm, the inner eye and ear can open onto such vision, which in the celestial realm will be experienced bodily.

These notions of supernatural influence, spiritual vision, and the inner eye and ear are prominent in mystical writing, but they are also influential in romance. The works of Chrétien de Troyes, Chaucer and Gower reflect an evidently sophisticated knowledge of physiological theory and are deeply engaged with the mental, physical, and affective processes that shape individual experience. Malory's *Morte Darthur* is typically seen as less psychological and intellectual, more focused on action than interiority, with ideas of character created not through the exploration of the inner psyche but by the gradual accruing of action. Yet Malory is powerfully engaged with the ways that external and internal forces shape being in the world – with the articulation of providence and destiny, with voices of and beyond the mind, and with visionary experience that in different ways pervades thought, body, and feeling.[6] Such experience plays essential roles in shaping

4 Stuart Clark argues that 'supernatural' is an inappropriate term in relation to the medieval period, because the spirit world, including demons, is part of God's natural order, and that 'preternatural' is preferable. While recognising that there are philosophical complexities, I use 'supernatural' in the conventional sense to refer to forces beyond the earthly or material world, 'Belonging to a realm or system that transcends nature, as that of divine, magical, or ghostly beings; attributed to or thought to reveal some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature; occult, paranormal' (*OED*, adj. 1a). *OED*'s first recorded use of the word in this sense is 1425, commenting on souls 'arayed wiþ þe deuelis armour': 'Þei haue not þanne þe supernaturel lyȝt ne þe lyȝt of kunnynge, bycause þei vndirstoden it not' (*The Orcherd of Syon*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS o.s. 258 [Oxford, 1966], 310, lines 23–24).

5 St Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. G. E. McCracken et al., 7 vols, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1957–72), VII.xxii.29. See Margaret Miles, 'Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's "De trinitate" and "Confessions"', *The Journal of Religion* 63 (1983): 125–42.

6 See also my discussion of Malory's serious treatment of magic and the supernatural in *Magic and the Supernatural*, 234–60 and my essay 'Religion and Magic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter, Cambridge Companions to Topics (Cambridge, 2009), 201–17.

9781843845096.indd 191 17/08/2018 09:29

individual identity, and hence in the making of the work's imaginative world. By rendering the Grail Quest an intrinsic part of his Arthurian history, Malory also takes up many of the traditions of affective piety familiar from devotional practice and writing. Visionary experience in the *Morte* needs to be placed not only in relation to Malory's 'French book', but also as part of a world view deeply rooted in Christian tradition and biblical history, in which prophecy and vision play central roles.[7] In its widest sense, such experience – often multi-faceted and multi-sensory – engages mind, body, and affect, lifts the veil between human and supernatural worlds, and shapes and intervenes in destinies. Malory takes up these possibilities most extensively in his 'Book of the Sankgreall', but they are present across the book as a unifying force, connecting disparate parts through prophecy, guiding but also disrupting the progress of Malory's protagonists. The *Morte* is also an unsettling work, which leaves many unanswered questions concerning agency, and the relationship between providence and destiny.

By endorsing affective visionary experience, Malory places his book on a continuum with some of the greatest devotional writing of his age. Caxton's project of publishing edifying books did not oppose romance and religious writing, but rather found in works such as the *Morte Darthur* a means to illuminate the concept of grace that played so crucial a role in his notions of worthiness, chivalry, and 'gentle' behaviour. For Caxton, 'the noble hystorye of the Saynt Greal' is inextricably linked with that of Arthur, and is an integral aspect of what makes Arthur 'fyrst and chyef of the thre best Crysten' among the Nine Worthies.[8] The *Morte* complements works such as Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, with its emphasis on affective engagement with the Passion and on individual visionary

[7] Scholars have moved away from the notion that Malory had 'an unknown and enormous single French work that gathered all of his French sources within one set of covers', to argue 'that what Malory calls his "Frenche boke" is more likely to be the French source he is using, or claiming to use, for the passage in question'; see Ralph Norris, *Malory's Library: The Sources of the 'Morte Darthur'*, Arthurian Studies 71 (Cambridge, 2008), 8. Norris argues persuasively that alongside his major sources of parts of the Old French Vulgate or *Lancelot-Grail* Cycle, the Prose *Tristan* Cycle, the Post-Vulgate Cycle (also known as *The Romance of the Grail*), the *Perlesvaus*, and the English Alliterative and Stanzaic *Morte Arthure* poems, Malory also used a range of minor sources, including John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, some of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and a number of Middle English romances. For a summary, see Norris, 164. See also Helen Cooper, 'The *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* in England: Malory and his Predecessors', in *A Companion to the 'Lancelot-Grail Cycle'*, ed. Carol Dover, Arthurian Studies 54 (Cambridge, 2003), 147–62.

[8] Sir Thomas Malory, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, rev. P. J. C. Field, 3rd edn, 3 vols (Oxford, 1990), Caxton's Preface, cxliii. Subsequent references to Malory's *Morte Darthur* are to this edition, cited by Caxton's book and chapter numbers, and page numbers.

9781843845096.indd 192 17/08/2018 09:29

experience. Caxton's prints included not only Love's *Mirror* but also a wide range of devotional texts, from lives of the Virgin and saints, to treatises such as *Cordyale or the Four Last Things* and *The Chastising of God's Children*, to religious histories such as *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, with all of which the *Morte* resonates.[9] Just as Caxton's Preface ends by looking towards heavenly bliss from 'thys shorte and transytorye lyf', so the *Morte* offers the 'doctryne' and the vision that will open the eyes and ears to the heavenly (cxlvi).[10] The book moves from hearing the voice of God through Merlin to a search for a more fully embodied experience of the divine, but its spiritual arc is also shadowed by more ominous voices of destiny.

Making God Speak

The first books of the *Morte* are distinguished by the intimate connection that Malory makes between vision and Merlin, even while Merlin himself can seem to see only 'through a glass darkly'. Though Malory draws extensively for this part of the work on the Prose *Merlin* and Post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin*, he omits any account of the history of the Grail or of Merlin, perhaps suggesting unease about his magical arts, which are less prominent in the *Morte*.[11] Yet Merlin's foreknowledge is crucial, placing him as maker of

[9] On Caxton's prints, see N. F. Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture* (London, 1991) and *William Caxton: A Bibliographical Guide*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 524 (New York, NY, 1985), and Lotte Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England* (London, 2010). On resonances with saints' lives, see Alfred Robert Kraemer, *Malory's Grail Seekers and Fifteenth-Century Hagiography*, Studies in the Humanities 44 (New York, NY, 1999).

[10] For a range of perspectives on Malory and religion, see D. Thomas Hanks, Jr and Janet Jesmok, ed., *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's 'Morte Darthur'*, Studies in Medieval Culture 51 (Kalamazoo, MI, 2013), in particular Fiona Tolhurst, 'Slouching towards Bethlehem: Secularized Salvation in *Le Morte Darthur*', 127–56.

[11] The Post-Vulgate Cycle was first identified through the Huth manuscript (British Museum Add. 38117), which contains versions of the Vulgate *Estoire del Saint Graal* and *Merlin*, and a much-reworked *Suite du Merlin* (which begins with Arthur's coronation). Sections missing from the Huth manuscript are found in Cambridge Add. 7071, which contains the same works. The research of Fanni Bogdanow has identified further continuations of the Post-Vulgate Suite: see Bogdanow, *The Romance of the Grail: A Study of the Structure and Genesis of a Thirteenth-Century Arthurian Prose Romance* (Manchester, 1966), and Elizabeth Archibald's essay 'Malory and the Post-Vulgate Cycle' in this volume. A complete translation of the whole is found in Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, 10 vols, vols VIII and IX, *The Post-Vulgate Merlin Continuation*, trans. Martha Asher (Cambridge, 2010, originally publ. New York, 1992–96); the editors assume this would have been preceded by versions of the *Estoire del Saint Graal* and *Merlin* comparable to those in the Vulgate (vols I and II of this translation). The translation of the *Suite* is keyed to the edition by Gaston Paris

9781843845096.indd 193 17/08/2018 09:29

destinies, with the power to fulfil Uther's 'entente and desyre' (I.1, 8). Malory repeatedly connects Merlin's will with that of providence. He reshapes Merlin's response to the barons who consult him about Uther's death to emphasise God's intention, 'There nys none other remedye … but God wil have his wille', and in a still more striking rewriting, Merlin and God act in concert, 'God and I shalle make hym to speke' (I.3–5, 11).[12] Merlin requests the Archbishop to summon all the lords of the realm at Christmas because Jesus will 'shewe somme myracle who shold be rightwys kynge' (I.3–5, 12), and the appearance of the sword in the stone is directly connected with 'clene' prayer (I.5, 12). Merlin's practical counsel of Arthur is combined with this emphasis on prescience and providence. He dramatically ends Arthur's battle against the eleven kings by voicing divine command, 'Therefore hit ys tyme to sey "Who!" for God ys wroth with the for thou wolt never have done' (I.1, 36; Merlin's reference to God's anger is Malory's addition).[13] A similar moral tone is evident in Merlin's instruction to Pellinor that he must suffer 'that penaunce God hath ordayned', a summary of a more extended prophecy in the French, which is not constructed as 'penaunce' and is addressed to Arthur rather than directly to Pellinor (III.15, 120; see *L-G* VIII.157). Most startling is Pellinor's response, 'God may well fordo desteny' (III.15, 120; not in the French).[14] The relation between God and destiny, however, remains obscure, and while Merlin repeatedly speaks for God, he also articulates destinies that can seem far from providential. The reader is repeatedly placed in Pellinor's position, wishing that God might 'fordo desteny', an effect in which much of the suspense of the *Morte* is rooted.

and Jacob Ulrich, *Merlin: roman en prose du XIIIe siècle*, Société des anciens textes français, 2 vols (Paris, 1886) of the Huth manuscript, which includes the prose *Merlin*; references to the French are therefore from this edition (cited as *Merlin*, by volume and page number), supplemented by the more recent edition of the *Suite* proper by Gilles Roussineau, *La Suite du roman de Merlin*, 2 vols, Textes littéraires français 472 (Geneva, 1996), which draws on other manuscript evidence, and by Vinaver's notes; translations are from Lacy, ed., *Lancelot-Grail* VIII and IX (cited as *L-G*, by volume and page number).

[12] The emphasis of the French is notably different. Merlin emphasises to the barons that Uther is not yet dead, and when they state that Uther has not spoken for three days, replies: 'Si fera, se Dieu plaist. Ore en venés, si le vous ferai parler' (*Merlin*, I.130; 'Merlin said he would indeed, if it was God's will. "Come with me now and I will soon have him talking to you"', *L-G* II: *The Story of Merlin*, trans. Rupert T. Pickens, 88).

[13] The account of Arthur's battles is missing from the Huth manuscript, but found in MS Cambridge Add. 7071: for the relevant passage, see Vinaver 1294, note to 36 (Roussineau argues the battles did not originally form part of the *Suite*, and bases his edition on the Huth manuscript).

[14] This seems to engage with Arthur's wish to prevent Pellinor's death, and Merlin's response in the French, 'Vous nel porriés plus destorner' (*Merlin*, II.139; 'You cannot prevent it', *L-G* VIII.157)

9781843845096.indd 194 17/08/2018 09:29

Malory's treatment of Merlin suggests something of the unease in this period concerning prescience and prophecy. On the whole, Merlin's associations with witchcraft or the devil are considerably reduced, and they are used selectively. Whereas in the French Uther jokes about Merlin's demonic quality, Malory limits such associations to negative contexts, as when the knight who plans Arthur's murder is warned, 'Beware … of Merlion, for he knowith all thynges by the devylles craffte' (III.14, 118), a detail not found in the French.[15] After Arthur's battle against the kings of Britain, some of the kings laugh 'and mo other called hym a wytche' (I.8, 18; not in the French), while King Lot dismisses Merlin's powers as those of a 'faytoure' (impostor, II.10, 76): 'Be we wel avysed to be aferd of a dreme-reder?' (I.9, 18).[16] The episode ends, however, with Lot's death, confirming Merlin's power.

In presenting Merlin's knowledge as divinely approved, the narrative responds to cultural anxiety about witchcraft. Nor is 'dream-reading' exclusively the prerogative of Merlin, as is exemplified by Arthur's dream, adapted from the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, of a great dragon that defeats a bear, signifying his battle with the Emperor Lucius. The episode demonstrates the possibility that all have access to a world beyond the temporal in sleep, in which futures and fates may be foretold – but also emphasises the need for learned interpretation. Arthur calls not on Merlin but on 'a philozopher … to telle what sygnyfyed his dreme' (V.4, 197). In the Alliterative *Morte*, two 'sage philosophers', 'In the seven science the sutelest founden, / The cunningest of clergy under Crist knowen', confidently connect the dream and providence: 'And thou shall have the victory, through help of Our Lord, / As thou in thy vision was openly shewed'.[17] Malory leaves the origin of the dream unstated: though associated with vision, dreams in the *Morte* remain mysterious, in keeping with Malory's more ambivalent treatment of forces beyond the temporal.

Seeing the future is crucially differentiated from being able to alter it. Merlin indicates his own magical powers when Arthur saves him from three churls who intend to kill him ('I cowde a saved myselffe and I had wolde', I.23, 49), but his subsequent prediction turns eerily to endings: 'But thou arte more nere thy deth than I am, for thou goste to thy dethe warde and God be nat thy frende' (I.23, 49). Though in Arthur's ensuing battle with Pellinor God does prove his friend, Merlin's words make clear the distinction between prophesying and changing the future. The tone differs markedly from that of the French, where Uther smiles at Merlin's prediction of the churls' deaths,

15 One knight simply warns the other to take care: see *Merlin* II.122; *L-G* VIII.148.

16 See Vinaver 1288, notes to 18.11–14 for discussion of the corresponding passage in Cambridge Add. 7071.

17 Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, in *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English 'Stanzaic Morte Arthur' and 'Alliterative Morte Arthure'*, ed. Larry D. Benson, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (Exeter, 1986), 113–238, lines 814, 808–09, 827–28.

9781843845096.indd 195 17/08/2018 09:29

placing his knowledge as 'mie de par Dieu, mais de par le mal esprit' ('not from God but from the evil spirit') and receives the answer 'Or ne parlés plus … de mon savoir; je cuic qu'il vous vaurra encore mieus que tout vostre poesté' ('Speak no more of my knowledge … I think it will be worth more to you than all your power').[18] Malory emphasises Merlin's role as seer, changing his account to the Lady of the Lake of the theft of Excalibur into a prophecy to Arthur, warning of 'many thyngis that scholde befalle' (IV.1, 125; *L-G* VIII.165). His foreknowledge, however, does not bring control of destiny: Merlin can delay but not end Arthur's battle against Lot though he knows one of them will die (II.10, 75–76); and ultimately, he cannot prevent the fall of the kingdom: 'ye have gotyn a childe that shall destroy you and all the knyghtes of youre realme' (I.20, 44).

Merlin's dialogue with Arthur concerning his own 'shamefull' death (I.20, 44) is revealing:

> So on a tyme he tolde to kynge Arthure that he scholde nat endure longe, but for all his craftes he scholde be putte into the erthe quyk. … Also he tolde kyng Arthure that he scholde mysse hym:
> 'And yett had ye levir than all youre londis have me agayne.'
> 'A,' sayde the kyng, 'syn ye knowe of youre evil adventure, purvey for hit, and putt hit away by youre crauftes, that mysseadventure.'
> 'Nay,' seyde Merlion, 'hit woll not be.' (IV.1, 125)

This rewriting of what is in the French a lengthy exchange between Merlin and the Lady of the Lake is a striking innovation, heightening the opposition between Merlin as seer and as victim of an ineluctable fate.[19] Merlin's voice making 'grete dole' is later heard by Bagdemagus, but the stone under which he is imprisoned by Nenyve cannot be removed, and Merlin reiterates his lack of agency: 'all was in vayne: for he myght never be holpyn but by her that put hym there' (IV.5, 132). Merlin may 'make God speak', yet his knowledge of destiny is also a knowledge of endings he would not choose, and his understanding ultimately remains partial. The sound of his voice 'in the erthe quyk' shadows the *Morte*, a haunting reminder of the impossibility of resisting the

18 *Merlin* I.188; *L-G* VIII.27.

19 Malory seems to draw on the following, but removes the emphasis on salvation: '"Encore", fait il, "en sai jou grant partie de celles qui n'apartienent a ma vie ne a ma mort. Mais des moies choses sui je si contrebatus par enchantemens que je n'i sai metre conseil, car les enchantemens qui sont fait ne puis je desfaire se je ne voel m'arme perdre; mais certes mieus vaurroie je que mes cors fust tornés a honte par auchune traison que l'ame de noi fus perdue"' (*Merlin* II.152; '"I still know a great deal of what does not pertain to my life or death", he said. "But in my own concerns, I am so opposed by spells that I don't know how to help myself, for I cannot unmake the enchantments that are made unless I want to lose my soul, but certainly, I would rather my body were given over to death through treason than that my soul were lost"', *L-G* VIII.165).

9781843845096.indd 196 17/08/2018 09:29

mysterious forces of destiny, their inexplicable relationship to providence, and the limits of earthly vision.

Unhappy Voices

These limits are most fully explored in the tale of Balin and Balan. In the *Post-Vulgate Suite*, the tale plays a crucial part in the history of the Grail: its connections with destiny are inbuilt and made explicit through prophetic voices. Malory, however, largely dissociates his tale from that history: the emphasis on providence is removed, to be replaced by voices that signal misfortune. Merlin's prophecies in Malory's telling repeatedly refer to Balin's doom, rather than to the Grail: 'hit shall be the grettist dole of hym that ever y knew of knyght; for he shall nat longe endure' (II.9, 75). The warning voices that in the French cry out to Balin when he enters the Grail chamber are reduced, including the terrifying voice that prophesies 'les aventurez e lez mervaillez du roialme aventurus' ('the adventures and marvels of the Kingdom of Adventure', *L-G* VIII.93).[20] Like these spirit voices, Merlin's voice is silenced, his prominent role in the *Suite* of watching and commenting almost completely removed by Malory. In this tale, there is no seeing; no move towards vision.

The emphasis is placed instead on incomprehensible and tragic destiny and misfortune. Though the explicitly moral voices of the Grail chamber are removed, at each turn of the narrative, unexplained warning voices speak powerful messages of ill omen. Thus as Balin journeys on, he reads written on a cross, 'it is not for no knyght alone to ryde toward this castel' and is warned by name by an 'old hore gentylman' to 'torne ageyne' (II.17, 88; cf. *Merlin* II.44; *L-G* VIII.104). The prophetic message of the cross, 'toute neuve' ('brand new') in the French, is heightened in Malory's narrative by its letters of gold, similar to prophecies written on tombs, and whereas the status of the old man in the French is entirely natural – he is an old vavasour – Malory creates an eerie figure who 'vanysshed awey anone' (II.17, 88). The seemingly supernatural warnings colour Balin's interpretation of the horn he hears as signalling his death (the French Balin laughs at the notion he might be captured, *Merlin* II.44; *L-G* VIII.104). Yet Malory's 'therfor torne ageyne and it will availle the' also leaves open the possibility of agency and choice, by contrast to the old man's words in the French, 'il n'i a mais riens del retorner' ('there's nothing for you but to go back').[21] The pattern of warning is once more repeated by a second damsel, who in the French explains Balin's 'mesqueance' ('misfortune') as vengeance for the dolorous stroke;

[20] This is a *lacuna* in Huth, and is quoted from Roussineau, ed. *Suite*, I.161; see also Bogdanow, *The Romance of the Grail*, 246.

[21] Vinaver notes, 'Whereas *F* leaves Balin no escape and no choice, *M* suggests that he

9781843845096.indd 197 17/08/2018 09:29

she identifies herself as sent by Merlin, inspiring fear in Balin (*Merlin* II.47; *L-G* VIII.105).[22] Malory omits both these details, characteristically leaving the damsel's warning obscure and her identity unexplained. The enigmatic warnings occasion not fear, as in the French, but a recognition of the conflict between destiny and knighthood: 'Me repenteth … that ever I cam within this countrey; but I maye not torne now ageyne for shame' (II.17, 89).

Malory makes a further crucial change to his narrative, taking up the import of the prophecy that the sword of the Lady of the Lake will cause Balin's death (*Merlin* I.224; *L-G* VIII.46). In the French this prophecy is not fulfilled, whereas in the *Morte* Balin's two swords become the central image of the tale, and Malory states that Balin is slain with 'that unhappy swerd' (II.18, 89; in the French 'l'espee trenchant', '[the] sharp sword', *Merlin* II.50; *L-G* VIII.107). As Helen Cooper notes, 'unhappy is a strong word in Malory, meaning "doomed" or "doom-bearing", almost "accursed"'.[23] The doom spoken by Merlin at the start of the tale is also its leitmotif. Whereas in the French one of Balin's swords becomes that of Lancelot, and another sword is set in the stone by Merlin for Galahad, in Malory's account Balin's sword is taken by Merlin to preserve for Galahad, to be inherited by Lancelot, who with it will mortally wound Sir Gawain, 'the man in the worlde that he lovith beste' (II.19, 91; cf. *Merlin* II.58–59; *L-G* VIII.112–13). The sword's use by the two 'beste knyght[s] in the world' affirms Balin's excellence even while the sword retains its 'unhappy' role. In this tale voices suggest dark forces of destiny that it is difficult to align with providence, reminding the reader of a conflict that arches over the entire narrative.[24] That conflict is also, as Cooper puts it, a 'tension between romance treatment and inevitable catastrophe'.[25] As in the opening books, vision is restricted: first to Merlin as seer and speaker of destinies; then to mysterious voices that hint at but never elaborate misfortune.

could have saved himself by turning back and that at that moment his fate was still in his hands', *Works*, III.1319, note to 88.3.

22 See further Vinaver on Balin's 'meschaunce', 1320–21, notes to 89.1–4.

23 Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*, ed. Helen Cooper, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 1998), 535, n.47.

24 See Muriel Whitaker's discussion of the 'tragic and inexplicable setting' of the tale in *Arthur's Kingdom of Adventure: The World of Malory's 'Morte Darthur'*, Arthurian Studies 9 (Cambridge, 1984), 56–57.

25 Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2004), 400. See also K. S. Whetter's exploration of the *Morte* as *tragic-romance* in *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* (Aldershot, 2008), 99–149, and in 'On Misunderstanding Malory's Balyn', in *Re-Viewing 'Le Morte Darthur': Texts and Contexts, Characters and Themes*, ed. K. S. Whetter and Raluca L. Radulescu, Arthurian Studies 60 (Cambridge, 2005), 149–62.

9781843845096.indd 198 17/08/2018 09:29

Seeing Openly

In the central books of the *Morte*, the emphasis on prophecy and destiny recedes. The consequences of the adulterous affairs that shape these books are set aside; so too is the emphasis on the 'unhappy', replaced by an often celebratory focus on play and adventure. Experience that opens onto a sphere beyond the temporal is rare; apparent windows onto the divine or the demonic prove mere illusions. It is only late on that the themes of prophecy, vision, and destiny again come to the fore, as the narrative begins to look towards the Quest of the Sankgreal. In the Quest Malory takes up the possibility of lifting the veil and seeing beyond. The episode in which Lancelot sees the Grail at the castle of King Pelles marks a shift from hearing prophetic voices to multisensory visionary experience, the provenance of which is often explicitly connected to the divine.[26] Lancelot's numinous experience presages his role as begetter of the Grail Knight, Galahad. The sequence of events is on the cusp, balanced between romance and revelation: in Lancelot's deception by the enchantress Dame Brusen, they look back to Lancelot's encounters with enchantresses in Book VI, while they also look forward to the achievement of the Grail, signalling a shift from secular magic to spiritual vision. When Lancelot is deceived a second time, literally made blind by Brusen to Elaine's identity, his response is the inverse of vision: madness. The Grail restores him to intellective vision and to the capacity for spiritual seeing that will govern the course of his subsequent actions. While the hermit who cares for Lancelot can heal his physical affliction, only the embodied, spiritual encounter with the Grail can heal his mind, setting the soul in order.

The coincidence of material and spiritual in the Grail is underlined in its healing of the dying Perceval and Ector, while the episode also demonstrates two levels of seeing beyond the literal, the intellective and the spiritual. Ector knows that he has been healed by the vessel of the Holy Blood, but that it can only be seen by a pure virgin, whereas Perceval has 'a glemerynge of the vessell and of the mayden that bare hit' (XI.14, 816), a perception not included in the French.[27] When the Grail appears at the start of the Quest, the other knights share in the Grail's engagement with all the

[26] This and the subsequent episodes discussed draw on a section of the Prose *Tristan* borrowed from the Prose *Lancelot*: references are to the edition of Philippe Ménard, *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 9 vols, Textes littéraires français (Geneva, 1987–97), cited as *Tristan*, by page number; and from *Lancelot-Grail* 5: *Lancelot* Parts V and VI, trans. William W. Kibler and Carleton W. Carroll, Part VI; for this episode see *Tristan* VI.119, and *L-G* V.101.

[27] See also *Tristan* VI.182–83; *L-G* V.417. The explanation given by Ector of the Grail as 'an holy vessell that is borne by a mayden, and therein ys a parte of the bloode of Oure Lorde Jesu Criste' (XI.14, 817) also differs from the French, in which Ector identifies the Grail as 'li vaissiaus u Nostres Sires menga l'aingnel le jou de Pasques avoeuques

9781843845096.indd 199 17/08/2018 09:29

senses: thunder, lightning, 'good odoures', and the marvellous provision of food and drink (XIII.6, 865; cf. *Queste*, 16; *L-G* VI.12).[28] Its material power is reiterated by the other physical signs that occur at Pentecost. It is this embodied experience of the Grail, even while, as for Bors, it remains covered, that urges the knights on to see it openly. They move away from earthly chivalry with its combination of prowess and virtue grounded in faith, to seek spiritual rather than intellective vision – to move from faith to fully embodied seeing.[29] Whereas vision has been the preserve of Merlin and limited to seeing the temporal future, now it is available to those who seek and are worthy and it opens onto the celestial.

The quest for embodied seeing also becomes an exploration of the nature and limits of 'avision' (XVI.1, 942), a term that is used repeatedly.[30] Such visions are integral to the *Queste*, characterised by Malory as 'mervaylous adventures', as with that of Gawain and Ector that occurs 'on slepe' (XVI.1, 942). Gawain's vision of only three white among a hundred and fifty black bulls signifies the difficulty of achieving such 'adventure', and in a waking vision of a hand holding a candle, a voice forbids Ector and Gawain the adventures of the Grail (XVI.2, 943). Yet even this limiting visual and auditory experience signals a spiritual world within reach and palpable. Particularly revealing is Malory's treatment of Lancelot's encounter with warring black and white knights. The scene is interpreted for him by a recluse, whose 'wyndow, that she myght se up to the awter' (XV.5, 932) suggests the

ses desciples' (*Tristan* VI.183); 'the vessel in which Our Lord ate the lamb with his disciples, on Easter Day' (*L-G* V.417); see further Norris, *Malory's Library*, 111.

[28] Malory's 'Tale of the Sankgreal' closely follows the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*, but abbreviates the detail, in particular, the allegorical explanations, while heightening sympathy for Lancelot: for Vinaver, Malory secularises the Grail, emphasising 'virtuous living' rather than 'chevaillierie celestiale', 1535–36. References are to the edition of Albert Pauphilet, *La Queste del Saint Graal: roman du XIIIe siècle*, Classiques français du Moyen Age 33 (Paris, 1965), cited as *Queste*, by page number; to which *L-G* 6: *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, trans. E. Jane Burns, is keyed. See also the more recent edition of Fanni Bogdanow, with a modern French translation by Anne Berrie, *La Quête du Saint-Graal: roman en prose du XIIIe siècle*, Lettres gothiques 4571 (Paris, 2006).

[29] See also Molly Martin, *Vision and Gender in Malory's 'Morte Darthur'*, Arthurian Studies 75 (Cambridge, 2010). Martin argues that, despite the spiritual ideal, vision remains primarily earthly in Malory's 'Tale of the Sankgreal', by contrast to the French *Queste*, 118–47; this is also the argument of Sandra Ness Ihle, *Malory's Grail Quest: Invention and Adaptation in Medieval Prose Romance* (Madison, WI, 1983).

[30] On the 'Tale of the Sankgreal' 'as paradigmatic of a tendency to interrogate and revise categories of knowledge and access, to the divine as to the narrative's logic, even as those accesses are put into play', see Catherine Batt, *Malory's 'Morte Darthur': Remaking Arthurian Tradition*, The New Middle Ages (Basingstoke, 2002), 131–58 (135).

9781843845096.indd 200 17/08/2018 09:29

'squint' through which recluses in cells adjoining churches saw the Mass.[31] Lancelot's encounter with her offers a compelling touch of realism: conversations such as those of Margery Kempe with Julian of Norwich would have taken place through just such a window.[32] Like the many hermits encountered in the course of the quest, the recluse has access to divine knowledge, and she emphasises the reality of vision: the knights 'were erthely knyghtes': 'natforethan there was none enchauntemente' (XV.6, 933), a clause added to the French, denying the practice of suspect magical arts. The conversation engages with the concerns of mystical writers about embodied visionary experience; the possibility that the devil may mislead by playing on the senses. In the warring white and black knights, spiritual battle takes material form. This merging of levels of reality is immediately and eerily affirmed when a mysterious knight, 'horse and man all black as a bere', strikes dead Lancelot's horse and disappears (XV.6, 934–35). Demons as well as the divine are always near, as when a priest with Lancelot conjures 'A fyende in an hydeous fygure' (XV.1–2, 925). This is a landscape of living allegories and symbols, such as the pelican seen by Bors, which pierces itself with its beak, Christ-like, in order to feed its starving young with its blood (XVI.6, 956). The Grail world makes visible the different kinds of understanding articulated by Augustine – sensible, intellectual, and spiritual.

Demonic and divine presences, voices and visions, govern the course of the Quest. Unlike that of Balan, its moral universe is stable; its endpoint clear, but it too is mysteriously shaped through supernatural forces, and the limits of agency and achievement continue to be probed, though within an explicitly Christian landscape. The emphasis on providential direction is particularly evident in relation to Galahad, whose place as elect is repeatedly endorsed by divine voices and by miraculous occurrences. In Galahad, destiny is fulfilled, and his actions enact prophecies made long before – as by the 'voyce' four hundred years earlier, which foretells his healing of King Evelake (XIV.4, 908). The quests of the other knights too are mysteriously directed, so that they are drawn into the ancient conflict between good and evil. Perceval's adventures exemplify the different kinds of visionary experience characteristic of the Quest, moving from dream to allegorical event to demonic manifestation to divine explanation; the pattern is repeated in Bors's sequence of adventures.

The unseen supernatural forces that govern the progress of the knights are manifest in the mysterious, unmanned ships that carry them. The Grail Ship is intimately connected with visionary experience: appearing in the middle of the sea, it is identified as Faith by 'two fayre lettirs wrytten, which seyde a

[31] See also *Queste* 142; *L-G* VI.88; in the manuscript which Vinaver identifies as closest to Malory's source, the recluse looks not through 'une petite voiete' but 'une petite porte': Malory perhaps aims for more realism, 1560, notes to 932.32–33.

[32] See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Cambridge, 2004), ch. 18.

9781843845096.indd 201 17/08/2018 09:29

dredefull worde and a mervaylous' (XVII.2, 984; in the French an inscription in Chaldean, the ancient language of magic, *Queste* 201; *L-G* VI.124–25), and Perceval's sister recounts the history of the ship, made by Solomon in response to divine vision and voice. As the knights journey onwards, their visionary experiences become more deeply embodied, marking them out as those who will see the Grail openly. Thus the white hart and four lions which lead them become Christ and the four Evangelists; a voice speaks telling of the Incarnation, and a hermit promises they will be shown 'grete secretis' (XVII.9, 999). Repeatedly, the veil is fully drawn back, and spiritual 'seeing' is embodied and material, reaching its height at the Castle of Corbenic. Four angels bear Joseph of Arimathea from heaven to celebrate Mass; angels carry candles, a cloth, and the bleeding spear; at the consecration the knights see 'a vigoure in lyknesse of a chylde' and the bread 'fourmed of a fleyshely man'; Christ emanates from the Grail with his wounds bleeding, promising revelation 'of my secretes and of my hydde thynges' (XVII.20, 1029–30). Divine voices govern ensuing events: Bors, Perceval and Galahad are sent to Sarras, urged on by 'a voyce amonge them', 'a voyce' promises that Galahad may request his own death, and 'a voice' speaks his kingship (XVII.21, 1031–32). The boundary between earthly and celestial worlds is removed when the son of Joseph of Arimathea appears to celebrate Mass, promising Galahad he will 'se that thou hast much desired to se' (XVII.22, 1034). The 'dedly fleysh' cannot ultimately be sustained, however, when 'the spirituall thynges' are seen openly: even Galahad begins 'to tremble ryght harde'; in response to his prayer for death his soul is carried by angels into heaven, along with the Grail and spear (XVII.22, 1034).

Only Lancelot's vision is restricted: he 'sees', but often on thresholds, at or behind doors, and through the veils of dream. Thus at the start of his adventures he encounters a chapel with a beautiful altar and candles, but can find no way of entering. 'Half wakyng and half slepynge', he sees the Grail but has no power to move (XIII.18, 894–95).[33] Later, he hears Joseph of Arimathea declare his sinfulness (XV.3, 928–29). Yet for Lancelot, unlike Gawain, vision also goes beyond the articulation of his limits. His experience on finding the Grail Ship is multi-sensory: a voice, described as a dream-vision, instructs him to enter; he sees a bright light on waking, and on board his overwhelming joy is characterised as taste (XVII.13, 1011). A series of voices, now heard in waking, leads Lancelot on until he hears angelic singing and sees a bright light, but at the door of the Grail Chamber he is held back by a voice warning

[33] The French leaves this more uncertain, 'ou parce qu'il ert trop pesanz dou travail que il avoit eu, ou par pechié dont il ert sorpris' (*Queste* 59); 'whether because he was so overcome with fatigue or because he was weighed down by the sins he had committed' (*L-G* VI.38), emphasising that Lancelot was much shamed for this; Malory qualifies this, 'but he toke repentaunce aftir that' (XIII.18, 895).

9781843845096.indd 202 17/08/2018 09:29

'flee and entir not'. His vision is fully embodied: he sees angels and watches a priest bear up the figure of a young man, but the Grail remains covered. On trying to enter, he is struck to the ground by a fiery breath (XVII.16, 1015–16). The affective extremes of visionary experience that cause violent trembling in Galahad induce in Lancelot a swoon: the vital spirits are so overcome that they withdraw into the heart, removing breath and consciousness. Whereas in the *Queste* Lancelot is aware of people moving his body, here his swoon is absolute: he lies 'stylle as a dede man' for twenty-four nights. Yet this swoon is also a transitional space, in which 'grete mervayles that no tunge may telle, and more than ony herte can thynke' are seen 'opynly' (XVII.16, 1016–17). By contrast to the French, which stresses the defilement of his sight by sin, the words of Malory's Lancelot characterise the swoon as a space of revelation, 'there where no synner may be' (cf. *Queste* 258; *L-G* VI.157). Though he is once more sustained by the Grail, Lancelot's waking signals the loss of seeing openly and his return to Logres, to narrate both the marvels he has seen and their limits. Yet Malory's reduction of the French emphasis on the corruption of sight caused by sin aligns his Lancelot with the visionary: his experience of the ineffable resonates closely with the experiences recounted by mystical writers.

Changing This Life

In the last books of the *Morte*, vision is largely left behind, replaced by the playing out of a tragedy repeatedly rooted in failures of seeing. Yet Malory chooses at the start of the denouement to reiterate the possibility of spiritual sight in his account of Lancelot's healing of Sir Urry. The episode, which has no known source, strikingly reshapes the emphasis of the French. Lancelot's connection with divine vision is sustained through his 'saiynge secretely' a prayer for healing power through grace (XIX.12, 1152). His tears and prayers align him with the holy men and women whose lives would have been familiar to Malory – a remarkable defence at a moment just before the tragic sequence of events triggered by the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere begins.

This final section of the book is most of all opaque, an opacity effected in part by Malory's move away from the moralistic emphasis of the Vulgate *Mort Artu* to draw on the English Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*.[34] It is as if the

[34] References to the *Mort Artu* are from the edition of Jean Frappier, *La Mort le Roi Artu*, 3rd edn, Textes littéraires français 58 (Geneva, 1964), cited by page number; which is keyed to *L-G* 7: *The Death of Arthur*, trans. Norris J. Lacy. References to the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* are from Benson, ed., *King Arthur's Death*, 1–111, cited by line number. Malory also draws on the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and probably on Hardyng's *Chronicle*. On Malory's reworking, see Vinaver, *Works*, vol. 3, 1615–26,

9781843845096.indd 203 17/08/2018 09:29

characters remain caught within the confusion experienced by Lancelot when worldly logic leads him to fight on the side of the sinful black knights, in a landscape where vision seems strangely partial, even unreliable. The relationship of providence to chance and destiny is unclear, and the limits of human agency pointed up. Even dreams seem unstable, suggestive of an opposition between malevolent fortune and beneficent providence that looks back to the early books of the *Morte*. Arthur's sequence of dreams on Trinity Sunday offers contrasting visions of the future. He dreams first of the wheel of Fortune from which he falls suddenly into deep black water, to be seized by 'serpentis and wormes and wylde bestis fowle and orryble' (XXI.3, 1233–34), seemingly a dramatic depiction of the ensuing tragedy and fall of the kingdom, though without the explicit moralisation of the *Mort Artu*.[35] Yet this is followed by his dream 'nat slepynge nor thorowly waykynge' (a phrase signalling vision in the Grail Quest) of Gawain and his company of ladies, who warn Arthur not to fight but to await Lancelot's arrival (XXI.3), suggesting a very different outcome.[36] Malory presents the dream as sent by God's 'speciall grace': it responds to the ladies' prayers and to God's 'grete pyté' for Arthur and 'many mo other good men', a seeming attempt to 'fordo desteny' of the kind Pellinor much earlier has suggested. Yet the attempt is thwarted: this 'grete grace and goodnes that Allmyghty Jesu hath unto [Arthur]' (XXI.3, 1234) is not sustained, replaced by 'unhappy' chance when a knight draws his sword to kill an adder and the battle begins. As Helen Cooper emphasises, we are not told whose side the knight is on and 'no metaphysical explanation is offered': 'This may be the Day of Destiny, in Malory's phrase, but it is not a divinely-controlled Day of Judgement.'[37] The episode raises one of the great theological problems: how can temporal events, with their combination of good, evil, chance, and error, be reconciled with the notion of beneficent providence? Perhaps the reader is intended to

and for a variety of perspectives, Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe, ed., *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 781 (New York, NY, 1988).

[35] In the *Mort Artu*, Fortune places the fall as the result of 'orgueil terrien' (227); 'earthly pride' (*L-G* VII.117). See also the extended dream of the Nine Worthies in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, in which Fortune whirls Arthur under the wheel, dashing him to pieces, 'Thou has lived in delite and lordshippes ynow!' (3387). In the Stanzaic *Morte* Arthur is dashed to the ground by the wheel but Fortune is not personified.

[36] In the Stanzaic *Morte*, the dream is more briefly related (3196–220): Gawain waits by a deep river with what seems an angelic host, both lords and ladies for whom he has fought and who have asked leave to accompany him, to warn Arthur to take a month's truce, 'Or elles, certes, ye shall be slain' (3221). In the French, Arthur's dream of Gawain precedes his vision of the wheel of Fortune, and Arthur resists Gawain's plea that he send for Lancelot, his enemy; despite a series of warnings, he refuses to turn back from the battle, *Mort Artu* 225–29; *L-G* VII.116–18.

[37] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, 402.

9781843845096.indd 204 17/08/2018 09:29

supply a Boethian answer, in which God is omniscient, seeing beyond time a pattern invisible to man. Yet because the book has so vividly depicted God's intervention through prophecy, vision, and miracle, the emphasis seems most of all on God's distancing and the withdrawal of vision on 'this unhappy day', a phrase Malory repeats (XXI.4, 1235, 1236).

In part, the book returns to an emphasis on the enigmatic supernatural, with the image of the 'arme and an honde above the watir' that takes back Excalibur, and the mysterious barge with its black-hooded queens who bear Arthur away to Avalon (XXI.5, 1240). Yet while the narrative creates a haunting sense of ineluctability, of the forces of destiny that shape and await Arthur's fall, the poignancy of the tragedy is deeply rooted in Malory's refusal to present a perspective that negates free will and individual responsibility. Paradoxically, this also allows for a final return to Christian vision and hope for salvation. Malory refuses to endorse the prophecy of Arthur's return, placing it as popular belief, 'som men say in many partys of Inglonde that kynge Arthure ys nat dede', but offers instead an active statement that affirms a shift towards celestial seeing: 'rather I wolde sey: here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff' (XXI.7, 1242).

This shift of vision is maintained in the final pages of the *Morte* through some of Malory's most striking changes to his sources. The Stanzaic *Morte Darthur* concludes with a brief description of Guinevere's corpse 'With rodes fair and red as cherry' (3956) and her burial; in the *Mort Artu* her death is reported to Lancelot before his battle with Mordred, and her penitence mentioned (*Mort Artu* 254; *L-G* VII.131). Malory, by contrast, recounts a 'vysyon' 'upon a nyght', a voice that instructs Lancelot to go to Amesbury where he will find the queen dead (XXI.10, 1255). That the vision occurs two days before her death corresponds with her own premonition and prayer that she will die before Lancelot arrives – features that align her death with those of holy men and women. Lancelot's end is even more markedly that of a saint: directly foreseeing his death ('I have warnyng more than now I wyl say'), he spends his last hours in prayer, and his death is marked by the Bishop's 'grete laughter' in sleep as he sees angels carrying Lancelot into heaven (XXI.12, 1257–58). Malory enhances features adapted from both his French and English sources to render vision embodied and multi-sensory: Lancelot lies smiling with 'the swettest savour about hym that ever they felte' (cf. 'red and fair of flesh and blood', Stanzaic *Morte* 3888). The veil is finally drawn back for Lancelot as 'the yates of heven opened ayeynst hym' (XXI.12, 1258). The last miracles counter the devastating sense of loss with the promise of redemption and a sense that the Grail may yet be seen uncovered.

With Lancelot's death, Malory turns from the ascetic life of withdrawal from the world to invent for his knights a more contemporary, active spirituality: Sir Bors, Sir Ector, Sir Blamour, and Sir Bleoberis depart for the Holy Land, to fight against the Turks and eventually to die 'upon a Good Fryday

9781843845096.indd 205 17/08/2018 09:29

for Goddes sake' (XXI.13, 1260). Their actions recall the conclusion of the Grail Quest, with Galahad's rule over the city of Sarras, and gesture towards the combination of physical and spiritual chivalry required to establish the Church on earth. But the shift to the present also signals for Malory's readers the possibility within the here and now of embodied, spiritual seeing, of drawing back the veil and entering into the divine presence.

The romance rewritings of *Le Morte Darthur* are many and multi-faceted. The narrative offers a grand retrospective on Arthurian romance, writing into a 'hoole book' the multifarious history of Arthur and his knights – and in doing so, emphasising its status as history. In the overarching role of destiny, in the writing of the seeds of destruction into the narrative from the start, and most of all in the ways that individual actions and choices play out across the book to shape a disastrous ending, the work also moves into the genre of tragedy. The sense of inevitability is held in tension with the longing for what might have been. But Malory also rewrites romance through the lens of spirituality, in ways that resonate with mystical writing and with the practices of affective piety. In his treatment of providence, his probing of its uncertain relationship with destiny and chance, his exploration of the ways that interior and exterior influences and affects interweave, and his dramatisation of the search for embodied vision, the book engages with the possibility of celestial vision within an uncertain world. We see only darkly, yet we retain the promise of seeing face to face. The numinosity of the book's multivalent visions lingers on even as its enigmatic articulations of destiny and the limits of seeing continue to haunt us.

9781843845096.indd 206 17/08/2018 09:29