Learning to Die Like a Knight:

The *Ars Moriendi* in Late-Medieval English Arthurian Literature

by

Daniel Pike

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Richard Newhauser, Chair
Robert Sturges
Bonnie Wheeler

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes presentations of death in late-medieval English

Arthurian literature through the optic of the Ricardian and 15th-century English

vernacular *ars moriendi* tradition. The period under examination begins in 1380 and ends

with a discussion of the gradual loss of the *artes moriendi* and reimagining of King

Arthur in Tudor England. The Arthurian texts examined are the *Alliterative Morte

Arthure (AMA), Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (SGGK)*, and Malory's *Morte Darthur*.

The theological texts examined include the following: *De visitacione infirmorum* (*A

Text*), BL MS Royal 18 A.X and *The Book of Vices and Virtues* (both ME translations of

Friar Laurent's *Somme le roi*), *Learn to Die* (a ME translation of Heinrich Suso's

Horologium sapientiae), *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* supplemented by illuminations from

MS Harley 3244 (*Summa de vitiis* f.27v-f.28r), *The Boke of the Craft of Dying,* Martin

Luther's *Sermon on Preparing to Die*, Thomas Lupset's *A Treatise of Dying Well*,

Richard Whitford's *Daily Exercise and Experience of Death*, and Desiderius Erasmus's

Preparation of Death. My methodology combines Comparative Literature, New

Historicism, and Jane Gilbert's Lacanian approach. The primary research method is a

comparison of the death sequences of major Arthurian figures in late-medieval English

literature with the major tenets of several *ars moriendi* tracts. Further, these source

materials are examined and compared to the earlier Arthurian texts. Lastly, some *ars

moriendi* expedients already present in the Arthurian source materials are compared with

contemporaneous rituals to elucidate which of them belong to an earlier tradition and

therefore are not updates. This dissertation demonstrates the following: Malory and the

authors of the *AMA* and *SGGK* captured a uniquely late-medieval English understanding

of death by updating their source materials, battlefield expedients for the dying included

in late-medieval English Arthurian literature can be traced back well before the Black

Death, and finally, that the English knight developed into a figure who spiritually battles

accidental sudden death, or *mors improvisa*, in the *memento mori* tradition, which in turn

influenced English Arthurian legend.

DEDICATION

To my advisor, Dr. Richard Newhauser, who saw something more in me than a mere student interested in the Arthurian legend, and who has spent countless hours encouraging me as well as reading and editing my work. This dissertation could not have been completed without your wisdom, guidance, and compassion. You have demonstrated that true education is unwavering mentorship and genuine interest in the success of your students. I will carry these values with me always.

To my wife, Jessica, and my children, Aurie and Kiera, who have supported me throughout this lengthy and tumultuous process. Thank you for giving me to the time to devote to my studies and for your patience. I especially appreciate each and every time you've allowed me to prattle on about my research in car rides, at the dinner table, and in between episodes of our favorite TV shows. I promise to do the same for each of you as your captive audience for life.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

APPENDIX

CHAPTER 1

TOWARDS THE ENGLISH ARTHURIAN *ARTES MORIENDI*

"Sykenes of body mekeliche isuffrid makeþ hele of soule."

  --*De visitacione infirmorum* (*A Text*)

"Go into helle in þi lyuying þat þou go noȝt in þi diyng."

  --Friar Laurent, Middle English translation of *Somme le roi*

"And ȝif hit so be þat þe eende be good it suffiseþ to helþe of þe sowle."

  --Heinrich Suso, Middle English translation of *Horologium sapientiae*

"Alle mannes lyfe upone erthe ys but fyghtying and kgyghthode ayenst gostly enemyes."

  --*A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*

"And he that is dying… let him pray devoutly within himself, with his heart and his

desire, as he can and may, and so yield the ghost up to God; and he shall be safe."

  --*The Boke of the Craft of Dying*

        Literary examples of knights "dying well" as a spiritual substitution for a holy life

considerably predate the above *ars moriendi* treatises circulating in England in the

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, nearly all[1] of their continental sources, and the events

traditionally held as their catalysts: the Black Death (1347-1351) and the Second Council

of Lyon (1274), which first outlined the Church's official teachings on Purgatory.

Making a "good death" was particularly important for the salvation of the soldier who

died on the battlefield often without a plenary indulgence or the opportunity to receive

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[1] The *Ordo ad visitandum* may or may not be older than the *Chanson de Roland* redactions (1040-1115) that include the substituted ritual described (Appleford 28-32; Ford 210).

last rites. As this dissertation will demonstrate, this lack of opportunity to perform the

"good death"—especially when considered in light of the dearth of *ars moriendi* treatises

and pastoral literature focused on violent death—is directly related to a sequence of

updates to the death sequences and death anxieties present in the English Arthurian

literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: in particular, *Sir Gawain and the

Green Knight* (*SGGK*), the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (*AMA*), and Malory's *Morte

Darthur*. It will also elucidate how this concern for the knightly class led to an

allegorizing of the knight and his arms in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English

vernacular *ars moriendi* treatises such as the *Pore Caitif* and *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*,

wherein this formerly violent figure serves as a spiritual exemplar, warring not against

fellow Christians but against the sins associated with *mors improvisa*, the sudden death of

the unprepared. This phenomenon, in turn, is captured in the reimagining of the knight as

a secular saint in the *AMA* and, I argue against conventional readings, *Morte Darthur*.

Further, and perhaps most important to the study of the *ars moriendi* and *memento mori*

genres, a comparative reading of these English Arthurian source materials and their

contemporaneous theological treatises—Middle English translations of *De visitacione

infirmorum, Somme le roi,* and *Horologium sapientiae* as well as the English *Tretyse of

Gostly Batayle* and *Boke of the Craft of Dying*—shows that while some preparations,

expedients, and leniencies associated with dying well can indeed be traced to the English

ars moriendi tradition after the Black Death, others hail from the High Middle Ages.

Some can be located in earlier continental tracts that were eventually translated to

English while others were in fact pioneered on the battlefield in the eleventh and twelfth

centuries and then recaptured by late-Medieval Arthurianists with access to these older

traditions through their preservation in French Arthurian sources such as the *Lancelot-Grail*.

Perhaps the earliest example of an emergency substitution for the Eucharist in French Arthurian Romance, a genre highly influenced by the *Chanson de gestes*, is the death of King Ban in the 'Lancelot proper' portion of the *Lancelot-Grail* (1215-1220). Though King Ban is described as a strict Christian in the *Estoire de Merlin,* with his dalliance resulting in Sir Hector's conception presented as an unavoidable sin, his treatment in the earlier Lancelot proper[2] demonstrates a concern with chivalry that would be further developed in *La Queste del Saint Graal*: lacking the plenary indulgence afforded to actual crusaders, secular knights pursue a sinful vocation and must atone for their acts of violence.[3]

In addition to a life of violence against other Christians, the dying Ban is caught in an act of worldliness that would be of great concern to fourteenth- and fifteenth-century moralists. Having left his material holdings in the hands of a subordinate to travel to Logres and seek King Arthur's aid against King Claudas, he crests a hill to look back on his beloved lands and finds his castle besieged and ablaze. Stunned by this sight, concerned for his young wife, and believing his infant son Lancelot will never be able to reclaim his birthright, Ban's heart bursts in his chest. He has become a *moriens*: a dying person who must now perform the "good death" in order to receive salvation. Alone and

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[2] In the *Lancelot-Grail*, the *Estoire de Merlin* appears before the Lancelot proper contextually, but the Lancelot proper dates earlier. Part of the *Estoire de Merlin* is based on Robert de Boron's *Prose Merlin* (now lost), but the section treating King Ban's piety is contained in the *Suite du Merlin* continuation (1235).

[3] Phelpstead notes: "The first plenary indulgence was granted to those taking part in the first Crusade (1095), though Purgatory was not yet a formalized doctrine" (107).

therefore without a priest to administer last rites, he offers his confession and final

prayers to God alone, but like many of the fourteenth-century English bourgeois buried in

pardon churchyards at St. Paul's Cathedral and the London Charterhouse during the

Black Death, he cannot fulfill the sacrament unsponsored (N. Lacy, Vol 1, 8; Appleford

10).

King Ban's resulting substitution for his last rites belongs to what may be argued

to be an older *ars moriendi* tradition, forbidden by both the Council of Paris and Leo IV

in 829, but by the twelfth century reinstated by councils in Rome and London. Similar to

instructions given by the Bishop of Bath during the height of the Black Death and

detailed in later *ars moriendi* treatises, pious laymen were permitted to administer

communion in emergency situations (Ford 206-7). Moreover, medieval soldiers in early

Continental Romances in the French tradition, as Ford helpfully catalogues in "To Bite

the Dust and Symbolic Lay Communion," sometimes substituted three leaves of grass for

the missing Host, enabling the dying to receive their Savior. Despite being

unconventional, King Ban's substitution for his last rites seems successful and perhaps,

through *imitatio Christi*, confers the status of martyrdom:

> When the king had spoken these words, he looked up toward heaven and beat his
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> breast in penance and bewailed his sins before the eyes of Our Lord God. Then he
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> pulled up three blades of grass in the name of the Holy Trinity and ate them as a
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> sign of true belief… His heart burst in his chest, and he lay dead on the ground,
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> with his hands stretched out and head turned to the east and facing upward. (N.
>
> Lacy, Vol 1, 8)

The death sequence from this early thirteenth-century French Romance bears more than a few similarities to those captured in *De visitacione infirmorum* (1380), a Middle English vernacular handbook designed to assist priests in the task of exhorting the sick to confess their sins and make a good transition between life and death:

> Þerefor, medele þin þouȝt wiþ his passioun and wrappe þe as in a cloþ in his mercy and triste stedefastliche þerinne, not þenkenge on þin wif and on þi children, ne on þi rychesse, but onliche and stedefastliche on the passioun of Oure Lord... And if þou beholde ony cros or ymage made wiþ mannys hondes, wete þou wel þat it is not God. And þerefore sey or þinke in þin herte: I wot wel þat þou art not God, but ymagid aftir him to make men to haue more mynde on him, aftir whom þou art ymaged. (Kinpoitner 29)

> [Therefore, blend your thoughts with His Passion and wrap yourself as if in a cloth in His mercy and trust steadfastly therein, not thinking about your wife or about your children, nor about your riches, but only and steadfastly about the Passion of Our Lord… And if you behold any cross or image made with man's hands, know with certainty that it is not God. And therefore say or think in your heart: I know well that you are not God, but created in His image to make men think about Him more mindfully, (He) after whom you are created.]

Setting aside the tract's late-fourteenth-century defense against Wycliffite iconoclasm, Ban's self-administered last rites treat and overcome these precise issues, as he is able to release himself from worldly concerns, including the fate of his family after death, and to mentally focus his dying act on Christ's Passion through a symbolic substitution for the "missing" Host that merely represents, for him, the omnipresent Trinity. His physical

death is completed in *imitatio Christi*, here likely modeled after Tertullian's instructions

to maintain the image of Christ's Passion in prayer posture: "*nos vero non attollimus*

tantum sed etiam expandimus, et dominica passione modulantes, et orantes confitemur

Christo"[4] (E. Evans, "Q. Septimii Florentis Tertulliani de Oratione Liber"). These

similarities point to the *ars moriendi* tradition of the Late Middle Ages as a resurgence of

an earlier tradition with connections not only to the *miles Christi*, but also to the

Continental Romances that inspired the French Arthurian tradition—and by extension, to

the Arthurian legend in England.

While Nancy Lee Beaty has referred to the fifteenth century as the "wellspring" of

ars moriendi literature in England, contemporary scholarship on this subject has been

limited to the brief treatises of the Late Middle Ages (1-53). These treatises follow mid-

fourteenth-century preoccupations with death resulting from the plague, but, as Amy

Appleford has pointed out, they are in fact separated from the preoccupations stirred up

by the plague by at least two generations (2). As Appleford has also shown (and Beaty is

certainly aware), the origin of this tradition is continental and derives from French,

German, and Italian originals concerning both the mortification of the body and the

performance of the "good death." Earlier texts such as Friar Laurent's *Somme le roi* and

Heinrich Suso's *Horologium sapientiae* circulated in England in French and Latin

respectively prior to translation, and the Middle English *De visitacione infirmorum* was

used in conjunction with one of its major sources, the more rigidly performative 11th-

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[4] Per Ernest Evans: "We however not only lift them up [the arms], but also spread them out, and,
modulating them by the Lord's passion, in our prayers also express our faith in Christ" ("Tertullian on the
Prayer").

century *Ordo ad visitandum,* first by professional clergy and eventually the laity. However, as these texts were undergoing the process of English translation in the late Middle Ages, the renegotiation of last rites in a time of "Lollardy," the expanding roles of layman patriarchs in the moral and spiritual education of their household subjects, and the concerns of the merchant class *vis a vis* the deadly sin of avarice necessitated revision (Appleford 23-54). The *ars moriendi* tradition therefore enjoyed a resurgence at a pivotal point in the history of English translation—not in the fifteenth century, but in Ricardian England.

Ricardian concerns with salvation through the *ars moriendi* are documented in not only *De visitacione infirmorum, Horologium sapientiae*, and the various *Somme le roi* translations, but also in more widely read literature such as *The Canterbury Tales* and *Piers Plowman*. It would be a vast understatement to say that the religious landscape in the time of the Wycliffites was doubtful. For Langland and Chaucer, this doubt partially manifested in a distrust for pardoners and friars—professional remitters of sin—whom they characterize as offering indulgences or prayers that by their own admission will not have the effects they claim. Despite being guided by Piers Plowman, the eponymous figure into which St. Peter and the Holy Trinity are subsumed, Langland's Pardoner turns back on the path to St. Truth, fearing that he will not be known there without his "box with… brevettes and a bulle with bisshopes lettres" (B.5.640). Chaucer's *Pardoner's Prologue and Tale* famously engages with the concerns of the English *ars moriendi* more directly than does *Piers Plowman*, including the lingering preoccupation with death resulting from the plague, a trio of rogues who vow to kill Death because they are not prepared to die, ignorance concerning when death will come, and the dishonest Pardoner

himself, a "technocrat of death," who dupes the devoted into believing that scrap textiles and sheep bones are the relics of saints (*PardT* VI 329-968; Phelpstead 106-9).

Less well-known is the burlesque of *De visitacione infirmorum* in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*, which features a wicked friar who attempts to extort a potentially dying patriarch, Thomas, on his sickbed. This 'Doubting Thomas' doubts the Summoner's friar when he claims that because he is a mendicant, his prayers go straight to heaven. When Thomas rages because he feels he has already donated enough money to regain his physical health, the friar berates him for splitting up his almsgiving between competing religious orders, allegedly rendering all their prayers less effective than if the friar had prayed—and been paid—alone (*SumT* III 1765-2132). In order to apprehend why literary figures such as these are embroiled in what appear to be overcomplicated—and for the clergy, frequently profitable—negotiations for the health of body and soul, a survey of the major Ricardian *ars moriendi* tracts is required and will make up the bulk of Chapter 2.

Early *ars moriendi* treatises such as *De visitacione infirmorum* and its successor the *Craft of Dying* are deathbed manuals containing instructions for either the dying person or the sponsor (often both), while *Somme le roi* and *Horologium sapientiae* include death meditations, visions of perdition, and admonishments of earthly mortification. Similar to the later and better-known *Craft of Dying* and William Caxton's *Ars Moriendi* treatises, the sum of their collective instruction is that a "good death" limits the amount of time a penitent sinner must remain in Purgatory, or as further exemplified in later English morality plays such as *Everyman* and *The Castle of Perseverance,* may even prevent an ostensibly well-deserved damnation. However, in Arthurian Romance

and especially in the more warlike Galfridian Chronicle tradition, few knights[5] are

permitted such a lengthy process of penitence as the eponymous Everyman due to their

abrupt deaths on the battlefield. To wit, in *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Geoffrey of

Monmouth seems unconcerned with salvation and predates the Romantic formula of

matching prominent Arthurian characters with enemies who slay them through superior

prowess, as many of the deaths in his Arthurian cycle—ranging from the Emperor Lucius

to Sir Gawain to King Arthur himself—come from an "unknown hand" (256, 258-9,

261). Geoffrey's major consideration is creating an imperialistic British hero in Arthur to

rival the Romans; if his Arthur is spiritually saved, it is by virtue of defeating Saxon (and

therefore pagan[6]) hordes with the image of the Virgin emblazoned on his shield (217).

Unlike the controversial *AMA*, neither Wace's nor Laȝamon's *Brut* update the Galfridian

tradition to include dramatic deaths resulting from single combat rather than by the whim

of Fortune, and they are also too early to address the inherent contradiction of the *miles*

Christi so fully explored in the Continental Romance tradition (Laȝamon 728, 742, 748-

50; Wace 325, 329, 333-4).[7]

    As Susan Crane has demonstrated in *Insular Romance*, extensive revision of

continental works—in both Anglo-French and Middle English—resulted in much of the

traditional Matter of Britain, and what Crane refers to as "insular resistance" is just as

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[5] Sir Gawain's prolonged death in Malory's *Morte Darthur* is a notable exception (676-8, 681-2).

[6] The Galfridian tradition—especially the Alliterative Morte Arthure—elides pagan Saxons and Muslims into "Sarazenes" to make an anachronistic case for plenary indulgence.

[7] Laȝamon lines 13,873-13,900 (Lucius), 14,136-14147 (Gawain), and 14,235-14,297 (Arthur and Mordred); Wace lines 12,959-12,966, 13,000-13,102, and 13,271-13,289 (respectively)

evident in the later English Arthurian Romance tradition as its *ars moriendi* tradition.[8]

Pointedly, the English Arthurian Romance tradition prior to Malory includes Sir Lancelot

but overlooks him as the Round Table's "best knight," as evidenced by the late Gawain

tail-rhyme romances, *SGGK,* and again, the often-overlooked *AMA*, one of the Galfridian

entries, along with Hardying's Chronicle, partially included in Malory's *Morte Darthur*[9]

(Benson 4; Shepherd 702). Moreover, as I will demonstrate through a selected reading of

the somewhat obscure English *artes moriendi*, the authors of several major English

Arthurian texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—including *SGGK*, the *AMA*, and

Malory's *Morte Darthur*—labored to update their primarily continental source material to

reestablish the Arthurian legend as a body of work conscious of the ever-evolving

English understanding of how to die. Again, to this end, I will examine the deaths or

near-death-experiences of several prominent knights in the above texts, compare their

individual spiritual outcomes and "death-readiness" against the prescribed process of

dying in several contemporaneous tracts concerning how to die well, and identify which

mortal situations are truly English updates and which belong to an earlier tradition. I will

also explore the English knight as secular saint by comparing English tracts such as the

Pore Caitif and *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* with continental sources such as Ramon

Llull's widely influential *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, which itself was translated

(with some embellishment) into English by William Caxton. While this topic has been

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[8] See especially Thomas of Britain's and Hue de Rotelande's interpolations of *Tristan* and *Ipomedon* (134-174)

[9] Malory ends the sequence based on the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* with Arthur conquering the Romans and instead uses the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* in addition to *La Mort Artu* for the concluding books containing the deaths of Arthur and his prominent knights.

explored relatively recently by contributors to anthologies such *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition* (Cherewatuk and Whetter) and *Malory and Christianity* (Hanks and Jesmok), the English *ars moriendi* treatises have gone largely missing from the discussion, though a close reading of their contents sheds considerable light on long-contested issues including Gawain's failure in *SGGK*, Arthur's spiritual status at the end of the *AMA*, and the widely alleged secularity of Lancelot's death in *Morte Darthur*.

Methodological Considerations

In *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages*, art historian Elina Gertsman traces a late medieval *topos* strongly associated with the Danse Macabre, the *Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead*, to "a poem, originally written in the second half of the thirteenth century, several versions of which exist in French, English, German, Italian, and Latin" (26). Gertsman notes this *topos* as the likely beginning of the macabre genre and points to its popularity as late as 1486, when Marchant, in an attempt to preserve the images of the Danse at the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents, also published a variant of the poem entitled *Legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead* alongside a woodcut based on a sculpture of the encounter, which was originally commissioned by Duke Jean de Berry in 1408 (6-8, 26, 254). The encounter *topos* features three living aristocrats—sometimes kings but other times minor nobles—who go hunting for game but instead find the Three Dead—sometimes noblemen, sometimes clergymen, sometimes their ancestors. These dead dialogue with the living, imparting them with the knowledge of "the fleeting quality of life, the sordid nature of the human body, and the necessity of repentance" (Gertsman 26). The result is similar to the *memento mori* genre in that the

reader or viewer is able to meditate on death after escaping its clutches, and when applied to visual art, the effect is similarly experiential due to its multi-modal potential. Most important to our reading, however, is the effect of encountering one's deathly double, a reading Gertsman shares with Jean Baudrillard: "the figure of the double is intimately bound up with the figure of death" (27). As death exists in a negative space and is an "invisible event," art and literature must therefore substitute images and "Thingify" this absence or lack. By doubling the living with the dead and making the Self the Thing, the encounter *topos* forces the living subject to face him- or herself alongside the eventual inevitable, enabling greater reflection and potentially greater spiritual redemption (Gertsman 21-3, 26-9). As we will see especially in Chapters 2 and 3, this was one of many methods of scaring the *moriens* straight, so to speak.

In a more abstract sense, the encounter *topos* can be traced back even further than the second half of the thirteenth century. The deathly doppelganger appears in the Old French Post-Vulgate Cycle (1230-1240) when Arthur nearly dies fighting Sir Accolon, who—with Morgan le Fay's help—has stolen his famous sword and scabbard and with them his powers over life and death. Malory reworks this scene and its aftermath as well, also leaving Arthur open to death later in his *Morte Darthur* because of the loss of Excalibur's scabbard (N. Lacy, Vol 8, 177-86, 191-8). Arthur survives his "mirror match" with this double only to be slain by another double later in the text: his own son. Malory in particular selects and refines material from the French tradition that exemplifies this *topos*: Balin and Balan, for example, whom Malory also doubles (somewhat inconsistently) with Gawain and Lancelot. Derek Pearsall's reading of *SGGK* also features a Gawain who must face death alongside himself and reflect upon his identity (or

perhaps identities), adding another potential "encounter" to the English Arthurian tradition (80-2).[10] Wherever possible, this dissertation will endeavor to trace the influence of the encounter *topos* as it pertains to the deathly doppelganger and its aftermath from the French to English tradition and apply this phenomenon to the English *artes moriendi*.

Jane Gilbert's Lacanian optic in *Living Death in Medieval French and English Literature* has also strongly influenced my readings of *SGGK* and *Morte Darthur*. In her introduction, Gilbert coins the term *entre-deux-morts* or "between two deaths" to designate a liminal space between the *moriens*'s symbolic and corporeal deaths, and this is applicable not only to the Arthurian literature under review but also to the *artes moriendi*. Gilbert describes this symbolic or non-corporeal death as a kind of death trajectory, as "being set on an inevitable course towards death, and attending to the ways in which that awareness affects their [the subjects'] engagement with life" (6). Entering into this liminal space, or suffering the first of these two deaths, can occur when a community, such as the Arthurian comitatus in Fitt II of *SGGK*, officially recognizes a member of that community as dead despite the technicality of life, leaving Gawain, as Gilbert would have it, "dead to the world" (6-7). For my purposes, it can also be used to refer to the liminality of the deathbed itself; spurred by the knowledge of impending doom and with the community at the bedside (as is strongly suggested by the *artes moriendi*), the *moriens* must change his or her thinking to perform death properly and thus avoid eternal demise. In both cases, the recognition of death is a social act, and the drama occurs when the *moriens* either accepts the inevitable or struggles against it,

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[10] An even more obvious example of this influential *topos* can be located in the *Awntyrs off Arthure*, wherein a hunting party encounters Guinevere's dead mother, who begs for requiem masses and prophesies the end of the Round Table due to worldly lusts. For more on this, see Chapter 2.

potentially leading to *mors improvisa*. Gilbert's work treats a variant of the *Lancelot-Grail*, *The Song of Roland*, and *Pearl* but avoids the closely related *Morte Darthur* and *SGGK*. Whenever possible, this dissertation will endeavor to identify when a subject becomes *entre-deux-morts*, as the subject's actions between symbolic and corporeal deaths will be used to measure how successfully he or she performs a good death in accordance with the contemporaneous English *artes moriendi*. As my reading of *SGGK* and the *AMA* will make apparent, refusing to recognize symbolic death or failing to properly perform the dying act can be surprisingly more consequential than leading a sinful life.

Organization

Chapter 2 traces the roots of the English *artes moriendi* from *De visitacione infirmorum* (1380) to *Somme le roi* variants such as those found in BL, MS Royal 18 A.X and *The Book of Vices and Virtues* (1340-1486), *Horologium sapientiae or Learn to Die* (1390), and *The Boke of the Craft of Dying* (1420 but not widely popular until 1460), explicating each tract and foregrounding its influences on English Arthurian literature. It also elaborates on the *memento mori* tradition, which as a lynchpin of late-medieval stoicism trained the *moriens* to be spiritually and psychologically ready to die through death meditations and fleshly mortification—a mindset important to recall when approaching *SGGK* and the final chapters of Malory's *Morte Darthur*.

While Chapter 2 also briefly introduces and situates *A Tretyse of Ghostly Batayle* within the English *artes moriendi*, this seldom-studied tract is explicated in greater detail in Chapter 3, which focuses on its intersection with the ghostly chivalry genre—a genre

14

focused on the knight as a *miles Christi* who wages spiritual warfare against God's enemies—and ultimately how ghostly chivalry came to be integrated into the English *ars moriendi*. Chapter 3 also further explores the similarities and possible influences of Ramon Llull's *Book of the Order of Chivalry* and MS Harley 3244 on the lengthy and complex spiritual allegoresis of the knight's arms and armor contained within the *Tretyse*, which I demonstrate was greatly expanded upon during its adaptation from the *Pore Caitif*. These allegoreses shed further light upon the use of particular armaments and weaponry in all three Arthurian texts under review but most especially on the spiritual significance of the arming and disarming sequences in *SGGK* as they pertain to ghostly chivalry and the *memento mori* tradition.

This analysis leads to Chapter 4, which focuses on *SGGK* and draws from the English *ars moriendi* and *memento mori* traditions to suggest that Gawain is presented as a knight-*moriens* who is *entre-deux-morts* and therefore that his famous spiritual trials—including those in which he is "bedridden" in the fashion of the traditional *moriens*—are in fact trials of death-readiness. Chapter 4 also endeavors to situate Gawain's iconic first arming sequence not within the traditional arming *topos*, as Derek Brewer has suggested, but within the genre of ghostly chivalry due to its connection with the above allegoreses, the Gawain-Poet's direct association of the Pentangle with Christ's Passion, and the fact that mere physical armor cannot protect Gawain from taking his part in the *gomen*, but spiritual armor may alternatively lead to his making a good death. It therefore follows that Gawain's voluntary disarmament at Hautdesert (despite his earlier refusal to disarm) and subsequent augmentation of his arsenal after accepting the green girdle signifies spiritual vulnerability and lack of death-readiness despite his ostensibly sincere attempts

at chastity and confession prior to the ultimate showdown at the Green Chapel. After this

confrontation, the influence of the Ricardian English *ars moriendi* is then drawn out of

Gawain's and Bertilak's confessions at the Green Chapel and supported by the work of

Amy Appleford. Finally, Elina Gertsman's research on the deathly doppelganger of the

encounter *topos* is fused with a Lacanian optic to elucidate, after the fashion of Derek

Pearsall's identity-annihilation reading, Gawain's reaction to failure as his public and

private identities collide, leaving him separated from the Arthurian comitatus and forcing

him to remain *entre-deux-morts* despite returning to Camelot nearly unscathed.

Chapter 5 focuses on the *AMA* and demonstrates through textual comparison with

Wace's and Laȝamon's *Bruts* as well as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum*

Britanniae that the *AMA*-Poet significantly updated the death sequences from previous

entries in the Galfridian Chronicle tradition to include tenets of the English *artes*

moriendi and the French Romance tradition. Specifically, I examine the deaths of Kay,

Gawain, and Arthur and argue that each of their deaths represents a different prescribed

way of dying in Ricardian England. Whereas Kay's death is commensurate with the

orthodox tradition and the English frankpledge, Gawain's death as a secular saint includes

the Crusader's Indulgence and a Eucharistic substitution similar to that of King Ban's in

the *Lancelot-Grail*. Conversely, Arthur, in a clear break from both Arthurian traditions,

does not adequately follow the *ars moriendi* despite foreknowledge of his death, nearly

dies in a state of *mors improvisa*, and must be spiritually supported posthumously by

trental masses rather than being designated "*Rex quondam Rexque futurus*." These

branching paths towards death are not present in the *AMA*-Poet's known Arthurian

sources but—as I again demonstrate through textual comparison—coincide directly with

16

instructions on how to avoid *mors improvisa* in various tracts circulating in Ricardian England including *De visitacione infirmorum,* the *Somme le roi* variants, and *Learn to Die*.

Moving to the fifteenth century, Chapter 6 examines Malory's *Morte Darthur* in light of *The Boke of the Craft of Dying* and *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*, challenging Eugene Vinaver's seminal argument that Malory's "Works" are in large part a secularization of the earlier *Lancelot-Grail* by demonstrating that Malory—like his English predecessors and in the typical fashion of insular resistance—updated his Arthurian material to coincide with the spiritual values of his time, which did not include the forced binary of celestial and terrestrial chivalry established by the Cistercian authors of *La Queste del Saint Graal*. Here, I focus specifically on the final books of Malory's Arthuriad and on the most prominent knights still living: Gawain, Arthur, and Lancelot. Gawain's orthodox death in *Morte Darthur*, which I compare closely with Malory's sources, reveals not only significant updates from both English and French material but also the complete efficacy of the *artes moriendi* despite the dubious spiritual status of the *moriens* prior to his or her time of dying. Indeed, Malory's Gawain may be ranked with Humanum Genus and Everyman in terms of his poor spiritual hygiene, rapid redemption, and ultimate reward. While loose ends abound in any proper examination of Malory's Arthur's "death," I endeavor—along with Thomas Hanks, Jr., Karen Cherewatuk, and others—to showcase Arthur's heightened Christological analogs in Malory's version and include my own analysis of Arthur's final actions with respect to both the *Craft* and the *Tretyse*. Unlike some of my contemporaries, I do not find a pagan or secular Arthur in these last moments before he is swept away to Avalon and perhaps out of the narrative,

but rather—in Malory's words, after the spirit of the *artes moriendi*, and in an absolute rejection of Arthur's ignoble death in the *AMA*—a secular king on the verge of death who "chaunged hys lyff" by releasing himself from the worldliness of his station to humbly embrace the next world (928.26, C XXI.7). Finally, my optic turns to Lancelot's "good death," which he achieves despite his infamous quarrel with the Archbishop of Canterbury after the death of Guinevere. I argue, along with Karen Cherewatuk, D. Thomas Hanks, Raluca L. Radulescu, and Kate Dosanjh, for a spiritual Lancelot and not a "priest-errant" or "saint for love," but in addition to their findings, I provide evidence from the contemporaneous *Boke of the Craft of Dying* and its predecessors that it is Lancelot and not the quarrelsome Archbishop who understands how to properly die in orthodox fashion. Like Malory's Gawain, Lancelot's "good death" is proven efficacious posthumously, but only in *Morte Darthur* is Lancelot in conflict with a prominent member of the clergy yet granted saint-like status over his protestations—a conflict entirely commensurate with the unrest of the late-fifteenth century and with the concerns of the *Craft of Dying* itself, which both laments and inculcates that few members of the clergy are aware of the *Craft*, thus leaving salvation in the hands of the *moriens* and demonstrating the necessity of having a personal knowledge of how to die.

CHAPTER 2

THE ENGLISH VERNACULAR *ARTES MORIENDI*

The *ars moriendi* in late-medieval England was a carefully scripted process examining the death readiness of the *moriens* and demanding a spirited performance in exchange for one's salvation. In addition to extreme unction, the *moriens* was required to make an honest confession in the presence of his or her family as well as other members of the faith community, successfully resist a sequence of temptations or "evil spirits," remain stoic throughout sickness without seeking "earthy" medicine, demonstrate the appropriate fear of God's wrath while simultaneously trusting in His mercy, participate in affirmations of orthodox faith, recite specific prayers of contrition, successfully imitate Christ's Passion while commending his or her spirit to God, and wholeheartedly embrace death. To prepare for this performance of a lifetime, the *moriens* was advised to habitually meditate on death, make metaphysical pilgrimages into the afterlife, and to arm him- or herself in the spiritual armor of God to participate in a constant battle against sin that could only end with death. For those who met their end in a state of *mors improvisa*, or accidental sudden death, only certain spiritual expedients, which naturally varied from tract to tract of the *artes moriendi*, could redeem them before it was too late.

This chapter will introduce, explicate, and trace the development of five such English tracts that will serve as optics to analyze the deaths of Arthurian figures presented in Chapters 4-6. Arranged chronologically from Ricardian England to around 1420 (and beyond), they are *De visitacione infirmorum* (*Visitation A*), a brief section

from *The Book of Vices and Virtues,*[11] Heinrich Suso's *Learn to Die*, *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*, and *The Boke of the Craft of Dying*. In addition to providing a reading of each tract, my investigation focuses on lay expedients that would be applicable to those dying quickly and innovations developed in the English vernacular tradition. The primary purpose of the chapter is to familiarize the reader with the sometimes-peculiar tenets of the English *artes moriendi* and demonstrate how they shifted between Ricardian England, the currently agreed upon time of the composition of *SGGK* and the *AMA*, and the Wars of the Roses, in which most Malory scholars and notably P.J.C. Field agree that Malory took part. Where possible, it also historically situates each of these texts within the loci of the plausible authors of the Arthurian material. The English tracts I have selected strike a balance between the *artes moriendi* and *memento mori*—between the highly performative process of dying sanctioned by the Church and the increasingly lay ascetic meditations designed to prepare the *moriens* to be an efficacious actor in that final scene. The first, *De visitacione infirmorum*, is the earliest and most influential of these tracts; granted official status by the Church and originally deployed as a vernacular guidebook, it saw use in the hands of death officiants as early as the late-fourteenth century and witnesses a public ritual that would have educated lay participants in the craft of dying.

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[11] London, BL MS Royal 18 A.X, another Middle English translation of Friar Laurent's *Somme le roi*, is also included in this reading.

De visitacione infirmorum

De visitacione infirmorum is the name given to a group of Middle English

deathbed manuals that subsumed, with various interpolations and reductions,[12] Baudri

Bourgueil's *Ordo ad visitandum*, an 11th-century epistle to his gravely ill nephew later

implemented by the Church into last rites, and the pseudo-Anselm's *Admonitio morienti*,

which includes affirmations for the dying. The earliest of these manuals is *Visitation A*

(1380), which Ricardian priests used in conjunction with the *Ordo ad visitandum* to

administer last rites, and will be the focus of this investigation. However, a later version,

Visitation E,[13] was used by lay death officiants in the fifteenth century and widely

inserted into texts concerning how to spiritually govern one's household, such as *Ego*

dormio, *Pore Caitif*, the *Schort Reule of Lif*, and *Speculum ecclesie. Visitations A and E*

are not always treated as individual texts but should be understood as English

"outgrowths" from the Continental tradition, predating Jean Gerson's *De scientia mortis*

and its descendent, *Tractatus de arte bene moriendi* from which the Middle English *Craft*

of Dying and Caxton's *The Art and Craft to Know Well to Die* also draw. Most important,

both *Visitation A* and *E* express English cultural concerns and do much to update the craft

of dying well (Appleford 23, 28-32).

The *Ordo ad visitandum* and *Visitation A* both rely on James 5:14-16, which

describes how priests should visit the sick and suggests each attendant make a public

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[12] Robert Kinpoitner notes: "…the Latin *De Visitatione Infirmorum* [*Ordo ad visitandum*] is a treatise in two books on preparing for death. All of its English versions confine themselves to the second, fourth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the first book" (lv).
[13] Per Amy Appleford, who updated Kinpoitner's research, the other manuscripts are partial translations of *Ordo ad visitandum* itself while E is an early-fifteenth century update of A.

confession, and Revelations 21:19-21, a popular passage[14] comparing the preparation of the soul to the polishing of a precious stone which must be set in the Heavenly Jerusalem (Kinpoitner lxxiii, 20). The opening of *Visitation A* glides from the *Ordo*'s longer passage comforting the dying, who will soon be reunited with dead loved ones and will also have the opportunity to meet "faderis, apostelis, martyres, confessoures, virgenes, and alle men and wommen þat ben sauid" to this concept of polishing the precious stone of the soul (Kinpoitner 20; Appleford 33). Both passages concern themselves with "noyse," which elides the positive and necessary process of verbalized confession with a "trewe preest" with the unprofitable "grucching" that the sick must avoid if they truly seek spiritual health and salvation (Kinpoitner 20, 24). This "grucching" appears throughout the *artes moriendi* and by the time of the *Craft of Dying* is variably understood as any of the following: muttering complaints, blasphemy, attempting to contradict the process of dying (e.g., through seeking worldly medicine) or the administration of the rite, or merely a general lack of stoicism that in each tract indicates the psychological and therefore spiritual unreadiness of the *moriens* (Comper 7-9). In order to perform the "good death," then, the penitent sinner may only make profitable "noyse," and only before dying: "þenke how þou moste aftir þis lif leggen a ston in þe walle of þe cytee of heuene slyliche, witouten ony noyse or strif"[15] (Kinpoitner 20). Amy Appleford points to the distinction between the lay officiants and a "trewe preest" in *Visitation E* and argues for the diminished role of the clergy: "The sick person, with the help of the officiating speaker, is now firmly in charge of the process of dying" (42).

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[14] See *Pearl*, especially XVII, lines 973-1032 (Andrew and Waldron).
[15] [Think how you must after this life lay a stone in the wall of the city of heaven gracefully and discreetly, without any noise or strife.]

While the officiant and not the dying person is still firmly in control in *Visitation A*, the

translator of the *A*-text makes this same distinction, suggesting that the officiant may

indeed be a lay person relying on a "trewe preest" specifically for confession and extreme

unction—sacraments which have gone missing from *Visitation A* but remain in the *Ordo*

and would have been drawn from the Latin text by clergymen at the bedside.

In *Visitation A*, the sickbed is a perilous place where "griseli deueles, þe wheche

hau tempted men to synne in þis lif, welen in þe laste hour ben ful besy to begile hem,

and namliche wiþ despair of Goddis mercy[16]" (Kinpoitner 21). This is unsurprising as

relapse into sin and lack of faith in God's grace—deserved or not—are two of the most

commonly attested concerns in the whole of the *ars moriendi* tradition. The dying person

is particularly vulnerable after confession because the pain of illness often causes more

"grucching" that may cause the penitent to "turne aȝen to synne" (Kinpoitner 21).

Visitation A answers this in several ways. The first, paradoxically, presents a further

complication in the belief that God can visit illness upon the physical body as punishment

for sin which may then be remitted through contrition:

> And þerfor þe lawe wolde bi ryȝt iustice þat noon leche scholde ȝeue bodily
>
> medicine to a syke man, but ȝif he were in wille to take gostliche medicine and to
>
> leue þe synne þat woundeþ his soule, schriuying him treweliche wiþ goode wille
>
> to doo no more yuel. (Kinpoitner 22)
>
> [And therefore the law demands by correct justice that no physician should give
>
> bodily medicine to a sick man, unless he were willing to take spiritual medicine

---

[16] [...grisly devils, which have tempted men to sin in this life, will in the last hour be most ready to beguile them, and most especially with despair of God's mercy.]

and to reject the sin that wounded his soul, confessing honestly with good will to

do no more evil.]

Contrition, of course, did not always improve the subject's physical health, and this often

caused the sick person who had already made a confession, in the manner of Thomas in

Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*, to "grucche." This exploratory process of discovering who

would remain ill enough to die necessitated the section of *Visitation A* entitled, "How a

man schold counforten anoþer þat he grucche not wan he is seek[17]" (Kinpoitner 23).

However, this section of about 70 lines could be skipped if it appeared the dying person

would not last through it. The next, "Ʒif deeþ go faste on a man, spek to hym þus"[18] could

also be skipped for the final section, "Whan þou hast told him al þis, or ellis if þou myʒt

not for haste of deþ, beginne here or his mynde go from hym"[19] (Kinpoitner 25, 28).

According to Appleford, this fluidity of the vernacular version was a great

innovation over the rigid, highly performative *Ordo*, as the Latin version's very precise

instructions could not always be followed to satisfaction; to wit, the sick person would

not necessarily die at the end of the prayers, forcing the priest to delay or to return the

next day only to discover the subject had died in his absence. In both texts, the *moriens*

and the attendees—who would have followed the priest in a formal procession from the

chapel—participate in a group confession, and if this did not cure the sick, it at least

allowed the both the subject of the visitation and the attendees to better prepare for death.

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[17] [How a man should comfort another so that he does not complain when he is sick]

[18] [If death is quick to claim a man, speak to him thus]

[19] [When you have told him all this, or if you were not able to because of the quick progression of death, begin here before his mind leaves him]

This process provided the benefits of encouraging the *moriens* to make a true confession through the example of the community and ensuring that he or she would not have to face death alone (33-4).

"How a man schold counforten anoþer þat he grucche not wan he is seek" compares the pains of death to the chastisement of a loving father and argues that God "wil not punische twyes hem þat mekeliche suffren hem,"[20] and further that "sykenes of þe bodi is helþe to soule… if þou grucche aȝenys God, wiþ þi grucching þou makest þi soule more febele, and so þou harmest þiself"[21] (Kinpoitner 23-4). The passage closes with the analogy that the sinner who is in pain has been to God as a traitor to the king, and where he "haddist deseruid hanging and drawyng," he has been put "but a litel while in an esy prison" (Kinpoitner 25). As a traitor to God, he deserves "euerelastynge peyne" and therefore should welcome such light punishment. The following section, "Ȝif deeþ go faste on a man, spek to hym þus" is intended to convince the dying person to depart from the world gladly and willingly: "…þouȝ þou were lord of al þe world, and þou stood in grace, þou scholdist desire to forsake it to come to heuene"[22] (Kinpoitner 26). This passage also contains the concept, repeated in all later English *ars moriendi* treatises, circulating around Proverbs 24:16, and referenced in both translations of the *Somme le*

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[20] […will not punish twice them that meekly suffer them.]

[21] […sickness of the body is health to the soul… if you complain against God, with your complaining you make your soul feebler, and so you harm yourself.]

[22] […even if you were lord of all the world, and you stood in grace, you should desire to forsake it (all) to come to heaven.]

25

roi[23] and *Piers Plowman,*[24] that "eueriche man synned whiles he lyuede here in þis wrecchid lif… seuene siþes in þe day falliþ þe ry3twis man";[25] therefore, it is better to "dei3en wel" than to "leuen yuele" (Kinpoitner 26).

The final section of *Visitation A* contains the interpolated *Admonitio morienti* in the form of "baptismal questions" that encourage the dying person to reaffirm his or her faith, and these are broken into seven identifiable sections: 1) an admission of one's sin, 2) an admission of sorrow for one's sins, 3) a promise to amend, 4) an affirmation of belief that God has the power to grant grace despite one's sins, 5) an affirmation of the major tenets of the Nicene Creed (broken into several questions), 6) an exhortation to give thanks to God, and finally, 7) an affirmation of the belief that "no man may be saued but þoru3 his [Christ's] passioun ande his mercy"[26] (Appleford 34; Kinpoitner 28-29).

Appleford demonstrates that these questions, which have been reworked for a Ricardian English penitent and will eventually make their way into the extremely influential *Tractatus artis bene moriendi*, alternate between the originals found in pseudo-Anselm's and Baudri's texts (34-37). Following these affirmations, the officiant would ostensibly continue to read the last admonishments beginning with "Whil þi soule is in þi body, put þi trust in his mercy…" while the dying person passed. Included amongst exhortations to fully disconnect with earthy concerns and worldly desires[27] and

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[23] *The Book of Vices and Virtues* (Francis 72, lines 26-31)

[24] Passus 8, Lines 20-56 contain the argument between Will and the Friar concerning Proverbs 24:16.

[25] [Every man sinned while he lived here in this wretched life… seven times a day falls the righteous man.]

[26] [No man may be saved but through Christ's Passion and His mercy.]

[27] As demonstrated in the introduction concerning King Ban's death.

with the contemplation of Christ's Passion are biblical examples of repentant sinners who found mercy in God's grace (Kinpoitner 29-30). The final 26 lines are affirmations of complete trust in God spoken by the officiant on behalf of the dying person, and these last few lines, aptly, are most poignant:

> Þerfor, God, my Lord, ful of trewþe, tak my soule, for it is þin. Do herto as þe likeþ. For I wot wel of þi goodnesse it schal fare betere þan it haþ desserued. Receyue it and help it, for in þine merciful hondes I putte it. Amen. (Kinpoitner 31)

> [Therefore, God, my Lord, full of truth, take my soul, for it is yours. Do hereto as You like. For I know well that because of Your goodness, it will fare better that it deserves. Receive it and help it, for in Your merciful hands I put it. Amen.]

Decades after the Black Death but before the reinstitution of the "frankpledge" in the early- fifteenth century that placed the moral and spiritual guidance of the English household legally in the hands of lay patriarchs, perhaps it was the public nature of these last rites that led to interest in death preparation and spiritual guidebooks containing *ars moriendi* treatises (Appleford 7). This, coupled with the well-documented preoccupation with death and disputed methods of salvation in Ricardian England, may have further influenced the mass-translation into Middle English of one such guidebook, *Somme le roi*.

London, BL MS Royal 18 A.X and *The Book of Vices and Virtues*

Friar Laurent's *Somme le roi* (1279), written for the household of Philip III, contains a brief but influential *ars moriendi* section widely translated into Middle English

(Francis xi-xix). Emmanuelle Roux lists nine distinct translations of *Somme le roi* based on extant copies:

> 1) *Ayenbite of Inwit* (1340 Kentish), 2) *The Book of Virtues and Vices* (1400), 3) Bodelian Library, MS Ashmole 1286 (1400 Midlands), 4) British Library, MS Royal 18 A.X (1400-1450 Midlands), 5) British Library, MS Additional 37677 (1400-1450 Midlands), 6) Toure of all Toures (1450, short extract of *ars moriendi),* 7) Bod., MS e. Musaeo 23 (1451 Midlands), 8) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 494 (fifteenth century Midlands), and 9) Caxton's *The book ryal* (1486). (xiv)

Ralph Hanna adds a tenth, *Speculum Vitae*, a verse translation which unfortunately suppresses the *ars moriendi* in favor of an explication of the Pater Noster (lxx-lxxiv). As the early *Ayenbite of Inwit* is generally considered a poor translation, and in light of the variety of texts available, I have chosen to examine *The Book of Vices and Virtues* and the fragmentary London, British Library MS Royal 18 A.X, which contains the *ars moriendi* section.

The Book of Vices and Virtues, like the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, opens with *Somme le roi*'s treatise of the Ten Commandments, while British Library MS Royal 18 A.X—like British Library, MS Additional 37677—immediately begins with eschatological material: specifically, with the Beast of Revelation rising from the waters (Francis 1-10; Michel & Stevenson 2-9; Roux XIII, 3). Both texts, however, treat at length the Deadly Sins as allegorical heads of the Beast directly before the *ars moriendi* section and directly afterward admonish the reader to learn to hate sin, evidencing the Deadly Sins' correspondence to *Visitation A*'s "griseli deueles" of temptation (Francis 68-71; Roux 43-

45). Both texts begin the "tretys of vertues" with how to learn to die, with *The Book of Vices and Virtues* interpolating it into the title, "Here he techeþ vertues and first to lerne to dye" (Roux 43; Francis 68).

The *ars moriendi* section in *The Book of Vices and Virtues* begins with a concession: "Þe man ne dieþ not gladly þat haþ not lerned hit"[28] but immediately demonstrates the importance of this knowledge, "þerfore lerne to dye, and þan shalt þou kunne lyue"[29] (Francis 68). What follows is a meditation on the "passing" brevity of life and the eternity of death, and what it means to "pass": "For deþ is a passage, þat wot euery man, and þerfore men seiþ whan a man is ded he is passed"[30] (Francis 68). Perhaps because Friar Laurent is writing for the instruction of a prince, he—quite helpfully, for our purposes—focuses next on the complications of royalty, who would have had more opportunities to enjoy earthy life, and like King Ban and the far worldlier King Arthur of the *AMA*, would likewise have more trouble disconnecting from it. Further, MS Royal 18 A.X includes a *translatio* of Wisdom 5:9-23 that provides our first reference to the chivalric concept of worship:

> Þat, wittenesseþ vs þe emperouris, þese kyngis and þe riche men of þe world þat
> þe glorie þerof hadden sumtyme. Now in helle, þei wepen and crien and ȝellen
> and weilen and seien: 'Allas, what is worþ to vs? Oure poweris, worschippis and

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[28] [No man dies gladly who has not learned how to do it.]

[29] [Therefore, learn to die, and then you will know how to live.]

[30] [For death is a passage, (and) every man knows that, and therefore men say when a man is dead, he has passed.]

richesse, ioie and bobaunce, alle is passid sounere þan eþer schadewe or bird fleiynge, eþer quarel of arblast.' (Roux 44)

[The emperors, these kings and powerful men of the world that had glory at one time give witness to us of this matter. Now in hell, they weep and cry and yell and wail and say: "Alas, what is esteem to us? Our power, worship and riches, joy and worldly vanity, has all passed by more quickly than the shadow of a flying bird, or the bolt of an arbalest."]

Ancient philosophers are treated next; they may have shunned the world and chosen death over life, but willingness to die, which is an important tenet of the *ars moriendi*, is to no avail without faith in Christ. But holy men who love and dread God accomplish two of three necessary deaths because they are already dead to the world, they understand that life is a living death, and they await a third death that is merely the severing of the soul from the body. This final death is but a "þynne wal" that separates them from the living death of life on earth and an everlasting joy in heaven (Francis 70; Roux 44-5).

Finally, Laurent prescribes death meditations commensurate with what Appleford defines as "mortification" in a process that separates the "heart" and "soul" from the body. He urges the reader to send his heart away to make the trip to hell, then Purgatory, and finally paradise. This journey will teach the heart and soul the nature of good and evil and the torments and joys that await the dead. Hell teaches how God will avenge Deadly Sin; Purgatory how venial sins will be purged; heaven how virtues and good works will be rewarded (Francis 70-1; Roux 45). In both translations of this section, Laurent insists that these three things are all one needs to know to live well and die well: "Therefore, if

you would know what good and what evil is, I say: "Out of yourself", I say: "Out of the world, learn to die. Depart your body from your soul in thought. Send your heart into the other world, that is, into heaven, into hell, into Purgatory" (Roux 45, translation mine).

These meditations for the benefit of death preparation, admonishments to detachment and stoicism, and concerns with worldliness, worship, and the deadly sin of avarice are treated in further detail in Suso's *Horologium sapientiae*. Together, these two texts provide insight into the meaning of death readiness for those who might die abruptly—without the benefit of last rites.

<center>

Horologium sapientiae (Learn to Die)

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Suso's *Horologium sapientiae* appeared in at least fifteen Latin manuscripts in Ricardian England, and around 1390 it was translated into a Middle English version, *The Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom*, of which ten manuscripts survive in both complete and incomplete versions. *The Seven Points of True Love* contains an *ars moriendi* section later retitled *Learn to Die* (E. Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in England*, ii; Appleford 121). *Learn to Die*, as its later title suggests, is a death meditation written as a Platonic dialogue between Wisdom, Disciple, and the soul of a dying young man, the "ymage of deeþ." Wisdom is, of course, Christ, as evidenced by His command to contemplate *His Passion* to avoid *His judgment*, but He speaks only at the opening and close. Most of the treatise involves the "ymage of deeþ," a deathly doppelganger strikingly similar to those deployed in the Encounter *topos*, advising the still-living Disciple in what Langland would refer to as the "kynde wit," or natural knowledge, of dying (E. Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in England*, 74-103).

<center>31</center>

Like the works of Chaucer, Gower, and Langland and the penitential texts circulating in Ricardian England, *Learn to Die* polarizes prayer and avarice in a time when pardoners were plying their trade and professional beadsmen were praying for the souls of the sick, dying, and dead. The "ymage of deeþ" craves nothing more than the prayers of the living:

> Loo, in þis houre I wold have more ioye of a litel schort preier, as of an Ave
> Maria seyd devouteli of me, þan of a þousand pound of selver and gold (E.
> Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in England*, 87).

> [Lo, in this hour I would have more joy in a little short prayer, such as a Hail
> Mary said devoutly for me, than of a thousand pounds of silver and gold.]

As the "ymage of deeþ" has already died without grace and accepted his time in Purgatory, this passage likely alludes to the medieval understanding that posthumous prayer can have a positive effect on the condemned. As Carl Phelpstead has noted, this belief is well documented in *Piers Plowman*, Passus 11 and 12, where Langland references Gregory the Great's miraculous intercession for the pagan Emperor Trajan, and this popular hagiographical formula is repeated in *St. Erkenwald* (104). Failing the unlikely intercession of a saint, requiem masses could be purchased on behalf of the dead. Phelpstead points out that the Summoner's Friar, like the William Langland of the "autobiographical" portion of the C Text of Piers Plowman, gains income by participating in trentals, which were "sets of thirty Requiem Masses said for the repose of a soul in Purgatory" (105). These specialized masses were an exchange of secular currency for spiritual currency, but this act was often disguised as almsgiving, particularly by wealthy merchants who sought to make a "good end' by counteracting the Deadly Sin of

avarice.[31] Phelpstead evidences the range of this practice in Edwardian and Ricardian England:

> Funds could be bequeathed for Masses and the Office of the Dead to be said for a patron's soul over a given period; such an endowment was known as a chantry. By the fourteenth century space was set aside in churches for the performance of such chantries and York Minster and St Paul's Cathedral, London, both had dozens of chantry priests engaged in praying for the dead. (105-6)

English Arthurian Romances took on these same concerns. Like the "ymage of deeþ" in *Learn to Die*, the ghost of Guinevere's mother in *Awntyrs off Arthure*, another poem extant in Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, has already been condemned to Purgatory, and she too craves posthumous prayer in the hopes of release:

> Fore Him that rightwisly rose and rest on the Rode,
>
> Thenke on the danger and the dole that I yn dwell.
>
> Fede folke for my sake that failen the fode
>
> And menge me with matens and Masse in melle.
>
> Masses arn medecynes to us that bale bides;
>
> Us thenke a Masse as swete
>
> As eny spice that ever ye yete. (Lines 317-323)
>
> [On His behalf who righteously hung on the Cross, / think of the peril and the sorrow in which I dwell. / For my sake, feed the people who lack food/ and

---

remember me in matins and masses as well. / Masses are medicine to us that abide

in torture; / we think a mass as sweet / as any spice you could ever eat.]

But the point of the *ars moriendi*, of course, is to avoid Purgatory altogether by being

entirely prepared for death. To this end, *Learn to Die* advises death meditations similar to

those found in *Somme le roi*: "Put in þi hert as þei þi sowle were now in purgatorye and

hadde in penaunce for þi trespasses ten ʒeer in þe furneys of brennying fyre and only þis

ʒere is graunted þe for þi helpe"[32] (E. Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in England*, 89-90). The

"ymage of deeþ" also exhorts Disciple to make a daily contemplation of the eternal

torments he is privileged to witness, where "þe leest peyne of þis purgatory we nowe

felen in on hour semeþ as grete as alle þe sorow of þe passing world in an hundred ʒer"[33]

and to "write hem sadli in þine hert, of þe sorowes and anguysches þat þu seest in me"[34]

(E. Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in England*, 98, 94).

Appleford points to Peter of Lombard's *Sentences* to explain the two types of fear

deployed in *Learn to Die*, the higher and appropriate *timor filialis* (fear appropriate to a

son), which is also treated in *Speculum Vitae* (lines 367-583) and *De visitacione*

infirmorum (ultimately deriving from Augustinian theology), and the lower and

inappropriate *timor servilis* (fear of God's punishment):

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[32] [Put into your heart that if your soul were in Purgatory now, you would have ten years in the burning fire in penance for your trespasses, and only this year is granted to you for your help.]

[33] […the least pain of this Purgatory we now feel in one hour seems as great as all the sorrow of the passing world in one hundred years.]

[34] [Write them (the sins) sadly in your heart, of the sorrows and anguishes that you see in me.]

…when a man abstains from sin because of fear of hell…and it is by fear that he

does whatever good he does: not by fear of losing the eternal good, which he does

not love, but by suffering the evil which he fears. (Petrus and Giulio Silano)

Treating the lay reader as an ascetic, *Learn to Die* prescribes stoic meditations that

demand the replacement of *timor servilis* with *timor filialis* through daily detachment

from the body and encounters with one's own soul in Purgatory. The objective is not to

fear damnation or to sympathize with the future, condemned self, but to understand the

result of a bad death is to be void of the presence of God. The "ymage of deeþ" is clear on

this point: "But passing alle oþer maner of tormentes and peynes it greveþ me most þe

absence of þat blessed face of God"[35] (E. Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in England*, 98).

Also commensurate with the concerns of *De visitacione infirmorum*, the "ymage

of deeþ" comments on the sickbed as a perilous place for the soul, as the sick person,

frequently exhorted by friends and doctors to get well, does not consider how to die until

it is too late:

Þus frendes of þe body ben enemys to þe sowle for what tyme þe syckenesse

continwelly encresed and he þat is sike ever hopeþ of amendment. At þe last

sodenly he fayleþ and withoute froyte of hele ȝeldeþ up þe wrecched sowle. (E.

Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in England*, 91-2)

[Thus, friends of the body are enemies to the soul for the duration that the

sickness continually increase(s), and he that is sick is ever hopeful of amendment

---

[35] [But beyond all other manner of torments and pains, the absence of the blessed face of God grieves me
most.]

(i.e., regaining bodily health). At the last, he suddenly fails and without the salve

of (spiritual) health yields up the wretched soul.]

But perhaps most important to an analysis of Arthurian literature, the "ymage of deeþ"

presents Disciple with the chief reasons most Christians are not prepared to die:

> And [if] þu wold knowe þe cause of so gret and so comoun a perile: lo, þe
>
> inordinate desire of worschip, þe superflue cure of þe body, erþely love, and
>
> myche besinesse abowte wor[l]dli lyvyng blynden mony hertes of þe unconnyng
>
> and bryngen hem at þe last to þese myscheves. (E. Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in*
>
> *England*, 93)

> [And if you desire to know the cause of so great and so common a peril: lo, the
>
> inordinate desire of "worship" (worldly renown), the superfluous cure of the
>
> body, earthly love, and much industry about worldly living blinds many
>
> unknowing hearts and brings them at the last to these mischiefs.]

"Worship" here as in *Somme le roi* refers to public renown and is crucial to chivalric

identity, particularly in romances where *fin amour* is dependent on performances of

knightly prowess (Crane, *The Performance of Self*, 107-39). For a knight, to disconnect

from one's worship is to lose all sense of identity, yet this is exactly the manner of

detachment that *Learn to Die* demands of its lay readership. Thankfully, Wisdom appears

again and proposes a familiar alternative in the contemplation of *His* Passion:

> But what tyme þu comest to þat houre in soþnes and maist non oþerwise helpe þi
>
> silf þan is þere non oþer remedie but þat þu putte my passioun bytwixe þe and my
>
> dome lest þat dredyng more þan [nedith] my ryghtwesnes þow falle downe from
>
> þyn hope. (E. Armstrong, *Heinrich Suso in England*, 101)

36

[But if at that time you come to that true hour and may not otherwise help yourself, then there is no other remedy except to put My Passion between yourself and My judgment, lest dreading My righteousness more than necessary, you fall down from your hope (of salvation).]

But what if the *moriens*, as a member of the chivalry required to seek out worship through battle or the *pas d'armes*, is vocationally incapable of satisfying these conditions and thus making a "good death?" While the English *artes moriendi* problematically continues to exclude the secular knight likely to die in *mors improvisa*, the concept of "ghostly chivalry" arises to elevate the *miles Christi* to the status of devotional exemplar for all laymen in one tract of the *Pore Caitif* and its much longer and more developed successor, *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*.

An Introduction to *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*

Formerly attributed to Richard Rolle, *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* appears in MS Harley 1706 (fol. 36b), Douce 322, Rawl. C 894, Reg. 17 C XVM, and C.C.C. Oxf. 220 (Horstmann 420). It is loosely comprised of the ninth tract[36] of *Pore Caitif*, most often titled "Hors eþer armur of heuene" but sometimes "Of Goostli Bateile," along with what Daniel Devry Smith defines as the "treatise version" of the eschatological tract "Of þre arowes on domesday," extracts from the *Prik of Conscience*, and for Horstmann, who in

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[36] Or eighth tract per Brady if the prologue is discounted; for the ongoing debate concerning the potential Lollardy of the *Pore Caitif*, see Mary Teresa Brady, "Lollard Interpolations and Omissions in Manuscripts of The Pore Caitif," in De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in late-medieval England, ed. Michael Sargent (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 183–203 and Kalpen Trivedi, "Traditionality and Difference," 210–44.

1896[37] produced what is currently the *Tretyse's* only edited version, "other ill-connected ingredients" (Brady, "The 'Pore Caitif': An Introductory Study," 532; Devry Smith 122-4; Horstmann 420). Despite this criticism, as a vernacular treatise drawn from multiple English sources and the only such text Appleford places in the *ars moriendi* genre that explicitly focuses on the members of the chivalry, it is useful in elucidating the spiritual struggles of the *miles Christi* as well as the slippage between secular knights and saint-like figures present in all three Arthurian texts under review (172). The lengthy *Tretyse* can be divided into two major sections: an allegoresis of the arms of the *miles Christi* with an exhortation to all laymen to engage in ghostly chivalry, and a *memento mori* focused on the three wounds Christ will deliver to sinners during the Apocalypse which has been fused with the death meditations from "Hors eþer armur of heuene;" however, the first part is shot through by the repetition of the traditional Ephesians 6:10[38] and what at first appear to be tangential sermons on the barnacle goose and *imitatio Christi*. While the barnacle goose is admittedly a bit of an odd choice for such a treatise, it is a common English symbol for Christ and/or baptism that can be traced back at least as far as "Riddle 23" of the *Exeter Book*. On the other hand, the anonymous compiler's inclusion of the *imitatio Christi* sermon is more appropriate to the genre, as it demonstrates the necessity of *imitatio Christi* to the *artes moriendi* even after extensive preparations against temptation and death such as those adumbrated in the *Tretyse*.

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[37] In *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole Vol 2*.

[38] The traditional allegorical passage from the letters of Paul concerning the "armor of God," which has also been commonly interpreted to mean priestly robes rather than the warrior's kit but literally refers to the virtues of truth (belt), righteousness (breastplate), peace (sandals), faith (shield), salvation (helmet), the holy spirit/word of God (sword), and prayer (completes the set). As we shall see, the *Tretyse* and other theological/chivalric texts that drew from this list modified it extensively. See the end of this section for a chart comparing the allegorical armor from all the tracts discussed.

Even before drawing from Ephesians 6:10 for the first time, the *Tretyse* opens with a description of the postlapsarian world and the declaration that any who desire "the endeless blysse that mankynde was ordeyned to in hys fyrst creacion"[39] must first "haue in mynde that [which] oure lorde seyth by holy Iob: …Alle mannes lyfe upone erthe ys but fyghtying and kgyghthode ayenst gostly enemyes" (Horstmann 421). Job, strikingly, remains at the center of medieval thought concerning spiritual warfare as late as the mid-fifteenth century to which several of the MSS containing the *Tretyse* have been dated (Devry Smith 122-4). Ann Astell has traced this late-medieval understanding of Job as a ghostly warrior of God back to the Church Fathers: "Origen in the third century, and Saint John Chrysostom in the fourth, described Job as a heroic model of Christian fortitude, an athlete of God wrestling with God's Adversary" (1). Further, Josephus influenced Saint Jerome to incorrectly identify the Joban dialogues (Job 3:1-42:7) as composed in the hexameters of the Classical Epic tradition, placing Job's spiritual warfare and fleshly mortification on the same allegorical battlefield as those of Aeneas and Odysseus (Astell 1-5). This ultimately led to Gregory the Great's extensive use of heroic allegoresis in his widely influential *Moralia in Job*:[40]

> See, that when outwardly prostrated by the wounds of the flesh, he [Job] abides
> inwardly erect in the fences of the mind, and beneath him he sees every dart fly
> past wherewith the raging enemy transfixes him outwardly with unsparing hand;
> watchfully he catches the javelins, now cast, in wounds, against him in front, and

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[39] Pointedly, this quote opens "Hors eþer armur of heuene."

[40] All translations of St. Gregory's *Moralia* are by John Henry Parker, J. G. F. Rivington, and J. Rivington unless otherwise noted. Please see Works Cited.

now, in words, as it were from the side. And our champion encompassed with the

rage of the besetting fight, at all points presents his shield of patience, meets the

darts coming in on every hand, and on all virtue's sides wheels round the guarded

mind to front the assailing blows. (Book 3, X.17)

While passages like these abound in the *Moralia*, St. Gregory's ghostly warrior is

concerned with spiritual and not physical warfare. Prior to the twelfth century, when St.

Bernard of Clairvaux wrote *De laude novae militae* to founding Templar Hugh de Payns,

ghostly battle was ironically characterized by the need for the Christian hero to lay down

his or her physical arms to conquer the enemies of God, as exemplified by Saint Martin,

Saint Sebastian, and according to Chris Vinsonhaler, even Beowulf (27-30). For Astell,

this physical disarmament remains representative of Job's ghostly battle in that Job is

stripped of his worldly possessions; thus, the *miles Christi* of the Early Middle Ages does

battle with the Devil and his legions armed solely in the "whole armor of God," which is

figurative and ghostly, not literal and corporeal (161-6). This changed when members of

the "new chivalry" were required to wage war against both physical and ghostly enemies,

rendering the allegorical literal:

> Job becomes a model for the Christian layman who braves the physical and
>
> spiritual dangers of this world and whose pure intention affirms and redeems
>
> secular military action. Signed with the cross, Job stands as the Bernardine patron
>
> not only of the historical Knights Templar and the crusaders, but also of Grail
>
> knights like Galahad. Rather than rejecting arms, they take them up as the
>
> outward sign of their inward devotion, reliteralizing the Joban allegory of
>
> weapons as they use them against God's enemies. (Astell 160)

40

Gregory the Great's Joban allegoresis had another potentially unintentional effect on the *miles Christi* of the High and Late Middle Ages that finds its way into the *Tretyse* and is essential to understanding its preoccupation with the English knight's arms and armor. In his *Moralia*, St. Gregory deliberately allegorizes the individual pieces of the Christian warrior's armor to stand against the traditional biblical reading drawn from St. Paul; for example, whereas in the NIV version of Ephesians 6:10 and its Middle English translation in the *Tretyse* the warrior's shield represents faith, in Gregory's *Moralia* it— along with the breastplate—stands for patience. An additional range of allegorical meaning ascribed to the biblical warrior's kit later appears in medieval treatises concerned with ghostly chivalry, including the *Pore Caitif's* "Hors eþer armur of heuene," the painstakingly labeled illuminations found together with a copy of Peraldus's *Summa de vitiis* (located in MS Harley 3244), and Ramon Llull's late thirteenth-century *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*. While the *Pore Caitif* tract is comparatively quite terse in its section concerning ghostly chivalry, these other two samples more closely match the compiler of the *Tretyse's* ambition to allegorize the complete arms of the knight with corresponding Christian virtues, an exegesis that is limited to the rider's tack in "Hors eþer armur of heuene":

Bridil—abstynence (fol. 94r)

Two Reynes—temperance (fol. 95r)

Sadil—mansuetude ethir esynesse[41] (fol. 95v)

Two Sporis—loue ... to that lastynge wele[42] that neuer shal haue eende.

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[41] Mildness or tranquility

[42] Prosperity, well-being (contextually the kingdom of heaven)

> –drede ... of the peynes of purgatorie and of helle, (fol. 96) (Brady, "The 'Pore
>
> Caitif': An Introductory Study," 540)

Conversely, while the illuminations that accompany a copy of Peraldus's *Summa de vitiis*
exhaustively catalogue the Seven Deadly Sins and all the concatenations of their
subordinate vices, there is still space for a detailed allegoresis of the knight's spiritual
arms and the Christian virtues by which he is protected from his ghostly enemies. The
knight of the illuminations is armed *cap-a-pie* and sits tall in his saddle, protected by a
guardian angel and flanked by seven doves representing the Gifts of the Holy Spirit listed
together with an interesting grouping of what Richard Newhauser has outlined as
Contrary Virtues[43] (Newhauser, "Preaching the Contrary Virtues," 135-52). The epigraph
inscribed above the knight and angel is, quite tellingly, Job 7:1: "The life of man upon
earth is warfare." The catalogue of his spiritual arms is as follows:

> Helm = *spes futuri gaudii* (hope for future bliss)
>
> Hauberk = *caritas* (love of God and fellow human beings)
>
> Shield = [*fides*] (faith) Three sides = Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Center = God
>
> Sword = *verbum Dei* (Word of God)
>
> Lance = *perseverantia* (perseverance)
>
> Pennant = *regni celestis desiderium* (desire for the Heavenly Kingdom)
>
> Reins = *discretio* (discernment)
>
> Saddle = *christiana religio* (Christian religion)

---

[43] Per Newhauser's translation of MS Harley 3244: 1) The Spirit of Fear of the Lord → Humility, 2) The
Spirit of Godliness → Gentleness, 3) The Spirit of Knowledge → Godliness, 4) The Spirit of Fortitude →
Thirst for Justice, 5) The Spirit of Counsel → Compassion, 6) The Spirit of Understanding → Cleanness of
Heart, 7) The Spirit of Wisdom → Peace (Biddle 155).

Saddle-cloth = *humilitas* (humility)

Horse = *bona uoluntas* (good will)

Spurs = *discipline* (instruction)

Stirrups = *propositum boni operis* (resolution to perform a good deed)

Horseshoes = *delectatio* (delight)*, consensus* (concord)*, bonum opus* (good deed)*,*

consuetudo (habit) (M. Evans 21, Biddle 157-8)

Chapter V[44] of Ramon Llull's *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* provides an even

more extensive allegoresis of comparable depth to that of the *Tretyse*. Originally written

in Catalan between 1274-1276, it was translated anonymously into French[45] and Latin,[46]

widely distributed throughout Western Europe, and eventually rendered fancifully into

English and printed by William Caxton between 1483-1485[47] (Fallows 1-5, Astell 170-2,

Byles xvi). As we shall see in the next chapter, which focuses on ghostly chivalry and

provides an in-depth analysis of the *Tretyse* and its analogs, while its compiler

uncontestably draws upon "Hors eþer armur of heuene," the work's first half more

closely resembles MS Harley 3244's illuminations and Llull's Chapter V in scope,

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[44] In Noel Fallows's recent English translation from Llull's Catalan (The Boydell Press, 2013); Alfred T.P. Byles, who edited the Caxton ME version in for the EETS, references this section as Chapter VI in all extant versions from Llull to Loutfut (Llull 66, Caxton 76).

[45] St. John's College, Oxf. Codex 102 attests to the presence of at least one French MS circulating in Ricardian England containing *L'Ordre de Cheualerie* alongside such well known tracts as *Secretum Secretorum*, *Les Romanes des 7 Sages*, and *Le Romance de Melibee et Prudence* (Byles xvi).

[46] Byles has discovered references to a Latin version in various MSS attributed to Llull and argues for its existence in his introduction although no extant copies remain.

[47] Caxton's translation is predated by Sir Gilbert Hay's Scots version in 1456, which Byles claims is "not so much of a translation as a free paraphrase and expansion," and is succeeded by Adam Loutfut's Middle Scots translation in 1494, which Byles has shown to be based not on the French *L'Ordre de Cheualerie* but Caxton's English version. Byles's comparison of these three insular translations reveals that only Hay's version takes creative liberties with the allegoresis of the knight's arms—although certain liberties abound elsewhere (xxxv, xli-xlii, li).

greatly expanding upon the *Pore Caitif* tract to include a more complex range of allegorical meaning than its sources and striving to provide a complete allegoresis of the knight's arms and armor, even going so far as to update Ephesians 6:10 for its purposes.

The Boke of the Craft of Dying

The *Craft of Dying*[48] is an early-fifteenth century, Middle English reworking and expansion of Jean Gerson's *Tractatus de arte bene moriendi*, which Nancy Lee Beaty refers to as "the wellspring" of the *ars moriendi* genre in her eponymous monograph (1-7). While this and previous chapters have endeavored to demonstrate the falsity of her "wellspring" claim, Beaty herself argues (as will be evident in our reading of the *Craft*) that one of the major sources from which the *Tractatus* was drawn—including much of its processes, rituals, and interrogations—is none other than the Latin version of *De visitacione infirmorum*, the *Ordo ad visitandum*, which (as discussed above) was widely translated into Middle English in the late-fourteenth century and used as a service book alongside—and eventually replacing—its Latin predecessor (Beaty 2-3; Appleford 23, 28-32). Horstmann labels the English *Craft* as a "work misattributed to Richard Rolle" yet believes the *Tractatus* itself to be Rolle's. On the other hand, Appleford, Beaty, and Comper for the most part agree on the author, composition, and dating of the *Tractatus* yet do not mention Rolle. It was likely drawn, again, from the *Ordo ad visitandum* and Gerson's *De scientia mortis*, the third chapter of his *Opusculum tripartitum*, and was then likely composed as well as distributed at the Council of Constance (1414-1418 CE)

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[48] For which Comper lists the following MSS: Douce MS 322, Rawl. MS C. 894, Bod. MS 423, C.C.C. Oxfd. 220, Harl. 1706, Reg. 17 C xviii, Addit. 10596, and Ff. v. 45 (48). This updates Horstmann's list found in *Yorkshire Writers Vol 2* (406).

where Gerson was a leading figure (Appleford 141; Beaty 2-3; Comper 48-9). Beaty also makes note of the influence of a tract from Suso's *Horologium sapientiae*, translated into Middle English as *Learn to Die* (also above), further revealing that the *Tractatus* is indeed not a "wellspring" in the sense of being an originator of the *ars moriendi* tradition either in England or on the Continent, but rather a compilation of previously influential tracts, much like *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*. What is defensible about Beaty's argument, however, is that the *Tractatus* was exceptionally influential in the fifteenth century, serving as the major source for the widely distributed Dominican *Ars Moriendi* Latin tracts (1415 CE for the first redaction and 1450 CE for the blockbook), which in turn were sources for both of Caxton's *Ars Moriendi* printings (translated in 1490 CE from French and 1491 CE from Latin). While Caxton's briefer versions of an already-redacted *Tractatus* are important to the English vernacular tradition, they have been studied at length and do not fall within the date range of this investigation (Appleford 170-1; Beaty 3-6; Comper 48-9). The *Craft*, however, as an English expansion rather than a redaction of the *Tractatus,* and a vernacular treatise in circulation as early as the 1420s and widely popular by the 1460s seems most appropriate to a consideration of the English tradition near March 1469-March 1470, the date range P.J.C. Field proposes for Malory's completion of *Morte Darthur* (Appleford 168; Field 131).

While ascetic in the sense that it frequently repeats that very few secular and indeed even religious persons know how to die well, the *Craft of Dying* intentionally seeks the widest possible audience of laymen and clergymen. As a compilation of various previous works and frames of thought, the *Craft* is individualistic in the meditative portions but communal in the death ritual itself—even more so than the previously

discussed *Visitations A* and *E*. Laypersons' roles are also greatly enhanced; they pray

over the dying, judge the *morien's* spiritual hygiene, engage in hagiographic storytelling,

and assume other offices normally reserved for a "trewe preeste," a figure never

mentioned in the text but who would likely have still attended to perform confession and

extreme unction[49] (Appleford 150-1). Unlike the terror-inducing *Learn to Die* and *Tretyse*

of Gostly Batayle, the *Craft's* primary concern is fear management and the avoidance of

timor servilis. Beaty sees the *Craft* as a text that ultimately comforts the *moriens* through

familiar prayers, liturgies, and symbols that she sometimes considers to be common

medieval superstitions; however, Appleford argues that its tone belies its anxiety about

the saving power of the sacraments and leaves the reader uncertain about "where

salvation lies and how hard it is to obtain" (Appleford 143; Beaty 22-53). As Beaty has

suggested, Suso's influence can be felt in the understanding that as an *ars*, or craft, the

moriens must learn to die well before taking sick because the dying person's natural

inclinations are to "grutch," doubt, and exhibit fear. Conversely, Appleford correctly

points out that the *Craft* contains no detailed descriptions of the afterlife or guided

pilgrimages to the afterlife such as those present in *Learn to Die*, *Somme le roi*, and *A*

Tretyse of Gostly Batayle (145). The focus instead is on the dying act itself, and—as in

Everyman—with the right (albeit brief) preparation, it is solely this act that determines

the spiritual hygiene of the *moriens* and his or her ability to escape the flames of

perdition.

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[49] As Appleford has pointed out, unlike the *Visitation* tracts, there are no gaps to allow for the office of the
priest (150).

The *Craft*[50] opens with an introduction laying out its six parts; this is essential

because like *De visitacione infirmorum*, the *Craft* is concerned with the death ritual itself,

which does not always go according to the script. From the beginning, the implication of

this organizational strategy is that the officiants may be required to skip around

depending upon the deteriorating status of the *moriens*. The first two parts, 1) the

commendation of death and knowing how to die well and 2) the temptations of the

moriens, are instructional while the other four parts refer to the ritual that should be

performed for and with (if possible) the dying person. These are 3) deathbed

interrogations while the *moriens* may still speak and understand them, 4) obsequies for

the dying including a set of prayers and *imitatio Christi*, 5) instructions for the deathbed

attendants, and 6) English rather than Latin prayers (Comper 3-4). Appleford comments

on the "extraordinary role the work gives to the deathbed attendants" and compares this

further shift toward the salvation granting authority of the laity to the earlier move

between *Visitations A* and *E*:

> The *Craft of Dying* potentially gives laypeople at least this degree of authority,
>
> but tends to diffuse it through the entire group of attendants. While any attendant
>
> competent to do so can conduct the interrogations and prayers, the work several
>
> times obliges the whole group to function as a collective or "convent" (149).

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[50] For my citations, I have used the updated typescript of the *Craft* in Francis Comper's 1917 *The Book of the Craft of Dying* pp. 3-51. Comper has done the important editorial work of normalizing the tract's spelling to Modern English and providing grammatical footnotes where needed without providing a full translation. The *Craft* is also available in Horstmann's *Yorkshire Writers Vol. II* pp. 406-420, which I have also surveyed and utilized (above) for my reading of *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*; however, Beaty has already provided an extensive reading of Horstmann's 1896 edition of the *Craft*, and I have included her reading in my analysis. Comper has also updated Horstman's work by relying on Bodleian MS 423, which he argues as the oldest version of the *Craft*, for his transcription and then collating with Douce MS 322 and Rawl. MS C. 894. My objective here is not to bypass a Middle English version of the *Craft*, but to be as comprehensive as possible in this brief space.

While Appleford allows that "[a]ctual priests must have attended the late deathbeds," she also notes their relative absence from the text as a whole (151). From the very beginning of the *Craft*, the sense is that of a relaxed ritual designed to be more comforting than terrifying to the *moriens* despite retaining a strong sense of orthodoxy.

Book I reveals that the moment of death, if performed correctly, supersedes a sinful life in determining the fate of the *moriens*. The author(s)[51] of the *Craft* are grimly aware of the disposition common to the sickbed: death is terrifying for those still cognizant of their condition, and embracing it wholeheartedly is not a reasonable response unless, as Suso has argued (above), it can be learned beforehand. This first section comforts as much as it instructs the *moriens*, speaking of the sinful dying: "…if they die in the state of very repentance and contrition, and in the very faith, and virtue, and charity of the Holy Church [their death] is acceptable and precious in the sight of God (Comper 5-6). This is reinforced by various scriptural passages, including Rev xiv.13,[52] Wis.iv.7,[53] and Eccels vii.1,[54] further characterizing death as a rite of passage as well as a ritual of cleansing that prepares the soul for heaven. As in *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*, earth is a prison that one may finally escape through death, and so dying should be welcome: "*Bene mori, est libenter mori*. To die well is to die gladly and willfully" (Comper 6-7). And as in every other tract surveyed, the antithesis of this gratitude for

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[51] Beaty makes an argument for multiple authors throughout her discussion and treats each Book as a separate project that was combined with the others later.

[52] "Blessed be all dead men that die in God" (Comper 6).

[53] "A rightful man though he be hasted, or hastily or suddenly dead, he shall be had to a place of refreshing" (Comper 6).

[54] "The day of man's death is better than the day of his life" (Comper 6).

death is "grutching," which the *Craft* illustrates more comprehensively than the others: muttering complaints, blasphemy, trying to escape the ordained time of death, subverting the ritual itself, etc.[55] The Book concludes with the example of Paul (Philip I.23) also deployed in the *Tretyse*: "I desire and covet to be dead, and be with Christ" (Comper 9). These deathly desires combined with complete acceptance of the heavenly appointed time of death aid the *moriens* in creating a kind of "perfect storm" of contrition that has the potential to overwhelm *mors improvisa* and enable the sinner or newly converted Christian the necessary forgiveness to bypass Purgatory and hell, whatever his or her actual dessert. Appleford's chapter "Wounded Texts and Worried Readers" suggests that the *Craft's* leniency here in fact creates more doubt than comfort; for Beaty, this first Book commending death seems equally concerned with "how to proclaim to sinful man the gospel of God's acceptance of him despite his sinfulness without thereby releasing him from the sense of moral obligation which makes possible human society as we know it" (8). This late-medieval sense of "imbalance" between a sinful life and the absolution of a good death is nevertheless portrayed didactically in fifteenth-century morality plays such as *Everyman* and *The Castle of Perseverance*, and as we shall see, it is equally stressed in Malory's updates to the deaths of prominent Arthurian figures in his *Morte Darthur*. Appleford communicates Book I's—and indeed the entire *Craft's*—telos succinctly:

> A single, inner movement of "verray contricyon," hidden from bystanders, known
> only to God, can outweigh decades of sin, negligence of confession, and a speedy

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[55] See my discussion in *De visitacione infirmorum* (above).

death. In this theological world, Suso's dying youth had every chance to be saved,

had he not succumbed to despair[56] (152).

Book II, the longest and most substantial section of the *Craft*, concerns the

temptations of the *moriens*, which are depicted as literal demons in the blockbook version

of the *Ars Moriendi* based upon the *Tractatus*, but which Beaty argues are more likely to

have been understood as psychological conditions[57] (12). The first temptation is of the

faith, and due to the *Tractatus's* likely origins at the Council of Constance,[58] the *Craft*

extols the virtues of the Church and reinforces the need for orthodox belief and

compliance, to "fully obey the statutes of the Church of Rome, and stably to abide and

die in them" (Comper 10). Complete "intellectual understanding" of the faith is not

required of the *moriens*, as the *Craft* asserts that all good Christians should obey

habitually without question and only endanger the health of the soul when they doubt the

efficacy of the Church and its rituals—again, as death is a perfectly natural time for such

doubt, it is also a particularly attractive time for the Devil to appear to tempt the *moriens*

to blasphemy and damnation. However, the fiend and his followers can be combatted by

fleshly mortification, the contemplation of the Passion, and the recitation of the Creed.

Meditations on the Holy Fathers are also recommended—notably including Job—as well

as the Apostles, martyrs, lesser saints, etc. This section ends with an exhortation to prayer

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[56] The second of the temptations in Book II and arguably the most dangerous for those dying quickly and in sin.

[57] For Beaty, "The demonology of the *Crafte* is more archaic in expression than in substance" (12).

[58] Appleford postulates that the Hussites, a 'heretical' movement on the Continent similar to the Lollards, might have been part of the reason for the many changes between Gerson's *Opusculum* and the *Tractatus*. Like the *Craft*, the *Tractatus* is concerned with all laypersons reciting orthodox dogma on their deathbeds. Gerson's Opusculum was likely made more orthodox at the Council of Constance before being adapted by Rudolph Von Dinkelsbul, a prominent fifteenth-century secular theologian (168).

and the important concept that all things are possible through faith, including forgiveness

for all sins at one's deathbed (Comper 10-2).

The second temptation is despair, the antithesis of the faith required to believe in

the mercy of God that can save the *moriens*. The Devil is an active figure in fostering this

environment of desperation, but the *Craft* also acknowledges that sickness and the

physical inability to make a confession are factors as well, reassuring the *moriens* thus:

> For though any one man or woman had done as many thefts, or manslaughters, or
>
> as many other sins as be drops of water in the sea… though he had never done
>
> penance for them afore, nor never had been shriven of them before—neither then
>
> might have time, for sickness or lack of speech, or shortness of time, to be shriven
>
> of them—yet should he never despair… (Comper 13)

This section continues to inculcate that the mere desire for confession and penance, even

if there is not enough time for it before death, "is sufficient and accepted by God"

(Comper 13). This is reinforced by Ps 50:19,[59] Ezech. 33.12,[60] and several passages

attributed to St. Bernard and St. Augustine before closing with Heb. 5:35 (along with

another list of the venerated): "Lose not your hope and confidence in God, the which hath

great reward of God" (Comper 15). Although it borders on complacency (the fourth

temptation) to believe in such ostensibly underserved forgiveness, Beaty points out that

according to the *Craft*, despair is profitless; as a symptom of doubt in God's love, it only

adds to the sins accumulated at the judgment: "…the mercy of God exceeds even man's

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[59] "Lord God, Thou wilt never despise a contrite heart and a meek" (Comper 13).

[60] "In what hour whatever it be that the sinful man is sorry inward, and converted from his sins, he shall be saved" Comper 13).

utmost ability to provoke his wrath and indignation…the only result of despair is to augment the everlasting pains that await the faithless" (12).

      The third temptation is impatience, of which the major symptom is "grutching" due to the pains of a long illness, which the tract identifies "as open experience teacheth men" as the most likely condition of the *moriens* (Comper 16). This norm of prolonged sickness is significant enough that a large section compares these pains to a Purgatory on earth through which the *moriens* must suffer in order to obtain grace (Comper 16-7). As in previous examples, the concern is that those unready for death display impatience with God's will to the point that they eventually become "wood and witless" and are therefore unable to make a good death. The counter for this is the virtue of patience, which surprisingly is not supported by the traditional example of Job, nor by the crucified Christ enduring the pains of the Passion, but rather by St. Gregory's *Homilies* and *Moralia* as well as passages attributed to St. Augustine. One of St. Gregory's citations stands out in particular: "It is done by the disposition and rightful ordinance of God that to the longer sin is ordained the longer sickness" (Comper 17). Although not mentioned directly until Book V, this coincides with *Visitation A's* concerns regarding seeking ghostly medicine before earthly medicine; if the illness, like Job's, is indeed designed as a trial, and the *moriens* interferes with this process, this act would strongly demonstrate impatience not just with illness, but with God, the possible originator of the affliction. Beaty's reading concurs;[61] unlike *Visitation A*, wherein the pain of dying should merely be accepted as a

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[61] Beaty also correctly points to a general lack of references to and meditations on scripture and holy figures in these remaining sections concerning the temptations; to her, these structural differences suggest multiple authorship (14-6). The Passion, one of the most important elements of the *Craft* and the key to the *moriens's* salvation, has also gone missing from these sections but will be reintroduced in Book III and remain prevalent thereafter.

deserved punishment and endured stoically, here "…their impatience shows their insufficient love for the righteous God who permits suffering as a punishment for sins" (14). Therefore, to demonstrate love and obedience through *timor filialis,* any suffering ordained by God must be fully embraced, not merely endured.

The fourth and fifth temptations are split between clerics and laypersons. The cleric's temptation is complacency, which Beaty simplifies to pride because this section is concerned with how the pride of the complacent *moriens* causes him or her to believe the final judgment not to be in doubt (15-16). Pride is unfortunately a natural symptom of lacking the doubt in God's forgiveness with which the previous section was concerned, and when considered in this way, as a tightrope walk between doubt and complacency, Appleford's argument that the *Craft* creates the very death anxieties in attempts to subdue seems apt (143). Prideful complacency is also, as Richard Newhauser has demonstrated, a cleric's bane as old as the original conception of the monk's temptations that eventually developed into the Seven Deadly Sins: an octad of "evil thoughts" that plagued the early desert hermits who embraced Christianity in the fourth century CE (*The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular*, 98-105). Newhauser explains the asceticism of these early desert hermits and their temptations:

> The evil thoughts were ordered…in a way which roughly reflects the monk's
> spiritual progress. At the beginning of his monastic career (and at the head of the
> list of λογισμοί), the monk was faced with controlling the coarse desires of the
> body; as he made progress in the anchoritic life, he had to confront more
> spiritualized temptations, and these culminated in vainglory and pride, which

became especially dangerous when all previous demons had been defeated. (*The*

Treatise on Vices and Virtues in the Vernacular, 104)

Newhauser is careful to state that the anchorites who reached this stage of asceticism at which pride was the chief concern did not entirely dismiss the bodily sins, but on the deathbed where the flesh is mortified, the cleric who believes to have overcome them all remains in a precarious position. The member of the clergy who would embrace the *Craft* and die well must therefore be certain not to presume ascension into heaven just as the desert hermit must not grow complacent in his spiritual hygiene. As complacency has been contextually identified with pride in this section, the *Craft* preaches the Contrary Virtue of humility to avoid this temptation—but the *moriens* must thread the needle of remaining humble without doubting in God's mercy (Comper 18-9).

The fifth temptation, worldliness—which Beaty *oversimplifies* to avarice—is the final temptation for the layperson, as the cleric is (perhaps wrongfully so[62]) already assumed to have dismissed this temptation upon taking the cloth (16-17). Avarice and the coveting of worldly goods are indeed addressed in this brief section, but it is more concerned with the *moriens's* continued focus on the carnal world rather than his or her transition to the spiritual world: "…business outward about temporal things; that is their wives, their children, their carnal friends, and their worldly riches, and other things that they loved inordinately before" (Comper 20). This "inordinate love" is at the heart of the

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[62] Beyond the well-documented luxuries of the clergy in Middle English literature (e.g. Chaucer's Monk and Prioress; Lydgate's clergymen (other than the Carthusian) in *The Dance of Death*, etc.), Gerson's inquiries from *De arte moriendi*, the third part of his *Opusculum*, which appear in Book III of the *Craft*, contain affirmations designed for dying clergymen who have amassed ill-gotten worldly goods (Comper 23-7; Beaty 19-20).

issue and hearkens back the Arthurian example of the dying King Ban in the *Lancelot-Grail* (see Chapter 1) who performs an *imitatio Christi* and improvised communion after fearing not for himself but for his young queen, his son (Lancelot), and his burning lands when his heart bursts in his chest. Two centuries after the composition of the *Lancelot-Grail*, the *Craft*, which in its succeeding Books will champion the Passion as the only way to ensure a good death, concurs that Ban's actions should have yielded positive results: "For he that will die well and surely must utterly and fully put away out of his mind all temporal and outward things, and plenerly commit himself all to God" (Comper 20). This comparison speaks not only to the orthodoxy of the *Craft*, but also to the resurgence of expedients dating back to the Crusades in effort to include and comfort as many dying Christians as possible in the early-fifteenth century.

Book III of the *Craft*, as stated above, contains the deathbed interrogations for the *moriens*, which are divided into two sections: questions for the layperson derived (as in the *Visitation* texts) from the pseudo-Anselm and questions for the clergy from Gerson's *De arte moriendi*, the third part of his *Opusculum* (Comper 23-7; Beaty 19-20). Beaty highlights some flexibility here in that the *moriens* need not wait for another person to pose these questions to him or her (20). As the tract inculcates, few supposedly know of the *Craft*, leaving proper death preparations ultimately in the hands of the *moriens*. This alleged access to specialized knowledge and exhortation to individual responsibility in performing a good death heightens the text's sense of lay asceticism and obliquely evokes the *memento mori* meditations of *Learn to Die* and the *Book of Vices and Virtues*. However, the true focus of Book III is not on death preparation but on the power of Christ's Passion. The most striking affirmation of the first set of interrogations is that the

moriens must believe that the Passion is the sole salvation of the dying, and this leads to a

brief *imitatio Christi* spoken in Latin and repeated thrice. Yet here is another flexibility:

if the *moriens* is unable to speak due to incapacitation, the lay deathbed attendants simply

take over, changing "*meum*" to "*eius*" and commending the spirit of the dying person on

his or her behalf (Comper 23-7; Appleford 149; Beaty 19-20). This critical part of the rite

is described in more detail in Book IV; for now, the *Craft* moves on to the next set of

interrogations intended for the clergy, but which ostensibly may also be applied to a

layman as well if there is time. Beaty points out that the most important commonality

between the first and second sequence, which in essence repeats the concerns of the

pseudo-Anselm but strengthens the focus on the authority and salvation-granting power

of the Church, is the *moriens's* need to renounce the ability to earn salvation without the

Passion (21). Moreover, of these interrogations, only "[t]he fifth and sixth are new,

designed to test the validity of the *moriens's* contrition… The seventh combines the last

three of the earlier set" (Beaty 20). A brief accounting of this set of inquiries follows:

1) Confirmation of belief in the doctrines of the Church

2) Confirmation of self-knowledge, humility, and *timor filialis*

3) Confirmation of sorrow and repentance of sins

4) Confirmation that the sick person, if restored to health, would amend his/her
   spiritual hygiene and shun worldly possessions and temptations

5) Confirmation of the sick person's willingness to forgive anyone that has sinned
   against him/her

6) Confirmation that the sick person, if restored to health, promises to forfeit any ill-
   gotten goods

7) Confirmation that the sick person believes he/she may only be saved by Christ's Passion

The slippage between layperson and the cleric is evident here despite the initial separation of the estates—the *Craft* suggests the layperson go through the second ritual, the ritual itself contains interrogations of the same substance as the first, the Passion remains the only saving force for both estates, material wealth and worldliness remain important concerns for the clergy (despite their apparent lack of temptation in Book II), and the attendants mentioned who administer this process are increasingly laymen. Beaty comments on Gerson's attempt to update this ritual: "Yet his interrogations for laymen are, even in the modified version found in the *Crafte*, little less timeless than the ritual of as much as seven or eight centuries before" (21). However, while the method of examination itself has not significantly changed, as in several of the *ars moriendi* tracts in the English tradition, the locus of salvation in the *Craft* has shifted from the Church to the individual and the lay community, from outward ritual known only to specialists to inner contemplation of Christ. The *Craft* is also clear in that any *moriens* not asked these questions may still make a good death if prepared to go willingly but fearfully into the afterlife while suffering sickness patiently and contemplating the Passion. Such a one would therefore be considered properly disposed to have answered the questions to satisfaction had he or she been queried (Comper 26-7). Again, as Appleford has stressed, the *Craft's* relaxing of previous restrictions is intended to provide comfort to the *moriens*, but anxiety and confusion may result instead, leading to the very doubt in the efficacy of the Church with which the tract is chiefly concerned.

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From these interrogations, the *Craft* moves fluidly into Book IV, which contains

prior to its other obsequies the detailed instructions for performing the *imitatio Christi*

referenced above. Beaty, who evaluates the tract structurally, argues that the lack of a

pause between Book III's examinations in the *moriens's* belief in the Passion's

redeeming power and Book IV's *imitatio Christi* demonstrates just how critical the

Passion is to the *Craft* and therefore to performing a good death (22-3). Here, the *moriens*

must imitate five actions Christ took on the Cross: praying, crying out, weeping,

commending his soul to God, and finally, yielding up his spirit (Comper 27). The

moriens too ill to pray aloud is permitted to pray in his heart, and cautioned to cry out

likewise rather than verbally—ostensibly in order to avoid "grutching." The *Craft* states

that Christ's act of weeping was but to teach mankind repentance, and so the *moriens*

must weep for his or her sins, not because death is at hand. The commendation of the

spirit and its release are expressions of obedience to God: "So should every man in his

death; that is to say, he should die willfully, conforming fully therein his will to God's

will, as he is bound" (Comper 27-8). A scripted oration is provided for the commendation

and release of the spirit, followed by a set of five orthodox prayers of which only two

verses are in Latin, strongly demonstrating a shift to the vernacular here that it's worth

noting is not followed in the later Caxton prints, which retain the Latin prayers of the

Tractatus. The first set of prayers are addressed to God and Christ, followed by the

Virgin Mary, and then eventually include "all the apostles, martyrs, and confessors, and

virgins—and specially to those saints which he [the *moriens*] loved and worshipped most

specially in his heal[th]—that they would help him then in his last end and most need"

(Comper 30-1). Yet the ending of Book IV makes another concession that reveals only

the *moriens's* participation in the *imitatio Christi* is necessary for the rite to be efficacious:

> And if he that is sick can not[63] all these prayers, or may not say them for grievousness or sickness, let some man that is about him say them before him, as he may clearly hear him say them, changing the words that ought to be changed in his saying. And he that is dying, as long as he hath use of reason, let him pray devoutly within himself, with his heart and his desire, as he can and may, and so yield the ghost up to God; and he shall be safe. (Comper 31)

Book V is addressed to the deathbed attendants and begins with an exhortation to warn all "even christians" of the perils of dying in *mors improvisa*. The chief concern of the first passage is that the majority of Christians "for-sloth themselves": they are aware of their poor spiritual hygiene but believe that they will live long lives and therefore put off the necessary preparations to be predisposed to die well. The *Craft* therefore teaches the administrator of the ritual to "diligently provide and ordain for the spiritual remedy and medicine of his [the *moriens's*] soul" (Comper 32). As in *Visitation A*, bodily medicine is not to be given before spiritual medicine, yet here the *Craft* obliquely cites (and Comper clarifies) the source of this decree as Gratian's *Tractatus de penitentia* from his *Decretum*, a staple of canon law dating back to the twelfth century and again demonstrating the *Craft's* reliance on tradition (32). The next concern is that the deathbed attendant does not give the *moriens* false hope of recovery: "Often times by such a vain and a false cheering and comforting, and feigned behooting of bodily heal[th], and trusting thereupon, men run and fall into certain damnation everlastingly" (Comper 33).

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[63] Comper notes this as "knows not," which is contextually correct (31).

Once the *moriens* is certain that recovery is impossible and the attendants have denied

any final earthly temptations, the next admonishment is that of a hasty confession. The

Craft returns to St. Augustine,[64] this time the fourth *Book of Sentences*, the twentieth

distinction, to support the assertion that those who defer their repentance until the very

end of their lives are seldom truly contrite, and therefore it falls to the attendants to bring

them to a true state of death readiness. Another way in which the *moriens* may have "for-

slothed" him- or herself is in waiting until near death to appeal any censures made by the

Church, and so the attendants must either exhort the *moriens* to do so quickly or perhaps

even take the matter into their own hands, settling any sanctions or interdictions

posthumously. Much of what remains discusses the attendants' role in the

aforementioned ritual, but further allowances are made; for example, the attendants

should recite prayers and the Ten Commandments for the *moriens* if he or she is unable

to respond to inquiries by voice or outward sign, and if the sickness leaves the *moriens*

incapacitated, the attendants should then recite the *moriens's* favorite prayers and

hagiographies (Comper 34-5). The concept of ghostly battle arises briefly in instructions

for armaments against fiends,[65] calling into question Beaty's reading of the temptations

as psychological rather than literally demonic; these spiritual weapons include the

crucifix, the image of the Virgin, and holy water, which must be sprinkled over the

moriens and about the deathbed frequently for protection against evil spirits (Comper 36-

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[64] Also attributed to and supported by St. Gregory but without direction citation.

[65] This section, combined with Book II, likely inspired the popular *Ars Moriendi* blockbook in circulation
around 1450. Despite Beaty's argument for the demons as psychological temptations, the first chapter of
her monograph contains a brief but illuminating description of the woodcuts presented in the blockbook
version of the *Ars Moriendi* and some possible correlations of the demons to the temptations/sins of the
Tractatus (3-4).

7). Another passage, similar to those before, warns of the *moriens's* concerns for his

earthly goods and loves, reiterating that these thoughts must be put out of the mind.[66]

This leads again to the question of whether or not a good death can truly make up for a

"lusty" life, and while Book V holds firm, it also, in a passage reminiscent of Suso,

cautions against the *moriens* waiting until the point of deathly illness to learn the *Craft*, as

the sick and terrified rapidly lose both their sense of devotion and faculties of learning

(Comper 37-8). Finally, Book V ends with a familiar, comforting reminder that the

moriens—whether laymen or clergyman, or dying at home or in a convent—should have

no lack of attendants in these final hours:

> …and it were possible, all a city should come together with all haste to a man that
>
> is nigh to the death or dying… Therefore it is read that religious people and
>
> women—for the honesty of estate—should not run but to a man that is a-dying
>
> and for fire. (Comper 38-9)

Book VI, the final book of the *Craft*, contains a final prayer sequence and returns

to the mentality of a religious "convent" complete with the "smiting of the table"[67]

(Comper 39). As Appleford has already argued, however, this mostly resulted in a

transference of monastic prestige to the lay officiants who more than likely surrounded

the deathbed (151). Book VI's instructions dictate a distinct prayer hierarchy: the litany,

psalms, and then orisons, but this service may be repeated "to excite the devotion of the

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[66] Interestingly, as demonstrated above in the King Ban reading from Chapter 1, *Visitation A* contains in its similar instructions a defense against (presumably Wycliffite) iconoclasm, yet these concerns have been removed from the derivative *Craft* despite its predecessor, the *Tractatus*, likely being constructed at the Council of Constance and its well-documented defenses of orthodoxy (Kinpointer 29; Appleford 141-68; Beaty 3-52).

[67] "A flat board which [in monasteries] was struck instead of a bell" (Comper 39).

sick man" if the *moriens* remains conscious. As in the final two temptations of Book II, a distinction is drawn between secular and religious: these prayers are unnecessary for the cleric studied in how to die well yet remain important for laymen and as well as clergymen who failed to learn the *Craft*—a common complaint and source of anxiety through the entirety of the text. An anomaly arises just before the prayer service. Bodleian MS 423, which Comper lists as the oldest version of the *Craft* and from which he draws his typescript, contains a brief note to the *moriens* demonstrating the norms of the following service but making an allowance for the *moriens* dying alone: "In these prayers, if thou say them thyself, turn the words that should be turned, as thou shouldest do to say them thyself; for I write them as another should say them for thee" (40). These instructions are missing from MS Rawl. C. 894, the basis for Horstmann's typescript, and according to Comper, are indeed unique to Bod. MS 423 (418; 40). The most likely reason for this redaction is the impossibility of the *moriens* completing such a lengthy service alone, demonstrating again the necessity of a faith community in order to make a good death. This requirement leaves, again, the secular man-at-arms who dies in *mors improvisa* on the battlefield in need of special dispensation.

The last leaves of Book VI lack further instructions—only prayers. Unlike previous and even future insular tracts such as Caxton's *Ars Moriendi* printings, the litany and orisons are entirely in English. (The psalms referenced above are not included but ostensibly would have been known by the officiants.) Individual prayers are offered directly to God, St. Michael, the Virgin Mary, and Christ before the commendation of the spirit: "Go Christian soul out of this world, in the name of the Almighty Father than made thee of nought; in the Name of Jesu Christ, His Son, that suffered His passion for thee;

and in the Name of the Holy Ghost, that was infounded into thee" (Comper 47). The final

words of this last orison remind the *moriens* and those assembled at the bedside on his or

her behalf through what means the good death and redemption are possible: "by the

mediation of Our Lord Jesu Christ, that is Mediator between God and man. Amen"

(Comper 47). This need for Christ's mediation strongly supports the reliance on the

Passion and *imitatio Christi* inculcated not only in the *Craft*, but in every Middle English

tract surveyed and indeed all their continental sources as well. In the English *artes*

moriendi, Christ's Passion has been weaponized as the lance of the ghostly knight,

argued as a defense against all Seven Deadly Sins, and deployed as models of stoicism,

timor filis, and the commendation of the spirit. While its deployment in these tracts has

been variegated, it remains at the core of the English *artes moriendi*. And in the *Craft*,

stripped down to its barest elements and with all its dispensations in place, the Passion in

the form of *imitatio Christi* remains, in fact, the only requirement for salvation if the

moriens is prepared to die.

CHAPTER 3

GHOSTLY CHIVALRY: A CLOSE READING OF *A TRETYSE OF GOSTLY BATAYLE*

A closer look at the relatively obscure *Tretyse* and the English knight's place as a religious icon in the late Middle Ages is long overdue—particularly in the field of Arthurian Studies where Malory's knights are frequently compared to their counterparts in the French tradition, which was established centuries before and under different terms. The *telos* of the *Tretyse* clashes strongly with the oft-referenced Cistercian *La Queste del Saint Graal*, which develops a binary between celestial and terrestrial chivalry and establishes the former as superior and the latter as sinful. The *Tretyse*, on the other hand, extols the virtues of the order of knighthood and calls on both the clergy and the common laity to emulate the knight in spiritual warfare against sin and *mors improvisa*. Put another way, where *La Queste* dictates that knights should become more like monks or even hermits in order to to achieve salvation, the *Tretsye* demands the opposite: that Christians emulate knighthood in their spiritual struggles against evil. To this end, the compiler of the *Tretyse* has provided a *translatio* of Ephesians 6:10 that is developed into what is arguably a more complete allegoresis of the arms and armor of the late-fourteenth and fifteenth-century English knight than can be found in Caxton's later, embellished translation of Llull's *Book of the Order of Chivalry*.

In providing a close reading of the *Tretyse* and its analogs, the first part of this chapter will trace the development of these allegoreses of the ghostly knight, compare them to the continental tradition, and demonstrate their importance in considering the figural meanings behind arming sequences such as those found in *SGGK* and armed battle sequences resulting in death such as those in the *AMA* and *Morte Darthur*. The

second part of the *Tretyse*, which again contains the eschatological "Of þre arowes on

Domesday," illustrates the progress of the *memento mori* tradition in England resulting

from translations of continental tracts such as *Somme le roi* and *Horologium sapientiae*

into Middle English. Taken together, the two major parts of the *Tretyse* paint a clear

picture of what "death-readiness" meant in the Late Middle Ages for the fighting man

who may not have access to either last rites or the community rituals described in

Visitation A and the *Craft of Dying*. And as we shall see in the following chapter, the

Tretyse also significantly illuminates and contextualizes Gawain's struggles with sin and

mortality as he prepares to face death at the Green Chapel in *SGGK*.

Part I: The Horse and Arms of the Ghostly Knight

Unlike Llull and St. Bernard of Clairvaux but similarly to St. Gregory and MS

Harley 3244, the compiler of the *Tretyse* apprehends ghostly battle not as idealized

physical combat against the enemies of God but—as in the *psychomachia* of *The Castle

of Perseverance*—the psychological struggle to resist the tripartite enemy of "the fende,

the worlde, and the flessh" (Horstmann 421). For the allegorical knight of the *Tretyse*, the

most dangerous of these ghostly enemies and the one that receives the most space is the

flesh, as "…mannes body ys [as] a clothe in the whyche the soule ys clothede"

(Horstmann 421). The weak and culpable flesh must therefore be protected by the "trewe

armoures of gode" in order to "with-stande the temptacions of oure enemyes (Horstmann

421). Rather than moving directly from the vulnerable body directly into the allegorical

armor of the knight, however, the compiler of the *Tretyse* first turns to the *Pore Caitif*

tract "Hors eþer armur of heuene" and uses the figure of the mounted knight to advance

what may be described as a Cartesian split[68] between the body, which is signified by the horse, and the soul, which is signified by the rider: "…so the body welle-rewled bereth the soule ouer many peryllys off thys wrecched worlde" (Horstmann 421). The chief admonishment of this passage is to direct the body away from the sins of the flesh, and particularly lust. Naturally, this leads to the horse's bridle, which signifies abstinence:

> And yeff [he] be wylde in flesshly lustis and in worldely worschyppys, thane
>
> brydelle hym with sharpe abstynence, bothe with fastyng and wakyng and with
>
> honest occupation doyng; for yeff thow on hym wolle fyghte and late hym lyfe
>
> after hys desyre, truste sekyrly that thow shalt be ouercome. (Horstmann 422)
>
> [And if he is wild in fleshly lusts and worldly pursuits of fame, then bridle him
>
> with sharp abstinence, both with fasting and waking (for matins) and with
>
> performing an honest occupation; for if you attempt to fight him and (yet) let him
>
> live as he desires, trust certainly that you will be overcome.]

The next passage remains focused on self-control, or temperance, as signified by the horse's two reins, which—not unlike Gawain's famous pentangle in *SGGK*—are presented as a knot. "The two reynes off the brydelle shullene be two partyes off temperaunce: that ys to say neythere to muche nere to lytelle, knytte to-gedyr by the knot off discrecione" (Horstmann 422). Despite this identification with discretion,[69] the knot

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[68] While the horse and its armor and/or tack are also allegorized in MS Harley 3244 and *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, this clear division between the horse and rider is present only in "Hors eþer armur of heuene' and the *Tretyse*, suggesting a movement unique to the English Vernacular tradition of the Late Middle Ages. MS 3244 has "good will" for the horse while Llull has "nobility of courage" and "preparation;" only the latter might be argued as a bodily trait, and not exclusively.

[69] MS Harley 3244 has "discretion" for the reins, which more nearly means "discernment" than "discretion," but a potential mistranslation opens the case for a common or intermediary source between the illuminations and the *Pore Caitif*. All three sources predictably utilize the reins as a steering or directing

as an image of temperance is stressed a second time before the compiler moves into two

longer passages concerning the individual reins and their allegorical significance. The

first rein signifies the appetites of the body and must be balanced with the second, which

in turn signifies strict abstinence that if applied too severely will cause the body to

become "so ffebylle that hit may nat serue gode durably with feruent herte" (Horstmann

422). Moreover, too strict an abstinence can also lead to "grete fantasyes and unclene

thoughtis be cause off ydelnes off the hede or for febylness off the body" (Horstmann

422). The reins of temperance therefore become an apt analogy for the stabilizing of the

body's swerving desires with the soul's duty of chastising the body, thus maintaining the

"straight path" to heavenly reward through moderation while preventing the body from

becoming too weak or impure to allow the mind to participate in ghostly battle.

While much of this section of the *Tretyse* is more or less consistent with "Hors

eþer armur of heuene," the compiler breaks with this source in altering the significance of

the knight's saddle and adding allegorical stirrups that are not present in the *Pore Caitif.*[70]

Where the saddle had originally stood for "mansuetude ethir esynesse" (mildness or

tranquility), it now signifies both "pacience and mekenesse" (Brady, "The 'Pore Caitif':

An Introductory Study," 540; Horstmann 422-3). "Mekeness," or humility, aligns the

saddle of the *Tretyse* with the saddlecloth of MS Harley 3244 (M. Evans 21, Biddle 158).

More important, the saddle when newly identified with patience is also identified with

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device, but the concerns regarding directing the "horse" differ. Llull's is perhaps the closest to the *Tretyse*, as his allegorical knight must be led by chivalry and restrained by the bridle/reins (69).

[70] While MS Harley 3244 is, to my knowledge, the only other such text to allegorize the knight's stirrups, there appears to be no connection between its illuminations, which are labeled *propositum boni operis* for one visible stirrup, and the complier's interpretation, which separates them into distinct virtues.

Job, who is juxtaposed with Cain in what appears to be an original passage. Unlike Job, who remains in the saddle like a true knight despite the loss of his goods, children, and health, Cain is unhorsed: "off hys horse felle owte off the sadylle off pacience into manslaughtere off hys brothere" (Horstmann 423). In order to maintain Joban ghostly chivalry and to prevent being unhorsed like Cain, the patient knight must also keep his feet within the stirrups of "lownes and sadnes"—contextually, humility (again) and stoicism/constancy. "…lownes ayengst pryde, and sadnes ayenst worldly coueytse and flesshly lustis; so that thow nat be [to] sory for no wo, ne to glad for no wele ne welfare" (Hortsman 423). As pride is often featured first in medieval concatenations of the Seven Deadly Sins[71] and is naturally prevalent amongst the nobility, it is presented as the first sin capable of casting the knight out of his stirrups and from the saddle of patience: "Kepe well thy styropps, that for no pryde off strengthe, off byrthe, off fayrnes, off kunnying, or ryches, or any vertow that gode hath sent the other bodyly or gostly, thow be not cast owte off thy styroppes off lownes and sadnes" (Horstmann 423). However, other "ghostly enemies" abound that are more consistent with the *ars moriendi* tradition; these include wrath, impatience with sickness, the loss of goods, the loss of renown, unwanted trials and tribulations sent by God, and allowing oneself to be tempted either by the Devil or by one's "even-cristine"[72] (Horstmann 423).

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[71] The other common root sin is Avarice. See Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular* (Brepolis, 1993).

[72] It's worth noting that while these "enemies" are more typical and can be located in the other treatises above, as a list they can easily be identified with Job's biblical trials and his ghostly battle in Gregory's *Moralia*.

After a sermon on the barnacle goose and an exegesis on living death before baptism, the compiler doubles back to the subject of the postlapsarian world, repeats the argument that mankind's existence has been ghostly battle since the fall, and again pulls from Ephesians 6:10. However, after admonishing the reader to "arme the with gostly armure to withstande the dyntis off the dartis off the deuyllis foundyng," this time the compiler provides a Middle English translation of the biblical passage that differs considerably from the NIV and updates both the armor and the virtues of the *miles Christi* to coincide with the late-fourteenth-century English knight:[73]

> Alle oure fyghtying ys ayenst wyckyde spyrytes off derkenes, that ben prynces and gouernoures off synfulle mene. "And therefore, he byddeth, arme yow in gostly armure off gode, so that ye mowe withstande the busshementis and the sleyghtis off the fende, and to stande stedefastly and parfytely in alle thyngis off ryghtwysnes. Stondeth, he seyth, in trowth, and gyrde you with the gyrdelle off chastyte, and doth one the habergeone off ryghtwysnes, and keuer ȝoure feete in dyghtyng (or makyng redy) of the gospelle off peese; and in all thingis take you the shelde of feyth, with the whyche ye may quenche alle the dartis of youre enemyes. And taketh to you the basnet off helthe, and the swerde off the holy gost, that ys goddess word; for, as he sayeth in a nother place, hit ys sharper thene any two-egede swerde." (Horstmann 424)

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[73] Indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, the kit described here and below is directly comparable with Sir Gawain's arms in the detailed arming sequence of *SGGK*, which quite tellingly occurs *after* the Arthurian hero has promised to face beheading, therefore rendering his highly symbolic armor physically unnecessary save for minor adventures on his journey to Castle Hautdesert.

[All our fighting is against wicked spirits of darkness, which are princes and governors of sinful temperament. "And therefore," he demands, "arm yourself in the spiritual armor of God, so that you are able to withstand the ambushes and trickery of the Devil, and to stand steadfastly and flawlessly in all matters of justice." "Stand," he says, "in fidelity, and gird yourself with the girdle of chastity, and put on the habergeon of justice, and cover your feet in the readiness of the gospel of peace; and for all occasions take with you the shield of faith with which you may quench all the (fiery) arrows of your enemies. And take to yourself the bascinet of health, and the sword of the Holy Spirit that is God's Word; for, as He says in another place,[74] it is sharper than any two-edged sword.']

The major modifications to the NIV translation of this passage are as follows:

Belt = Truth → Girdle = Chastity

Breastplate = Righteousness → Habergeon = Justice

Helmet = Salvation → Bascinet = Ghostly Health

Prayer = Completes the set → XXX[75]

The move from Paul's breastplate[76] to the medieval habergeon, a sleeveless chainmail tunic, leads to an extended analogy to the "euene-christine" and the knight's duty to impartiality in dispensing justice:

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[74] Hebrews 4:12, NIV: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

[75] But as the *Tretyse* will demonstrate, common prayer has been supplanted to some degree by *memento mori* meditations.

[76] The breastplate typical of a gladiator or a legionary; medieval breastplates were not common until the early fifteenth century.

And as in the habergeone euery ryng accordeth with othere and ys knytte in othere, so shulde alle trouthe accorde and be knytte to-gedere in ryghtwysnes [justice]; for yef ye fauour othere lorde or lady spiritualle or temporalle, souereyne or subgette, kyne or frende, or any creature hygh or lowe, so moche that [it] ys hynderyng to a nother's ryghte, than youre ryngis in your habergeone accordyne nat ne be nat welle knytte to-gedere, but there ys one hole where-thorow the fende may sle youre sowle. (Horstmann 424)

[And as in the habergeon every ring conforms with the others and is interwoven with the others, so should all persons of integrity agree and be knit together in justice; for if you favor one or another lord or lady either spiritually or temporally, sovereign or subject, family or friend, or any creature high or low so much that it infringes upon the rights of another, then the rings of your habergeon are misaligned and not well-knit together, but there is a hole through which the Devil may slay your soul.]

Competing traditions may begin to explain this change in focus from righteousness to justice. Llull also identifies the ability to dispense justice as one of the chief virtues of the knight. He agrees with the *Tretyse's* allegorical functionality if not the signification of the knight's body armor in his designating the hauberk[77] as "a castle and rampart opposite vices and misdeeds," and he deems the dispensation of justice critical enough to place the following passage in his chapter, "On the Office That Pertains to a Knight:"

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[77] Allegorically identifiable with the habergeon but including mail sleeves—more common in the late-thirteenth century when Lull wrote his treatise.

Justice must be upheld by the knights, for just as judges profess the office of

judging, so knights profess the office of upholding justice. And if the knight and

book-learning could be joined in such close concert that the knight were learned

enough to be a judge, no office would be as well suited to being a judge as that of

the knight, for he by whom justice can be best upheld is more suited than anyone

else to being a judge, because of which the knight is suited to being both a judge

and a knight. (Llull 67, 46)

The illuminations in MS Harley 3244 also designate the knight's hauberk as signifying

the interconnectedness and spiritual equality of the "euene-christine" community by the

inscription "Caritas," which extends beyond the mundane definition of charity and can be

best translated as "love of God and fellow human beings" (M. Evans 21, Biddle 157).

While these similarities are not robust enough to demonstrate that the compiler of the

Tretyse drew directly from either of these sources, their correlations combined with the

lack of this material in the *Pore Caitif* suggest he or she had some familiarity with the

genre.

The girdle, which again in the compiler's update to Ephesians 6:10 signifies

chastity, is entirely absent from the other texts but quite obviously allows for a

fascinating comparison with the infamous green girdle in *SGGK*.[78] This innovation also

suggests the compiler's familiarity with the functionality of pre-fifteenth-century arms

and armor; for the medieval soldier, the girdle cut down the weight of the habergeon on

the shoulders by redistributing it to the hips. The compiler takes advantage of this

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[78] See Chapter 3.

knowledge to create a brief concatenation of virtues, Chastity → Justice, that further

justifies his exegesis of Ephesians 6:10:

> …for lyke as a gyrdylle fast gyrt to a mane beryth vp the haberioune and saueth
>
> the body from akyng and werynesse, so the gyrdelle off chastyte wele festenede in
>
> the loue off gode with clene thowghtis ande heuynly desyres, bereth vp the soule
>
> from the foule pytte off synne and strengtheth hym in vertew and goodnesse.
>
> (Horstmann 425)
>
> […for just as a girdle tightly fastened to a man bears up the habergeon and saves
>
> the body from aching and weariness, so the girdle of chastity well fastened in the
>
> love of God with clean thoughts and heavenly desires bears up the soul from the
>
> foul pit of sin and strengthens him in virtue and goodness.]

This concatenation is then expanded to either Charity → Chastity → Justice or Chastity

→ Justice → Charity with the addition of the "Iakke off Fence" or Jack de Fence, a

padded jacket sometimes reinforced with iron plates that served as outer armor for foot

soldiers but according to our modern understanding would most likely have been worn

under the mail of a knight, relegating it to a secondary defense. Although the Jack de

Fence of charity is coupled with the girdle of chastity in its role in supporting the

habergeon, it is also likened to Christ's robe, which is clearly an outer garment. The

evidence for it being worn underneath the habergeon is that it, like charity, softens the

blows of one's enemies: "the Iakke thorough the nesshenes and softenes that ys in hit,

feynteth ande wasteth alle the dyntes off thy enemyes" (Horstmann 425). The Jack de

Fence's operative effect here is the ability to absorb and not to deflect blows, as would be

the case if the compiler intended it to be lined with plates like a brigandine coat and

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therefore worn as an outer garment. This reading is also supported by the compiler's

accompanying translation of Paul Cor. 14: "'charyte suffreth alle thynges paciently, and

maketh euery trauayle soft, and beryth alle thing esyly'" (Horstmann 425). Conversely,

the Jack de Fence takes on a holistic aspect and represents multiple virtues (charity,

patience, kindness/good will) when it is next likened to Christ's Robe, which according

to the compiler could not be cut by the "knyghts" who cast lots for it after the

crucifixion—it therefore represents the principal armor that belongs to all Christians, the

armor he exhorts all lay people to take up in order to participate in ghostly battle:

> …leue ffrendes, I pray yow to arme yow in gostly armoure as goddys knyghtis;
>
> for though ye be natt able to bodyly fygth, yet ye be able to gostly fygth, and in
>
> that ye be crystenede ye Crystis knyghtis beene to fygth in gostly batayle, yeff we
>
> wylle come to the blysse off heuene (Hortsmann 426)
>
> […dear friends, I ask you to arm yourselves in spiritual armor as God's knights;
>
> for though you are not able to physically fight, you are still able to spiritually
>
> fight, and because you are christened (as) Christ's knights, you are required to
>
> fight in spiritual battle if we are to come to the bliss of heaven.]

The notion of the Jack de Fence as an outer garment representing the knight's virtues

holistically is also supported by Llull's allegorical "pourpoint", which Caxton renders

more simply as a "Cote," signifying "the grete trauayalles that a knyght must suffre for to

honoure chyualrye" (Lull 69-70, Caxton 87). Despite the modern understanding of the

arming jacket being worn under the hauberk, Hay, Caxton, and Loutfut all retain in their

translations Llull's thirteenth-century allegoresis of a textile "worn over the other

garments and exposed to the sun, wind, and rain" and which "receives blows before the

hauberk" (Llull 69-70, Caxton 87, Botfield & Hay 43). With respect to three medieval translators who took pains to update Lull's work elsewhere, and in keeping with the compiler of the *Tretyse*'s identification of the Jack de Fence with Christ's Robe, it seems most sensible to me that the second potential concatenation, Chastity (girdle) → Justice (habergeon) → Charity (Jack de Fence), best matches the compiler's understanding of the virtues and best represents his exegesis of these three items.[79]

Unfortunately, as Horstmann has already remarked, the *Tretyse* is not well organized enough to make either of these potential concatenations of virtue terribly clear, as the habergeon is separated from these two other elements by lengthy allegoreses[80] of the sabatons/cuisses, shield, and bascinet—all of which differ from or expand upon the compiler's translation of Ephesians 6:10. The extension to the allegory of the leg harness, which the compiler maintains earlier as signifying the traditional "readiness for the Gospel of Peace," is that of "gostly pouerte" to defend against the temptations of the world, such as worldly goods and fleshly lusts (Horstmann 424). The compiler's update to the biblical shield of faith is its connection to the Trinity, which just as in MS Harley 3244 is made possible by the heater shield's three-sided design. But perhaps the most fascinating transformation is the biblical helmet of salvation to the fourteenth-century

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[79] There is no direct point of comparison in MS Harley 3244, as the knight of the illuminations wears an unlabeled tabard—unless the label '*humilitas*' was actually intended for the tabard, which drapes over the knight's saddle, and not the saddle-cloth as has been previously interpreted (M. Evans 21, Biddle 158).

[80] Which, in turn, are interrupted by a passage differentiating the spiritual duties of the priest and layman. The address pertaining to the latter demonstrates that even if the *Pore Caitif* can be connected to Lollardy, the *Tretyse* which drew upon it is grounded in orthodoxy: "…and yef thow be a lay-mane, the be-houeth to helpe ande susteyne heme that haue powere and trewly techyne hit. Also the be-houeth to here and to be-leue trewly one hit and in alle the sacrementis of holy churche, and nat [to] dyspute and ymagyne howe they myghte be so, but fully be-leve in heme, and so to conforme the in the laws of gode and the ordynaunce off holy church" (Horstmann 424-5).

bascinet of spiritual health because of the compiler's concatenation between the original

virtue and its new interpretation (Spiritual Health → Salvation) as well as its possible

connections to MS Harley 3244's *spes futuri gaudii* or "hope for future bliss" (Horstmann

425, M. Evans 21, Biddle 157).

> And lyke as hit ys clene, brygth and smothe, that shote ande strokes mowe sone
>
> glyde off: so muste your herte be clene, brygth and smothe ffrom wyckede
>
> thowgthys, wyckede desyres and wyckede wylles. Ande lyke as a basnet ys
>
> hyghest off alle armoure, goyng and gaderyng vpwarde in to a lytylle coppe: so
>
> muste youre hope ande youre truste pryncypally go vp to gode, and not to sette hit
>
> to moche in mannys mygth ne in erthely goodys that ys but rust wastying the
>
> basnett off helthe. (Horstmann 425)
>
> [And just as it is clean, bright, and smooth so that shot and strokes must quickly
>
> glance off, so must your heart be clean, bright, and smooth from wicked thoughts,
>
> wicked desires, and wicked urges/inclinations. And just as the bascinet is (the)
>
> highest of all armor, going and gathering into a little cup, so must your hope and
>
> your trust principally go up to God, and not be focused too much on man's might
>
> nor on earthly goods, which are but rust wasting the bascinet of health.]

Next, the addition of the gauntlets, vambrace, and rerebrace as extensions of the knight's

hands and arms enables a brief sermon on the Contrary Virtue of "besynes," or industry,

and the dangers of idleness, or sloth, which ultimately lead back to the text's primary

concern—the sins of the flesh (Horstmann 425). No analog exists for this allegoresis in

the other texts. The sword of the *Tretyse* remains, however, the Word of God: a tradition

unbroken in every text surveyed containing ghostly battle with the exception of Llull's

Order of Chivalry, which identifies the cruciform sword with the Cross as well as the

power to destroy God's enemies and its two edges with justice and chivalry (Llull 66).

The compiler of the *Tretyse* does, however, extend the allegorical significance of the

sword and also capitalizes on the utility of its two edges, but his focus on separation

rather than destruction is commensurate with Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12 and

therefore need not depend on another tradition. The sword should first be used upon the

self to make division "be-twene the soule and synne, frome fleshly desyres and from

wordly [sic] couetyse" but should also be applied to God's enemies, for Christ "came nat

to make synfulle peese, but to sende the swerde off separacion in erthe to destroye

wyckede peese that mene haue in theyr hertis with synne" (Horstmann 426).

The compiler's final interpolation before returning to the matter of the *Pore

Caitif's* "Hors eþer armur of heuene" is the knight's spear, which signifies Christ's

Passion and leads to an inserted *imitatio Christi* and lengthy exegesis concerning the

Passion's ability to defeat the Seven Deadly Sins as an alternative to deploying the

Contrary Virtues,[81] which up to this point in the *Tretyse* have comprised much of the

labeling of the knight's armor. The inspiration for this substitution can likely be traced

back to the sermons and writings of Bonaventure,[82] who found the contemplation of the

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[81] Per Newhauser, these virtue-vice pairings are not always stable, but they generally follow this attested pattern in ME which I have drawn from Edward Wheatley's work on MS Harley 2399 as an example: Mekenys > Prede, Charyte > Envy, Chastyte > Lechery, Abstynens > Gloteny, Pacyens > Wreth, Largynys > Covetys, and Ocupacion > Sclowthe ("Preaching the Contrary Virtues," 135-62; Wheatley 203-5). Beyond sermons and treatises, these pairings also remain stable in morality plays such as *The Castle of Perseverance* and longer allegorical works such as Digulleville's *Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of Manhode*.

[82] The *Vitis Mystica*, attributed to Bonaventure and in which Christ is allegorized as the "true vine" from which all virtues grow, can also be connected to this substitution. In the *Vitis*, various sections or "flowers of the vine" are attributed to differing virtues (e.g. "the violet of humility", "the lily of virginity", "the crocus of abstinence") but the rose is reserved specifically for Christ's Passion (Brownlow 36-401). Similarly to the knight's spear of the *Tretyse*, Christ's Passion is weaponized as roses in *The Castle of Perseverance* and used to defeat allegorical manifestations of the Seven Deadly Sins (lines 2045-59).

Passion to be the strongest defense against the vices, yet this expedient appears as late in the English *ars moriendi* tradition as Caxton's 1491 printing, *A little treatise called ars moriendi, that is to say the craft for to die for the health of man's soul*[83] (Newhauser, *Preaching the Contrary Virtues*, 151-2; Emery 183-214). Perhaps more appropriately for our purposes, the inclusion of the spear allegorized in this manner makes the *Tretyse* the only known tract[84] on ghostly battle in the Insular tradition to link the *ars moriendi* and *imitatio Christi* as proof against the Seven Deadly Sins with the apocryphal tradition of the Spear of Longinus,[85] and by extension, with Arthurian traditions that include the Grail Quest, the Fisher King, and/or the Dolorous Stroke. The bulk of this section is dedicated to a detailed description of the sufferings of Christ and an allegoresis of not five but seven elements of the Passion along with their ability to defeat the Seven Deadly Sins, and some venial sins as well (Horstmann 426).

1) Crown of Thorns > Pride[86]

2) Spread Arms/Wounded Hands > Wicked Works

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[83] This is the second of Caxton's "Ars Moriendi" treatises; the first, printed in 1490 and titled, *The Art and craft to know well to die*, was translated from a French version of a Latin original that dates to 1415. The second and later translation was made from this Latin tract. All versions contain the *imitatio Christi*. As Appleford has demonstrated, all are also drawn from the same source as *The Boke of the Craft of Dying*— the *Tractatus de arte bene moriendi*, which itself is a much-modified version of Jean Gerson's *De scientia mortis* (141).

[84] Surprisingly, none of the other ghostly battle tracts I have been able to assess allegorize the spear in this way or refer to Christ's Passion. See the table at the end of this section for a side-by-side comparison.

[85] In the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Longinus is the "knight" who stabs Christ with the so-called "Spear of Destiny" and subsequently becomes a Christian. Though unnamed in the Gospels, Longinus was and remains venerated as a saint, and the Spear of Destiny was allegedly recovered in the First Crusade.

[86] Described by the compiler as, "worst off all synnes and most vnworthy in the sygth of gode" (Horstmann 426).

3) Spear Wound Producing Water[87] > Pride (again), Covetousness, Envy, Hate, Wrath, and Malice

4) Wounded Feet > Sloth

5) Scourging of the Flesh > Lust and Lechery

6) Hanging Poor and Naked > Covetousness (again) and Worldly Worship

7) Drinking Vinegar and Gall > Gluttony

Like Bonaventure, for the compiler of the *Tretyse*, "Thys spere of Crystis passyone ys the best and sykerest wepyne ayenst oure enemyes" (Horstmann 426). After weaponizing the Passion but just before returning to the matter of "Hors eþer armur of heuene," he gives a final, expanded metaphorical admonishment concerning fighting spiritually on good and solid ground. Just as a "wyse knycth" has to his advantage "the hylle and the sonne and the wynde," the ghostly combatant must take advantage of "the hylle of good living," "the sonne and the lygth of goddis grace," and "the wynde off holy prayer" to be victorious against temptation (Horstmann 426-7). Here, as when discussing the bascinet and the girdle, the anonymous compiler demonstrates some knowledge of secular chivalry, as all three of these advantages would be critical for a knight in actual battle—the high ground assists the mounted charge, the sunlight is necessary for a visored combatant with limited visibility, and a strong wind could disrupt the shots of enemy archers. At this point, however, the interpolations end, and the compiler proceeds to the spurs, which are entirely commensurate with the *Pore Caitif* tract. The right spur signifies the love

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[87] The compiler understands the spear wound to have been through the heart, and he therefore comments on these particular vices dwelling in the hearts of sinners. He also provides an explication of the blood that gushes from the same wound, but it represents martyrdom and is not weaponized against the Sins (Horstmann 426).

mankind owes to God while the left spur signifies the dread of the innumerable pains of hell and purgatory "eyther to be thougth or seyd or tolde" (Horstmann 427). This section marks a departure from the ghostly arms and begins to discourse on how to use the tenets of spiritual battle to resist temptation and prepare to die well. Pricking the horse (body) with either spur allegorizes the death meditations that will save the soul from fleshly lusts, and the compiler is quick to admonish that lustful thoughts are just as deadly to the soul as lustful deeds and strivings. The ghostly knight, whose feudal obligations are to God, must therefore be at constant war with the invisible world, "fyghting ayenst thy gostely enemyes, and neuer to haue pease with heme—for yeff thow doo, thou art traytoure to gode" (Horstmann 427). And if he fails, he must make amends "by sorow in herte, by confessyone of mouthe, and by satysfacion in dede" to avoid "endeles payne in helle withowtene ende" (Horstmann 428). The best method to avoid such failure and to be ready for death, as the compiler counsels in the manner of Suso and Friar Laurent, is to "departe thy soule from thy body by inwarde thoughte"[88] and to send it on pilgrimages to heaven, hell, and Purgatory. Much like *Lerne to Dye* and the *ars moriendi* tract of *The Book of Virtues and Vices*, the second half of the *Tretyse* guides the reader through these metaphysical journeys inward, interpolating the eschatological "Of þre arowes on domesday" into "Hors eþer armur of heuene." For a table displaying a chronological evolution of ghostly arms from Ephesians 6:10 to the *Treytse*, see Appendix I.

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[88] The verbiage here is extremely close to the *ars moriendi* passage from *The Book of Vices and Virtues* but is drawn directly from the compiler's source in *Pore Caitif*, suggesting a connection between these popular Middle English devotion manuals that can be traced back to *Somme le roi*.

Part II: Death Preparations and Looming Doom

The basis for this section of the *Tretyse* is undeniably the *Pore Caitif* tract, which it follows with the exception of the aforementioned interpolation of "Of þre arowes on domesday," interpolations from the *Prik of Conscience*, and some scriptural insertions, guiding the meditating layman through a metaphysical pilgrimage to hell, Purgatory, and finally heaven (Horstmann 428-36). While the *Tretyse's* meditations on hell are similar to those present in the tracts discussed in detail above, they differ in their extreme focus on the physical body, which here is present in hell but remains eternally mortified after the fashion of the images of bodily decay featured on *transi tombs*: "…the bodyes off heme shulle be so febylle and so chargede with synne that they ne shalle [mow] remeve the lest worme[89] frome no party off theyre body" (Horstmann 428). Indeed, these mortified bodies are so foul that they leave their corresponding souls offensive to the physical senses of sight and smell, "dyrke ande dymme, hydously stynkyng and lothsome to see" (Horstmann 428). Other passages point to a bad death not as a cessation from life but as an agonizing continuation of it, a living death. Jane Gilbert's *entre-deux-mortes*, which places the dying in a liminal space between a symbolic and literal or actual death, is inescapable in the compiler's version of hell: "And so they be euer dying but neuer ffulle dede, but shul lyue euer in payne, woo and turment" (Horstmann 428). Like *Somme le roi* and its Middle English derivations above, the *Tretyse* draws (although only briefly) from Wisdom 5:9-23[90] in expressing the common inability of the living to comprehend

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[89] The worms representing physical decay are an update to the *Pore Caitif* tract and—like the insertion of the "Of þre arowes on domesday"—may reflect the influence of late-medieval funerary culture.
[90] In doing so, the compiler either deliberately glosses over or fails to incorporate an allegorical alternative to Ephesians 6:10 located in Wisdom 5:15-23: Righteousness = Breastplate; Justice = Helmet; Holiness = Shield; Wrath of God = Sword.

the transience of life and permanence of death, but in this case, the living-dead denizens of hell are poignantly described as "euer desyrying dethe" (Horstmann 428). Also, similarly to the above texts, the *Tretyse* focuses here on the perils of "wordely worschyppes," so critical to the knightly class, and "flesshly lustis"—both are referred to as "consentying to the wyckede intysngis of thy enemyes," thus characterizing the Seven Deadly Sins as active tempters that one must constantly struggle against both psychologically and physically (Horstmann 428). As in the *Pore Caitif* tract, the allegory of the horse and rider remains present and here is deployed as a tool for instructing the devotee to attain a physically balanced and morally erect lifestyle through the frequent maintenance of the bridle of abstinence, the reins of temperance, and the knot of discretion. This instruction for proper living is strongly punctuated, however, by inserted passages such as the following, which demonstrates the *memento mori* mentality of late-medieval death culture by pairing the mortification of the flesh with the certainty of death and the need to shape for that inevitable end:

> …for thy body, be hit neuer so beauteuous and myghty, ande though thou kept hit neuer so welle with delycate metys and drynkes, with ryche clothes or eny other maner restorytyfys, yet hit shalle dye and turne ayene to erthe and wormes mete.
>
> …Thynke that thou shalt dye and thow wettest neuer where ne whene ne what dethe, ne in what daye ne what tyme; ande therfor seyth Austyn that euer shulde oure last day be in oure mynde… (Horstmann 428)
>
> […as for your body, despite how beautiful and mighty it may be, and though you may maintain it so well with fine foods and drinks, with expensive clothes or any other manner of medicines, yet it will die and turn again to dust and worm-food.

82

Think (i.e. meditate on) that you will die and never know where, when, or what

death (you will meet); nor in what day or at what time; and therefore St.

Augustine says that our last day should be ever on our mind…]

Here, the *Tretyse* evokes the telos of the nigh-ubiquitous *Danse Macabre,* which found

its way to England in Lydgate's translation (and expansion) of the French version at the

Chapel of the Holy Innocents that was once displayed at St. Paul's as part of the now-lost

Daunce Poulys and was later reworked to accompany his *Fall of Princes* (Appleford 83-

96). Most poignant to this investigation are the passages in Lydgate's A version of *Fall of*

Princes[91] containing the confrontations between Death and the Constable and Death and

the first Squire (or *Miles et armiger* in the B version), as well as the traditional depiction

of the King's body mortified at the conclusion of the *Daunce*. Like the other members of

the estates allegorized in the *Daunce* with the exception of the world-weary Carthusian,

these three figures meet with *mors improvisa* and must accept what only appears to be an

ironic death because none of them are properly prepared to die.[92] It is only at the end that

the mighty but worldly Constable discovers, "al worldly prowesse/ Death can abate… For

agaynst death is founde no respite" (Lydgate 150-1, 53). He must be poignantly reminded

that Death is "more stronger than euer was Charlemain,/ …and more worshipable; for

hardines ne knighthode," and that no "strong armure of plates ne of maile" or "armes of

folkes most notable" can protect him in the end—hence the compiler of the *Tretyse's* call

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[91] Appleford argues that the A version of Lygate's translation probably predates the *Daunce Poulys*.
TEAMS has at this point edited versions of both A and B and made them available online. Version B
renames the first Squire of the A version "*Miles et armiger,"* whom Death addresses in English as "Knyht
or Scwyer"; however, as I began working from the EETS A version of the *Fall of Princes* Vol. 3, and there
is almost no variation in this figure other than naming, I have chosen to stick to the A version.

[92] The Hermit, who is featured as the last allegorical estate in Lydgate's version, makes a good death
regardless (III.625-32).

not to worldly but to ghostly chivalry (139-43). Lydgate's fresh young Squire, bearing

arms, newly horsed, and well-versed in the latest dances and fashion, comes to the same

conclusion: "Thinke on your soules or that Death manace;/ For all shal rot, and no man

wot what time" (231-2). This is reinforced by the penultimate section, "The King ligging

eaten of Wormes," which serves as a reminder not only of the inevitability of death but

also the king's status as a member of the "euene-christine":

> Ye folke that loke vpon this portraiture,[93]
>
> Beholding here all estates daunce,
>
> Seeth what ye been & what is your nature:
>
> And haueth this mirrour aye in remembraunce.
>
> Howe I lye here whylom crouned [a] king,
>
> To al estates a true resemblaunce,
>
> That wormes foode is fine of our liuing. (Lydgate 631-40)

The hell of the *Tretyse* awaits the ghostly knight who, like Lydgate's King and the

members of his chivalry, failed to apprehend this lesson and prepare accordingly to be

judged. At this point, the tract instructs the increasingly concerned lay reader to "haue

mynde howe the sowl shalle departe frome the body with grete drede" and illustrates a

disputation between "goode aungellis" and "fendys" over the soul so thorough that

"noughte shalle be forget to the leste thought that euer thou thowghtest other consentest

to, and alle the wordys euer thow speke shullene be examynede, and alle thy dedus

shewede" (Horstmann 428-9). Ghostly battle and death meditations become critical habits

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[93] Although the *Daunce of Poulys* has been lost, the Tottel edition of *The Fall of Princes* contains a woodcut of the mortified king that has been reproduced in the *EETS* printing, Vol. III (Bergen 1025, 1043).

to deploy before this terrifying doom because as the *Tretyse* states fairly openly, most people could not realistically be expected to remember all their sins and make an appropriate confession during their last rites. Dying in *mors improvisa* will reveal at the judgment "many synnes that thow may nat now see nor thynk" which "shalle than come be-fore the opynly ande perauenture more to drede;" worse, one's spiritual hygiene could be entirely unknown because the judgment may reveal "many thingis [that] thow wenyst be now welle done shall schew than fowle synne" (Horstmann 429). It is at this exact line that the compiler breaks off from "Hors eþer armur of heuene" and begins to interpolate a version of "Of þre arowes on domesday," drifting away from the metaphysical pilgrimage to hell and focusing instead on the judgment of a wrathful God, which is described as so terrifying that those damned in the Apocalypse wish they were already in hell.

Like the *Tretyse*, little critical attention has been paid to "Of þre arowes on domesday," an issue that Daniel Devry Smith attempted to remedy in his 2018 dissertation *Imagining Doomsday: Aspects of the Last Judgment in Late Medieval English Vernacular Devotional and Manuscript Culture, c. 1300-1500.* His second chapter, which is partially supported by an as-of-yet unpublished paper by Ralph Hanna given at the 2016 Late Medieval Devotional Compilations in England International Conference,[94] explores the potential origins of the three arrows trope in the English vernacular tradition and how it may have found its way into instructional tracts like the *Tretyse*. Devry Smith begins by comparing a series of passages in MS Rawl 285 and MS Arundel 507, which contain the oldest known extant examples of the three arrows trope and the only examples of what he defines as the "meditation version" of the tract. He

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[94] Held 1 April at the University of Lausanne.

concludes that both MSS ultimately stem from a lost text dating to the fourteenth century and potentially authored by Richard Rolle[95]—MS Arundel by means of *Þe Holy Boke Gratia Dei*, whose compiler must have had access to the non-extant version Devry Smith proposes, and MS Rawlinson as a direct but embellished copy of the lacuna. Further, he proposes that the three arrows trope itself grew out of embellished ME translations of Deuteronomy 32:23-25, Matthew 25:31-46, and Revelations 20:11-15; all include the role of Christ or God as a judge or "domesman," and Deuteronomy mentions God's vengeful arrows. However, the above scriptures never mention the number three, and neither does the Latin fragment of Deuteronomy in MS Rawl 285. Its corresponding Middle English translation, on the other hand, interpolates the number three, which has also been interpolated into the Latin and its corresponding ME passage on the arrows in MS Arundel 507. A similar interpolation of the number three is also found as a corrective mark[96] in London, British Library MS Additional 22283, one of the oldest extant examples of what Devry Smith identifies as the "treatise version"—the same version which eventually finds its way into *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*. If Devry Smith is indeed correct, his work demonstrates at the very least that the three arrows trope began in the English vernacular tradition[97] and that it was popular enough[98] in the late-fourteenth and

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[95] Devry Smith arrives at this conclusion partly due to Hanna's and Horstmann's commentaries on MS Rawl 285; they agree that this version of the *Three Arrows* tract matches or closely matches Rolle's style and versification. Devry Smith also draws from the ongoing authorship debate of *Þe Holy Boke Gratia Dei*, which was formerly attributed to Rolle.

[96] Per Devry Smith: "The text's rubric on f. 117r ȝaȝ was originally written as 'Of þe arwes þat schullen be schot on doomes day', but 'þe' has had a superscript 'r' added, transforming the word into 'þr e'. This change would appear to be a correction, as the 'r' is accompanied by an arrow beneath, demonstrating that it is an insertion to the existing word, rather than the superscript letter merely being a spacesaving device. This manuscript is late-fourteenth-century, making it one of the earliest representatives of version two of the *Three Arrows*, which allows it to potentially be a trendsetter" (136).

[97] Although Hanna has traced the tripartite structure of the "treatise version" to a common pattern found in Latin sermons.

[98] It is extant in one of three distinct forms in over 30 ME MSS (Devry Smith 122).

early-fifteenth centuries that it entered into longer tracts such as the *Tretyse* by means of scribes embellishing their sources to include it (131-6). Another, more pedestrian reason for the inclusion of the *Three Arrows on Doomsday* specifically into the *Tretyse* is that it traveled frequently with the *Pore Caitif* –50% of the "treatise version" samples from Devry Smith's study can be located in MSS containing the *Pore Caitif*. It has also circulated via Harley MS 1706 (MS J) with other tracts in the English *ars moriendi* genre including *Pety Iob*, *The Boke of the Craft of Dying*, *Complainte of the Dying Creature*, and three couplets beginning "look before how thi lyfe wastych," although Hanna notes that MS J is actually two MSS that were later combined, limiting the extrapolations one might make concerning the thematic similarity or devotional uses of their contents (153-4).

Naturally, the inserted *Three Arrows* makes use of a tripartite structure, beginning each of its three sections with an identification of the arrow that will wound sinners at the Apocalypse and closing with the nature of the wound it will inflict. The First Arrow, the "clepyng to the dome," follows Revelations 6 and Deuteronomy 32:23 but also includes Psalm 57:11 and Luke 12:53 (Horstmann 429-30). Its purpose is to update the English *ars moriendi* tradition by inspiring terror in spiritually unhygienic lay readers who believe they still have time to make a good death. In the beginning of the passage, the souls of the joyous dead are reunited with their physical bodies, but only to be juxtaposed with the souls and bodies of the damned. A damned soul accosts its body, blaming it for the time it has already burned in hell before being bound to it once again as it was in life. This reinforces not only the corporeality of those tormented in hell but also the earlier connection between horse (body) and soul (rider). Of particular import to the text as a

meditation intended to inspire fear is the image of the wrathful Christ as the "domys-mane" drawn from Deuteronomy 32:23's vengeful God: "Then they shalle see the domys-mane sytting vpone the reyne-boew with [his] voudys bledyng, and with sterne loke one hem lokyng as he were wode for wretthe" (Horstmann 429). Once Christ appears, the saints and the saved bear witness to the terror of the damned and rejoice; the damned have no place to go but hell, and receive no sympathy from their "even-cristine." A reference to Psalm 57:11 recalls the joy of the righteous upon seeing the punishment of the damned, and this is reinforced by an unlabeled paraphrase of Luke 12:53 in which fathers turn against sons, mothers against daughters, and children against parents. As in Revelations 6:16, the sinners about to be judged pray in vain for the mountains to fall upon them, the seas to shallow them up, and the hills to hide them. Instead, they are wounded by the first arrow: "So woo they shulle be one eury side, for noting shalle res[ei]ue theyme but only helle. And thy sys the vounde of the furst arowe" (Horstmann 430).

The Second Arrow is the "sharpe reprovyng of alle false crystene mene and womene" (Horstmann 430). Drawn from Matthew 25:31-46, this section interprets the biblical parable of the Sheep and the Goats as a literal conflict between Jesus and a group of "false Iewes" who "fellene to the erthe" upon realizing they were being judged not by needy servant but the Lord in disguise; this revelation is compared to the *mors improvisa* of the sinners being judged by an accusing God with the aim of the amplification of terror—if the "false Iewes" are so terrified, how much more terrified must those sinners be at the doom when they ostensibly, as good Christians, should have known better and therefore acted charitably to all their "even-cristine?" However misguided or anti-Semitic

88

this comparison, here the sense of separation between saved and damned present in

Matthew 25:31 is logically coupled with the communal accusations of the previous

wound, as Christ the doomsman is accompanied by "hys oste off aungellys and off

seyntys to deme the awykke ande the dede lyke as they hane deserued" (Horstmann 430).

Again, there is no sympathy nor forgiveness for the sinner at this point, no chance at a

final redemption as depicted in mystery plays such as *Everyman* and *The Castle of*

Perseverance. Those still living at the end times face an interesting predicament, as the

artes moriendi cannot save those "goats" separated from the "sheep" at the final

judgment. This moment in the *Three Arrows* calls into question the limits of last rites,

pardon churchyards, manuals on how to die, and trental masses for the dead, suggesting

that death meditations and spiritual hygiene are the only sure preparations to avoid *mors*

improvisa. Following this, a closing passage attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux neatly

summarizes the second wound the condemned shall receive:

> When the synfulle wreche shal be accusede and hys owne conscyence shal bere
>
> wytnesse ayenst hym & euery creature of god shal rise ayenst hym in vengeaunce,
>
> thane greuous as ane arowe shalle be the voice off gode to suffre. (Horstmann
>
> 430)

The Third Arrow is, predictably, "the sentence of endeles dampnacion," and the

wound is damnation itself. In stark contrast to the hagiographic legends of St. Gregory

and St. Erkenwald and the trental masses of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth

centuries, there is no reversing this decree with posthumous prayer or other ghostly

medicine:

Thys arowe shalle wounde hem so grievously that alle the leches ne alle the

creatures in erthe neyther in heuyne shulle mowe hele the wound of hit. Than shal

the erthe opyne hys mowthe and swalowe hem doune in to helle… (Horstmann

431)

[This arrow shall wound them so grievously that (neither) all the doctors nor all

the creatures in earth or heaven shall be able to heal the harm of it. Then the earth

shall open his mouth and swallow them down into hell…]

The interpolated *Three Arrows on Doomsday* ends with the question of whether the living

can truly believe in or even begin to comprehend these spiritual wounds before they are

inflicted and felt through experience—and by then, of course, it is too late. Again, the

implication of this inquiry is that only frequent meditation on the end times, serving as a

habitual simulation for the inevitable experience of facing the doom, can completely

prevent *mors improvisa*. As this inclusion of the *Three Arrows* demonstrates, such

meditations are especially relevant to ghostly chivalry, which—despite its applications to

all laymen—was expected to be practiced by the estate that inspired it and which was

likely to face sudden death: the knighthood.

A guided meditation on Purgatory directly follows the *Three Arrows*. It begins

with defining Purgatory as a prison God created to punish those who were shriven

correctly before death but had not yet done penance to absolve their sins. In his chapter

concerning the *Three Arrows*, Devry Smith points to "stathel"—a colloquialism for the

residue of sin that lingers after confession—as the likely reason for including or

combining the treatise version of the *Three Arrows* with various tracts concerning

confession,[99] so its placement directly before this passage concerning the limitations of confession seems particularly apt despite Horstmann's criticism of the *Tretyse's* structure (167). The Purgatory of the *Tretyse* is partially based on the year-day principle of biblical exegesis, ultimately drawn in this instance from Ezekiel 4:6: "Diem pro anno dedi tibi, that ys: 'I haue yeuene [the] a day for a yere'" (Horstmann 431). Contextually, one day of missed penance on earth nets the sinner a year's torment in Purgatory, where he or she will face "paynes… more harde to suffre eyther to fele than alle the paynes that euer martyres suffredene, ande more payne thane tunge can reherse or telle" (Horstmann 431). Naturally, the tract then contradicts itself by clearly outlining the Seven Pains of Purgatory, which Horstmann has correctly identified as having been drawn not from the *Pore Caitif* but from Book V[100] of the *Prik of Conscience*. Further, it is highly likely that the unlabeled reference to Ezekiel above and the inclusion of the year-day principle, which are also absent from the *Pore Caitif*, have in fact been drawn from the same book of the *Prik*:

> Bot ever o day of penaunce here
>
> May stonde in stede of an yeere,
>
> As God seyth openly and wele
>
> By the prophete Ezechyele:
>
> *Diem pro anno dedi tibi.*
>
> That is on Englysshe thus to saye,

---

[99] These are the *Myrour of Sinners*, Anselm's *Meditatio I* (Horstmann 443), *Pety Iob*, *The Boke of the Craft of Dying*, *Complainte of the Dying Creature*, and as I have just postulated, *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* (Devry Smith 154-69).

[100] Book IV of the TEAMS version—both Horstmann's note and Morey's edition have this section beginning on line 2892 of the *Prik*.

"I gif a yeer for oon daye." (Morey IV: 2759-65)

This desire to collect and sometimes reduce popular ME tracts and then interpolate them into the subject matter for the *Tretyse* may have, as Horstmann has criticized, led to a disorganized text that contradicts its major source in the *Pore Caitif*, but it nevertheless presents a variegated understanding of the *artes moriendi* and *memento mori* that is entirely commensurate with the uncertainty of the late insular tradition as defined by Amy Appleford. Whereas the earlier *Pore Caitif* describes Purgatory as analogous to an alchemist's furnace wherein the soul is refined to the state of "rede gold," its later iteration in the *Tretyse* maintains only the sense of this positive transformation and focuses instead on the limits of confession and the torments of the sinner who is unprepared for death (Brady, "The Pore Caitif," 145). Again, drawn from the *Prik*, these torments are as follows:

1) The separation of soul and body, after which the soul is ravaged by demons that attempt to bring it to despair

2) The soul's great dread awaiting the Last Judgment—the soul must trust in salvation as a trial of belief in God's mercy

3) The soul's exile from body, heritage, and paradise[101]

4) The soul's bonds of its own sin, which cannot be escaped until the captive is purified by pain

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[101] This section does include some passages from the *Pore Caitif* concerning the fire that purifies gold as well as quotes attributed to St. Augustine and St. Anselm that appear in the same.

5) 'Soul-sickness' in which the soul suffers maladies as the body would in life; each is associated with one of the Seven Deadly Sins[102]

6) The soul's absence from God's grace—it exists in a "desert of evil" far from goodness

7) The soul's being cast between the fires of purgation and "a licoure that ys caldere thane any Ise or snowe" until purification (Horstmann 432).

Only after the compiler has completed this list does he return to the *Pore Caitif* with its focus on venial sins; however, much of the *Tretyse's* last section on Purgatory is greatly expanded and focuses on a comparison between venial and deadly sins not nearly as robust in the original. While both texts exhort the lay reader to make frequent confessions and do penance to avoid Purgatory, the diction closely matches only in a metaphor comparing venial sins to a "shyppe" with a hole in its bottom that is slowly taking on water. Each droplet of water represents a single venial sin, which "may drenche the soule in to endeles paynes of helle as a deadly synne may doo" if the habitual sinner does not cast them out "by sorowe of herte, by prayere ande by allemos-dede doying" (Horstmann 432). Where the *Pore Caitif* glides easily from Purgatory to heavenly meditations and returns to the allegory of the horse and rider along with the application of the right spur, the *Tretyse* loses the knightly allegory. It focuses instead on escaping the material world entirely and advises asceticism by example in a vastly extended passage that venerates a group of sinners who chose to "forsake alle the worlde, bothe the[r] goodis and also the

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[102] Dropsy/edema = covetousness, palsy = sloth, fevers = wrath, jaundice = envy, flux or "menysone" = lechery, and measles = pride (missing gluttony). Although Purgatory is generally associated with venial sins, which is the focus in the *Pore Caitif*, the compiler repeats the justification here that the sinners who suffer from these maladies have been shriven yet failed to do penance before dying.

presence off people" and therefore "fleddene in to deserte places, to lerne to loue oure lorde Ihesu Cryste" (Horstmann 433). Unlike the ascetics mentioned in the *Pore Caitif*, those in the *Tretyse* remain concerned for the fate of their "euene-crystene," who are characterized as being in "grete torment…in getyng off worldely goodes and worldely worschyppys and fleshly lustys" and live "as vnresonable bestis hauyng noo mynde that they shulle dyene neythere that they shalle come ande be demede in the dredefulle day off dome (Horstmann 433). The compiler ends the meditations on Purgatory by chastising those who believe "that [god] ys so mercyfulle that he wylle natt punyssh sinners" (Horstmann 433). While this shift in focus from a continuation of ghostly chivalry in the *Pore Caitif* to lay asceticism (or perhaps even officially taking the cloth) in the *Tretyse* might appear extreme, again, it remains consistent with what Amy Appleford has elucidated as the concerns of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth-century English vernacular tradition. Indeed, as we shall see, ghostly chivalry fails Malory's Lancelot, forcing even the "flower of chivalry" to make a similar departure from the world and its temptations for the sake of his soul.

The *Tretyse's* meditation on heaven is considerably longer than that of the *Pore Caitif's* "Hors eþer armur of heuene" but contains nearly all of its elements and phrasing with the notable exception of its lack of disease; this lack is critical to the *Pore Caitif's* depiction of paradise but not mentioned at any point in the *Tretyse* (Brady, "The Pore Caitif," 147-50; Horstmann 434-6). This surprising alteration may again demonstrate the late-medieval shift in anxieties from a preoccupation with plague deaths in the mid-to-late-fourteenth century to doubts concerning the efficacy of the Church's official process of dying, which in England was being reconsidered under Lollardy and undergoing a

transformation during the Council of Constance (CE 1414-1418) as a probable result of

lay support for both the Lollards and the Hussites, a similar movement on the Continent

(Appleford 141, 167-8). Beyond this shift in focus, one notable interpolation is the

lengthy parable of a mother and child in prison; the prison represents the living world,

which the child does not realize is a prison because he or she was raised there and has

experienced nothing else, while the mother, on the other hand, has experienced the

outside world (i.e. heaven) as a basis for comparison. The mother in this parable is the

Church, the ghostly mother. The child's fleshly mother is relegated to a representation of

the corporeal world—and with it all sinful temptations—and is juxtaposed with the

ghostly mother, who desires nothing more than to bring the child to salvation. While

these stock allegories can be found in various devotional writings, it is the *Tretyse's*

homily of this parable that proves significant, as it elucidates the requirement of sending

one's soul to heaven through death meditations more thoroughly and convincingly than

does "Hors eþer armur of heuene," *Learn to Die*, or *The Book of Vices and Virtues*. The

Tretyse's justification transcends the familiar juxtaposition of heaven and hell drawn

from "Hors eþer armur of heuene" at the beginning of these meditations: "sende thy herte,

whyche ys [thy] most louyde and trusty frende, before, to wete off that two thyngis [i.e.

heaven and hell] whyche ys moste profytable to abyde in" (Horstmann 428). While the

terror that should rightfully be instilled by death meditations on hell (and in this case

coupled with the doom) should be enough to render heaven the obvious choice for the lay

devotee, this homily, which strongly supports and is identified with the right spur of

ghostly chivalry, presents the reader with its own potential epiphany for ascetics

meditating on paradise: "For yeff thou haddest felt ore seyne the lest blysse that ys in

95

heuyne, thene alle the ioyes and lykyngis that thow hast in thys worlde of erthely thyngis, shalle thane be to the grete bytternes, sorowe, and care" (Horstmann 434). In these meditations, the joys of heaven are touted as secret yet instantaneous bliss available only to those select few willing to abandon the corporeal world to seek them. The earthly mother, characterized as a "nykare or meremaydene, that cast opone the water syde dyuerse thyngis whyche semene fayre and glorious to mane," openly leads the child of the parable to damnation by preventing him or her from knowing the superior joys of heaven, but those who partake in heavenly death meditations quickly realize, "howe ther ys in this worlde byt stynke ande horrybylyte and a foule dongeone in comparysone of that heuynly blysse" (Horstmann 435). Once the child of the parable has stolen a glimpse outside the window of this earthly prison, he or she desires only the freedom of heaven. Therefore, these meditations, by allowing the lay ascetic to peer outside this proverbial window, should have the effect of entirely nullifying earthy desires and fostering a deep longing for eternal bliss. In brief, heavenly death meditations lead the ascetic away from life and prepare him or her for death through a superior sense of pleasure—and with it, escapism. This esoteric bliss is supported by a paraphrased retelling of Christ's transfiguration[103] before only a handful of his disciples "opone the hylle of Thabor…ther he schewede but a lytylle off [the] blysse of hys manhode," and this fervent longing for heaven is reinforced by a mortified St. Paul, who after being "rauysshede in to heuene" and who "hade seene the vysyons and the pryvytees off gode" cared nothing for clothing nor sustenance, in a poignant translation and expansion of Romans 7:24: "'[I] vnsely mane, who shalle delyuer me from the body of this deth? I covet to be departid the soule

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[103] Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36

from the body and to be with Cryste withoutyne ende'" (Horstmann 435). The image of a mortified Moses fasting in the presence of God on Mt. Sinai rounds out these examples of holy men longing for the release of heavenly bliss and ends these death meditations (Horstmann 436). None of this is present in the *Pore Caitif* nor any of the other tracts currently considered sources of the *Tretyse*.

Despite these many additions and expansions, *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* ends in an orderly manner by returning to the horse, rider, and ghostly arms and exhorting the reader to remember the lessons discussed in the tract: balance the needs and desires of the horse (body) with the spiritual hygiene of the rider (soul); "…take hede that the soule be welle armede with gostly armour, whyche beene vertewes"; take care not to leave behind one's spear (the Passion), sword (the Word of God), and shield (the Trinity); and keep one's eternal reward always in mind (Horstmann 436). The Christian soul seeking heaven must prove to be "a trewe knyght in thys gostly batayle," for hell awaits the "cowarde" who "wylle nat fyght ayenst thy gostly enemyes but consentest to ther wykede counsellys" and who trusts in the "erthely moder" (Horstman 436). The final passage reinforces the tract's opening interpretation of Job 7:1—that ever since the fall, the human experience has consisted of spiritual warfare against ghostly enemies, but the knight who trusts to his or her arms and to the ghostly mother—at this point a transmogrification of the Church's doctrine to include ascetic death meditations—will ultimately prevail and "come to endeles blysse whyche man was ordernede to in hys furst creacione" (Horstman 436).

CHAPTER 4

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT: ARMED WITH VIRTUES BETWEEN

TWO DEATHS

Although Sir Gawain famously survives his encounter with the Green Knight,

death anxiety remains *SGGK*'s most centralized theme, saturating the text from the Green

Knight's entrance in the first Fitt to the Baudrillardian simulacrum of the green girdle at

Camelot when Sir Gawain, who had been written-off by the court, returns with it in the

last. Death and rebirth are present even in the poem's temporal structure, which places its

major conflicts between New Year's Eve and New Year's Day a full calendar year later,

effectively beginning at an end and ending at a beginning separated by the life-and-death

topos of the passing seasons (I.36-59, II.491-535). Michael W. Twomey points to a

variety of holidays referenced in *SGGK* associated with eschatological figures such as St.

Michael, St. John the Evangelist, and the Virgin Mary, who is ubiquitous in Catholic

theology but whose role as divine intercessor for the dying is central to Sir Gawain's

plight (79). Moreover, the Gawain-Poet's innovation to the year-and-a-day questing trope

creates a liminal space between the suggestion and confirmation of death that his

protagonist must occupy and navigate throughout all his trials—both known and

unknown. This complex presentation of the looming anxieties of death and potential

damnation not only correlates with the *memento mori* concerns of treatises such as *Learn

to Die* and *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*, but also addresses the more immediate reality of

death as the greatest of unknowns, an invisible event spiritually perilous even to those

who take the proper precautions.

As both Elina Gertsman and Jane Gilbert have respectively argued from the optics of poststructuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, death exists in a negative space and therefore cannot be directly signified. Gertsman writes of the attempt to do so as a "simulacrum, a simulation of Death… Since death is an absence rather than a presence, any attempt to paint death underscores the impossibility of doing so by the very tangibility of the represented subject" (21). Gilbert, in Lacanian terms, identifies death with the unknowable "Real" (9). Her definition of "living death" in the literature of the Middle Ages is useful in terms of locating the liminality of the *moriens*, whom she identifies as existing *entre-deux-morts,* and evaluating death's powerful yet impalpable presence in *SGGK*. For Gilbert and the headless Green Knight, death cannot necessarily be correlated with the end of corporeality; she places equal weight on the "symbolic death" of the figure, allowing for a broader range of interpretations that are especially poignant when considering Sir Gawain's unique predicament. Gilbert defines "symbolic death" as "the community's formal recognition of a person as dead," which may "precede corporeal death, as when such phenomena as religious commitment or mental illness makes a subject 'dead to the world'" (6). The Arthurian comitatus of *SGGK*, of course, considers Sir Gawain lost and blames King Arthur even before his famous nephew has departed on All-Saints Day to search for the Green Chapel (II.550-61, II.674-86). Further, and more directly reflective of Sir Gawain's entanglements, Gilbert explains, "A different understanding of non-corporeal death might be termed 'subjective,' referring to [the] subject's sense of being sent on an inevitable course towards death, and attending to the ways in which that engagement affects their engagement with life" (6). In *SGGK*, Sir Gawain's engagement with life as a subject *entre-deux-morts* is at the heart of his trials

99

and eventual failure, and it is no accident that the Gawain-Poet places the most perilous

of these trials not on the battlefield, but at the bedside where in the *ars moriendi* tradition

the *moriens* must vie for his or her soul against spiritual adversaries. With these

considerations in mind, the following chapter will reconsider *SGGK* as a text that

problematizes the English vernacular tradition of dying well when applied to the knightly

class by placing its central character—a supposed paragon of chivalry who attempts to

participate in *memento mori* stoicism—between two deaths.

　　　As early as I.85-106, the Gawain-Poet deploys the French motif of King Arthur's

refusal to eat until he has heard of some adventure to establish a "childgered," golden-age

king who serves as the poem's first example of a knight not ready for death. Lines I.96-

99 describe an impetuous Arthur jousting life-for-life as an entertainment to whet his

appetite for supper. It is he who first agrees to the Green Knight's *gomen* when his own

knights refuse to speak because he fails to interpret the holly and the ivy as signifiers of

the Green Knight's power over life and death. With this in mind, his switching places

with Sir Gawain and watching his nephew's symbolic death might produce an effect

similar to that of Gertzman's *Encounter*—Arthur, through seeing Gawain as "undead,"

the king's own deathly doppelganger, now understands the gravity of death and just how

close he has come to dying in *mors improvisa*. As Jayme M. Yeo has demonstrated,

Arthur's terror is evident in his needless attempts to comfort Guinevere, which only serve

to transfer his fears onto his wife so that he can remain in the role of the protector (lines

I.470-5; 254-5). Through Arthur's microcosmic arc, the Gawain-Poet demonstrates the

misguided nature of secular chivalry and gestures towards the *memento mori* asceticism

commensurate with ghostly chivalry, as established by the *Pore Caitif* and *A Tretyse of*

Gostly Batayle. The Arthurian comitatus attempts to remedy this err with Sir Gawain, now in their eyes a *moriens*,[104] before he faces what his fellowship believes must be his inevitable death.

<p style="text-align:center">Arming the Knight-*Moriens*</p>

When the Knights of the Round Table and their followers gather around Gawain before he leaves to search for the Green Chapel, their approach is similar to that of deathbed attendants in the English *artes moriendi*: they are not there to prevent Gawain's death, but to see him off and protect him as best as they are able against the spiritual temptations that lead to a bad death. The arming sequence that follows this gathering has been argued by Derek Brewer as belonging to the same *topos* that stretches back to *Gilgamesh,* forward to *The Rape of the Locke*, and may have already been parodied in the Gawain-Poet's time by Chaucer in his tale of *Sir Thopas* (175-9). The most famous of these sequences (Brewer identifies three) all belong to Homer's Achilles, but as Brewer has argued, the finest and most complete is that of Sir Gawain in *SGGK* (177). However, while Brewer discusses the Pentangle as a blazon designating morality as well as the development of the image of the Virgin Mary on shields in the English Arthurian tradition,[105] which is also included in Laȝamon's *Brut* and Geoffrey's *Historia* but likely

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[104] Although Twomey does not engage directly with the *ars moriendi* or *memento mori tracts* surveyed in Chapter 2, he does point to the Arthurian comitatus' fear of Gawain's potential spiritual annihilation through the loss of his head (78-82). While he focuses more on the corporeality of death than I will do here, his work concerning the reunification of the body with the spirit at the General Resurrection is commensurate with the eschatological 'Of þre arowes' section of *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*.

[105] Prior to *SGGK*, Mary's image is traditionally featured on King Arthur's shield.

first appears in Nennius's *Historia Britonum*,[106] he does not speak to the spiritual virtues

signified by the armor itself.[107] As demonstrated by the anonymous Middle English tract

A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle and its predecessor the *Pore Caitif*, the Latin illuminations

from MS Harley 3244, and Ramon Llull's Catalan *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*[108]

(translated anonymously into French as *L'Ordre de Cheualerie*[109] and later by William

Caxton into English), a wide range of allegorical meaning can be applied to a theological

reading of the arms and armor of the knight. According to Ann Astell, these allegories

fall into the genre of ghostly battle or "ghostly chivalry," which is concerned with

spiritual warfare against both metaphysical temptation and the literal "enemies of God"

(159-84). Said enemies have been rendered alternatively as physical opponents and evil

spirits in Arthurian texts such as *Perlesvaus, La Queste del Saint Graal*, and in the

present case, *SGGK*. While Brewer is correct that the traditional arming *topos* generally

prepares the hero for his most dangerous battle, the true conflict Sir Gawain faces in

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[106] Heng (among others) points to the debate concerning Arthur carrying the image of Mary either on his "shoulder" or his "shield" (511).

[107] This is true even though Brewer does reference Ephesians 6:13-17 and refers to it as "a passage that used to be familiar as the first Sunday in Lent" (176).

[108] Listed here in the order of their perceived importance to *SGGK*. Chronologically, the earliest of these is MS Harley 3244, which dates to the second quarter of the thirteenth century, followed by Llull's *Order* and its French translations in the late thirteenth century, the *Pore Caitif* in the mid-fourteenth century, the *Tretyse* sometime between the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and Caxton's translation of the *Order* between 1483-1485. A Scots version dating to 1456 and written by Sir Gilbert Hays also exists, but Byles has dismissed it as a poor translation; another by Adam Loutfut has been demonstrated to be a translation of Caxton's version (Fallows 1-5; Astell 170-2; Byles xvi, xxxv, xli-xlii, li).

[109] Found in MS Royal 14.E.II (fols. 338r-354v) and prepared for King Edward IV sometime between c. 1473-1483 (Fallows 3). This text is not to be confused with the c. 1220 Old French poem *Ordene de chevalerie*, which Brian R. Price has argued as a source for Llull's *Order* but which Fallows does not mention.

SGGK is not with the physical opponents he meets on the road to Hautdesert, but with temptation and *mors improvisa*—the ghostly enemies of the *moriens*.

For J.A. Burrow, one of the defining tenets of Ricardian Poetry is its suppression of heroic violence, and indeed *SGGK* is the tale of a prominent Arthurian figure facing death not on the battlefield where physical armor could protect him but through a pact with a seemingly supernatural entity (54-7). And as I will demonstrate and others have certainly commented, Sir Gawain's victories in battles with giants, dragons, and wildmen or "wodwos" on the way to Castle Hautdesert are treated as a foregone conclusion due to his temporary status as a *miles Christi*. To my thinking, the dilemma with this traditional reading of the arming sequence in *SGGK* is that Gawain's armor cannot protect him from his oath to receive a stroke from the Green Knight's axe. However, this issue can be resolved by an augmented reading that locates this scene within the *memento mori* tradition of the English *artes moriendi* and therefore interprets it not just as a bestowal of physical armaments, but also of the spiritual virtues associated with them vis-à-vis ghostly chivalry. These arms indeed retain protective properties if Sir Gawain is taken for what the Arthurian comitatus believes him to be: not a knight-errant who can still fight for his life, but a knight-*moriens* who must willingly embrace death to attain salvation.

The First Arming Sequence

Crucial to the first arming sequence and to the general symbolism of *SGGK* is the "point," which is a tie with a conical metal end or "aglet" used to fasten the various pieces

of the knight's armor into place.[110] The use of points in attaching outer to inner armor is well-documented in the Hastings MS [f.122b] (c.1450):

> He schal have noo schirte up on him but a dowbelet of ffustean lynyd with satene cutte full of hoolis. The dowblet muste be strongeli boūdē there the poyntis muste be sette aboute the greet of the arme. And the breste [?][111] before and beyhnde and the gussetis of mayle muste be sowid un to the dowbelet in the bought of the arme. And undir the arme the armynge poyntis muste be made of fyne twyne suche as men make stryngis for crossbowes and they muste be trussid small and poyntid as poyntis. Also they muste be wexid with cordeweneris coode. And than they woll neythir recche nor breke. (Arthur and Viscount Dillon, 43)

> [He shall have no shirt upon him but a doublet of fustian lined with satin (and) cut full of holes. The doublet must be strongly stitched where the points must be set about the whole of the arm. And the breast before and behind. And the gussets[112] (wedges) of mail must be sewn onto the doublet in the bend of the arm and under the arm. The arming points must be made of fine twine such as the strings men make for crossbows, and they must be wound tight (at the end) and pointed into aglets. Also, they must be waxed with tanner's resin. And then they will never stretch or break.]

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[110] Points of other materials were also, of course, used in a variety of fashions in the Middle Ages and could be found lacing a doublet together or serving as a suspension system for pants and hose.

[111] The MS has "b ste," which Arthur and Dillon have marked as a lacuna. However, the missing element is likely the common abbreviation for "re."

[112] See "Gusset." Middle English Compendium. University of Michigan, November 2019. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field=hnf&q=%2Bgusset.

Like the Pentangle on Gawain's shield that holds together the Five Points of Chivalry, the

arming point forms a sturdy knot that binds together differing materials such as metal,

textiles, and leather. The aglet, which in Gawain's case is cast in gold or at least gilded,

enables the attendant arming the knight to "sew" the armor into place. Most important to

our reading, as will be demonstrated below, the armed knight could then untie these

points and remove most of the armor with little aid should he choose to do so.[113] While

the Gawain-Poet uses the term "poyntez" varyingly especially in describing the properties

of the Pentangle and its bearer, lines II.590-1,[114] which provide a vision of Gawain in his

armor after the majority of the pieces are in place, clearly demonstrate the literal use of

points: "When he watz hasped in armes his harnays watz ryche: / Þe lest lachet oþer

loupe lemed of golde."[115] Golden loops and laces, which are presented here as the most

basic element of Gawain's harness, must refer to the aglets at the ends of ties that hold

the kit together and not to buckles. This is because the Gawain-Poet is deliberate about

his placement of fasteners in the arming sequence, as demonstrated by the "knotez of

golde" about Gawain's knees yet the leather "þwonges" or straps that wrap around the

back of his thighs and require buckles.[116] When taken together with the motif of knots

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[113] This process is not often depicted in Arthurian literature because the traditional arming and disarming
sequences require a servant or perhaps a peer to aid the knight as a custom of courtesy, but courtesy
requires at least two people in order to be performed. Without aid, a knight whose harness had been pointed
on could remove most of the armor protecting the arms, legs, and head. In Sir Gawain's case, it is the mail
that would have given him the most trouble unless it was split at the breast and therefore able to be tied on
as well, and this is not indicated by the Gawain-Poet's description.

[114] I have made use of the typescript of SGGK found in Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, *The Poems
of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Exeter: Univ.
of Exeter Press, 2011). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[115] [When he was fastened in his arms, his armor was splendid: / The least lace or loop gleamed with gold.]

[116] This suspension system for the thighs is both sturdier and easier to undo than a tie.

prevalent throughout the poem, it seems obvious that the pointed-on armor should be read similarly to the way Geraldine Heng has read the knots of the Pentangle and the Green Girdle: as a symbol that binds but can also be easily undone (500-14). This symbol is also central to a *memento mori* reading of the knight's armor, as both the *Pore Caitif* and *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* deploy the knot similarly as an analogy for the abstinence required to control bodily urges—an important problem in *SGGK*.

These points would also literally be necessary to attach the arm, shoulder, and leg armor (by means of suspension) to the first element in the arming sequence, the "dublet" or arming jacket (II.571). *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* identifies the "Iakke off Fence" or arming jacket, the foundation of the knight's kit, with the virtue of charity—perhaps expressed more aptly as the Latin *caritas*: "love of God and fellow human beings." As it is also a garment worn by common soldiers as outer armor, its purpose is to absorb blows, which the *Tretyse* likens to Paul Cor. 14 in establishing it as the principal armor that belongs to all Christians: "'charyte suffreth alle thynges paciently, and maketh euery trauayle soft, and beryth alle thing esyly'" (Horstmann 425). The *Tretyse* further identifies the arming jacket with the Robe of Christ and provides the explanation that it could not be cut by the "knyghts" (i.e. Roman soldiers) who cast lots for it (Horstmann 425). This garment is followed by the "capados," which is often translated as "hood" or "cape" but in this context most likely refers to an arming cap or coif that overlaps the arming coat to cover the breast and shoulders, as Gawain at this point still lacks both mail and surcoat[117] (II.572). Although not referenced in the *Tretyse* or its analogs, such a cap serves the same purpose as the arming jacket: to absorb the blows of enemies. Despite

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[117] See the comparison of the Green Knight's beard to a cap-a-dos on I.186.

possible representations of charity, or *caritas*, as a foundational Christian virtue (i.e.,

donned first and worn under the other armor), both physical garments would be

considered quite lavish; the former is from Tharsia, famous for its textiles, and the latter

is lined with "blaunner" or ermine, the fur of a type of weasel prized for both its fashion

and warmth (II.571, 573).

The sequence continues realistically with the sabatons, greaves, and cuisses—the

latter of which must be pointed to the arming jacket, as there is no mention of a belt in the

Gawain-Poet's detailed description of the process until the girding of the sword, which is

worn over the "cote-armure" (II.574-9, 586, 588-9). The *Tretyse* traces the ghostly

warrior's leg harness back to Ephesians 6:10[118] but provides a heavily modified Middle

English *translatio*, including both the traditional "readiness of the gospel of peace" and

well as an updated reading, "ghostly poverty," in its allegoresis. The *Tretyse's* homily on

ghostly poverty focuses on acknowledging the need for God's aid in defending against

temptations such as worldly goods and fleshly lusts (Horstmann 424). Taken together,

these two readings provide a spiritual foundation for a knight who must rely upon the

Word of God and His aid to maintain his spiritual hygiene. Ramon Llull's *Book of the

Order of Chivalry* provides an additional range of significance for these "iron chausses,"

which refer synecdochally to all the pieces of the knight's leg armor: they are worn to

remind the knight of his duty to guard the highways from God's enemies, a task that Sir

Gawain performs during his search for the Green Chapel before arriving at Hautdesert

(67). These enemies referenced in both the *Order* and *SGGK* are not members of the

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[118] Which in itself is a considerable update, as the "Armor of God" in this passage includes sandals, which have been interpreted as greaves in the Classical warrior's kit.

chivalry (in *SGGK*, as we will see, they are frequently bestial or monstrous) and would therefore be afoot, making the leg harness an important physical defense for the mounted warrior. The differing allegoreses of the leg harness in both the *Tretyse* and the *Order* demonstrate the tendency to freely adapt scripture to serve the context of the New Chivalry and the utility of its arms.

This is also true of the *Tretyse's* treatment of the gauntlets, vambraces, and rerebraces that appear on II.582-3 of *SGGK* but are entirely absent from the tract's known sources and analogs with the exception of an update in the much-later Caxton translation of the *Order*.[119] The compiler of the *Tretyse* relies upon the common religious allegory of the hands as representative of "besynes" or industry, the Contrary Virtue of sloth, and freely applies this to the plate armor that would cover these appendages (Horstmann 425). In contrast, the body armor drawn from Ephesians 6:10, which finds likely analogs in Galatians 3:27 and Romans 13:14, has undergone a complete transformation from the Classical warrior's breastplate to the knight's hauberk or habergeon that can be traced from scripture through a variety of religious tracts ranging from late antiquity to the fourteenth-fifteenth century and culminating in the *Tretyse*. This is in part due to the innovation of mail and its differing physical properties from the breastplate, which produce additional figural meaning through the perceived "interconnectedness" of the interlocking rings, a quality interpreted as representational of the "even-cristine" community that the knight must protect yet also judge. The purest and simplest ghostly

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[119] There is no mention of armor for the arms and hands in *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, *MS. Harley 3244*, *The Pore Caitiff*, *The Prik of Conscience*, *St. Gregory's Moralia on Job*, or any scriptural source referenced in the *Tretyse*. Caxton's update to Llull by means of a copy of *L'Ordre de Cheualerie* found in MS Royal 14.E.II replaces the horse's bit, which represents "security against false oaths and uncouth words," with gauntlets designating essentially the same virtue (Llull 69; Caxton 82).

body armor can be located in Galatians 3:27 and Romans 13:14; it is the act of clothing

oneself in Christ for ghostly protection against bodily desire. Both Wisdom 5:15 and the

more often deployed Ephesians 6:10 provide allegoreses for the "Armor of God" and

agree in this case upon the "breastplate of righteousness," but by St. Gregory's *Moralia*

on Job this has already shifted to the "breastplate of patience"[120] to coincide with St.

Gregory's allegoresis of Job as a champion of God (Book 5, XLV.81). A paradigm shift

occurs with the innovation of chainmail and other knightly arms alongside the invention

of the New Chivalry, defined in St. Bernard of Clairvaux's letter to founding Templar

Hugh de Payns, *De laude novae militae.* As Astell has demonstrated, in Late Antiquity

and the Early Middle Ages, ghostly battle was solely spiritual and waged only against

temptation and evil spirits, but for the New Chivalry of the twelfth century and beyond,

corporeal enemies of God joined the fray and paved the way for the Crusader's

Indulgence (161-5). This led to the *miles Christi* and his constant war against God's

enemies becoming emblematic of the struggle for salvation, which is depicted in the

famous Latin illuminations inserted into MS Harley 3244. These illuminations feature a

mounted knight facing the Seven Deadly Sins and their venial offspring and include the

label "caritas" for the hauberk rather than the arming jacket worn beneath it, again

demonstrating the sense of community associated with its interlocking rings (M. Evans

158). Similarly, while the *Order* describes the hauberk as a "castle and rampart opposite

vices and misdeeds," it also contains a section on the knight's duty to dispense justice

fairly to his "even-cristine" (Llull 67, 46). This is analogous to the *Tretyse's* treatment of

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[120] St. Gregory's allegories are less precise than those of the medieval authors and also include the shield as a representation of patience or steadfastness.

the habergeon,[121] which represents "justice" rather than "righteousness" in the compiler's

loose translation of Ephesians 6:10 but presents an extension to this meaning to include

"equality" as it pertains to the equal dispensation of justice amongst "even-cristine"

(Horstmann 424). The compiler of the *Tretyse* further argues that if the knight shows

favoritism to any of his "even-cristine" that he has a proverbial chink in his armor

through which the Devil may reach in to claim his soul (Horstmann 424). Llull also

appears fixated on rendering the utility of the mail figuratively, but instead focuses on its

strength in a passage reminiscent of *The Castle of Perseverance*:

> …for just as a castle and rampart are closed around so that no one may enter
>
> inside them, so the hauberk is closed and fitted on all sides so that it signifies the
>
> noble courage of the knight, inside of which neither treachery, pride, disloyalty,
>
> nor any vice can enter. (Llull 67)

The *Tretyse*, the *Order*, and the illuminations from MS Harley 3244 provide apt readings

for the virtues and spiritual safeguards bestowed by Sir Gawain's mail because their

allegoreses all stem from the Christian ideal of interconnectedness—again, frequently

addressed through the Gawain-Poet's references to the knot as a symbol of unified

strength but also potential undoing.

    Next in the sequence is Gawain's "ryche cote-armure," which is fitted over the

"bryné"—alternatively translated as "hauberk", "habergeon," or more simply, "mail shirt"

(II.586). This surcoat was usually made of linen because it was difficult to cut and would

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[121] Structurally the same garment as the hauberk but with shorter (or no) sleeves and usually less
overlapping thigh protection. As the armor that protected the limbs advanced, the hauberk became
redundant and unnecessarily heavy. If incorrectly matched with other pieces, its sleeves and shirttail could
also cause the armor to bind, prohibiting movement.

normally display the knight's heraldic device; however, as Sir Gawain's usual devices—

and by extension his identity and connection to his bloodline—have been replaced by the

Pentangle (more on this below), the Gawain-Poet declines to describe the surcoat in any

detail during the arming sequence. Llull provides an allegoresis of the "pourpoint" or

surcoat that speaks not only its utility in terms of displaying the knight's identity but also

to the burdens that come with the knight's worship, or worldly reputation. He points to

the function of the pourpoint as an outer garment by comparing the how it receives

damage before the hauberk—from not only the blows of enemies but also extreme

weather and wear—to how the knight must safeguard the Christian community even to

the point of willingly dying before allowing its members to be harmed. This allegoresis,

like those found in MS Harley 3244 and the *Tretyse*, also returns to the understanding of

the hauberk as the "even-cristine" community that must be protected by the members of

the chivalry. Put more simply, it represents the "ordeals the knight must suffer" to defend

king, nation, and faith community; the virtue comes in being chosen for these ordeals

(Llull 69-70).

The remainder of the sequence is as follows: spurs, sword, horse, bridle, helm,

shield, blazon, and finally, after much discussion of the blazon, the lance. The inclusion

of the horse and its tack is extremely important as they are depicted in the *Order*, the

Pore Caitif, *MS Harley 3244*, and the *Tretyse* as parts of the knight's virtue-bestowing

arsenal—in the *Pore Caitif* and the *Tretyse*, the horse is a somatic system that must be

frequently governed by the rider via the "bridle of abstinence" and allegorically figures

the knight's body with it all his fleshly lusts and corporeal needs. Bridling the horse is

necessary to maintain a Benedictine control over the body, as it must remain strong

enough to fight yet mortified enough to be spiritually hygienic and ready for death

(Brady, "The Pore Caitif," 139-40; Horstmann 421-2). That the Gawain-Poet interlaces

the horse's system with that of the knight, which should be isolated to the point of a

Cartesian split to give the soul control over the body, may evidence either a preference

for an earlier continental tradition such as the one depicted in the MS Harley 3244

illuminations or a deliberate choice that figures Gawain's famous weakness for women

and struggle to control his lust. In order to more appropriately discuss the ghostly

allegoreses of Gawain's arms, I will be focusing first on the remainder of the knight's

system and then that of Gringolet, Gawain's horse.

      Another conundrum is locating the spurs (II.587) within one system or the other.

MS Harley 3244 provides the Latin *disciplina* or "instruction" for the spurs, pointing not

only to their utility but also the relationship between rider and mount and therefore

suggesting their duality (M. Evans 21; Biddle 157). Llull sees the knight and his mount as

one system and figuratively locates reasoning centers within both entities despite

referring to the literal horse as "a beast who does not have reason;" for example, in the

Order the "restraint" identified with the bridle and the reins refers to the knight's

"willingness to be led by chivalry," suggesting the knight's decision-making faculties

may need to be checked rather than merely his bodily urges as in the two English tracts

(Lull 69). Llull's treatment of the spurs, which gestures to their significance in traditional

dubbing ceremonies, is similar:

      Spurs are given to the knight to signify the diligence, expertise, and zeal with

      which he professes the honour of his Order, for just as with the spurs the knight

      pricks his horse so that it hurries and runs as swiftly as it can, so diligence hastens

the things that it is fitting to hasten, and expertise makes a man guard against

being taken by surprise, and zeal yields the harness and provisions that are

essential for the honour of chivalry. (Llull 67)

The *Tretyse*, however, which again draws its treatment directly from the *Pore Caitif*,

identifies the spurs individually and refers directly to the *memento mori* tradition. The

right spur represents the love that mankind owes to God while the left refers to the dread

of hell and Purgatory. In death meditations, the ghostly knight must figuratively prick his

or her[122] flesh with the appropriate spur, alternatively incentivizing and chastising the

horse (Horstmann 427). This range of figural meaning that can be applied to Gawain's

"gold spurez" more directly engages with the problems of the text than reading them as a

badge of office alone; if chivalry, often signified by the spurs, is indeed on trial in *SGGK*,

it is through the ordeals of ghostly and not secular chivalry that Gawain must face the

judgment for which he is being prepared.

The next of Gawain's armaments is arguably the most recognizable in the

knight's kit: his sword "Galatine" or "Galuth" in the English tradition,[123] which

importantly—along with the physical battles in which he engages on the road to

Hautdesert—is suppressed in *SGGK* despite its alliterative potential and the presence of

precisely seven references to his alliterative horse, Gringolet. Lines II.588-9 describe the

girding of the blade, an important part of the traditional knighting ceremony and probably

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[122] Due to its concerns with fleshly temptation universal to both sexes, the *Tretyse* uses the extended metaphor of ghostly battle to instruct both men and women.

[123] From Malory's Roman War section of the Winchester *Morte Darthur* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* respectively. It's possible that the Gawain-Poet was unfamiliar with the sword because it primarily appears in later English texts, but that would not have stopped him from inventing an alliterative name to deploy with both "Gawan" and "Gringolet," Gawain's famous horse originating in Chretien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide* and prominent in the *Lancelot-Grail*.

placed adjacently to the spurs for this reason. However, this ritual can only be read figuratively and has no place in the traditional arming *topos*, as Gawain is unable to make use of his "bronde" due to his oath to the Green Knight. When Gawain's peers, "þe best of þe burȝ," gather together, they discuss and lament the suppression of the sword: Þere watz much derue doel driuen in þe sale / Þat so worthe as Wawan schulde wende on þat ernde / To dryȝe a delful dynt and dele no more/ Wyth bronde[124] (II.555-61). In terms of ghostly chivalry, however, Gawain's inability to make use of his blade has even direr consequences than corporeal death, as the biblical allegory of the sword is one of the most important and stable that has come down from scripture. Where Llull focuses on the cruciform sword as having two edges, "justice" and "chivalry," which empower the knight to destroy God's enemies, every other text surveyed from Ephesians 6:10 to the *Tretyse* (besides the *Pore Caitif*, which doesn't treat the weapons at all) identifies the sword with the Word of God, and of these texts, only MS Harley 3244 fails to also identify it with the Holy Spirit. The *Tretyse* augments this reading only slightly, pointing to the need for violent separation rather than sinful peace (Horstmann 426). Without the Word of God and the Holy Spirit at his side, Gawain's ghostly battle for the salvation of a good death seems utterly hopeless, and this is but one set of the virtues bestowed through arms he is unable to bear against the Green Knight and throughout his trials at Hautdesert. And whereas the sword is figuratively identified with the separation of virtue and vice, here, it is Gawain who is separated from the tenets of his faith, carrying them in name only. Interestingly, the sword-belt itself has its own allegoresis in the *Tretyse*,

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[124] [There was much painful sorrow made in the hall / That (one) so worthy as Gawain should journey on that errand / To endure a doleful blow and deal (as in 'strike back') no more / with (his) sword.]

where the biblical designation of "belt of truth" from Ephesians 6:10 has instead been translated as "girdle of chastity." In the compiler's homily, this girdle transfers the weight of the habergeon from the shoulders to the hips, therefore forming a concatenation of virtues that can also be applied to Sir Gawain's kit: Chastity [Girdle] → Justice/Equality [Habergeon] → Charity/Caritas [Arming Jacket] (Horstmann 424-5). It is no small matter of significance that it is over this belt that Gawain will later loop the Green Girdle (IV.2030-6). Replacing this virtue-granting girdle with a corrupted one, which Gawain identifies in Fitt IV as representing "cowardice" and "covetousness," quite obviously disrupts this sequence.

After a passage concerning Gringolet to which we will return, Gawain receives his helm, which he kisses before donning (II.605-6). The helm, like the sword and shield, cannot be deployed physically against the Green Knight and also bears the singular distinction of not being able to be worn in his final trial. Also like the sword and shield, the helmet's virtues can be traced back to scripture: Wisdom 5:15 has "justice" where Ephesians 6:10 provides "salvation." These allegories have not remained as stable as those of the sword, however, with MS Harley 3244 labeling the knight's early great helm[125] "*spes future gaudii*" or "hope for future bliss," a shift resonating with the *artes moriendi* and *memento mori* traditions in that the *moriens* must not be complacent concerning salvation, instead displaying *timor filialis* despite placing complete trust in God's mercy (M. Evans 21; Biddle 158). Llull's *Order* designates the "chapel-de-fer," a

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[125] MS Harley, again, dates to the second quarter of the thirteenth century, and the illumination depicts the knight as a true *miles Christi* in the armor of the crusader. This includes the early great helm or enclosed helm, which has distinctive features dissimilar to the bascinet, the most popular style of helmet at the time of the Gawain-Poet's writing (M. Lacy 166-7).

type of kettle helm in use during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as representing a "fear of shame" that reminds the knight of the honor of his office "…so that he does not stoop to base deeds and the nobility of his courage does not descend into malfeasance, deceit or any evil habit" (Llull 67). While any of these readings can be applied to Sir Gawain's symbolic beheading, the most appropriate to my thinking comes from the *Tretyse*, which provides an allegoresis for the precise style of helmet Gawain wears in the arming sequence and during his battles on the road but does not wear at Hautdesert and cannot wear at the Green Chapel. Michael Lacy's analysis of Gawain's "helme" on II.605-7 and IV.2317 and the aventail or "auentayle" on II.608 reveals it to be a bascinet complete with "a small cape of mail… suspended from a leather band, affixed to the helm by means of small staples, called vervelles" (166-7). Here, as Brewer has already made mention, the Gawain-Poet's description is remarkably precise:

> Þenne hentes he þe helm and hastily hit kysses,
>
> Þat watz stapled stifly and stoffed wythinne,
>
> Hit watz hyȝe on his hede, hasped bihynde,
>
> Wyth a lyȝtly vrysoun ouer þe auentayle… (II.605-8)
>
> [Then he takes the helmet and quickly kisses it, / Which was stapled stiffly[126] and stuffed on the inside,[127] / It was high on his head, clasped from behind, / With a bright silk band over the aventail…[128]]

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[126] Referring to the strap and the vervelles that encircled the helm and from which hung the aventail. The strap was suspended from these permanent "staples" and affixed to the outer circumference of the helm.

[127] With a textile and interior padding to prevent concussive blows from reaching the head—this doubled the protection of the arming cap.

[128] The cape of mail to which Michael Lacy (above) refers; it hung from the helmet and protected the sides of the face, neck, and depending on its length, doubled the hauberk's protection of the clavicle.

It is due to the Gawain-Poet's precision and not the imprecision of the infamous illuminator of Cotton Nero A.X that Michael Lacy has definitively categorized Gawain's helm as a bascinet, and perhaps uncoincidentally, the compiler of the *Tretyse* found this late style of helmet important enough to ghostly chivalry to alter the provided translation of Ephesians 6:10 to include it in the Armor of God passage and also to provide a differing allegory from the biblical passage. Rather than the traditional "salvation," the *Tretyse* has "ghostly health" and includes an extended allegoresis of the bascinet's highest point and designates this "little cup," which was especially designed to deflect arrows[129] as well as downward blows to the crown, as representing "trust in God" (Horstmann 424). Again, from the optics of ghostly battle and *memento mori*, Gawain's position appears ever more hopeless when considering the virtues his faith community attempts to impart to him, but which cannot be deployed in his final confrontation with the Green Knight. The allegorical lance, which is virtually ubiquitous in the ghostly battle genre since at least *Gregory's Moralia on Job* and frequently appears in Arthurian grail quests ranging from Chretien's *Percival* to the Cistercian *La Queste del Saint Graal* to Malory's adaptations that include the *Post-Vulgate's* Dolorous Stroke, is scarcely mentioned[130] (II.667). However, the Arthurian comitatus takes an additional step to ensure Gawain's salvation through presenting him with a specialized virtue-granting

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[129] Perhaps those such as the Three Arrows of Doomsday mentioned later in the *Tretyse*; these are fired at the damned and are "the calling to doom," "the chastisement of false Christians," and "the sentence of eternal damnation" (Horstmann 430-1).

[130] This may be in part due to its connection to Christ's Passion, which the Gawain-Poet instead ascribes to the Pentangle. The lance has alternatively signified "preaching/love" (St. Gregory), "*perseverentia"* (MS Harley 3244), "unbending truth" (Llull), "strength" (Caxton), and most importantly, the Passion (the *Tretyse* and the majority of Arthurian material beginning with the French tradition).

accoutrement he can carry with him at all times: his shield, and with it, the now-famous blazon of the Pentangle.

The shield itself, which first appears on II.619, has a long history of allegory that can be traced to Wisdom 5:15 and Ephesians 6:10. Wisdom 5:15 provides "holiness" for the shield whereas Ephesians 6:10 has "faith." It is Ephesians 6:10, which again may be found loosely translated into Middle English within the *Tretyse*, that provides its compiler with "faith," but the medieval innovation of three-sided shields, such as the heater and kite shield types, also provides an extended allegory of the "Holy Trinity" (Horstmann 424). Similarly, the heater shield is present in the MS Harley 3244 illuminations, and its three sides are labeled (in translation) "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" with the center boss "God" (M. Evans 21; Biddle 158). Both texts appear to be direct extensions of scripture. Conversely, St. Gregory provides "patience" or "steadfastness" in his exegesis on the Book of Job, and Llull, perhaps concerned with the shield's connection to the knight's worship or reputation via the blazon, lists "duty" and "the office of the knight" (Book 3, X.17; Llull 68).

Of these arms, it is Gawain's blazon—the Pentangle—that has obviously received the most criticism. While its connection with King Solomon on II.625 indeed imbues it with a sense of mysticism, at the core of its numerology are the five wounds of Christ, His Passion: "And alle his afyaunce vpon folde watz in þe fyue woundez/ Þat Cryst kaȝt on þe croys, as þe Crede tellez"[131] (II.642-3). Pointedly, the shield is the defense that must be placed between the knight and the strokes of his foes, and in virtually every tract

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[131] [And all his trust upon earth/life was in the five wounds/ That Christ received on the Cross, as the Creed tells.]

in the English *artes moriendi*,[132] the Passion must be placed between the *moriens* and the final judgment, which in the *Tretyse* is allegorized as a series of three arrows Christ will fire at the damned (Horstmann 429-31). In the French tradition, Gawain's shield normally displays a two-headed hawk or eagle,[133] and given the Gawain-Poet's free adaptation of French Arthurian material, it is likely that he would have been aware of this famous heraldry. Its alteration rightly strips the hero of his worldly worship and replaces his identity within the comitatus with virtuous anonymity, allowing Gawain to suspend his reputation as Arthur's famous nephew and with it his worldly concerns. Like the arming *topos*, the knight riding in disguise is traditional and may signal the comitatus to discover rather than suspend the knight's identity,[134] but riding incognito takes on additional meaning when viewing Sir Gawain as a *moriens* who must release himself from worldliness in order to make a good death.

Following these five wounds and the spiritual protection they provide are the five joys Mary had in Christ: the Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, and Assumption—subjects of popular devotions and often paired with Five Wounds of Christ (Andrew and Waldron 232). In the context the Gawain-Poet provides, the image of Mary on the back of Gawain's shield takes on a different bent in *SGGK* than in its previous appearances on King Arthur's shield due to its connections to the Pentangle and the Passion. *Visitations A* and *E* as well as *The Book of the Craft of Dying* identify Mary as a

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[132] This holds true for *Visitations A and E*, *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, *Learn to Die*, *the Pore Caitif*, *A Tretyse of Ghostly Batayle*, and *The Boke of the Craft of Dying* as well as—where applicable—their continental originals.

[133] The hawk may be derivative of his Welsh name, Gwalchmei: "Hawk of May."

[134] See especially Susan Crane's *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War,* Chapter 4: Chivalric Display and Incognito.

divine intercessor who may be placed, with the Passion, between the *moriens* and his or her sins. Where Geoffrey's Arthur draws upon Mary's image for courage and dominance on the battlefield during the Battle of Bath, Gawain instead draws upon it to resist sexual temptation in a bedroom scenario not entirely unlike that of the bedridden *moriens* in the *artes moriendi* (Thorpe 217). All of the other fives in the Pentangle sequence, including the five points of chivalry, are dependent upon Mary and the Passion, reestablishing the chivalric hero as a *miles Christi* whose first duty is to his faith community and whose virtues stem from his spiritual hygiene, not his secular identity. The Pentangle is, of course, also a knot: a unifying symbol that holds Gawain together spiritually but also completes the armor set much as prayer completes the warrior's kit in Ephesians 6:10. While wearing the Armor of God, which he importantly doffs before the bed games at Hautdesert that ultimately lead to its augmentation and corruption via the Green Girdle, Gawain is described as follows:

> Forþy hit acordez to þis knyȝt and to his cler armez,
>
> For ay faythful in fyue and sere fyue syþez,
>
> Gawan watz for gode knawen and, as golde pured,
>
> Voyded of vche vylany, wyth vertuez ennourned
>
> In mote. (II.631-35)
>
> [And so this knight matched his spotless arms, / For always trustworthy in five ways and five times each way, / Gawain was known for (his) goodness and, as pure gold, / Was devoid of each villainy (i.e. sin), equipped with virtues in the castle (or amongst people[135]).]

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[135] I am indebted to Richard Newhauser for pointing out this second possible reading of "In mote."

In this passage, "wyth vertuez ennourned" must refer to the spiritual benefits bestowed by the armor itself, and the Gawain-Poet notably adds "In mote." This phrasing places limitations on Gawain's spotless character, making it circumstantial to both his equipment and his current location: Camelot, with the Arthurian comitatus and his faith community. As has been generally critiqued, his behavior in Hautdesert, where he is physically and spiritually "disarmed," does not coincide with this image of the virtuous knight[136] and is indeed more commensurate with the late-French Gawain. Here, Gawain's attendants, like those who gather around the *moriens* in the *Visitation* tracts, have done their part to equip him for ghostly battle before certain death, and like Humanum Genus in *The Castle of Perseverance*, it is Gawain himself who will undo these protections and expose himself to sin and *mors improvisa*.

Again, interlaced with Gawain's arming sequence is the preparation of his horse, Gringolet. Like the knight and his arms, the horse and its tack have a wide range of allegorical meaning in the ghostly battle genre, but unlike those of the *miles Christi*, they do not stem from scripture and begin to appear in the thirteenth-century sources. The horse represents "*bona voluntas*" or "good will" in MS Harley 3244, "nobility of courage" and "preparation" in the *Order*, and again—most importantly—the "body" in the *Pore Caitif* and the *Tretyse*, which must be managed by the "bridle of abstinence" and the individual spurs that alternately chastise and reward the body with ghostly meditations on hell/Purgatory and paradise (M. Evans 21; Llull 68; Horstmann 421-2, 427-8). The

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[136] Nor does it coincide with the more favorable but less sophisticated English Gawain of the northern Tail-Rhymed Romances; traditionally, Gawain is presented as a secular knight with few exceptions such as *De ortu Waluuanii nepotis Arturi* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. He is always secularized when juxtaposed with Percival.

Tretyse, which draws its allegoresis of the horse's tack directly from the *Pore Caitif* but adds stirrups and modifies the saddle to coincide with a reference to Job as a champion of God (drawn from St. Gregory's *Moralia*), also provides the following: reins [temperance], saddle [patience/humility], and stirrups [humility/stoicism] (Brady, "The 'Pore Caitif': An Introductory Study," 140; Horstmann 422-3). While this English allegorical system is perhaps the most apt in comparing Sir Gawain's character leaving Camelot and on the road to Hautdesert—when he is obviously armed and horsed—to his struggles to control his bodily lust and worldly desires after agreeing to Bertilak's request to abandon the hunt for the bedroom, it is less sophisticated than those drawn from continental sources. MS Harley 3244 provides reins [*discretio* or "discernment"], saddle [*christiana religio*], saddlecloth [*humilitas*], stirrups [*propositum boni operis* or "resolution to perform a good deed"], and even the four individualized horseshoes: *delectatio* or "delight," *consensus* or "concord," *bonum opus* or "good deed," and *consuetudo* or "habit"—likely referring to the establishment of good habits to avoid venial sin (M. Evans 21; Biddle 157-8). Llull's system is even more complex and customarily speaks to the utility of the horse's arsenal as well. In addition to the bridle, reins, and spurs (above), he provides the saddle [security of courage/burden of chivalry], the bardings or horse armor [protection of the wealth needed to maintain chivalry], and the horse's bit [security against false oaths and uncouth words] (Llull 68-9). Regardless of which allegorical optic is employed here, the Arthurian comitatus who gathers like deathbed attendants to see off their already-doomed champion nevertheless take great pains to ensure that Sir Gawain is well-prepared for ghostly battle before he leaves Camelot, and those preparations involve his famous horse, which with the armor is

122

symbiotically connected to the rider. Arms, horse, and rider may even be read, in Jasbir

Puar's terms, as an "assemblage:"[137] a unity of parts that have become indistinguishable

from one another and extend beyond their individual corporealities to signify not the

body they arm and conceal, as heraldry would have done, but in this case, the sacrificial

Body of Christ (216-18).

The Knight-*Moriens* on the Road to Hautdesert

On the road, Gawain is presented as a *miles Christi* in the brief passage wherein

he is presented with physical danger and given the opportunity to defend himself. He

defeats so many enemies—"wormez," "wolues," "bullez," "berez," "borez," and

"etaynez[138]"—that in Burrow's "Ricardian" style, the Gawain-Poet refuses to elaborate on

what for Sir Gawain are minor conflicts. The Poet does, however, find the space to

remark that Gawain's victories are predicated not only on his prowess as a warrior, but

also on his trust in God and willingness to administer His justice: "Nade he ben duȝty and

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[137] As Martine Yvernault has helpfully pointed out, this phenomenon of the "knight-assemblage" in which the armor augments the knight's virtues is also evident in *Lybeaus Desconus* when Gyngelayne, a ten-year-old "wild child," takes the armor of a dead knight and—importantly without disguising himself—uses it to first gain entrance to Arthur's court and then to attain knighthood before he has fully matured and his parentage is known. In both MS Lambeth 306 and MS Ashmole 61, Gyngelayne inexplicably gains Christian etiquette after donning the armor, but in Lambeth 306 specifically the armor remains "bryght" for Gyngelayne and becomes his official kit. The Lambeth 306 version also sees Gyngelayne successfully adventuring in the old armor immediately, whereas Ashmole 61 contains passages in which he receives a new suit of armor from Arthur (line 88, "He gafe hym armour bright") and training in "every prinsys pley" from his as-of-yet unknown father, Gawain (lines 94-96). Ostensibly, the transference of virtues from the armor to the new knight in Lambeth 306 is equivalent to the extensive training and outfitting Gyngelayne receives in Ashmole 61. The opening of Book I of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* echoes this transference of knightly and spiritual virtues between Redcrosse and the original owner of his battered arms: "A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine, / Y cladd in mightie armes and siluer shielde, / Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine, / The cruell markes of many a bloudy fielde; / Yet armes till that time did he neuer wield" (1.1-5). At the intersection of ghostly chivalry and the *memento mori*, all three of these texts may be placed in conversation with *SGGK*.

[138] Dragons, wolves, bulls, bears, boars, and giants respectively and traditional random enemies in Tail-Rhymed Romances such as *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle*, *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, etc.

dryȝe and Dryȝtyn had serued, / Doutles he hade ben ded and dreped ful ofte"[139] (II.724-5). The armor eventually becomes a terrible burden when Gawain begins to have more trouble with the weather than these foes, yet "Ner slayn wyth þe slete he sleped in his yrnes"[140] (II.729). If Gawain indeed understands his kit as bestowing spiritual virtues, this refusal to disarm may be his attempt to remain virtuous and resist temptation even in the face of death, and in this example, in isolation, he is far more successful than at Hautdesert.

It must also be taken as a deliberate statement by the Gawain-Poet that Sir Gawain is journeying in such complete isolation; while the French tradition from which he draws suppresses squires and commonfolk, they typically manifest just in time to deliver an important message or to present the errant knight with another lance at the *pas de armes*. Moreover, other members of the peerage are always available—and usually quite willing even if to exact some revenge—to house Arthurian staples like Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain, whether in a comfortable manor or a simple pavilion. Castles with strange customs that the hero must set right are another possibility. Failing this, hermitages are frequent havens for the knight in peril to disarm, hear masses, and have his wounds dressed. But Sir Gawain has "Ne no gome bot God bi gate with to karp / Til þat he neȝed ful neghe into þe Norþe Walez"[141] (II.696-7). His isolation is established again just before the abbreviated combats on the road: "Fer floten fro his frendez,

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[139] [Had he not been brave and stoic and served God, he doubtless would have been killed many times.]

[140] [Nearly slain by the snow he slept in his irons.]

[141] [No man but God to talk to on the way until he came very near to North Wales.]

fremedly he rydez"[142] (II.714). Gawain is utterly forlorn, journeying without so much as a

squire to help him back into his arms should he choose to remove them. Already dead to

the comitatus, his virtue-bestowing armor, freezing or not, represents his only remaining

connection: his relationship with God. He is now without a doubt what Jane Gilbert

describes as *entre-deux-morts*, dead to the Social but not yet to the Real. And it is in this

state that he nearly attains grace.

At the height of his peril on the road and with no dwelling in sight, Gawain makes

a weeping confession despite the lack of any priest (or even layman) to hear it, calls upon

Mary twice for divine intercession, prays his "Pater and Aue / And Crede," crosses

himself thrice, and meditates on the Passion, ending with "Cros Kryst me spede" (II.735-

8, II.753-62). Much of what Gawain does here is commensurate with the required dying

acts of the *moriens* in *Visitations A and E* and their expanded English version (via the

Tractatus[143]), *The Book of the Craft of Dying.* Gawain has prayed to the appropriate

intercessors, affirmed his faith by stating his Creed, meditated on the Cross and by

extension the saving power of Christ's Passion, crossed himself, and commended himself

to Christ. A knight dying alone without a priest or even a layman officiant to aid him can

do little more than this to perform a good death with the exception of taking an

improvised form of the Eucharist such as grass[144] or dust, which would be impossible in

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[142] [Far removed from his friends, as a stranger he rides.]

[143] The same is true of Caxton's two *Ars Moriendi* printings, which are beyond the scope of this investigation.

[144] See the death of King Ban in Chapter 1.

the snow.[145] This penitent version of Gawain, who stands in stark contrast to the disarmed Gawain at Hautdesert, might indeed have succeeded in making a good death had his life ended here—the *Craft of Dying*, when stripped of all its concerns and admonishments, makes so many concessions for the sick or incapacitated *moriens* that a confession of the heart, a silent *imitatio Christi*, and the placing of the Passion between the dying person and the judgment are enough for the properly prepared to achieve salvation. *Visitation A*, which was in use during the Ricardian period when *SGGK* was likely written, also makes several concessions for the *moriens*, allowing much of the ritual to be skipped over if necessary. While it is not as liberal as the *Craft*, some of its requirements concerning the judgment of death-readiness and the gathering of the community around the *moriens* are met prior to Gawain's departure from Camelot through the arming ritual itself. Of course, all of these official tracts ignore the knightly estate, and the *Craft* (1420 CE) is a bit late for *SGGK*. While *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* does support Gawain's death preparations, it was never granted official status by the Church, leaving the state of the hero's soul dubious for the Ricardian reader should he freeze to death—but perhaps not so for one reading just a generation later.

While Gawain does implore these divine intercessors for "herber," which of course may also be read figuratively, in his literal phrasing it is harbor specifically for religious purposes: so that Gawain "myȝt here masse/ ande ...matynez tomorne"[146] (II.755-6). Isolated from worldly temptation and death-ready, this Gawain is a far cry

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[145] As we will see in Chapter 5, Gawain may have attempted to perform this Eucharistic substitution before his death in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*.

[146] […might hear mass and matins (the morning prayer) tomorrow morning.]

from the courtier who later, while concerned with his social identity and committing what Richard Newhauser has defined as "the greed of life,"[147] accepts and conceals the Green Girdle, makes a hasty confession before a night of dancing and feasting, and is unquestionably unprepared to die at the Green Chapel (Newhauser, "The Meaning of Gawain's Greed," 410-26). Hasped in the Armor of God, Gawain is invincible in physical battle against God's enemies yet remains focused on the health of his soul rather than his corporeality.

The Knight-Moriens '*Dispoyled*'

This virtuous figure erodes when Gawain is placed in a subtler yet far more perilous trial once he has been both physically and spiritually disarmed at Hautdesert—a trial which points not to the dangers of the field, but to the temptations of the *moriens* at the deathbed. Gawain's disrobing on lines III.860-74 marks the beginning of his transformation from the *miles Christi* the Gawain-Poet had established to the courtier of the French tradition:

> Þer he watz dispoyled, wyth spechez of myerþe,
>
> Þe burn of his bruny and of his bryȝt wedez;
>
> Ryche robes ful rad renkkez hem broȝten
>
> For to charge and to chaunge and chose of the best.
>
> Sone as he on hent and happed þerrine,

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[147] As Newhauser has established, the specific sin Gawain commits here, a sin entirely compatible with the concerns of the *artes moriendi* and *memento mori*, can be drawn from St. Augustine's fifth-century sermon on *avaritia vitae*, or "the greed of life." Newhauser's argument neatly answers the question of why Gawain identifies the girdle with "cowardice and covetousness" rather than pride and lust when he attempts to return it to the Green Knight in Fitt IV.

Þat sete on hym semly, wyth saylande skyrtez,

Þe ver by his uisage verayly hit semed

Welneȝ to vche haþel, alle on hwes,

Lowande and lufly alle his lymmez vnder;

Þat a comloker knyȝt neuer Kryst made,

Hem þoȝt.

[There he was deprived, amongst speeches of merriment, / The knight of his hauberk and bright armor; / Worthy men very quickly brought him fine robes, / To put on and change and choose the best (one). / As soon as he took one and wrapped (himself) within (it), / which sat on him nicely, with flowing skirts, / It truly seemed by his appearance the Spring (had come), / Nearly to each man, in all its colors. / All his limbs (were) glowing and comely under (the garment); a more beautiful knight never Christ made, / They thought.]

The verb "dispoyled" in the sense of "deprived" or "divested" when deployed in this passage parallels the verb "ennourned" at the end of the arming sequence. Whereas Gawain was "equipped" with virtues while wearing the armor, he is now "divested" of them. Stripping the knight of his armor also signals a shift from the spiritual to the corporeal; rather than the ghostly virtues associated with his harness, the focus is now on his masculine beauty, his "lowande and lufly lymmez" and "saylande skyrtez." Contextually, the remark that the disarmed Gawain appears to be a harbinger of Spring, commonly associated with Maying, evokes such images as the late-medieval rivalry— complete with livery—between the Orders of the Flower and Leaf, Chaucer's opening to *The Legend of Good Women* and his lusty Squire who is "as fressh as is the month of

May," and Lydgate's derivative Amorous Squire, who like the rest of the estates dancing the *Danse Macabre* "…shal turn into ashes dead; / for al beautie is but a faynt ymage" (Crane, *The Performance of Self*, 39-48; Chaucer, *General Prologue*, line 92; Lydgate 438-9).

As soon as Gawain has been disarmed and has chosen a fine, comfortable outfit, he is given a fish meal which he repeatedly refers to as a feast. The servants correct him, saying that better food will be served tomorrow (III:875-900). This dialogic exchange does more than merely accentuate the splendor of the North and juxtapose the comforts of the castle with the harshness of the road: it also demonstrates that Gawain is now both temporally (he ostensibly is unaware it is Friday) and spiritually distant from his faith, as a knowledge of feast days and high holidays was essential to medieval Catholicism, and a man of Gawain's stature and privilege should certainly be able to tell a fast from a feast. Again, he has been "dispoyled" not just of the burden of his physical armor, but also of its virtue granting properties. For a reader of the *Pore Caitif* or *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*, he has failed to maintain the Bridle of Abstinence, and the horse (body) is now leading the rider (spirit); again, aptly, these two *memento mori* tracts refer to this bridle as a "knot," and at this point in the poem, the disarmed knight, distanced from the knot-like pentangle on his shield and on a trajectory towards the silken Green Girdle, has begun to come undone.

Moreover, after being "dispoyled" of his arms, Gawain ceases to travel as a knight incognito and falls back into the social obligations associated with his 'worship.' The courtiers of Hautdesert have certain expectations for a man of Gawain's reputation that are detrimental to the *memento mori*:

129

'Now schal we semlych se sleʒtez of þewez

And þe teccheles termes of talkyng noble.

Wich spede is in speche vnspurd may we lerne,

Syn we haf fonged þat fyne fader of nurture.

God hatz geuen vus His grace godly forsoþe,

Þat such a gest as Gawan grauntez vus to haue

When burnez blyþe of His burþe schal sitte

And synge.

In menyng of manerez mere

Þis burne now schal vus bryng.

I hope þat may hym here

Schal lerne of luf-talking.' (III.916-927)

['Now we will see seemly, skilled demonstrations of courteous behavior / And the faultless expressions of noble conversation. / We may learn without asking what success in speech is, / As we have received that fine father of good breeding. / God has indeed given us His good grace, / That (He) grants us such a guest to have as Gawain / At that time when men will sit, rejoicing in His birth (i.e. Christmas) / and sing. / To an understanding of noble manners / This man shall bring us. / I believe that any here with him / Must learn about romantic conversation.']

Whether these courtiers are complicit in Bertilak and Morgan's schemes or not, their expectations for Gawain, who is on a trajectory toward death, serve as earthly distractions that were not present when he traversed the road from Camelot alone with only God as

130

his conversant. Whereas the Pentangle was intended to help Gawain forget his worldly identity and prepare to make a good death, now that he is becoming "undone," he is socially obligated to live up to his impressive reputation—a demand the Lady of Hautdesert will also make of him. For Benson, Gawain's identity remains at the core of *SGGK*, and as he has already discussed at length in *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,[148] the Lady "…uses this fame in the same way that the Green Knight did, arguing first that it was his fame that attracted her to him, and then demanding that he act in the way for which he is renowned" (219-20).

This entrapment, of course, would not be possible without Gawain's complete return to corporeality and predisposition to the dangers of fleshly lust, which is strongly signaled by his gazing at the Lady's and Morgan's bodies in the chapel on III.928-994. Whereas he had mortified his flesh while wearing the armor, his "body" is now "unbridled." It's important that Gawain scans Morgan's body alongside the Lady's and that Morgan's is given more space. Critics have read Morgan's grotesque form in this passage—which is likely a glamour—in widely varying ways. The traditional reading places Morgan in the loathly lady archetype with the likes of Dame Ragnelle and the Wife of Bath's enchantress. Gail Ashton, who argues that Morgan slips between traditional gender markers, nevertheless describes her appearance here as conforming

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[148] Benson compares the Gawain of *SGGK* to several French prototypes who are also concerned with their reputations, including the Gawains of *Perlesvaus*, *Brun de Branlant*, and the infamous *Le Chevalier à l'épée*. Like the Gawain of the *Lancelot-Grail*, these French versions never conceal their identity and are eager to prove it when in doubt. This is important to Gawain's characterization even in other English texts like the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, wherein he attempts to conceal his identity from Sir Priamus but changes his mind almost immediately when he sees that being defeated by a lesser man (he claims to be a squire) would damage his rival's reputation (Benson, *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 218-26; Benson, *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, 210-11, lines 2620-2645). As with other aspects of Arthurian Romance, the Gawain-Poet has built upon an established trope and complicated it by placing it on trial in a quest that requires accepting one's certain death.

"…to traditional misogynistic portrayals of the feminine" in creating a ruse to escape the

lusty Gawain's notice (55). As a marginal "monster" whose body has been "atomized," he

points to her chapped lips, nose, bleary eyes, and dark eyebrows as the only parts of her

body allowed to be exposed, ultimately leaving her both defeminized and desexualized

(55). Alternatively, Lorraine Kochanske Stock sees Morgan as the figural Sheela-Na-

Gig[149] of Castle Hautdesert: hypersexualized, starkly corporeal to the point of the

grotesque, and serving as a warning which Gawain ignores (121-148). I want to suggest

yet another alternative: that Morgan's body, covered yet still grotesque, when

deliberately juxtaposed with the Lady's youthful beauty, can be read as representative of

the deterioration that comes with age—and by extension, may signal towards death and

the Macabre. Again, as Gertsman has demonstrated, death exists in a negative space and

therefore resists signification. The dancing skeletons of the Danse Macabre, the carvings

of mortified corpses on transi tombs, and the encounter of the living with the deathly

doppelganger provide some late-medieval examples of the artist attempting to "paint

death," but none of these capture the invisible event. Just as death can be read into a

dancing skeleton, life and death can be read on the bodies of these two objectified women

just as in the earlier display of the holly and the gisarme, but lacking spiritual insight as

he lacks his armor, Gawain fails to read these potential signs: the Lady is the holly while

Morgan is the axe, and the end of the one is the inevitable other. Like the Gawain of the

Lancelot-Grail, he lusts over the lady in the chapel and fails to read the portents of the

scene. Straying from mortification and abstinence to embodiment and lust, he is unable to

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[149] An architectural grotesque of a nude woman displaying an exaggerated vulva that is thought to have
served a similar purpose to that of a gargoyle.

see death just as his French counterpart is unable to see the Grail. While this behavior is entirely commensurate with the French Gawain's reputation as a courtier and ladies' man, it contrasts starkly with the Gawain-Poet's earlier descriptions of the hero's virtuous character while wearing the armor. Here, as Polonius would have it, the apparel hath proclaimed the man.

<p style="text-align:center">The Exchange of Winnings and the Deathbed</p>

Once Gawain is effectively "undone," enter Lord Bertilak and the exchange of winnings (III.1087-1104). The pact Gawain makes with his host is not unprecedented, but as before, the Gawain-Poet draws from established Romance tropes to create a unique situation that enables a far more complex reading than his analogs. The knight in need of sustenance is hardly new, although it is perhaps more famously employed later in Malory's *Tale of Sir Gareth*. Similarly, the "good guest" topos, which establishes a feudal relationship between host and guest prior to testing the strength of this pledge, appears in a number of tail-rhymed romances showcasing Sir Gawain ranging from analogs such as *The Greene Knight* and *Sir Gawain and The Carle of Carlisle* to the non-analogic *Knightly Tale of Golagras and Gawain* in which the hero takes on the role of the guest as a prisoner after making a secret pact with the host (III.1089-1092). Chastity tests are even more common. Where the Gawain-Poet differs is in his physically restraining Sir Gawain within a bedchamber while the host takes on the knightly sport of hunting, which of course requires both the use of the horse and some of the knight's arms. While this can and has been read numerous ways, it is not merely a juxtaposition of action and idleness or a clever gender role reversal, as again the Gawain-Poet takes pains to create a situation

that simulates the traditional perils of the *moriens* on the deathbed. The Gawain-Poet extends the period of temptation from the usual single night indexed by the French tradition and the tail-rhymed romances to three days and interlaces the action between the violent hunts that showcase the rapacious destruction of the flesh with a "bedridden" Gawain who can take no action but "luf-talkyng." In terms of the *Tretyse* and its predecessor *The Pore Caitif*, Gawain can no longer maintain his "bridle of abstinence" because he has willingly surrendered his allegorical steed, the body, to fleshly needs and desires rather than mortifying his flesh before his encounter with the Green Knight (Horstmann 422).

It's worth pointing out that the next we see Sir Gawain after making this pact with Bertilak, the once-fully-armored knight has been stripped down to nakedness with the exception of the bedsheets underneath which the Lady of Hautdesert pins him down. Like a spirit of temptation at the deathbed, she enters the bedchamber without invitation when the knight-*moriens* is at his most vulnerable and proclaims: "'Now ar ȝe tan astyt! Bot true vus may schape, / I schal bynde yow in your bedde--þat be ȝe trayst'"[150] (III.1211). While this capture appears to be in jest and is coupled with flirtatious laughter, it does in fact leave Gawain physically restrained in bed (due to his nakedness) for the entirety of this first private encounter with the Lady, which sets the tone for the next two encounters. When Gawain plays along and yields himself her prisoner, he asks only that she allow him to rise from the "prysoun" of the bed and "busk" himself, but she flatly denies him: "'ȝe schal not rise of your bedde'" (III.1223). Throughout this encounter, she also flatters

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[150] [Now at once you are taken! Unless we can make a truce between us, I shall bind you in your bed–be sure of that!]

Gawain through enumerating the reasons she claims to desire him, and they are tied directly to the "worship" and "worldliness" he must renounce to make a good death:

> For I wene wel, iwysse, Sir Wowen ȝe are,
>
> Þat alle þe worlde worchipez; quereso ȝe ride,
>
> Your honour, your hendelayk is hendely praysed
>
> Wyth lordez, wyth ladyes, with alle þat lyf bere. (III.1226-29)
>
> [For I know well, certainly, you are Sir Gawain, / Who all the world holds in high regard; wherever you ride, / Your honor, your courtesy is nobly praised / By lords, by ladies, by all that live.]

The phrasing "with alle þat lyf bere" is a common—if archaic—Middle English turn of phrase, but it's worth pointing out that the Lady frequently deploys this verbiage throughout her encounters with Gawain, referring to the living world and identifying herself with life. This is most pronounced in the third encounter, where she refers to herself as "þat lyf þat ȝe lye nexte," implores him to answer her "For alle þe lufez vpon lyue," and upon being rejected laments, "I may bot mourne vpon molde" (III.1781, 1786, 1795). As a representative of life and the world, she is particularly dangerous to the soul of the *moriens*, who must reject these temptations and willingly embrace death. For Gawain, however, her corporeality poses the greatest temptation through his own erotic desire, and like a proper vice-tempter figure, she propositions him to fleshly sin during their first encounter with an offer that masquerades as another aspect of the host-guest agreement—for Gawain to "make himself at home" in her body: "'Ȝe ar welcum to my cors, / Yowre awen won to wale, / Me behouez of fyne force/ Your seruant be, and

135

schale'"[151] (III.1237-40). Allegorically, Gawain's "unbridled body" sits uselessly in the stables when it traditionally should be out on the hunt, and so the Lady of Hautdesert, often read as a huntress herself, has offered him possession of hers in its place. These shifting corporealities have been interpreted in various ways, but a reading that considers the English *ars moriendi* allows for what is perhaps the most stable allegory, relegating the disarmed and unhorsed Gawain to the fleshly prey—a relegation that should and to some extent does serve as a reminder of his need for bodily mortification, although as we shall see, he struggles so much with lust that he fails to see that the Lady's flirtations are causing him to choose life over death despite his apocalyptic arrangement with the Green Knight. Whereas the "bridle of abstinence," figured as a knot just as his Pentangle, should balance the base needs of the body with its chastisement for the sake of the soul, here the "unhorsed" Gawain instead attempts to balance his courtly reputation—which should have been rejected by this point—with the spiritual piety necessary to die well.

Although Gawain accepts only kisses from the Lady and plays up the role of the "good guest" throughout the first two encounters, by the end of the first encounter he has lost all sense of ghostly chivalry and begun to fall prey to the deathbed temptations elucidated in the English *ars moriendi* tracts. Only the verbiage of ghostly chivalry remains here in an allegorical method similar to St. Gregory's *Moralia on Job*; throughout the exchange of winnings section, the Gawain-Poet refers to Gawain's resistance of the Lady's charms as "defense," and on lines III.1777-8 "luf-laȝyng" is

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[151] [You are welcome to my body, / Your own dwelling in which to take pleasure. / I am compelled of pleasant necessity to be your servant, and I shall.]

deployed as a weapon to "lay bysyde" or "parry"[152] the Lady's propositions (III.1282, 1551). As Gawain struggles, each day Bertilak unsuccessfully reminds him of his trajectory towards death by presenting him with deathly images after his encounters with the Lady: the "dead meat" dressed straight from the hunt.[153] In exchange for death, Gawain exchanges kisses that figure his fleshly desire. These "winnings" are of the world and in the *ars moriendi* and *memento mori* lead to the loss of the soul. Despite these signs being on display for the entire court, Gawain fails to interpret them just as he failed to read the inherent warnings in the bodies of Morgan and the Lady. He is blinded to the figuring of the dead flesh that nourishes him as death itself. Indeed, an *ars moriendi* reading suggests that the "exchange of winnings" section may have been informed by Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death."

Two days of this process are enough to relegate Gawain's death anxieties concerning his quest to the unconscious mind, as evidenced by the Gawain-Poet's description of his waking on the third day:

In dreȝ droupyng of dreme draueled þat noble,

As mon þat watz in mornyng of mony þro þoȝtes,

How þat Destiné schulde þat day dele hym his wyrde

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[152] To "put aside" or "lay aside" an enemy's sword is a common phrase especially in Malory that always results in a deflection of an attack.

[153] Two of the three animals Bertilak hunts, the boar and the fox, are also identified with the Seven Deadly Sins in both *The Castle of Perseverance* and the marginalia from MS Harley 2399. The traditional virtue-vice pairings, which Wenzel and Newhauser have identified as being drawn out of sermons, are as follows: Mekenys-Prede (Lion), Charyte-Envy (Wolf), Chastyte-Lechery (Goat), Abstynens-Gloteny (Fox), Pacyens-Wreth (Boar), Largynys-Covetys (Sow), and Ocupacion-Sclowthe (Ass) (Wenzel 1-22; Newhauser, "Preaching the Contrary Virtues," 135-62; Wheatley 203-5). Hunting the hart, the one animal not easily paired with a Deadly Sin, is a frequent departure point that leads to 'aventure' in the tail-rhymed romances featuring the English Gawain, although the boar appears as a deadly adversary in *The Avowyng of Arthur*.

At þe Grene Chapel when he þe gome metes

And bohoues his buffet abide withoute debate more.

Bot quen þat comly com he keuered his wyttes,

Swenges out of þe sweuenes and swarez with hast. (III.1750-6)

[In the deep slumber of dreaming muttered that nobleman, / As one that was in mourning of many fierce thoughts, / How Destiny would that day deal him his fate / At the Green Chapel when he meets the man/warrior (i.e. the Green Knight) / And must accept his blow without any more debate. / But when that beautiful one came, he recovered his senses, / Starts out of the dreams and answers her hastily.]

Gawain is then pulled away from his legitimate concerns about his impending death to kisses, smiling, laughter, and joy. Under differing circumstances, this might seem a favorable shift, but on Gawain's seemingly undeviating trajectory toward death, these dalliances prevent the psychological death preparations demanded of the *moriens* described in *Visitation A*, *Learn to Die*, *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, and *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*. The *moriens* must prepare the soul to be separated from the body and embrace the invisible event willingly rather than clinging to life. Gawain's time in Hautdesert and in particular with the Lady has transformed him from the *miles Christi* ready to wage ghostly battle against temptation to the worldly courtier who subdues his true concerns, gives in to temptation, and seeks to extend his life beyond the appointed time of death. This final concern, which the English *artes moriendi* refer to as a form of "grutching," is blasphemous in that it contests the will of God and can ultimately cause the *moriens* to make a bad death. One of the *artes moriendi's* prescribed remedies for this

138

is to call upon a divine intercessor,[154] and at this point during the third encounter, the

Gawain-Poet handily provides the following showcased within a bob-and-wheel stanza:

"Gret perile bitwene hem stod, / Nif Maré of hir kny3t mynne"[155] (III.1768-9). It seems,

however, that it is not Mary who has forgotten Gawain but Gawain who has forgotten

Mary; he does call upon God to shield him on III.1776, and as discussed above, the

image of Mary has been painted on the inside of his shield for protection against

temptation, but this does not stop him from accepting the "luf-lace." Again, the Gawain-

Poet provides the psychological reasoning behind this decision:

> Þen kest þe kny3t, and hit come to his hert
>
> Hit were a juel for þe joparde þat him jugged were:
>
> When he acheued to þe chapel his chek for to fech,
>
> My3t he haf slypped to be vnslayn þe sle3t were noble. (III.1855-1858)
>
> [Then the knight considered, and it came to his heart / That it was a jewel for the
>
> jeopardy assigned to him: / When he reached the chapel to receive his doom
>
> (literally "check" as in "checkmate"), / If he might escape un-slain the stratagem
>
> would (still) be noble.]

This thinking is antithetical to that of the freezing Gawain on the road who refused to

disarm—allegorically, to undo or unknot himself. It is not that Gawain has taken a

"magic favor" that condemns him; while Brewer identifies the girdle as a "false charm"

and mentions the illegality of carrying "any form of magic charm in tournament," it is

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[154] Michael W. Twomey also points to Mary and her role of intercessor in this line, but again does not refer to the *artes moriendi* (79).

[155] [Great peril stood between them / unless Mary remembers (to aid) her knight.]

Gawain's intention and not the charm's efficacy that matters, and various Arthurian

figures, including the Lancelot of the Vulgate at Dolorous Guard, Malory's Gareth, and

nearly all of Chretien's knights, make use of such trinkets with no ill effects (179). It is

rather Gawain's belief that he is altering his appointed time of death at the Green Chapel

that causes him to fail his test, which is and has always been a test of death-readiness. As

Richard Newhauser has established, the specific sin Gawain commits here, a sin entirely

compatible with the concerns of the *artes moriendi* and *memento mori*, can be drawn

from St. Augustine's fifth-century sermon on *avaritia vitae*, or "greed of life"

(Newhauser, "The Meaning of Gawain's Greed," 410-26). Newhauser's argument neatly

answers the question of why Gawain identifies the girdle with "cowardice and

covetousness" rather than pride and lust when he attempts to return it to the Green Knight

in Fitt IV. This issue of challenging God's will transcends the problem of whether or not

Gawain remains the "good guest" in mostly keeping his oath to Bertilak concerning the

exchange of winnings; his worldly reputation remains a mortal matter, and to my

thinking, whether or not he conceals the act of taking the sash during his brief confession

at Hautdesert before leaving with the "luf-lace" for the Green Chapel is not the point.[156]

As demonstrated by the *Craft of Dying* and the *Tretyse*, the *moriens* can make what he or

she believes to be a true confession, yet the knowledge of all one's sins remains

impossible. What is more important is the appropriate psychological preparation for

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[156] It is worth noting, however, that the confessor at Hautdesert is a true priest who, as Michael Twomey
has pointed out, comments "that Gawain was shriven so clean that he could face the final judgment" (79;
III.1884). This confession proves ineffective, but Gawain's later confession to Bertilak, a layman and
ostensibly a Pagan who worships Morgan le Fay as a goddess, seems to be effective at least for the
purposes of the narrative.

death, which again, as Friar Laurent and Suso have inculcated (see Chapter 2), is

unnatural and therefore must be taught and experienced through death meditations.

The Second Arming Sequence and the *Ars Moriendi*

Gawain's lack of death-readiness is evident on his person when he arms himself

again[157] but this time augments his kit with the Green Girdle, which he loops around his

spiritually significant sword-belt (again representing "chastity" and beginning a

concatenation of virtues if the optic of the *Tretyse* is taken). The Gawain-Poet provides

his reasoning for this in a passage that takes up more space than the whole of the second

arming sequence. Here, he eliminates other potential reasons for wearing the love token

such as love for the Lady, pride, and its costliness and elucidates Gawain's belief that it

will enable him to cheat death: "Bot for to sauen hymself when suffer hym behoued, /To

byde bale withoute dabate, of bronde hym to were / Oþer knyffe (IV.2039-42).[158]

However, despite Gawain's "covetousness," this augmented suit of armor seems to re-

instill the earlier virtues imparted to the knight. He is far more death-ready by the end of

his second encounter with the Green Knight than he is while on his "deathbed" in

Hautdesert—arguably the wrong place for a knight to die but the setting for all the

canonical *ars moriendi* tracts.

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[157] An abdominal armor piece, or "paunce," has been added on IV.2017, but this is part of Gawain's original kit, as it has been "piked ful clene" along with his "platez," suggesting that it was with him on the road and required maintenance after his arrival at Hautdesert. This is therefore not an augmentation, but a detail the Gawain-Poet skipped over in the initial arming sequence.

[158] [But to save himself when he was required to suffer, / to abide bale without the defense of sword / or knife.]

As before on the road, Gawain progresses through much of the craft expected of the *moriens* while he negotiates what appears to be his impending doom at the Green Chapel. He dispenses with his worship and worldly concerns, so important to him in Hautdesert and especially in the presence of the Lady, when he dispenses with the guide who promises to noise abroad that Gawain achieved the Green Chapel even if he chooses to flee (IV.2091-2139). While this action seems less heroic if Gawain believes the girdle will save him, it is evident by the time he is kneeling with his head in a block after witnessing the hellish horrors of the Green Chapel that he has completely forgotten about the "luf-lace." Moreover, facing the ordeal of the Green Chapel itself by looking into its depths may actually serve as a form of death meditation similar to those rehearsed in *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, *Learn to Die*, *The Pore Caitif*, and *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*—a meditation on the pains of hell. In the *Tretyse* specifically, the meditations on hell are immediately followed by the interpolated "Of þre arowes on domesday," an eschatological *memento mori* designed to terrify the reader who is unprepared to be judged at the Apocalypse. In *SGGK*, Gawain's vision of the Green Chapel is immediately followed by his own personal "domesman" when the Green Knight appears sharpening yet another enormous axe. This grim executioner figures death and judgment similarly to Christ in the *Tretyse* wielding the "rain-bow," and like Christ the "domesman," he takes three "shots" at the sinner about to be judged.[159] Moreover, the Green Knight also inspires *timor servilis*, which is evident when he takes his first stroke and Gawain

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[159] Michael Twomey further discusses *SGGK*, the Apocalypse, and beliefs concerning the rejoining of the body and soul in "Sir Gawain, Death, and the Devil," located in Cherewatuk and Whetter's *The Arthurian Way of Death* (2009). His work highlights the court's concerns of Gawain's potential beheading as it pertains to the General Resurrection and identity—concerns also addressed in the 'Of þre arowes on domesday' section of *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*.

"flinches." (If Gawain still believes in the girdle's life-saving power after experiencing the Green Chapel, why flinch?) Gawain overcomes his *timor servilis* for the second stroke and replaces it with the more appropriate *timor filialis*, which is crucial to a good death in nearly all the texts surveyed and supported by Appleford (121-3). When the Green Knight again refuses to strike, Gawain "grucches" because he still cannot control the timing of his own death, and the Green Knight subdues him into sitting still for one more stroke. When this stroke only wounds Gawain, he completes his armor set by adding the helmet, sword, and shield in preparation for battling the Green Knight, whom he believes to be an enemy of Christ. However, the Green Knight demonstrates his apparent Christianity by taking a page from the *Visitation* series and making an example confession to Gawain: he was Bertilak all along, and the trial set in motion back in Camelot a year and a day prior was never in hiatus. As in *Everyman* and *The Castle of Perseverance*, the *moriens* has attempted to postpone death, failed, and must be judged: a familiar *topos*. Also familiar to a modern reader wrestling with these concepts is Gawain's shocking absolution, which follows swiftly. As in the *artes moriendi* tracts, Bertilak's example confession prompts a true confession from the *moriens* figure, and here Gawain accepts responsibility not for failing to keep his oath at the end of the exchange of winnings, but for the "covetousness" that marked him as unprepared for death. After this confession, Bertilak, despite being a layman and perhaps even a Pagan due to naming Morgan le Fay a "goddes," absolves Gawain while referring to Revelations 21:19-21, which is central to both *Visitation A* and *Pearl* and concerns death preparations through the allegorical polishing of a stone that is to be set in the wall of the Heavenly Jerusalem—notably, in *Visitation A*, this must be done "without grucching" (Kinpoitner

143

20, Pearl XVII: 973-1032, SGGK IV.2358-2406). According to Bertilak, who per the *Visitation* tracts need not be a "trewe preest" to administer last rites in Ricardian England, Gawain is now "polysed of þat plyȝt and pured as clene" as if he had "neuer forfeted syþen [he] watz fyrst borne" (IV.2393-4). Finally, Gawain receives the Green Girdle again not as a love token, but as a symbol of *memento mori*. As in the *Tretyse's* Middle English *translatio* of Ephesians 6:10, death meditations once again complete his allegorical armor set.

Despite Gawain's apparent absolution and escape with only a neck wound, Derek Pearsall argues that a death does occur at the Green Chapel—not corporeal demise, but the death of Gawain's personal identity, which will forever be separated from his public identity after this second encounter with the Green Knight (78-81). Here again, the Gawain-Poet builds upon a well-established romantic trope, the worship-seeking knight, and problematizes it by raising the stakes of the quest to include certain death, thus changing the rules. Pearsall writes of Gawain's reaction to Bertilak's confession: "To show a fictional character capable of being embarrassed and humiliated in the way that Gawain is embarrassed and humiliated is a new art of the interior self …that is being disentangled from the fictions of chivalry that have prevailed" (80). Pearsall next compares Gawain's reaction to the annihilation of his interior self to those of Yvain in Chretien's eponymous tale and Malory's Lancelot, who "can only run mad in the woods," which he identifies as "a kind of mental suicide, a revulsion against the pain inflicted on the inner self so violent that mental life must be suspended, blocked off, until some form of redemption becomes available" (80). For Gawain, who does not run mad in the woods, there is no personal redemption, and the solitary nature of his private pain, his mental

isolation, reiterates Gilbert's sense of being one of the "living dead" through his still being "dead to the world" despite the Arthurian comitatus's efforts to "resurrect" his public identity through wearing the girdle as a badge of honor (IV.2513-18). Poignantly, Pearsall argues that Gawain's reaction to his shame "…puts him with the Ancient Mariner rather than with Yvain or Tristram," and Coleridge's famous protagonist is quite literally undead and trapped in a kind of corporeal purgatory (80). Pearsall further explains the nature of Gawain's self-annihilation as a private purgatory that—like Coleridge's Mariner—he must endure for the rest of his life, a purgatory of self-realization:

> Dead to honor, he [Gawain] must live by a thousand self-narrations… For
> Gawain, in his newly discovered solitariness, there is nothing to be done, no
> action that will cleanse and renew his humiliated self, no person, however well
> disposed, who will properly understand what has happened to him, but the quality
> he has found in himself is the quality in individuals that we have become
> accustomed to believe constitutes them in their essential individual humanity. (80-
> 1)

Pearsall's evaluation of Gawain's "death" is commensurate with Gilbert's *entre-deux-morts*, which relies on Lacan's sense of liminality, but it is to Lacan's mirror stage[160] that we should ultimately look for the precise moment of Gawain's self-realization and annihilation. In "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function," delivered on July 17, 1949 at the Sixteenth International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Zurich, Lacan reintroduces what his arguably his most famous theory and discusses its significance. The

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[160] A helpful suggestion made by Robert Sturges when evaluating my earlier work on *SGGK*.

mirror stage occurs when a child (mis)identifies (through *méconnaissance*) him- or herself in the mirror for the first time and sees him- or herself for the first time as an object. This creates the Ideal-I, which is a desire-based, future projection of the self that is reliant on how society, from the subject's perspective, *should* view the subject—as a desirable object. However, as the gaze of the imaginary other cannot be experienced by the subject, and the desires of the subject are constantly shifting, the "true I" becomes unknowable, making it impossible, as Gawain is constantly called upon to do in *SGGK*, to be oneself (Lacan 75-81). Even before his experience at the Green Chapel, Gawain's desire to be his socially constructed self is evident in his frequent struggles to uphold his reputation throughout the exchange of winnings, and to do so despite the *moriens's* requirements for release from worldly identity. However, it is evident that up until this point, Gawain views his socially constructed identity, his worship, which is granted to him alternatively by the Arthurian comitatus and the denizens of Hautdesert, as consistent with his actual identity. That his amorphous "self" shifts from the perfect knight of the arming sequence to the late-French Gawain at Hautdesert supports Lacan's theory that our sense of the self is predicated upon shifting desires, often libidinal, which in turn in *SGGK* are phenomenologically influenced by the objects of Gawain's gaze, such as the Lady of Haudesert and Morgan le Fay. This self-fixation ultimately causes Gawain to fail his test, as the *moriens* must not the concerned with the living future or the corporeal imaginary but must instead embrace death.

Gawain's failure culminates in his "seeing himself" for the first time at the Green Chapel, and as Pearsall has already indicated, the split between his inner and outer self. As Lacan describes this experience for the infant, it is a moment of violence as the

146

fragmentary identity—Gawain's alternative understandings of himself as the champion of the Knights of the Round Table, as Arthur's nephew, as the "good Gawain," as the *miles Christi* in the Armor of Christ, as the courtier skilled in "luf-talkying," as the honorable oathkeeper—collides with the *imago*, which the subject takes for a gestalt. Lacan describes this process, which for him forms the ego and the "armor of identity," as follows:

> …the mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation—and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an "orthopedic" form of its totality—and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure. Thus, the shattering of the *Innenwelt* to *Umwelt* circle gives rise to an inexhaustible squaring of the ego's audits. (78)

The *Innenwelt* or "inner world" is broken by the *Umwelt* or "outer world" when Gawain recognizes himself not as his constructed identity or reputation, which through Arthur's simulacrum of the Green Sash goes on without him, but as the *imago*. To my thinking, the moment of this violent *méconnaissance* arrives at IV.2265-7 when Gawain "glances" or "looks" at the falling axe and must recognize, despite his heroic reputation, his cowardice in the face of death: "Bot Gawayn on þat giserne glyfte hym bysyde, / As hit com glydande adoun on glode hym to schende, / And schranke a lytel with þe schulderes for the scharp yrne."[161] Here, facing a death from which he cannot defend himself,

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[161] [But Gawain glanced upon that gisarme (i.e. pole-axe) beside him / As it came gliding down in a flash to destroy him, / And shrank a little with his shoulders from the sharp iron.]

Gawain's previous sense of identity is replaced by the *imago* of his dead self. From here, we return to Elina Gertsman's work on the "Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead,"[162] a *topos* in both poetry and visual art stemming from the mid-thirteenth century and extant in French, English, German, Italian, and Latin. This *topos* deals with body doubles, glimpsing the dead self, existential crisis, and the opportunity to escape and reflect upon "the fleeing quality of life, the sordid nature of the human body, and the necessity of repentance" (26). For Gertsman, the Encounter *topos* marks the beginning of the Macabre genre and leads directly to transi tombs, which originally featured two effigies of the dead: the gisant, which like the Ideal-I represents the idealized body in its prime, and the decaying, fragmented body signifying death (29-31). Moreover, like the *imago* encountered in Lacan's mirror stage, the "deathly doppelganger" of the Encounter produces a violent reaction that affects change by appearing "simultaneously familiar and foreign" (Gertsman 27). Again, for Gertsman and Baudrillard, "the figure of the double is intimately bound up with the figure of death," and this certainly seems to be the case for Sir Gawain at the Green Chapel (141). Like the three youths of the Encounter *topos*, Gawain's brush with death leaves him forever changed, regardless of being pardoned by both Bertilak and King Arthur. And although his worship remains intact in Camelot where he is "resurrected" by the Arthurian comitatus, he remains, as Gilbert would have it, a "dead man walking."

Taken together, the English *memento mori* and *ars moriendi* traditions form an optic revealing a problem that most likely concerned the Gawain-Poet: the dearth of patristic instruction concerning how members of the secular chivalry, who were often

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[162] See Chapter 1.

vocationally incapable of receiving last rites due to battlefield deaths, could still perform a "good death" and avoid Purgatory or damnation. The Poet's presentation of the typically—and quite often unapologetically—secular Gawain as a *miles Christi* who must become a knight-*moriens* is the exception that establishes this norm. Gawain, with the help of the Arthurian faith community, is able to efficaciously arm himself for ghostly battle because unlike most secular knights, he is made aware well in advance of the potential time of his demise. That he arms not against a corporeal, worldly opponent but against *mors improvisa* significantly augments the context of the arming *topos* that the Gawain-Poet deploys and allows for the inclusion of two Gawains: the "good Gawain" of the pre-Malorian English tradition while armed with spiritual virtues and the problematic Gawain of the late-French tradition when disarmed and beholden to his worldly identity. All of Bertilak's—or rather Morgan le Fay's—trials from the *gomen* to the exchange of winnings to the Green Chapel can be reduced to a test of Gawain's psychological death-readiness. Though the knight "lacks a little" at the end, we are given the impression that because of his atypical experience and renewed focus on the *memento mori*, he will be better equipped to deal with his time of dying when it truly arrives. As will become evident in the next two chapters, both the poet of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* and perhaps Gawain's greatest defamer in English, Sir Thomas Malory, apply the tenets of these traditions to ensure his good death and salvation.

CHAPTER 5

CRUSADERS IN THE NEW CHRONICLE TRADITION: THE *ALLITERATIVE*

MORTE ARTHURE

The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (*AMA*) remains among the most complex and

contested poems in the English Arthurian tradition. Its anonymous author draws from the

competing Galfridian Chronicle and the French Romance traditions but clearly intends to

continue in the former despite simultaneously celebrating and problematizing its themes

of empire and conquest. In doing so, the AMA-poet is clearly concerned with updating

the deaths of major Arthurian characters in a variety of ways that coincide with either the

English *artes moriendi*, the crusader tradition of plenary indulgence established in the

Chanson de gestes and reimagined in light of the Papal Schism and Ricardian

Crusades,[163] or both. Prior to the *AMA*—and well established by Karen Cherewatuk, K.S.

Whetter, and Dorsey Armstrong among others—the Chronicle tradition lacked precise

detail concerning even the deaths of principal figures such as Arthur and Mordred, who

never come face-to-face on the battlefield as they do in the Old French *Mort Artu* or the

AMA's stanzaic cousin, which relies on the French tradition for much of its narrative. The

AMA, on the other hand, provides not only detailed accounts of these Arthurian figures

facing death on and off the battlefield but also their individual dying processes, creating a

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[163] From 1378-1417, the status of the Pope was considered dubious because of rival factions in Italy and
France declaring various Popes and anti-Popes after the Holy See was moved to Avignon in 1309 under
Pope Clement V. This led to the technicality of Christians being able to declare crusades against other
Christians as in the Ricardian Crusades. Marco Nievergelt writes of this situation in the *AMA*: "Ultimately
the poet invites the reader to question the sincerity of the Ricardian revival of crusading fervor in the
aftermath of the Papal Schism, highlighting what may be seen as various forms of appropriation and misuse
of the idea of crusade for political, economic and self-glorifying ends. The poet's attitude towards crusading
is thus far from being univocaily celebratory as has been occasionally suggested, and may rather be seen as
'combining enthusiasm and opprobrium'" (90-1).

sophisticated didactic for readers familiar with the *artes moriendi*. This chapter will focus on three such dying processes which represent the gamut of how to die in Ricardian England: the orthodox death of Sir Kay, the cautionary near-*mors improvisa* of King Arthur, and the crusader's death of Sir Gawain.

My choice to limit this analysis to Ricardian England requires some explanation. Despite the *AMA*'s well-recognized status as one of Malory's sources, its only extant copy was both copied and signed by Robert Thornton and is located in the mid-fifteenth century Lincoln Thornton manuscript, now called Lincoln Cathedral MS 91. However, Larry Benson's earlier date for the poem of around 1400 places the *AMA* well before the well-documented fifteenth-century fixation with the macabre, which included the *Danse Macabre* at the Holy Innocents Cemetery in Paris (1424) and John Lydgate's subsequent English translations that would eventually accompany similar—but now lost—*memento mori* images at St. Paul's Cathedral in London (Benson x, 4; Appleford 83-96). Even the influential *Boke of the Craft of Dying*, despite circulating with the *AMA* as early as the 1420s, was not widely read until the 1460s and could not have influenced its composition. Therefore, in order to establish the mindset of the AMA-poet regarding how one should properly die, it is most profitable to limit this investigation to tracts known to be in circulation in Ricardian England. These again include *Visitation A*, the various ME translations of *Somme le roi*, *Lerne to Dye*, and—to a lesser extent—the *Pore Caitif*. As we will see, the AMA-poet was just as concerned with the question of how to die well as with other themes frequently treated in contemporary criticism of the poem: English imperialism, the questionable righteousness of war, and the secular or spiritual nature of chivalry. These concerns are most apparent in timely and often anachronistic updates to

151

the Galfridian Chronicle tradition—a literary tradition whose major figures, especially Arthur, are always already dead, and so it is not that they die but how they die that should receive our attention.

The Death of Kay

One easy-to-overlook death in the *Bruts* is that of Kay the Seneschal, who is treated more favorably in the Galfridian and earlier Welsh traditions than in French Romances. K.S. Whetter points to Wace as the AMA-Poet's principal Galfridian source while Dorsey Armstrong turns to Laȝamon, but in either case, blink and you will miss it ("Genre as Context," 49; "Rewriting the Chronicle Tradition," 81-101). Laȝamon has: "…and for-wundede Kai swiðe; inne strongen þan fehte / to þan bare deðe; reou-lich wes þa dede /"[164] (722, 13766-13767). Wace chooses instead to briefly describe the death of Bedivere and the mortal wounds Kay receives defending his body (319-317, lines 12617-12654). Kay's death in the *AMA*, however, is sufficiently expanded to enable him to contemplate his end and to receive his last rites after the fashion of *Visitation A*. The sequence begins when Kay is mortally wounded as he is turning his horse to charge:

> But Kayous at the in-come was keeped unfair
>
> With a coward knight of the kith rich;
>
> At the turning that time the traitour him hit
>
> In through the felettes and in the flank after
>
> That the bustous launce the bewelles entamed,
>
> That braste at the brawling and broke in the middes. (Benson 197, lines 2171-6)

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[164] […and wounded Kay fiercely in that strong fight to the bare death. Terrible was the deed!]

[But at the income (of the charge) Kay was poorly defended / Against a cowardly knight from a powerful family; / The traitor hit him as he was turning (his horse) / In through the loins and in the lower belly afterward / Such that the wild lance pierced the bowels / Which burst during the fighting and broke in the middle.]

Controversially, King Arthur's mortal wound is also delivered to the "felettes," which Benson[165] had initially glossed as "rib-plates" probably due to the description of Arthur's "jupon and gesseraunt" but which Armstrong, Krishna, and Westover read as "loins" in order to make the case for the king's further symbolic emasculation by his nephew, Mordred (D. Armstrong, "Rewriting the Chronicle Tradition," 94-5). While Arthur is certainly emasculated by Guinevere's actions—marrying Mordred in her husband's absence and, in a move unique to this text, bearing his children—such wounds to the loins or thighs, like the Fisher King's un-healing wound, tend to signify religious piety and alterity, and Kay does not appear to be emasculated in the death sequence that follows. Moreover, both injuries begin with the "felettes" but only become fatal when they involve the bowels. Arthur dies because Mordred's sword "fiched [pierced] in the flesh an half-foot large" (Benson 258, line 4239). Curiously, the blade bypasses "jupon and gesseraunt of gentle mailes" in order to wound Arthur in this manner. The easiest way to do so would be to thrust under these layers of armor that typically fall to the mid-thigh—a literal "low blow." What is clear, however, regarding both Kay's and Arthur's identical wounds is that they afford them both the time to prepare for death not granted to the poem's arguable deuteragonist, Sir Gawain. Indeed, the AMA-poet handles Kay's

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[165] The TEAMS update to Benson's edition revised by Edward E. Foster glosses both wounds as injuries to the loins.

foreknowledge of his death in a manner that places him *entre-deux-morts* and therefore presents him with the choice to either continue fighting and risk dying in *mors improvisa* or to seek an orthodox end: "Sir Kayous knew well by that kidd wound / That he was dede of the dint and done out of life" (Benson 197, lines 2177-8).

Kay first uses this borrowed time to "cleve" his foe "clenlich in sonder," but as evidenced by his final words to his killer, his thoughts have—in the spirit of the *artes moriendi*—turned to forgiveness and salvation: "'Had thou well delt thy dint with thy handes, / I had forgiven thee my dede, by Crist now of heven!'" Kay is preparing to let go of his earthy concerns; his refusal to forgive his killer is not "grucching" over his impending death, but rather reprimanding the "low blow." Next, in a revision that contradicts Wace, Kay makes the decision to leave the battlefield rather than fighting to the end:

> He wendes to the wise king and winly him greetes:
>
> "I am wathely wounded, waresh mon I never;
>
> Work now thy worship, as the world askes,
>
> And bring me to burial; bid I no more.
>
> Greet well my lady the queen, yif thee world happen,
>
> And all the burlich birdes that to her bowr longes;
>
> And my worthily wife, that wrathed me never,
>
> Bid her for her worship work for my soul!" (Benson 198, lines 2185-92)
>
> [He travels to the wise king and greets him pleasantly: / "I am woefully wounded; I will never be able to recover. / Do now the office of your status, as the world requires, / And bring me to burial; I ask no more. / Greet well my lady the queen

154

if you happen to survive, / And all the stately maids that belong to her bower; / And my worthy wife, that never angered me, / Ask her for the sake of her reputation to pray for my soul!]

Kay, in a move that corresponds with both *Visitation A* and *Lerne to Die*, and unlike Arthur when his end comes, does not seek earthly, but rather ghostly medicine. His request that Arthur use his "worship" to see him properly confessed may anachronistically reference the English frankpledge, which was formally reinstituted in the early fifteenth century but dates back from before the Norman invasion. This law required the secular patriarch to provide, amongst other moral obligations, for the last rites of everyone in his household, and Kay would certainly qualify as Arthur's seneschal if not his stepbrother as in the Romance tradition (Appleford 7). Here, the "worship" required to bring this about is alliteratively coupled with "the world," which per Laurent and Suso, Kay must leave behind, and he accomplishes this by placing his earthly affairs in Arthur's hands. His final requests, however, are exceedingly humble considering his station, the most important of which being that his "worthily wife work" for his soul. I interpret this as posthumous prayer on the part of Kay's wife herself, not trental masses purchased from professional beadsmen or commanded by royalty as in the *Awntyrs off Arthure*. Arthur himself, as evidenced by the elaborate funeral sequence following his death (see below), could have effectively purchased Kay's salvation, and per the Ricardian anachronisms of the poet, may be obligated to do so. Yet in asking that his wife pray for him instead, Kay goes about limiting his time in Purgatory without falling prey to the avaricious hypocrisy of the clergy so famously lambasted by Langland and Chaucer. Finally, Kay makes his "good death" in the traditional way:

155

> The kinges confessour come with Crist in his handes,
>
> For to comfort the knight, kend him the wordes;
>
> The knight covered on his knees with a kaunt herte,
>
> And caught his Creatour that comfortes us all. (Benson 198, lines 2193-6)
>
> [The king's confessor came with the Eucharist in his hands; / To comfort the
>
> knight, he spoke the absolution to him. / The knight arose to his knees with a stout
>
> heart, / And caught his Creator who comforts us all.]

In this terse rehearsal of *Visitation A*, "Crist in his handes" obviously signifies the Host, and the presence of a confessor implies a confession must take place—likely not the prescribed group confession for lack of time and attendants (the other soldiers are on the battlefield), but as we have seen, portions of *Visitation A* could be skipped depending on the need of the dying person. The half-line "kend him the words" likely refers to the affirmations of faith, such as those provided by Baudri and pseudo-Anselm, followed by the affirmations of trust that would be read on behalf of the dying person as he or she passed. Kay's act of rising to his knees to receive the Host—despite likely being in excruciating pain—demonstrates his ability to die without "grucching" and his total submission to God. The final line of the sequence, "And caught his Creatour that comfortes us all," seems to signify Kay's success at performing the "good death."

The Death of Arthur

Arthur, despite receiving the same wound as Kay, is far less successful at dying well for a number of reasons that are at the heart of contemporary concerns surrounding the *AMA*. Many critics view this version of Arthur as problematic, tragic, or even

satirical. Dorsey Armstrong argues that the poet's criticism of Arthur runs through the entirety of the text and points to a potential shadow narrative of a pacifism that might have been if Arthur had made use of Clarent, the sword of peace, rather than Caliburn, the sword of war—and aptly, it is Clarent, entrusted to Guinevere and wielded by Mordred, that deals Arthur's "emasculating" deathblow ("Rewriting the Chronicle Tradition," 81-101). Whetter contends strongly that Armstrong is missing the point—that the poet absolutely condones Arthur's violence and imperialism because the poem belongs to the genre of epic-heroism. While the argument holds some merit, Whetter falls short in failing to recognize the elements of romance that pervade the entirety of the work, not merely the Gawain-Priamus section ("Genre as Context," 45-65). Benjamin Peters and Marco Nievergelt address the "slippage" between secular and spiritual chivalry that might, for our purposes, rescue Arthur from damnation by means of a renegotiated understanding of chivalry as its own "secular religion," and Nievergelt points to the crusading elements of the poem which, like those of the Lancelot-Proper, can be traced back to the *Chanson de gestes* (305-17; 89-116). However, setting aside the piece's strong Orientalism and anachronistic identifications of Saxons with "Sarazenes," even this rescue via plenary indulgence proves problematic when examined in light of the so-called Ricardian Crusades, which were made possible when the Papal Schism allowed England, much to Gower's chagrin, to declare the Hundred Years War and the Despenser Crusade "holy wars" (Nievergelt 95-101).

Though perhaps a bit pedestrian, I would like to argue that Arthur's failings in the *AMA* more aptly coincide with his inability to heed admonishments from the clergy similar to those in *Somme le roi* and *Lerne to Die*, especially those expressed in the

157

passages concerning kings, emperors, and worship. Even for those who read this version of Arthur as justified at the beginning of his "crusade," his pride and avarice, both considered at differing points in medieval thought to be the roots of all the other Deadly Sins, reach a highwater mark just before his Boethian dream of the Nine Worthies reverses his fortunes. As Nievergelt explains,

> Alongside Arthur's claims to be the selfless, disinterested champion of Christendom, the poet inserts indicators for unmistakably political, imperialistic, and economic motives… Clearly Arthur relishes the riches… from the very beginning, and the wealth of Lombardy is a powerful incentive for Arthur to pursue his campaign. (96)

After conquering Rome, Arthur announces, "We shall be overling of all that on erthe lenges!" He hypocritically takes pride in securing "the rentes of Rome" despite going to war because Lucius had demanded similar tribute from the Britons, and now declaring an official crusade, has set his sights on Germany and then Jerusalem: "over the grete se with good men of armes / to revenge the Renke that on the Rood died (Benson 228, lines 3207-17; Nievergelt 96-7). This sinful overreaching leads to what perhaps should have been a pivotal dream sequence—the most complete version of Arthur's brush with Fortune and likely inspired by the Old French *Mort Artu*—where he, like the other Nine Worthies who are jockeying for position, falls from Fortune's Wheel. While Armstrong sees desire for conquest as the common denominator between the Nine Worthies and points out that they all choose to climb the Wheel to the detriment of their respective nations, it is important to note the original didactic of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, which is death preparation ("Rewriting the Chronicle Tradition," 96-8). This *ars moriendi*

didactic is upheld by the philosopher that Arthur consults upon waking from the dream, who perhaps, as a conflation of Boethius's Dame Philosophy and the wise hermits of the Romance tradition best exemplified by the *Lancelot-Grail*, explicates his dream plainly for both Arthur and the reader:

> "Freke," says the philosopher, "thy fortune is passed,
>
> For thou shall find her thy fo; fraist when thee likes!
>
> Thou art at the highest, I hete thee forsooth;
>
> Challenge now when thou will, thou cheves no more!
>
> Thou has shed much blood and shalkes destroyed,
>
> Sakeles, in surquidrie, in sere kinges landes;
>
> *Shrive thee of thy shame and shape for thine end.*
>
> Thou has a shewing, Sir King, take keep yif thee like,
>
> For thou shall fersly fall within five winters.
>
> Found abbeyes in Fraunce, the fruites are thine owen,
>
> For Frolle and for Feraunt and for thir fers knightes
>
> That thou fremedly in Fraunce has fey beleved.
>
> *Take keep yet of other kinges, and cast in thine herte,*
>
> *That were conquerours kidd and crowned in erthe.* (Benson 233, lines 3394-3407,
>
> emphases mine)
>
> ["Bold warrior," said the philosopher, "your good fortune has passed, / For now you
>
> will find her (Fortuna) your foe; test this when it pleases you! / You are at the
>
> highest (i.e. the top of Fortune's Wheel), I promise you this is the truth; / Challenge
>
> this now if you desire, but you will achieve no more! / You have shed much blood

159

and destroyed men, / Innocent men, through your pride, in sundry kings' lands! / Confess your shame and prepare for your end. / You have a revelation, Sir King, take heed if you like, / For you shall fall proudly (or savagely, cruelly—a potential pun) within five years. / Found abbeys in France, the fruits (i.e. of posthumous prayer) are your own, / In the names of Frollo and Ferrand and their bold knights, / Whom you unkindly (as a stranger) left dead in France. / Consider yet of other kings, and search your heart, / Concerning those famous conquerors crowned as earthly kings."]

If the *AMA* has absorbed the Romance tradition in the slightest, the philosopher's interpretation of Arthur's dream should be taken at face value. However, as in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Fortune's "bad turn" is in actuality a "good turn" in that it dispels all illusions and gives the prideful and avaricious Arthur, like Boethius, a chance for spiritual redemption before death. But "shriving" is not enough, as Arthur is also admonished to begin death meditations: "shape for thine end." The final two lines above—another probable call to death meditations—reference the fallen Nine Worthies but resemble the kings and emperors of *Somme le roi,* weltering in hell because they focused on worship and worldliness, which are of no avail to the dying. Compared with Kay's swift demise, "five winters" seems a generous amount of borrowed time to confess and repent, raise churches, give alms, and ultimately learn to die. Arthur, however, soon discovers Mordred and Guinevere's betrayal and forgets the admonishments of the philosopher. His earthly worship is threatened, and this proves to be more important than his salvation.

Arthur's ignoble end in the *AMA* might be argued as a clean break with the Galfridian Chronicle tradition, which has since *Historia Regum Britanniae* included Arthur's possible return from Avalon, in that this version of Arthur dies with no possibility of return. Dorsey Armstrong notes, "This choice seems to have deeply affected a later reader of the poem, who attempted to rewrite the tragic conclusion by adding the line 'Hic jacet Arthurus, rex q[u]ondam rexque futurus' at the end of the narrative in the Thornton manuscript" ("Rewriting the Chronicle Tradition," 101). As Arthur fails to take the prescribed steps to amend himself before the moment of his death, this bleak ending may be directly connected to his failure to meet most—but not all—the demands of the *ars moriendi*.

Unlike King Ban, who in keeping with *Visitation A* is able to let go of the world and his concerns for his family, Arthur remains fixated on Mordred and Guinevere's betrayal almost to the last. Armstrong comments (although imprecisely), "With his dying breath, he orders that Mordred and Guenevere's children 'bee sleyghely slayne and slongen in watyrs'" ("Rewriting the Chronicle Tradition," 99; Benson 260, line 4,321). Unlike Kay, Arthur sorrows over his own death and those of his knights—"grucching"— and pointedly seeks earthly medicine from a "surgen of Salerne" at Avalon, only calling for a confessor after he "sees by assay that sound bes he never" (Benson 260, lines 4,311-4,312). Despite this, Arthur's final words, however brief, indicate a shift towards acceptance, forgiveness, and *imitatio Christi,* and his final act coincides with Suso: "putte my passioun bytwixe þe and my dome" (101). "'I forgive all gref, for Cristes love of heven! / If Waynor [Guinevere] have well wrought, well her betide!' / He said 'In manus' with main on molde where he ligges, and thus passes his spirit and spekes no more!"

(Benson 260, lines 4,324-6). But the efficaciousness of Arthur's *imitatio Christi* is

doubtful, as the poet ends with a passage that calls to mind, on a much grander scale, the

trentals of Ricardian England, the beadsmen's attempts to pray the dead out of Purgatory:

The baronage of Bretain then, bishoppes and other,

Graithes them to Glashenbury with glopinand hertes

To bury there the bold king and bring to the erthe

With all worhsip and welth that any wye sholde.

Throly belles they ring and Requiem singes,

Dos masses and matins with mornand notes;

Religious reveste in their rich copes,

Pontificalles and prelates in precious weedes,

Dukes and douspeeres in their dole-cotes,

Countesses kneeland and claspand their handes,

Ladies languishand and lowrand to shew;

All was busked in black, birdes and other,

That shewed at the sepulture with syland teres;

Was never so sorrowful a sight seen in their time! (Benson 261, lines 4,328-

4,341)

[The baronage of Britian then, bishops and others, / Make themselves ready and

depart for Glastonbury with dismayed hearts / To bury the bold king and bring

him to the earth / With all the worship and wealth that any person (of his status)

should have. / Loudly they ring bells and sing the Requiem (mass for the dead), /

Do masses and matins with morning/mourning notes (a potential pun); /

Monastics dressed in their mourning cloaks, / Bishops and prelates in precious

garments, / Dukes and other high noblemen in their mourning coats, / Countesses

kneeling and clasping their hands, / Ladies grown faint and outwardly frowning; /

All dressed in black, women and others, / That appeared at the sepulcher with

flowing tears; / There was never so sorrowful a sight seen in their time!]

The choice to entomb Arthur at Glastonbury, however, continues a tradition that grants

him the status of martyrdom and therefore does not entirely discredit his performance of

the "good death." This is due to another instance of Peters and Nievergelt's "slippage"

between secular and sacred that can be located in William Caxton's introduction to *Le

Morte Darthur*. Here, Caxton provides "proof" of the veracity of the English Arthurian

legend through objects that are treated as saintly relics inspiring pilgrimage, but only two

profess actual bodily remains: Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury and Gawain's head at Dover

Castle (Shepherd 816). Perhaps because the other "relics" lack this quality of

embodiment which Christopher Lee Pipkin notes was of importance not only to Ricardian

thinking but also to the AMA-poet in particular, the poet provides us only with evidence

of these same two "relics"—Arthur's remains through his traditional entombment, and

Gawain's through the Eucharistic sacrifice and reliquization of his mortified body (100-

9).

The Death of Gawain

In Laȝamon's *Brut*, Gawain meets his end at the hands of Saxons and therefore

would have been eligible for plenary indulgence based on the AMA-poet's common but

anachronistic understanding of Saxons as "Sarazenes" (742, lines 14,140-14,143).

However, after the effects of the Papal Schism cast crusading in a negative light, such an indulgence may not have been sufficient. "Gawain the Good" needed to be uncontestably saved, and this Ricardian update to his salvation is accomplished not only by papal indulgence but also by a layered performance of the "good death" that incorporates death meditations similar to those suggested by Laurent and Suso as well as the older *ars moriendi* tradition exemplified by King Ban in the *Lancelot-Grail*. It is further reinforced by two threnodies, lamentations that serve as elegies, performed by Arthur and— paradoxically at first—Mordred. Gawain's process of dying in the *AMA*, as we shall see, supports Caxton's belief that his skull could be presented as a relic in the English Arthurian tradition and likely influenced Malory's updated account of Lancelot's death in his *Morte Darthur*.

Unlike Arthur and Kay and central to Laurent and Suso's death meditations, Gawain is uncontestably prepared to die at any given moment, as exemplified by his angry parley with the Romans, his dubious choice to battle the vastly larger Lombard force during the hunting expedition, and his choice to fight against insurmountable odds knowing he and his battalion would be slaughtered by Mordred and his Saxons (Benson 171-3, 206-21, 245-7; lines 1299-1367, 2483-3000, 3796-3863). His "Battle of Malden" moment before his death has earned him criticism as a hot-headed and flawed character, but his deliberate and unhesitating sacrifice is seldom discussed. Moreover, unlike Arthur, Gawain's desire for worldly worship never influences his decision making, which is demonstrated by actions such as his ceding command of the hunting expedition to the neophyte Sir Florent, holding back to allow Florent's knights to gain glory on the battlefield (only engaging when the French knights are in danger), and claiming to be a

164

mere yeoman after defeating Sir Priamus, uncharacteristically withholding his true

identity until he realizes his rival's personal honor is at stake (Benson 215-21, lines 2741-

3000; 211, lines 2620-2645). This total devotion to the chivalric code supports Peters and

Nievergelt's argument for chivalry as a "secular religion" in this text—and to this version

of Gawain, who worships rather than desiring worship, it is worth dying for.

  Gawain certainly conflates chivalry and religion in his final speech to his men,

who are outnumbered "seven score" to "sixty thousand" and subsequently martyred. His

words are spoken from a space that is undeniably *entre-deux-morts* and are designed to

help his troops take control of their second, literal death in order to make an offering of

themselves to Christ:

> "…I sigh not for myself, so help our *Lord*,
>
> But for to see us surprised my sorrow is the more!
>
> Bes doughty today, yon dukes shall be yours!
>
> *For dere Drighten this day dredes no wepen.*
>
> We shall end this day als excellent knightes,
>
> *Ayer to endless joy with angeles unwemmed;*
>
> Though we have unwittyly wasted ourselven,
>
> *We shall work all well in the worship of Crist!*" (Benson 245, Lines 3,796-3,803,
>
> emphases mine)
>
> ["I do not sigh for myself, so help our Lord, / But to see us captured/surrounded
>
> my sorrow is the greater! / Be valiant today, and you shall overcome those
>
> warriors! / For dear almightly God dread no weapon this day. / We shall end this
>
> day as excellent knights, / Go onward to endless joy with the spotless angels; /

Though we have unknowingly wasted ourselves, / We shall all work well towards

the glory of Christ!"]

In discussing the performance of martyrdom, Susan Crane points to physical torture as a means by which "the body can become a living relic through the process of mortification" (*The Performance of Self*, 90). While she is concerned with Joan of Arc's torture prior to execution, the process itself may be applied to the knight who suffers and dies on the battlefield:

> …the late medieval body was… 'a means of access to the divine': the relic [here, the body] offers contact with the saint's spiritual power, the mortification of the flesh pushes the spirit upward in visionary or contemplative illumination, and the martyrs' endurance under torture brings them closer to God by imitating Christ's crucifixion. (*The Performance of Self*, 90)

For Crane, this "divinity accessed and materialized in the body" also describes a process by which embodied relics such as Gawain's skull are created. "In its role as a means of spiritual access, the body is clearly inferior to the spirit and the relation between the two has an ascending energy. But the energy of this relation flows in both directions" (Crane, *The Performance of Self*, 90). Through mortification, then, the result of that downward flowing energy, the living relic of the sanctified body, can also be offered up willingly to God along with the spirit. In essence, rather than requiring the Eucharist for salvation, the sanctified body of the martyr instead becomes like the Eucharist—the ultimate *imitatio Christi*.[166] Embodiment ensures the remains retain this special sanctification after death

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[166] Ingestion ostensibly would not be necessary because the mortified body is now already sanctified; this process also anticipates the *Craft* wherein the desire for the Eucharist and *imitatio Christi* are enough for salvation.

(Crane, *The Performance of Self*, 90). For Gawain, who per Friar Laurent's instructions seems to have already died his "two of three necessary deaths" before being martyred on the battlefield, this process could logically result in a sacred relic such as those Caxton refers to in his introduction to Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Further, as Pipkin has demonstrated, the AMA-poet was interested enough in embodied relics to include sacrilegious humor regarding St. Michael's apparent impotence due to his relics not stemming from a physical body, and this lack results in the archangel's humorous conflation with the grotesque body of the giant of Mont-Saint-Michel (95-109). Perhaps paradoxically, Gawain's remains can then be interpreted as relics surpassing St. Michael's, confirming his status as a martyr and rendering ridiculous the notion of his entering Purgatory despite his inability to receive his last rites.

In this final speech, Gawain is also clearly a proponent of both the literal version of ghostly chivalry Ann Astell attributes to the *miles Christi* of the High Middle Ages and the metaphysical version contemporaneously adumbrated in the *Pore Caitif* and its successor *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*. He demonstrates the former through promising his knights that their physical battle against the "Sarazenes" will grant them direct access to heaven despite their collective inability to receive last rites:

> We shall for yon Sarazenes, I seker you my trewth,
>
> Soupe with our Saviour solemnly in heven,
>
> In presence of that Precious, Prince of all other,
>
> With prophetes and patriarkes and apostles full noble,
>
> Before His freelich face that formed us all! (Benson 245, lines 3803-8)

[For defeating those Saracens (i.e. pagans), I pledge you my true word, we shall / Enjoy a sacred feast with our Savior in heaven, / In the presence of that Precious One, the Prince above all others, / With prophets and patriarchs and apostles completely noble, / Before His glorious (with the sense of being noble and freeborn) face that created us all!]

Gawain's speech also presents a Eucharistic substitution for the Host denied to his soldiers; while they are unable to take their savior before death, he gives his word as a knight that they will all "solemly soup" with Christ posthumously in a move that invokes the Last Supper and perhaps, by extension, the Passion, which again must be performed in *imitatio Christi* to be commensurate with the *artes moriendi*. This critical moment in the dying process could be accomplished through Christian martyrdom, but in another move that evokes ghostly chivalry in the metaphysical sense, Gawain also admonishes his soldiers to follow through with martyrdom or risk damnation, as they would then be failing to perform their duties as ghostly knights who must be ready to war against not only the enemies of God but also temptation, including—as is apparent in our above reading of *SGGK*—*avaritia vitae*:

> He that yeldes him ever
>
> Whiles he is quick and in quert, unquelled with handes,
>
> Be he never mo saved, ne succoured with Crist,
>
> But Satanase his soul mowe sink into Hell!" (Benson 245, lines 3809-12)
>
> [He who yields at any time, / While he is alive and in health, unrestrained in his actions, / He can never again be saved, nor comforted with Christ, / But Satan may sink his soul into hell!]

For Gawain, the soldier who yields even to the suggestion of escaping martyrdom—

therefore missing out on the ultimate honor of dying in Christ's name—cannot be

redeemed even by orthodox means. This *memento mori* understanding of the good death

speaks directly to the *miles Christi* as a warrior armed with spiritual virtues and required

to do psychological battle against spirits of temptation as demonstrated most directly in

MS Harley 3244 and the later *Tretyse*. It also exemplifies a secular sainthood wherein

members of the chivalry could renegotiate salvation to avoid *mors improvisa* even to the

point of superseding the established sacraments of the Church. In doing so, Gawain

serves as a lay death officiant to his doomed troops, instructing them in the means of

salvation and then guiding them to it by his actions on the battlefield. Throughout

Gawain's deathly charge into the Frisian ranks, the AMA-poet repeats the half-line

"wondes but little," providing a sense of Gawain's psychological state on his death

trajectory and culminating in "Als he that wolde wilfully wasten himselven," perhaps

demonstrating the process of converting *timor filialis* to trust in God's will and ultimately

the traditional loss of the five wits when "all his wit failed" on the final approach to

Mordred, his killer (Benson 246, lines 3820, 3832, 3835-6).

If martyrdom, ghostly chivalry, and secular sainthood are not enough, Gawain

might escape Purgatory through posthumous prayer delivered not through trentals but

threnodies: literary elegies which in fitting with other emergency substitutions might

serve as a secular expedient for an official mass.[167] Indeed, this theory may explain

Mordred's remorseful speech over his brother's corpse, on which Whetter has

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[167] Stephen H. A. Shepherd notes that Malory continued in this tradition for Lancelot's death in his *Morte Darthur* and likely borrowed the material from the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (704).

commented, "Certainly no other hero receives such praise from the opponent who fells him" (59). Mordred, fearing Arthur's wrath and knowing the king's main force is not far behind, does not have time to bury Gawain nor a priest on-hand to sing a proper mass, but this does not stop him from praising his dead brother lavishly before the King of Frisia:

"He was makless on molde, man, by my trewth.

This was Sir Gawain the good, the gladdest of other,

And the graciousest gome that under God lived,

Man hardiest of hand, happiest in armes,

And the hendest in hall under heven-rich,

And the lordliest in leding whiles he live might,

For he was lion alosed in landes ynow;

Had thou knowen him, Sir King, in kithe there he lenged,

His cunning, his knighthood, his kindly workes,

His doing, his doughtiness, his deedes of armes,

Thou wolde have dole for his dede the dayes of thy life." (Benson 247-8, lines 3,875-3,885)

["He was peerless on the earth, man, by my true word. / This was Sir Gawain the good, the most joyous of (all) others, / And the most gracious man that lived under God; / Man hardiest of hand, most fortunate in arms, / And the noblest in (any) hall under the kingdom of heaven, / And the lordliest in leadership while he was living, / For he was praised as a lion in many lands. / Had you known him, Sir King, in the country where he lived and belonged, / His cunning, his

170

knighthood, his natural works; / His doing, his valor, his deeds of arms, / You

would have sorrow for his death all the days of your life."]

Mordred's threnody seems sincere on its own, but its hyperbolic sense becomes evident

when paired with Arthur's:

> "Dere cosin of kind in care am I leved,
>
> For now my worship is went and my war ended!
>
> Here is the hope of my hele, my happing in armes,
>
> My herte and my hardiness holly on him lenged!
>
> My counsel, my comfort, that keeped mine herte!
>
> Of all knightes the king that under Crist lived!
>
> Thou was worthy to be king, though I the crown bare!
>
> My wele and my worship of all this world rich
>
> Was wonnen through Sir Gawain and through his wit one!" (Benson 250, lines
>
> 3,956-3,964)
>
> ["Dear natural relative of my blood (nephew), I am left behind in sorrow, / For
>
> now my renown is gone and my war at an end! / Here is the hope of my well-
>
> being, my good fortune in arms; / My heart and my hardiness rested wholly on
>
> him! / My counselor, my comfort, that guarded my heart! / The king of all knights
>
> that lived under Christ! / You were worthy to be king though I bear the crown! /
>
> My wealth and my status in all this worldly kingdom / Were won through Sir
>
> Gawain and through his wit alone!"]

If Arthur believes what he says here about Gawain, he should have been better able to

disconnect from "worship," the "crown," and "all this world rich" because he would have

recalled the philosopher's interpretation of his Boethian dream—none of these worldly

things are truly his, and they are keeping him from the good death. Paired with his

imitatio Christi, this redemption should have enabled him, like Gawain and Kay, to make

an uncontested good end and avoid Purgatory. But based on Arthur's worldliness after

this scene and up until his own death, it is far more likely that this threnody is aimed at

Gawain's salvation rather than the king's redemption—it is not a true epiphany. The

same, despite the "teres of the traitour," can be said for Mordred's threnody (Benson 248,

line 3,886).

As it was during the Crusades and the tumultuous half-century that followed the

Black Death, the *ars moriendi* on the English Arthurian battlefield is rife with

substitutions: threnody for trental, layman for priest, vernacular for Latin, ascetic

preparation for performed sacrament, chivalry for religion, plenary indulgence granted

for slaying the Christian, and mortified body or grass for the Eucharist—or perhaps both.

Finally, we turn to the deathly image of Gawain as Arthur finds him, an image which

recalls the earlier, Continental *ars moriendi* tradition inspired by the *Chanson de gestes*,

and by which King Ban dies:

> With the Sarazenes unsound encircled about,
>
> And Sir Gawain the good in his gay armes,
>
> Umbegripped the gers and on grouf fallen,
>
> His banners braiden down, beten of gules,
>
> His brand and his brode sheld all bloody berunnen. (Benson 249, lines 3,942-
>
> 3,946)

[With the dead Saracens encircled around, / And Sir Gawain the good in his

bright armor, / Clutched the grass and fallen face down, / His banners pulled

down, beaten and bloody, / His sword and his broad shield running with blood.]

Here lies good Gawain the *miles Christi*, surrounded by slain "Sarazenes," grasping the

grass. Karen Cherewatuk has briefly noted this connection to both the *Lancelot-Grail* and

Eucharistic substitution in an analysis that does not mention yet remains commensurate

with Ford's seminal work:

> Gawain's gesture suggests the symbolic act of Lay Communion whereby the
>
> dying demonstrate a desire to receive communion by eating or holding three
>
> blades of grass. Appearing in crusading texts and descriptions of battle, this
>
> practice exemplies the crusading ethos that pervades the poet's treatment of this
>
> internecine family feud. ("Dying in Uncle Arthur's Arms and at his Hands," 70)

That Gawain lies face down after his encounter with Mordred strengthens Cherewatuk's

assertions that clutching the grass is not a mere coincidence, as Mordred most likely

leaves his brother lying on his back after thrusting a knife "Through the helm and the

hed on high on the brain"—such a thrust would glance off the back of Gawain's helm but

would be effective if it went through the visor (Benson 247, line 3856). The AMA-poet

also describes the unhorsed and wounded Mordred on his back reversing positions with

Gawain after his dagger slips on his brother's aventail: "His [Gawain's] hand slipped and

slode o-slant on the mailes / and tother [Mordred] slely slinges him under (Benson 247,

lines 3854-5). After the stroke, the poet twice repeats "Thus Sir Gawain is gone," and this

suggestion of sudden death is immediately followed by Mordred's lengthy threnody,

which he must deliver over the corpse because he leaves the body, weeping, directly

173

afterwards (Benson 247, lines 3858, 3860, 3874-89). In order for Gawain to later be found by Arthur in the state described above, he must have regained consciousness long enough to deliberately turn over despite the weight of his armor, recognize that he was still "unquelled with handes," and make good on his earlier speech by reaching for his Savior with his dying breath. If Gawain is indeed the "king of knights" as he is presented in the *AMA*, this final detail demonstrates not only the poet's concerns with the spiritual dangers of the chivalric vocation regardless of the Crusader's Indulgence but also a desire to rescue Gawain in particular—a character that in Ricardian England could stand synechdocally for the knightly estate—from *mors improvisa*.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS A SPIRITUAL MALORY: DYING WELL IN *MORTE DARTHUR*

Two camps of Malory criticism vis-à-vis spirituality have emerged in the wake of

Eugene Vinaver's seminal reading of the *Sankgreal* and its close source, *La Queste del*

Saint Graal. In his *Works*, Vinaver establishes the claim that Malory, in general,

secularizes his French sources and therefore departs from what is perceived as the

orthodoxy of the French tradition (Hanks, "'All maner of good love comyth of God,'" 13-

4, Tolhurst 132-3). This reading, in turn, has led to a generation of Malory scholars

interpreting spirituality in Malory as unorthodox and tied too directly to either courtly

love, chivalry, or both. For example, in "Unadulterated Love," Cory Olsen argues that

Malory establishes the figure of the "trewe lover" as death-ready and therefore capable of

making a "good ende," pointing to Elaine of Ascolat's arguments with the clergy,

Malory's descriptions of Guinevere as a "trewe lover," and Malory's interpolated Maying

passage (30-49). Similarly, and partly in response to Malory's interpolation of the

Pentecostal Oath, which is designed to establish the behavioral code of the Arthurian

knight, Dorsey Armstrong has commented, "In the *Morte Darthur*…spiritual devotion is

largely absent, eclipsed by more secular chivalric concerns. Or, to put it another way,

Malory's depiction of knighthood isn't particularly religious, because knighthood *is* the

religion" ("Christianity and Instability," 111, original emphasis.) Armstrong's comment

concerning knighthood as a religion strikes a deep chord but again assumes that the

binary of celestial and terrestrial chivalry established in the early-thirteenth century *La*

Queste is still prevalent in the late-fifteenth century when Malory composed *Morte*

Darthur. Contrary to Armstrong, Raluca Radulescu has argued what texts such as *A*

Tretyse of Gostly Batayle, Caxton's translation of *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, and

Malory's close source the *AMA*[168] demonstrate to be true concerning the English chivalry

during this period: "In Malory's time as in his *Morte Darthur* (and in other romances of

the period, Arthurian and non-Arthurian), chivalry encompasses both secular and spiritual

ideals" (211). As Vinaver's methods have been further called into question, more Malory

scholars such as Radulescu, D. Thomas Hanks Jr., Kate Dosanjh, and especially Karen

Cherewatuk have labored to establish a spiritual Malory who updates rather than

secularizing his sources. And while Fiona Tolhurst has recently argued for "secularized

salvation" in Malory, her examination of Vinaver's methods, which she characterizes as

"inadequate and therefore misleading," places her partially in the same camp as

Radulescu, Hanks, Dosanjh, and Cherewatuk (132-3). Tolhurst's work ultimately claims

the following: "By modifying—not eliminating—the spiritual values of his source,

Malory achieves two goals: the conflation of earthly and spiritual chivalry and the

compression of the hierarchy of Arthurian knights" (139). As I have endeavored to

demonstrate in previous chapters, however, the conflation to which Tolhurt refers is

indeed orthodox and points to English *ars moriendi* and *memento mori* traditions wherein

the knight is the rallying symbol around which both clergymen and laymen are called to

war against temptation and sin in their time of dying. P.J.C. Field, in his *Life and Times*

of Sir Thomas Malory, also points to "knighthood itself as an 'order' with a moral

purpose and a religious justification" (68). Field's biographical work on Malory is

certainly not lost on Hanks and Janet Jesmok in their introduction to *Malory and*

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[168] See Chapter 5.

Christianity, where they provide a bit of context for the setting in which the knight-prisoner most likely composed his Arthuriad:

> What is clear [about Malory] is that religious observances such as tithes, baptisms, marriages, and death rites would have been central to his daily life. Even as Malory was writing the *Morte* in Newgate Prison, his days would have been punctuated by the bells of Greyfriars Church just across the way from the prison—a church where he was eventually buried and where his dust now lies under a rose garden. (3)

This chapter will endeavor to demonstrate that Malory's understanding of spirituality, far from being secular or unorthodox, was timely, and that one of his goals near the end of his Arthuriad must have been to be update his close sources to coincide with the orthodox English *ars moriendi* and *memento mori* traditions. This is evident in Malory's textual selections, "reductions," and interpolations throughout the *Morte* and therefore critical to his reshaping the deaths of several chief characters to ensure that they not only make "good deaths," but also "good deaths" commensurate with contemporaneous English tracts such as *The Boke of the Craft of Dying* and *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*. As will also be made evident, Malory conflates his sources to capitalize on late-medieval death motifs discussed in earlier chapters, such as *The Encounter Between the Three Noble Youths and the Three Dead* and the phenomenon Jane Gilbert has identified as being *entre-deux-morts*. I will be focusing primarily on the deaths of three of the most important members of Arthurian chivalry: Sir Gawain, King Arthur, and

Sir Lancelot.[169] All three cases will demonstrate that Malory updates his material rather than secularizing it, particularly the hotly contested death and spiritual redemption of Sir Lancelot.

The "Good Death" of Sir Gawain

There is no greater example of the English *artes moriendi's* efficacy in *Morte Darthur* than the protracted death and swift redemption of Sir Gawain. As Raluca Radulescu has demonstrated, Malory carefully plans Gawain's death early in his Arthuriad by connecting Balin and Balan to Lancelot and Gawain via a sword that is destined to kill Gawain (217-8). Although the material concerning this unnamed sword and Gawain's death is drawn from the *Post-Vulgate Cycle*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, *Mort Artu*, and the *SMA*, only in *Morte Darthur* is it the same sword that both Balin and Galahad wield before it is passed to Lancelot. In making the further connection between the ill-fated brothers and Lancelot and Gawain, Malory shapes a death for Gawain that is strikingly similar to the early encounter between Arthur and Accolon wherein the latter serves as a deathly doppelganger after the fashion of the *Encounter Between the Three Noble Youths and the Three Dead*. Gawain's allegorical potential here is problematized, however, as his characterization—drawn alternatively from English sources such as the *AMA* and *SMA* and French sources such as the *Lancelot-Grail*, *Post-Vulgate*, and *Prose Tristan*—is notoriously inconsistent. Whenever possible, Malory turns to the *Post-Vulgate* and *Prose Tristan* for Gawain's adventures and intrigues, and these two sources

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[169] As I am treating multiple Arthurian texts in this writing, I retain the modern spelling of these and all other character names. This seems to generally be the case for Arthur and Gawain but not for Lancelot specifically when critics focus on Malory.

in particular paint Gawain in a negative light when compared with the *Lancelot-Grail* and especially the English material. The overall result is a nebulous figure who along with his affinity has much to atone for by the time of his death, including warmongering with Lancelot's affinity, murder through feuding with King Pelinore's family, making a hasty confession to hermits but refusing to take on repentence for his sins during the *Sankgreal*, and the accidental killing of a damsel whose headless body he must display at Arthur's court in the Wedding of King Arthur episode. As Amy Kaufman has pointed out, this morbid scene with the damsel, however, leads directly to the Pentecostal Oath and to Gawain as the protector of all ladies, a role that Malory acknowledges when the angelic Gawain, redeemed after his good death, returns to Arthur in a nocturnal vision before his final battle against Mordred at Salisbury (171-6).

Gawain's relationship with his killer, Sir Lancelot, is equally inconsistent. During the Balyn Le Sauvage episode, Merlin prophesizes the following concerning these two men and the instrument of Gawain's demise:

> 'There shall never man handyll thys swerde but the beste knight of the worlde, and that shall be Sir Launcelot, other ellis Galahad hys sonne. And Launcelot with thys swerde shall sle the man in the worlde that he lovith beste: that shall be Sir Gawayne.' And all thys he lette wryte in the pomell of the swerde. (74.9-13, C II.19)

While both knights do initially attempt to keep the peace when the other's honor is called into question—Lancelot when he hears of the Orkney brothers' murder of Lamerak and Gawain when he learns that his brothers Mordred and Agravain are planning to ambush Lancelot with the queen—that Lancelot "lovith Sir Gawayne beste" seems inconsistent

with the later events of *Morte Darthur.* A strong exception to this is Lancelot's visitation

to Gawain's tomb at Dover, where in an elaborate scene unique to Malory, Lancelot

finances requiem masses on behalf of Gawain's soul consistent with Appleford's,

Phelpstead's, and Langland's descriptions:[170]

> Than Sir Launcelot kneled downe by the tumbe and wepte, and prayed hartely for
>
> hys [Gawain's] soule. And that nyght he lete make a dole, and all they that wolde
>
> com of the towne or of the contrey they had as much fleyssh and fysshe and wyne
>
> and ale, and every man and woman he dalt to twelve pence, com whoso wolde.
>
> Thus with hys owne honde dalte he thys money, in a mournyng gowne; and ever
>
> he wepte hartely and prayed the people to pray for the soule of Sir Gawayne. And
>
> on the morn all the prystes and clarkes that myght be gotyn in the contrey and in
>
> the town were there, and sange Massis of Requiem. (931.17-28, C XXI.8)

The above passage continues and illustrates the specific financial offerings made at these

masses, and Lancelot's are by far the most generous. Placed in the context of fifteenth-

century religious practices, these offerings demonstrate Lancelot's enduring loyalty to a

man he never intended to kill as well as his own desire for repentance. Lancelot, of

course, cannot know that by this time Gawain has already been saved through his "good

death" and reappeared to Arthur through the grace of God.

Malory's attempts to demonstrate Gawain and Lancelot's relationship prior to

Gareth's death are also evident in Gawain's loyalty to Lancelot in refusing Arthur's order

to be present at Guinevere's execution despite Lancelot having already killed Agravain

and two of Gawain's sons. This final inconsistency between the feuding Gawain and the

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[170] See Chapter 1.

loyal Gawain is again an issue of Malory's source selection—the former Gawain from the *Prose Tristan* and the latter from *Mort Artu* and the derivative (though quite different) *SMA*. If any strong evidence remains to support Eugene Vinaver's approach to the *Morte Darthur* as a collection of "Works" with no direct correlation, it is Malory's inconsistent portrayal of the figure who to a medieval English audience would have been considered Arthur's greatest knight. To my thinking, however, this portrayal is planned and purposeful. On the one hand, diminishing Gawain's role strengthens Lancelot's position, and Lancelot is unquestionably Malory's favorite knight. On the other, it allows for what may be the most dramatic Christian redemption in Malory's Arthuriad, made possible on Gawain's deathbed because of Arthur and Gawain's adherence to the English *artes moriendi*.

In *Morte Darthur*, the death of Gawain serves as a final turning point for the Arthurian comitatus and especially King Arthur, who is denied his threnody for Gawain from the *AMA* but is still able to express that Gawain and Lancelot were his "erthely joy—" the same phrase that Lancelot will later use to refer to Guinevere when he turns to asceticism. Upon finding Gawain mortally wounded, Arthur refers to Gawain as his "joy" four times in a passage that marks a departure not only from the former prestige of the Round Table, but also Arthur's connection to the temporal world; indeed, Arthur instead maintains his spiritual connection to his favorite nephew, as evidenced by Gawain's reappearing to Arthur posthumously in nocturnal visions foretelling the king's own death (917.34-5-918.1-4, C XXI.1-2; 920.30-921.17, C XXI.3). While Gawain reappears to Arthur in both of Malory's close sources, Malory's preference for Lancelot's cause and his resulting interpolations to Gawain's confessions from *Mort Artu* bring Gawain's

dying acts closer in line with the English *artes moriendi*, especially as articulated in the *Craft of Dying*. Gawain, without "grucching," identifies and accepts the impending hour of his death (at noon when his blessing of strength will fail) and with Arthur as his deathbed attendant takes the appropriate steps to absolve himself. His death acceptance recognizes the privilege that he has received from God—to be a fighting man and to know the time of his death in advance in order to avoid *mors improvisa*—and he takes responsibility for his death rather than blaming his killer: "for thorow my wylfulnes I was causer of myne owne dethe" (918.7-8, C XXI.2). The unhealing wound that Lancelot has dealt Gawain, opened unceremoniously by an oar in the *SMA*, takes on a more symbolic connotation in *Morte Darthur* due to Malory's text selection, his foretelling of Gawain's death in the Arthuriad's initial episodes, and Gawain's connection to the Pentecostal Oath (Benson 96, lines 3066-73). For Malory, Gawain's death is always already connected to the death of Arthurian chivalry, and Lancelot is fated to give the Order its deathblow— the wound he deals can never heal. Yet Gawain graciously absolves Lancelot rather than continuing their feud in hopes of healing the symbolic—but importantly not the physical—wound before he dies.

Gawain's swansong letter to Lancelot, which is original to Malory, demonstrates that in his time of dying he seeks reconciliation—ghostly medicine—before physical medicine. Indeed, Gawain intimates to Lancelot that despite being close to death, he has written this letter "with myne owne honed and subscribed with parte of my harte blood" (919.16-7, C XXI.2). The *SMA*, one of Malory's two major sources for the death of Gawain and the one to which he adheres more closely whenever possible, contains no such attempt at absolving Lancelot. Gawain instead dies in the field unconfessed and is

182

markedly silenced: "There is good Gawain gone to ground, / That speche spake he never more" (Benson 96, lines 3072-3). He is only later confirmed to have been saved during Arthur's nocturnal visions in which Gawain appears not, as in *Morte Darthur*, with a host of women he had championed in life, but a host of both lords and ladies (Benson 96, lines 3066-73; Benson 100-1, lines 3195-3223). Gawain's championing of ladies and connection to the Pentecostal Oath signals a more organized redemption sequence in *Morte Darthur* than in Malory's close source; moreover, it is significant that Malory breaks from his English source and turns to *Mort Artu* to enable Gawain to make a confession, and even more significant that he interpolates the letter, which creates a double confession that not only demonstrates his sincerity but also makes his penitence public, as directed in both the *Craft of Dying* and the earlier *Visitation* tracts. In a passage that deploys the analogy of disease—notably more common of the typical *moriens* than a member of the chivalry—Malory's Gawain confesses to the sin of pride, takes the entire blame for the "shame and disease" overrunning England because Lancelot had held Arthur's "cankyrde enemyes in subjeccion and daungere," and twice asks Lancelot to visit his tomb and offer posthumous prayers in addition to succoring the king (918.5-919.18, C XXI.2).

In *Mort Artu*, Malory's close source for Gawain's final conversation with Arthur, no such direction confession exists, but Gawain does take responsibility for his death and accept it. He asks to be buried with his brother Gaheriet (Gareth in Malory) and asks for their mutual tomb to be inscribed, "'Here lie Gaheriet and Gawain, whom Lancelot killed through Gawain's folly,'" and continues, "'I want those written there so that I will be blamed for my death, as I deserve to be" (N. Lacy, Vol 7, 114). In this version, Gawain

first warns Arthur about Mordred while he is still alive and then dies unconfessed, although in his last words, he does appropriately put Christ between his sins and salvation: "After that, no one heard Gawain say anything else except, 'Jesus Christ, Father, do not judge me by my faults.' And then he left the world, his hands folded on his chest" (N. Lacy, Vol 7, 114). Like in *Morte Darthur*, Gawain's good death is then confirmed through his posthumous reappearance, but as *Mortu Artu* dates to the early thirteenth century, he is saved without the necessity of explicitly following the *Craft*. Malory therefore updates this sequence to maintain Gawain's salvation, including a death-ready *moriens*, public and private confession, a letter written in blood rather than seeking worldly medicine—which along with the unhealing wound may be read as Christological—and the orthodox sacraments, which would have included the Eucharist and extreme unction. Malory expresses the latter in his matter-of-fact style, "the kynge made Sir Gawayne to resceyve hys sacrament," but this significant interpolation not only brings *Morte Darthur* closer to fifteenth-century orthodoxy but also demonstrates Malory's concern with the importance of last rites and the problem of knights dying in a state of *mors improvisa* (919.20-1, C XXI.2). Malory also likely alludes to the reinstated English frankpledge in placing Arthur in control of Gawain's last rites; as below with Kay in the *AMA*,[171] because Gawain is a member of Arthur's household, Arthur would be spiritually and financially responsible for ensuring that his nephew was given every opportunity to make a good death (Appleford 7). With this in mind, Arthur's success as a patriarch is also confirmed by Gawain's posthumous return prior to the requiem masses. While Malory does not provide a direct *imitatio Christi* as is called for by the *Craft*,

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[171] See Chapter 5.

instead ending in chronicler's fashion with "And so at the owre of noone Sir Gawayne yelded up the goste," Gawain nevertheless imitates Christ's Passion in his dying act of forgiving his own killer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34 KJV).

Taken together, Malory's text selection in creating Gawain's sinful life and "good death" and his concerns with updating his sources to coincide with the English *artes moriendi* dramatically display the efficacy of dying well in accordance with the *Craft* in fifteenth century England. Malory also interpolates Gawain's skull still resting at Dover castle, which is also referenced in Caxton's introduction,[172] further demonstrating the elision of secular and celestial chivalry evidenced by the ghostly chivalry genre and most prominently in *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*, MS. Harley 3244, and *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* (919.24-7, C XXI.2). Like the author of the *AMA*, a text that was Malory's close source for the Roman War episode and likely Ector's threnody for Lancelot,[173] Malory ensures that Gawain's salvation is established in more than one way, remaining orthodox while also appealing to an English audience that would view Gawain as a "secular saint" and consider his skull a relic on the basis of his knightly worship alone. While Malory takes a similar tack with Arthur's ambiguous death and—despite criticism to the contrary—an even more orthodox avenue with Lancelot's penitence and absolution, Gawain more than these other two demonstrates how to die well in Malory's world while remaining a knight.

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[172] See Chapter 5.

[173] Cherewatuk and Whetter have identified this with the two threnodies for Gawain in the *AMA* (*The Arthurian Way of Death*, 11).

The Once and Future King

Of the three deaths examined in this chapter, Arthur's death in the *Morte Darthur*

is the most ambiguous, the most shrouded in mysticism, and the most critically contested.

In *Malory and Christianity* (2013), Janet Jesmok argues for a vengeful, pagan ending

whereas in the same volume D. Thomas Hanks and Karen Cherewatuk comment on the

Christological elements associated with the king's death ("Rhetoric, Ritual, and Religious

Impulse," 95-6; 19-21; "Christian Rituals in Malory," 88). For Hanks, "Arthur becomes

almost a Christ figure: he has "chaunged hys lyff," is no longer visible on earth, and is to

come again, at which point a major redemptive event will occur" ("'All maner of good

love comyth of God,'" 21). Cherewatuk adds that "Bedivere's actions with Arthur's

sword clearly recall Peter's denial of Christ, and Arthur's status as 'rex quondam rexque

futurus' hints at Christological resurrection ("Christian Rituals in Malory," 88). Due to

Malory's deliberate ambiguity, Arthur's status as either living or dead in both figural and

literal senses has also been contested. For Michael Wenthe, Arthur's death is "almost

certainly confirmed," and he cannot transcend death because he cannot transcend

chivalry—or conversely, he transcends chivalry via association with sorcery and the

female gender and thus loses his place in it (134-5). For Lisa Robeson, however, Arthur

has "two bodies," one which dies on Salisbury Plain, and a legendary body that "has

'changed his life' but does not lose it. Excalibur is put into safekeeping, and his glorious

kingship does not die" (149-50). While this chapter cannot begin to provide a definitive

status for Arthur at the close of the *Morte* and will not attempt to do so, it will examine

the most important aspects of Arthur's death in terms of the English *artes moriendi*—not

if Arthur dies or what happens to him afterward if he indeed does, but how Arthur faces

death in terms of the *Craft of Dying* and other fifteenth-century tracts concerning how to

die well.

Despite the critical focus on the end of Malory's Arthuriad, Arthur's death

sequence does not actually begin on Salisbury Plain, but quite early in the text when he is

first rendered vulnerable to death. Arthur's death is also intricately connected with

Gawain's and similarly foretold through a conflict with a deathly doppelganger: in this

case, Sir Accolon. In the Book of Adventures, Arthur is duped by Morgan le Fay, who

has stolen Excalibur and replaced it with a fake. When Arthur agrees to fight Sir

Accolon, he is unaware that his opponent is armed with not only his famous sword, but

also its life-preserving scabbard. In a scene that becomes analogic to the Encounter[174]

(see Chapter 1), Arthur faces a knight using his own supernatural abilities against him,

and he would have died if not for the Lady of the Lake's intervention. More important,

Arthur is unable to recover the scabbard in the aftermath of the duel, as Morgan steals it

while he is recovering from his wounds, rendering him permanently susceptible to death

(119.13-23, C IV.14). This doubling scene is redoubled when Arthur faces and is

ultimately killed by Mordred, his own son and therefore another potential "twin" standing

in for death. For Lisa Robeson:

> in the final combat at Salisbury Plain, Arthur and Mordred do become one,
>
> physically connected by the lance and sword. At the moment of Arthur's
>
> wounding, the two men form a closed circle—Arthur's right hand and arm on the

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[174] Gertzman's work places the Encounter motif in the "second half of the thirteenth century;" however, Malory draws this analogic scene from the Post-Vulgate Cycle, which is estimated to have been written between 1230-1240 (26).

spear that has impaled Mordred, and Mordred's right hand[175] holding the sword

that has connected with Arthur's skull. The king and his heir become one in a

circle of birth and death—but it is a circle that destroys legitimate succession

rather than confirming it. (148)

Put another way, Mordred completes what Morgan and Accolon began and does so in a

conflict that structurally parallels Balin and Balan as well as Lancelot and Gawain

through Malory's manipulation of his sources. After facing his double and losing

Excalibur's scabbard, Arthur, like Gawain, fits Gilbert's definition of *entre-deux-morts*.

But this accentuation of the deathly double is just one of the many ways in which Malory

updates his sources concerning Arthur's death. A further evaluation of his selections,

interpolations, and reductions reveals that Malory indeed had the English *artes moriendi*

in mind when constructing what for the English tradition would eventually become and

still remains the definitive version of King Arthur's death.

Arthur's nocturnal visions prior to the final battle at Salisbury Plain portend his

death and are present in all of Malory's known sources. Of these sources, the *AMA* and

Mort Artu reference Fortune's Wheel directly and present Arthur with a choice to make

within a Boethian liminal space; however, the *SMA* does not, and it is the *SMA*'s

description of this critical scene that Malory chooses to follow most closely, effectively

redacting Fortuna and the pre-Christian elements associated with her from Arthur's dream

(Benson 99-100, lines 3168-91). While the *Consolation of Philosophy* was obviously

accepted as a foundation Christian text despite these elements and bears philosophical

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[175] Malory actually specifies that Mordred uses a two-handed grip, "hys swerde holdynge in both hys hondys," when dealing Arthur's deathblow, making Robeson's image even more circular than she indicates here (924.2-3, C XXI.5).

and structural similarities to the much later *artes moriendi*, Malory may not have been aware of its significance and therefore may have chosen to err on the side of orthodoxy, as he does with Gawain's and Lancelot's deaths as well. Notably, Malory maintains "Trynytē Sunday" as the night of the visions, but the critical dialogue from *Mort Artu* with the Lady who turns out to be Fortuna is reduced to the ambiguous phrase, "and the chayre was faste to a whele" (N. Lacy, Vol 7, 177; 920.16, C XXI.3). On the other hand, Malory maintains and enhances Arthur's second nocturnal vision of Sir Gawain, which is the first vision in *Mort Artu*. In the French original, when Gawain advises Arthur not to fight Mordred but to instead send for Lancelot, Arthur responds, "'I most certainly will fight him, even if I must die as a result; for I'd be a coward not to defend my land against a traitor'" (N. Lacy, Vol 7, 116). The French Arthur also rejects Gawain's advice because "Lancelot had so wronged him that he did not think he would come if sent for" (N. Lacy, Vol 7, 116). Even after the vision of being crushed by Fortune's Wheel, the French Arthur stubbornly continues with his plans to attack Mordred, knowing that he will die. He goes so far as to hear mass, confess his sins to the best of his knowledge, and consult an archbishop for advice concerning the two visions, but after being counseled by the archbishop not to fight, he rejects spiritual for worldly concerns a third time. Like the Arthur of the *AMA*, the French Arthur is given time to make death preparations or even to avoid death, to "shape for his end," but remains focused on his worship as a knight and the office of the crown (N. Lacy, Vol 7, 117-8). This version of Arthur, unlike Malory's version, chooses an unnecessary death due to pride, wrathfulness, stubbornness, and worldliness—charges that critics such as Jesmok and Megan Leitch have unjustly leveled at Malory's Arthur ("Rhetoric, Ritual, and Religious Impulse," 95-6; 80). Conversely, by

189

choosing the order of the two dreams as they appear in the *SMA* and allowing Arthur to finally take Gawain's advice at the right time, Malory presents a humbler Arthur who is receptive to spiritual guidance and is entrapped into the battle with Mordred's forces by circumstances outside his control—the adder that by "mischance" causes an unnamed knight to draw his sword and spoil the truce Arthur and Mordred have made (Benson 104-5, lines 3340-51; 922.11-21, C XXI.4). The serpent's figural connotations when paired with the angelic Gawain elevate the struggle for the English crown to the cosmic level, inviting a Christological reading of Arthur's death that is only partially present in *Mort Artu* and entirely absent in the *AMA* but central to both the *SMA* and Malory's Arthuriad.

Moreover, only in the *Morte Darthur* does the angelic Gawain reveal that his instructions to Arthur come directly from God, affording Arthur the opportunity to demonstrate *timor filialis* through his obedience as he shapes for his end: "And for the grete grace and goodnes that Allmyghty Jesu hath unto you, and for pytē of you and many mo other good men that there shall be slayne, God hath sente me to you of Hys special grace" (921.9-12, C XXI.3). This places Arthur, like Lancelot (see below) in Malory's elect group of knights that through God's grace are granted foreknowledge of their potential deaths to allow them the opportunity to prepare and avoid *mors improvisa*—a problem with which Malory seems genuinely concerned. However, despite his many departures from the French tradition and the *AMA*, Malory's Arthur has been recently criticized by Jesmok, Leitch, and others for challenging Mordred after the Battle of Salisbury is declared to be over and which Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere claim he has

190

won in a possible reference to the Trinity:[176] "…for yet we ben here thre on lyve, and with Sir Mordred ys nat one on lyve. And therefore if ye leve of now, thys wycked day of desteny ys paste" (923.21-3, C XXI.4). But as Arthur has realized, he is not able to control his own destiny, and to do so would constitute a variety of issues common to the *moriens*, including "grucching," *timor servilias*, and as discussed in Chapter 4, *avaritia vitae* or "greed of life." Arthur expresses this both before and after the remaining knights' protestations. First, "'Alas, that ever I shulde se thys doleful day! For now… I am com to myne ende'" (923.5-6, C XXI.4). And after, "'Now tyde me deth, tyde me lyff… now I se hym [Mordred] yonder alone, he shall never escape my hands!'" (923.24-5, C XXI.4). While it is clear that this version of Arthur, like his predecessors, is compelled to fight Mordred and die, and that Malory cannot avoid this fatal confrontation, the French Arthur and the Arthur of the *AMA choose* death while Malory's Arthur *accepts* death. The French Arthur and his derivatives stubbornly cling to the world despite clearly being deposed by Fortune, while Malory's Arthur, in the tradition of the English *artes moriendi*, is fixated on setting things right in this world so that he can move on to the next. This leads to his clash with Mordred—again, his deathly doppelganger—in a final conflict that leaves him with an unhealing wound that matches Gawain's in its potential Christological significance.

Although by this point Arthur has lost Excalibur's scabbard, he remains in possession of his famous sword, yet he deliberately chooses to use a spear to subdue Mordred instead. This choice puzzled filmmaker John Boorman, who in his 1981 film

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[176] In *Mort Artu*, Sir Sagremor remains alive as well and is beheaded by Mordred before the others, but Malory chooses to redact this scene in favor of three remaining knights against Mordred (N. Lacy, Vol 7, 126).

Excalibur reverses the weapons to allow Arthur to strike Mordred with the movie's titular sword and be impaled by the spear instead. Robeson sees Arthur's deliberate use of the spear or lance as a sacrifice of knightly identity, as the lance is the weapon of the "basic knight" (149). Both of Malory's close sources also describe Arthur running through Mordred with a spear or lance, but there is no deliberation over the choice of weapon. Only in *Morte Darthur* does Arthur make a premeditated decision to use the spear rather than Excalibur: "'Now, gyff me my spear,' seyde Kynge Arthure unto Sir Lucan, 'for yondir I have aspyed the traytoure that all thys woo hath wrought'" (923.12-4, C XXI.4). Arthur knows that he must die by Mordred's hand, and per *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*, which links the *artes moriendi* and *imitatio Christi* with the apocryphal spear of Longinus and by extension Arthurian Grail traditions, this act can be read as putting Christ's Passion—allegorized by the spear—between his sins and inevitable death, a task required by the *Craft of Dying* and its predecessors and ultimately influenced by Bonaventure's *Viitis Mystica*[177] (Horstmann 426, Comper 47). Although Malory, who is himself a knight, redacts a line from *Mort Artu* concerning the spear to focus on the martial realism of why Arthur's thrust presents Mordred with the opportunity for a two-handed afterblow, the French original directly connects the lance with Christ as it is torn from Mordred's body: "And the story says that when the lance was withdrawn, a ray of sunlight shone through the wound, so clearly that Girflet saw it; and the people of that country say that it was a sign of Our Lord's wrath" (N. Lacy, Vol 7, 126). If Mordred is indeed the physical embodiment of Arthur's sins and death, as Merlin, whom Hanks has identified as a mouthpiece for God, predicts in the Uther Pendragon and Merlin episode, then

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[177] See Chapter 3, note 65.

successfully placing Christ's Passion between himself and his ill-fated destiny may be what Malory implies when he writes cryptically that Arthur "chaunged hys lyff" ("'All maner of good love comyth of God,'" 13; 36.13-21, C I.20; 928.26, C XXI.7).

After the clash with Mordred, Arthur hangs between life and death, awaiting the fulfillment of his "commaundment" that Bedivere return Excalibur to the lake. Though this sequence has obvious pre-Christian origins, Malory shapes this near-death sequence into a kind of *imitatio Christi* through reencoding the Welsh *Y Mab Darogan*—as Hanks and Cherewatuk have already argued—into a near-Christlike figure. This is made possible through Malory's accentuation of Christological parallels to Arthur's death and potential resurrection in *Mort Artu* and the *SMA* and summary rejection of the *AMA*'s interpretation, which suggests *mors improvisa* despite the Arthur of the *AMA* having more detailed foreknowledge of his death and more time to prepare to die than in Malory's other close sources.[178] Unlike in the *AMA*, Arthur's dying acts occur "offstage" in *Morte Darthur*, and therefore there can be no witnessed *imitatio Christi* in which Arthur speaks the "In manus" and commends his spirit to God as he does in Malory's rejected source for both Arthur's and Gawain's deaths (Benson 260, line 4,326). Yet Malory's treatment of the events leading up to Arthur's death (or possible disappearance) and his commentary on competing Arthurian death traditions replaces this missing death act with a strong Christological framework that assumes a good death—if, indeed, Malory's Arthur dies at all.

Source comparison demonstrates that Malory either interpolates new Christological elements or strengthens those already present in the Arthur-Bedivere-

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[178] See Chapter 5.

Excalibur sequence, which Janina Traxler has suggested signifies Arthur's choice to return his most valuable worldly possession and the symbol of his kingly identity in order to prepare for death (179). While the sequence exists in Malory's close sources, only in *Morte Darthur* are Arthur's pleas referred to exactly three times as "commaundementes," and Malory freely interpolates the Trinity again when Bedivere finally obeys him and returns Excalibur to the lake (925.16-26, C XXI.5). The *SMA* describes the reception of the sword as a hand that "braundished as it sholde brast," and *Mort Artu* minimizes the importance of Excalibur by comparing it unfavorably to the Sword of the Strange Straps and denying it any numerological significance by describing the reception as the hand brandishing the sword "three or four times in the air" (Benson 109, line 3492; N. Lacy, Vol 7, 128). Malory, on the other hand, excludes the Sword of the Strange Straps and solemnizes the reception with the number three: "And there cam an arme and an honde above the watir, and toke hit and cleyght hit, and shoke hit *thryse* and braundysshed, and than vanysshed awaye the honde with the swerde into the watir" (926.14-7, C XXI.5, emphasis mine). Although Bedivere technically only denies Arthur twice and succeeds in fulfilling the third "commaundemente," I agree with Cherewatuk in that his status as the last surviving Knight of the Round Table, his denials of his lord, and the emphasis Malory places on the Trinity evokes the relationship between Christ and St. Peter, completing his parallelism of the knights to Christ's disciples begun in the Sankgreal section during the feast of Pentecost ("Christian Rituals in Malory," 88). Bedivere importantly takes the cloth immediately following what he believes to be Arthur's death, and unlike Girflet, his French counterpart, who dies eighteen days after Arthur, Bedivere becomes part of the faith community at Glastonbury and passes his tale on to Lancelot,

directly inspiring his *contemptus mundi* (see below; N. Lacy, Vol 7, 130; 934.16-20, C XXI.10). Also, like St. Peter, Bedivere serves as a vehicle of transference between Arthur (Christ) and Lancelot (the Christian elect), passing on faith and knowledge in the place of Arthur's lost sword. These seemingly minor alternations greatly shift Arthur's status from that of Malory's sources, allowing him the potential to be read as an *imitation of Christ* even if we are unable to see his moment of death when the *imitatio Christi* should take place.

Moreover, and again despite pre-Christian influences, the presence of strictly women on the ship that carries Arthur to Avalon where healing or resurrection might be possible can also be read as Christological. Matthew 27:55-6, Mark 15:40, and John 19:25 all reference three women at the crucifixion who may correspond to Malory's "tre quenys." Malory also mentions a fourth, Nynyve, who may represent the fourth woman in John 19:25 or stand in for the ambiguity between the Gospels (928.5-15, CXXI.7). Both Arthur and Christ are surrounded by women at their deaths and burials and are utterly disconnected from their male disciples. The most consistent and prominent of these women mentioned in the Gospels is Mary Magdalene, a reformed prostitute. The most prominent of these women at the end of the *Morte*, and the only one allowed to speak, is Morgan le Fay, a reformed sorceress. Unlike his sources, Malory takes full advantage of this lapse of male authority by suggesting that Arthur may not have died after all. When Bedivere hears from the often-problematic Archbishop that "here cam a numbir of ladyes and brought here a dede corse," he assumes the body must be Arthur's because he last saw the king alive in the company of ladies, yet Malory also writes, "the ermyte [i.e. the Archbishop] knew nat in sertayne that he was veryly the body of Kynge

195

Arthure" (927.21-928.20, C XXI.5-7). For Wenthe, the body is confirmed as Arthur's

when Lancelot opens the tomb to inter Guinevere with her husband (134-5). Yet Malory

remains ambiguous by citing Sir Bedivere as the source of Arthur's death and also

presenting dissenting voices that connect Arthur to Christ even more directly than he was

able to do while remaining reasonably faithful to his close sources: "yet som men say in

many partys of Inglonde that Kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of Oure

Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wynne

the Holy Crosse (928.22-5, C XXI.7). Again, these many selections, interpolations, and

reductions present Arthur not only as death-ready in terms of the *artes moriendi*, but also

as a potential Christ figure before "dying offstage." For Malory, Arthur's ignoble death in

the *AMA* must have been unthinkable, which explains why he excludes this ending and

takes pains to present the most orthodox version of Arthur that he can just before the

king's apparent death, including connecting him further to the repentant Gawain, whose

salvation is already confirmed by his posthumous reappearance. Malory's last word on

the subject is the traditional leonine for Arthur associated with the hope of rebirth and

salvation: "'Hic iacet Arthurus, Rex quondam Rexque futurus'" (928.28, C XXI.7).

The Saint's Death of Lancelot

Critics who support a secular Malory, such as Fiona Tolhurst, Janet Jesmok, and

Cory Olsen, have made much of Lancelot's "quarrel" with the Archbishop of Canterbury

during his time of dying—which is original to the *Morte Darthur*—despite his actual

penitence being fairly consistent with both Malory's close sources, the *SMA* and *Mort

Artu*, wherein he receives no correction. Others, such as K.S. Whetter, have argued for

Lancelot, after the fashion of Elaine of Ascolat, as a "saint for love" ("Love and Death in Arthurian Romance," 111-14). However, despite Malory's interpolated friction between Lancelot and the Archbishop concerning proper penitence, as a *moriens* made aware of his appointed time of dying through nocturnal visions, Lancelot is not in any conflict with the tenets of the English *artes moriendi*. Moreover, Malory's additions to his sources seem informed by the English *artes moriendi* and thus signal towards a spiritual rather than a secular reading. This optic is consistent with recent criticism, such as that of Karen Cherewatuk, D. Thomas Hanks, Raluca L. Radulescu, and Kate Dosanjh, which has shifted the conversation towards not only a spiritual Malory but also a penitent Lancelot who can be read alternatively as an Everyman figure or a hero of hagiography. For Cherewatuk, Lancelot—unlike Elaine of Ascolat—is not necessarily a "saint for love," nor does he display "obsessive" behavior in his final days. Rather, "From the standpoint of hagiography, and that of Malory's Catholic audience, Launcelot's practices translate into repentance. These ascetic acts link Malory's hero with monastic saints" ("The Saint's Life of Sir Launcelot," 69). Cherewatuk's hagiographic optic brings us closer to the didactic of the last book of Malory's Arthuriad, which is unquestionably how to die well. A reading of Lancelot's final days through the optic of the English *artes moriendi* takes us even further by demonstrating that it is indeed Lancelot and not the quarrelsome Archbishop who correctly interprets the *Craft of Dying*.

Essential to Lancelot's "good death" is his elect status, which enables him both foresight into his time of dying and a deeper understanding of *memento mori* asceticism than the Archbishop who criticizes his penitence and dying process. Lancelot importantly reminds Guinevere of this status at their final parting:

'And God deffende but that I shulde forsake the worlde as ye have done! For in
the queste of the Sankgreall I had that tyme forsaykyn the vanytees of the worlde,
had nat youre love bene. And if I had done so at that tyme with my harte, wylle,
and thought, I had passed all the knyghtes that evere were in the Sankgreall
except Sir Galahad, my sone. And therefore, lady, sythen ye have taken you to
perfeccion, I must nedys take me to perfection, of ryght.' (933.24-31, C. XXI.9)

Several critics, including K.S. Whetter and Dorsey Armstrong, have challenged
Lancelot's veracity in this passage considering his desire for marriage, his reference to
Guinevere as his "erthely joy," and his request for a final kiss, which she refuses to grant
("Love and Death in Arthurian Romance," 109; "Christianity and Instability," 121-3).
However, what Malory illustrates here may be more important than what Lancelot
intends, as being separated from one's "erthely joy" is essential to making a good death
and a problem for the *moriens* in each of the tracts examined. Lancelot may have initially
desired marriage, but as Guinevere has chosen perfection, she now serves as his divine
intercessor not unlike those present in the English *artes moriendi*. Cherewatuk has
closely examined Lancelot and Guinevere's dialogue in this scene across the only extant
version of *Mort Artu* that contains it (Palatinus Latinus 1967, a fourteenth-century MS),
the *SMA*, and *Morte Darthur* and concludes that while Malory's dialogue closely matches
that of the *SMA*, he redacts sexual puns and makes several additions that solemnize it,
leading to a more spiritual reading ("The Saint's Life of Lancelot," 65). Among
Guinevere's unique lines is a modification of her explanation of her contrition, to which
Malory adds a reference to Christ's Passion, the most important element in the English
artes moriendi and especially the *Craft of Dying*, and her trust in its efficacy:

"And yet I truste, thorow Goddis grace *and thorow Hys Passion* of Hys woundis
wyde, that aftir my deth I may have a syght of the blyssed face of Cryste Jesu, and
on Doomesday to sytte on Hys ryght syde; *for as synfull as ever I was, now ar
seyntes in hevyn.* (932.34-35, 934.1-2; C. XXI.9; emphasis mine)

Kate Dosanjh, who like Cherewatuk has connected Lancelot's final interview with
Guinevere and death to the Sankgreal section, also comments on Lancelot's line, "Alas!
Who may truste thys world?" which is spoken in reaction to Guinevere's rejection and
upon his entrance to the monastery at Glastonbury: "Here, as in his farewell speech,
Launcelot's language shows that he finally understands the temporality of his world" (65).
Cherewatuk agrees and points to Lancelot's *contemptus mundi* in this scene: "However
dubious Launcelot's intentions as he leaves Guenevere, his entrance into the hermitage
marks a conversion" ("The Saint's Life of Sir Launcelot," 68). Lancelot is now, if
"grutchingly," free—not to begin a new life as a priest or "priest-errant," but to return to
the elect status he enjoyed in the Sankgreal and that is his by birthright. Guinevere, the
focal point of his sins, serves as the connective tissue between this episode and the
Sankgreal. She is also the one to explain Lancelot's holy lineage and elect status in the
earlier episode when Galahad, who is technically a bastard, arrives at court:

'He ys of all partyes comyn of the beste knyghtes of the world and of the hyghest
lynage: for Sir Launcelot ys com but of the eyghth degré frome Oure Lorde Jesu
Cryst, and thys Sir Galahad ys of the nyneth degré frome Oure Lorde Jesu Cryst.
Therefore I dare sey they be the grettist jantillmen of the worlde.' (673.20-25, C.
XIII.6)

While Malory's exploration of Lancelot's and Galahad's holy lineages are admittedly

limited when compared with those in the *Estoire del Saint Graal* and the *Lancelot*, which

further connect them to the Grail Kings and the Biblical line of David, D. Thomas Hanks

and others have recently challenged Vinaver's traditional reading of Malory's Sankgreal

as a mere secularization of *La Queste del Saint Graal*, his close source. Hanks nearly

goes as far as to argue that Vinaver mistranslates the key moment in *La Queste* when

Lancelot views the Grail and is rendered comatose, leading to an argument that Lancelot

in fact "achieves" the Grail in both *Morte Darthur* and the French original ("'All maner of

good love comyth of God,'" 13-4). That Lancelot, a confirmed sinner, can even partially

achieve the Grail points to his elect status, and the scene to which Hanks refers (more

below) importantly prefigures Lancelot's death. For Dosanjh, it also demonstrates

Lancelot's privileged ability to experience heaven prematurely while in a comatose state

(64-5). Several tracts in the English *memento mori* tradition, including the *Pore Caitif*, *A

Tretyse of Ghostly Batayle*, *Lerne to Dye*, and fragments from *The Book of Vices and

Virtues*, call for deathly meditations on heaven as a means of experiencing death

prematurely to prepare to die well. Lancelot, according to Dosanjh, is able through his

elect status to do better than a typical ascetic, as he experiences the true presence of God:

> When Launcelot enters the room and is hit with a hot 'breeth,' his face feels like it
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> has been burned. He becomes deaf and blind and falls to the earth. This
>
> description is reminiscent of several Biblical passages in which people in the Old
>
> and New Testament meet with God, most notably, Moses's experience on Mount
>
> Sinai when his face shines for days after glimpsing God's glory, and Paul's
>
> encounter with God on the road to Damascus, which leaves him blind. (64)

Dosanjh also points to Isaiah 30:33, which "states that 'the breath of the Lord' is 'like a stream of brimstone'" and concludes that "Launcelot's apparent encounter with God may have been enough to send him into a coma" (64). When he awakens from this state after twenty-four days and nights, Lancelot is vexed and displays *contemptus mundi*. He has seen "grete mervayles that no tunge may telle, and more than only herte can thynke" and considers himself blessed to see Christ's secrets openly in a place with no sinners other than himself (775.7-12, C. XVII.15). For Dosanjh, Lancelot fails to follow the celestial codes of the Grail-World and is "punished by the fact that he is forced to awaken and re-enter the world, having seen a glimpse of the Grail and God's glory" (64). This places Lancelot *entre-deux-morts*, as death would have been the logical end of his spiritual journey, as it is for Galahad—who, unlike Lancelot and Elaine of Ascolat—has not been critically accused of suicide despite asking for death at the close of the Sankgreal: "'Now, my blyssed lorde, I wold nat lyve in this wrecched worlde no lenger, if hit myght please The, Lorde'" (787.16-18, C. XVII.22). Also worth consideration are Galahad's final words to Bors before dying in prayer, which seem intended to posthumously transfer his elect status to his father: "My fayre lorde, salew me unto my lorde Sir Launcelot, my fadir, and as sone as ye se hym bydde hym remembir of this world unstable" (787.33-35, C XVII.22). Further, father and son are posthumously connected in that they are both carried away by angels in the presence of witnesses—Bors and Percival in Galahad's presence and the Archbishop in a nocturnal vision of Lancelot—in parallel scenes. For Hanks, Galahad achieves the Grail through perfection, but Lancelot achieves it through grace, and both are necessary in a Christian society ("'All maner of good love comyth of God,'" 13-4). These important connections to the Sankgreal demonstrate that later

201

Lancelot's contrition and death must be read in the context of the *Morte* as a "Hoole

Book," and new scholarship is therefore justified in challenging Vinaver's approach,

which again, in his *Works of Thomas Malory,* relies on an editorial understanding of the

Morte as separate, unconnected episodes.

   After the Sankgreal and Lancelot's backsliding into sin, Malory reconfirms

Lancelot's elect status by allowing him to perform a miracle in the "Healing of Sir Urry"

episode, which is critically agreed upon as being original to *Morte Darthur* despite

having several clear analogs in the *Lancelot-Grail*, the closest being the "Healing of

Agravaine."[179] Cherewatuk argues that Lancelot's elect status is confirmed yet again

when he dreams of the queen's death three times in one night, and as she has noted, these

visions do not appear in either the *SMA* or *Mort Artu* ("The Saint's Life of Sir Launcelot,"

69). The same can be said of Lancelot's cryptic prediction of his own demise and his

demand for last rites, which the Archbishop initially refuses to accept: "'My fayr lordse,'

sayde syr Launcelot, 'wyt you wel my careful body wyll into th'erthe, I have warnyng

more than now I wyl say. Therefore gyve me my ryghtes.'" (937.24-26, C. XXI.11). For

Cherewatuk, "Launcelot's prediction recalls Guenevere's deathbed insight, and more

generally, the foreknowledge of death God grants to the blessed" ("The Saint's Life of Sir

Launcelot," 70-1). Cherewatuk also links Lancelot's mystical experiences as a would-be

elect in the *Sankgreal* episode to these visions through common verbiage: "in Malory's

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[179] The French original differs in that it requires the blood of the two best knights living to heal the afflicted knight, which are Lancelot and Gawain, while the Sir Urry episode requires only that the afflicted knight's wounds be "searched" by the best knight in the world (N. Lacy, Vol 2, 60, 70, 435). Malory's exclusion of Sir Gawain was likely necessary to showcase Lancelot's elect status and to remain consistent with the material he adapted from the *Prose Tristan*, which casts Gawain in a negative light.

202

Morte Darthur the words "avysyon" and "vysyon" appear almost exclusively to denote

the mystical experiences of the 'Grail Quest.'" (The Saint's Life of Sir Launcelot, 69).

Viewed in light of his holy lineage, his privileged experiences during the Sankgreal, his

son's legacy, his ability to perform miracles, and his nocturnal death visions, it should be

clear that Lancelot and not the misinformed Archbishop of Canterbury is intended to be

read as the figure representing Malory's spiritual didactic. Again, as the *Craft of Dying*

both laments and inculcates (see Chapter 2), few professional clergymen are aware of the

tenets of the *ars moriendi*, leaving the responsibility of making a good death ultimately in

the hands of the *moriens*. Lancelot undeniably takes his death into his own hands, and in

doing so, makes a good death in spite of his superior's misguided attempts at spiritual

guidance. Lancelot's end is not "unorthodox," as Janet Jesmok has argued, but rather as I

will demonstrate, it is illustrative of the state of the *Craft* during Malory's lifetime (92-

106).

 After his final meeting with Guinevere, Lancelot rejoins the Arthurian comitatus

and faith community in the only way that he still can—by joining the Archbishop and Sir

Bedivere at the Glastonbury hermitage where Arthur's body is said to be entombed. As

Lancelot was the greatest worldly knight and remains an elect of the Sankgreal who has

experienced more visions and portents of the Grail than anyone at the hermitage with the

exception of Bors, who arrives later, he quickly turns to his penitence with the same zeal

he demonstrated as a knight. This zeal has led to the above critics referring to Lancelot

alternatively as a "priest-errant" or "saint for love" who is merely fulfilling his lady's

command in the same manner he would in his previous life as a knight. However, as the

Pore Caitif and *Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* demonstrate, not only knights but also other

203

laymen and clergymen were called upon to perform chivalric acts through waging a spiritual war against sin and the enemies of God to obtain salvation, and both tracts apply ghostly chivalry directly to the *memento mori* and include fleshly mortification after the fashion of Suso's *Lerne to Dye*. Therefore, in terms of the English *artes moriendi*, Lancelot's knightly zeal is not necessarily secular. Malory is demonstrating the intersection or "slippage" between these two estates, which in fifteenth-century England was much different than the binary of celestial and terrestrial chivalry originally imposed in the early thirteenth century by the authors of *La Queste* and later carried into the English tradition. Again, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, MS Harley 3244, the *Pore Caitif*, the *Tretyse*, and the plenary indulgences granted to crusaders, which by Malory's time had been further complicated by the Papal Schism, demonstrate this elision. With respect to the binary created by the probably Cistercian authors of *La Queste*, Lancelot's conduct being called into question by the Archbishop would be worth noting, but importantly, Malory has softened—but not necessarily secularized—the rebukes of the hermits in his *Sankgreal*, and Lancelot again receives no rebukes from the Archbishop for his penitence in Malory's close sources. Malory's deliberate changes to his source material do indeed elide chivalry and ascetic practices, but this is in keeping with the English *artes moriendi* and demonstrates a possible theological reversal when compared with his sources—at the time of the writing of *La Queste*, the chivalry was required to turn to the clergy for answers, but by the time of the fifteenth-century English treatises and even poetry such as *Piers Plowman* wherein Christ jousts in the lists during his Passion, the clergy had turned to the chivalry for a figural understanding of how to resist sin and make a good end. In creating a situation wherein Lancelot, a converted knight

204

who applies chivalric codes to his time of dying, knows more of the *Craft* than the Archbishop of Canterbury, Malory deploys the elect status he has established for Lancelot to signal to the English knight's perceived spiritual status in his time. That Malory maintains Lancelot and Gawain must receive their last rites to make a good end rather than allowing Eucharistic substitution or indulgence as in the *AMA*, his close source for his Roman War section, also demonstrates orthodoxy in so far as Malory's spirituality is concerned with the *artes moriendi*.

Morever, as Fiona Tolhurst has pointed out, Lancelot and not the Archbishop is the *de facto* head of the faith community at Glastonbury because it is he who inspires the other knights from his affinity, including the more celestial Bors, to follow in his footsteps: "And whan they sawe Syr Launcelot had taken hym to suche perfeccion they had no lust to departe but toke suche an habyte as he had" (Tolhurst 146-7; 935.8-10, C XXI.10). Under Lancelot's guidance, these former knights dispense with their horses, "for they toke no regarde of no worldly rychesses" (935.15-17, CXXI.10). This is significant not only to the episode concerning the death of Guinevere, but also to the English *artes moriendi*. In the *Pore Caitif* and *Tretyse*, the horse represents the knight's body that is in constant danger of fleshly sin and must be chastised by the spurs, which represent death meditations. With this optic in mind, Lancelot's faith community may be inspired to dispense with their horses (bodies) as a direct response to Lancelot's fleshly mortification: "for whan they sawe Syr Launcelot endure suche penaunce in prayers and fastynges they toke no force what payne they endured, for to see the nobleste knyght of the world take such abstynaunce that he waxed ful lene" (935.17-20, CXXI.10). Following Lancelot's abstinence, which as Cherewatuk has demonstrated (see below)

was regarded as a cure for adultery and lust, Lancelot is granted three nocturnal visions of Guinevere's death—presumably, Lancelot has reached a point in his penitence where he is capable of seeing Guinevere as a Christian soul and not an object of fleshly desire. Even the Archbishop does not gainsay Lancelot's visions at this time; he instead allows Lancelot and his seven converted knights to travel from Glastonbury to Almsbury on foot—again, without their horses, which in addition to symbols of worldly status can be read as sinful bodies that require chastisement. The loss of the body literally through fleshly mortification, "for they were wayke and feble to goo," and figuratively through the loss of the horses should ensure that temptation cannot occur, and quite aptly, Guinevere dies "but halfe an oure afore" Lancelot's arrival (935.28-35, C XXI.10). Here, Lancelot's penitence proves not only orthodox in terms of the *artes moriendi* but also effective in that his worldly temptation is removed as a direct result.

Although the Archbishop eventually chastises Lancelot for "suche maner of sorrow-makyng" at the tomb of Arthur and Guinevere at Glastonbury, it is important that Lancelot's initial reaction to Guinevere's death at Almsbury is appropriate: "Than Syr Launcelot saw hir vysage, but he wepte not gretelye, but sighed" (936.9-10, C XXI.11). His next response is to perform his priestly duties for the sake of her soul before returning her—again on foot—to Glastonbury to be entombed with her husband. He also demonstrates humility and lack of ownership over Guinevere by relinquishing control of the requiem masses to the Archbishop upon returning. Lancelot does not "swoun" and "laye longe stylle" until after she is in "a coffin of marbyl" with the corpse that is ostensibly Arthur's (936.10-26, C XXI.11). At this point, the Archbishop must awaken Lancelot—similarly to Lancelot's experience in the *Sankgreal* when he experienced his

"first death"—and the former bishop rebukes the former knight because he believes

Lancelot is sorrowing over his worldly loss. Lancelot's response, which may be taken at

his word due to his proper handling of Guinevere's death for days at this point and

conveying her corpse on foot for a distance of thirty miles (according to Malory),

demonstrates that he is not reacting to the death of Guinevere, but a new understanding of

his sins and foreknowledge of his impending death:

> But my sorow may never have ende, for whan I remember of hir beaultē and of
>
> hir noblesse, that was both with hyr king and with hyr, so whan I sawe his corps
>
> and hir corps so lye togyders, truly myn herte wold not serve to susteyne my
>
> careful body. (936.31-5, C XXI.11)

C. David Benson has called part of this speech into question due to reading "hir" as

singular female possessive, but as Cherewatuk, Fiona Tolhurst, Corey Olsen, and others

have argued and which should be contextually obvious, these pronouns refer to both

Arthur and Guinevere and should be read as third person plural possessive ("The Saint's

Life of Sir Launcelot" 68-9; 148; 49). At the close of this speech, Lancelot repeats his

elect foreknowledge of his death and connects his sorrow to his sins: "this remembered,

of their kyndnes and myn unkydnes, sanke so to myn herte that I myght not susteyne

myself" (937.4-5, C XXI.11). Malory closes this passage with, "So the Frensshe book

maketh mencyon," but this is not, in fact, the case—the elect foreknowledge and stated

cause of Lancelot's death are original to the *Morte Darthur*.

      After six weeks of fasting and praying, Lancelot is ready to die and for the next

major confrontation with the Archbishop, which is over his last rites. Dosanjh has argued

that the Archbishop believes that Lancelot is spiritually hygienic enough that he denies

him his rites on the basis of not needing them, and this would indeed be unorthodox, but the context of the passage suggests otherwise (66). The Archbishop is not praising Lancelot but suggesting that he has given into *Acedia*: "it is but hevynesse of your blood. Ye shal be wel mended by the grace of God to-morne" (937.21-3, C XXI.11). But Lancelot reiterates the need for his rites and again claims elect knowledge of his death, demonstrating his familiarity with the *Craft*, accepting his time of dying without "grutching" or seeking earthly medicine, and confirming his orthodoxy through his belief in the power of the sacrament. Only then is Lancelot "howselyd and enelyd" and given "al that a Crysten man ought to have (937.27-8, C XXX.11). Despite his elect status, Lancelot avoids what the *Craft* refers to as the "cleric's pride" and therefore ensures his proper end. It is Lancelot and not the Archbishop who is proven right when the Archbishop finally receives his own nocturnal vision of angels, who "heve Syr Launcelot unto heven, and the yates of heven opened ayenst hym" (938.10-2, C XXI.12). Yet even then the Archbishop, along with Bors, must view Lancelot's corpse to confirm his death—a corpse that further supports his state of grace upon death and should do much to rescue him from being compared with Elaine of Ascolat, who also wastes away and dies but in a different context entirely.

K.S. Whetter has paired or "twinned" Lancelot and Elaine of Ascolat, arguing for them as lovers who represent and die for secular love in disagreement with the Church; conversely, Hanks works to absolve Elaine and Lancelot—along with Guinevere—as "Godly lovers" ("Love and Death in Arthurian Romance," 95; "'All maner of good love comyth of God,'" 15-6). While either characterization may be applied to Elaine, the same cannot be said for Lancelot. Lancelot's turn away from romantic love and the secular

world is evident in his repentant actions whereas Elaine dies a sympathetic but unrepentant death. That both Lancelot and Elaine allow themselves to waste away after quarreling with members of the clergy is immaterial for several reasons, but the most important of these is intent. Lancelot, himself an elect member of the clergy who is eight degrees from Christ and has foreknowledge of his own death, intends to mortify his flesh as penance for his carnal sins—sins which Elaine by her own admission has not had the opportunity to commit. Lancelot's fleshly mortification is supported not only by the English *artes moriendi* but also, as Cherewatuk has noted, *The Parson's Tale*, where "food deprivation is associated with the healing of lechery, of which adultery is a subspecies" and in Caxton's hagiographical *Golden Legend* where "food deprivation is specifically associated with curing lust" ("Christian Rituals in Malory," 87; "The Saint's Life of Sir Launcelot," 66). Lancelot, who becomes unrecognizable through his mortification, sloughs off his "unbridled flesh" to cleanse his spirit and make a good death that is ultimately justified by the blissful state of his posthumous body, signifying sainthood. Elaine, on the other hand, plans for her corpse to be weaponized in such a way that will continue worldly strife after her death, not to lay anything—figuratively or literally—to rest. Finally, in referring to herself as an "erthely woman" and never ceasing to complain of Lancelot throughout her self-imposed processes of dying, she "grutches" and lacks Lancelot's *contemptus mundi* (827.12-20, C. XVIII.19). Unlike the fair maid, Lancelot's death-readiness is evident in the state of his corpse: "starke dede; and he laye as he had smyled, and the swettest savour aboute hym that ever they felte" (938.18-9; C. XXI.12). Both Lancelot and his jilted lover are what Michael Wenthe refers to as "legible corpses" in *Morte Darthur* but must signal differently to those who "read" them (124-47).

209

Without mentioning Elaine of Ascolat, Amy S. Kaufman has recently argued for the female corpse in the *Morte Darthur* as having the agency to re-characterize members of the chivalry, altering the male narrative—such as Gawain's accidental killing of a maiden—and calling into question patriarchal institutions; this, and not "twinning" with Lancelot, seems the more likely function of the fair maid's deathly display. Wenthe instead pairs Lancelot with the pagan Corsabryne in a brief sensology reading of their two posthumous bodies. For Wenthe, they are foils—he juxtaposes Corsabryne's foul stench after death with Lancelot's "swettest savour," which is original to *Morte Darthur*, pointing to the fact that neither of these odors are mentioned when the two were alive (131). Through Lancelot's "legible corpse," Malory provides tangible evidence of Lancelot's successful death that is again, as Cherewatuk has demonstrated, consistent with hagiographical sources ultimately compiled into Caxton's *Golden Legend*.[180]

Lancelot the secular knight does make one final appearance in the *Morte* following his good death—in Sir Ector's threnody, which Cherewatuk and Whetter have identified with the two threnodies for Gawain in the *AMA*[181] (*The Arthurian Way of Death*, 11). It is important to note, however, that Ector is not part of the faith community at Glastonbury nor was he an elect of the *Sankgreal*, and so his commentary is that of a secular knight mourning the man he remembers before Lancelot, like Arthur, "chaunged hys lyff—" not by altering his destiny like the king, but by finally claiming it. Malory

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[180] See Cherewatuk, "The Saint's Life of Sir Lancelot." In Arthuriana, Vol. 5, No 1 (Spring 1995), 62-78. Cherewatuk compares Lancelot's death to several saintly deaths, including those of Abbot Agathon, St. Martin, and St Theodora in that he willingly and joyfully yields up the spirit and is able to predict his own death via nocturnal visions. She also provides an etymological analysis of "swettest savour"—Malory's verbiage despite Lancelot's posthumous aura of holiness appearing in both the *SMA* and *Mort Artu*—that demonstrate the phrase's significance in both hagiography and biblical exegesis.

[181] See Chapter 5.

signals this through Ector's physical reaction to hearing of his brother's demise, which includes the temporary rejection of his arms: "And than Syr Ector threwe hys shelde, swerde, and helme from hym, and whan he beheld Syr Launcelottes vysage he fyl doun in a swoun" (939.6-9, C XXI.12). However, more important than what Ector believes is Lancelot's final command, which is original to Malory despite his reference to the "Frensshe book" and points again to the conflation of knight and cleric while demonstrating Malory's orthodoxy: Lancelot orders his affinity to take up arms once again and secure their places in heaven by crusading in the Holy Land (940.9-16, C XXI.13). "And there they dyed upon a Good Fryday for Goddes sake" ends the *Morte Darthur* and demonstrates yet another way to die like a knight (940.15-6, C XXI.13).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE HENRICIAN *ARTES MORIENDI* AND THE ARTHUR OF

TUDOR ENGLAND

As I have attempted to elucidate throughout this dissertation, the *artes moriendi* and the English Arthurian legend strongly converge from the Ricardian period to the end of the Wars of the Roses. Evidence of English death anxieties and expedients to salvation contained in the vernacular tracts are easily locatable in all three of the English Arthurian texts I have reviewed alongside them, and this framework of belief concerning making a good death for the salvation of the *moriens* coincides with late-medieval Catholic doctrines despite, in some cases, vestiges of an earlier continental tradition inherited from the French. A better understanding of the English *artes moriendi* and *memento mori* is particularly helpful in understanding the manner in which authors like Sir Thomas Malory updated earlier French Arthurian material in an effort to lead their chief characters—such as Arthur, Gawain, Lancelot, and others—towards an updated, English understanding of how to die. This convergence of traditions ended, however, when the new religious and political pressures of Protestantism in Henrician England fundamentally changed English considerations of death and simultaneously instigated a reconfiguration of the figure of King Arthur, resulting in his rebirth as a Tudor icon.

The *artes moriendi* continued well into the sixteenth century and the Protestant tradition, as first evidenced by Martin Luther's *Ein Sermon der Bereitung Zum Sterben*, or *Sermon on Preparing to Die*. While Appleford remains uncertain if Luther's *Sermon* ever crossed the English Channel, the tract demonstrates that the *artes moriendi* could and did continue into the Reformation more easily than Arthurian legend was able to do, and it

would be followed by a series of tracts that did in fact see circulation in Henrician England (185). As Luther's *Sermon* was originally commissioned by Augustinian donor Mark Schart via George Spalatin, a personal friend of Luther's, in 1519, the tract is remarkably orthodox when compared with his later writings (Dietrich 97). Reformation scholars generally view the *Sermon* as a break from the medieval tradition, but Appleford argues strongly for a continuation of this earlier tradition and correctly identifies Luther's chief innovations as shifts in considerations of fear and the importance of community involvement in the process of dying:

> …in 1519, he [Luther] had not yet rejected the nonscriptural sacraments, the mediating power of the Virgin and the saints, the doctrine of purgatory, or the theology of works. Much of his advice about deathbed preparation—Christians must dispose properly of their temporal goods, resolve their relationships with others, and become familiar "with death during our lifetime, inviting death into our presence when it is still at a distance and not on the move," while doing proper penance for the sins—is standard. (183-4)

When discussing how the *moriens* should manage fear, Luther identifies three evil images that manifest during the dying process that could possibly lead to damnation: 1) the image of death,[182] 2) the image of sin, and 3) the compounded image of Hell and damnation (Lehmann 101-2; Appleford 182). Any of these images could terrify the *moriens* into doubting his or her status as elect and thus cause *mors improvisa*. Like Suso and the compiler of the *Tretyse*, Luther is concerned with the natural fear of death and

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[182] This is a fascinating innovation considering most critics argue, like Gilbert and Gertsman, that there is no such thing in our system of signage!

advises early death preparations as well as behaving after the manner of Christ to receive

salvation, but he is not concerned with *timor filialis*; rather, the *moriens* must remain

stoic and show no fear, allowing these three terror-inducing images to slip by as Christ

was able to do during the crucifixion. Despite his new focus on the elect status of the

moriens, Appleford points out that Luther also discusses "the key role played by the

sacraments as aids to the dying (including confession and unction)" (182). Luther thus

intertwines the Protestant concept of election—which must not be doubted even on the

deathbed—with the earlier doctrine of placing complete trust in Christ commensurate

with the Catholic *artes moriendi*.

A Survey of Luther's *Sermon on Preparing to Die*

In characteristic fashion, Luther arranges his *Sermon* into twenty points. He

begins traditionally with 1) the need to put one's physical goods in order and 2) the need

to take leave spiritually by granting and seeking forgiveness from one's community

(Lehmann 99). In his third point, he soothes the *moriens* by comparing the experience of

death to the experience of childbirth—the pain of death is likened to the pain of labor

while the world is a womb from which heavenly spirits are born (Lehmann 100). His

fourth point calls for confession "of at least the greatest sins and those which by diligent

search can be recalled by memory" (Lehmann 100). While Luther's understanding of

confession is innovative and responds to late-medieval death anxieties such as the reality

of being unable to remember one's sins, he also upholds here the sacraments of

communion and unction; yet in a move similar to the *Craft of Dying*, he argues that these

sacraments should be taken but are not necessary if the *moriens* longs for them.

214

Somewhat paradoxically, his fifth point then discusses how the *moriens* must demonstrate faith and trust in God through belief in the sacraments. Again, Luther does not necessarily vacillate between positions on these points when one considers that these same concerns are addressed in the *Craft of Dying*, an orthodox Catholic text that by this time was nearly a century old and which in turn was drawn from the influential *Tractatus de arte bene moriendi*.

Points six and seven discuss the three evil images (see above) with the prevailing instruction being that the *moriens* should have contemplated his or her sins long before the time of death and should think only of grace on the deathbed while remaining stoic to these images (Lehmann 101-2). Luther's battle against the three images continues for the duration of the tract and recalls the concept of ghostly battle that was the basis for both "Hors eþer armur of heuene" and its predecessor *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle*. The eighth point concerns election but also presents advice similar to the *Visitation* series and the later *Craft vis a vis* complacency and pride: do not presume, Luther warns, to know if one is elect or reprobate and do not question this either, as it may lead to further blasphemy or *avaritia vitae* (Lehmann 101-3). The ninth and tenth points return to ghostly battle: 9) expel all images of the devil and damnation and 10) view the image of death only after the manner of the saints who have already traversed it—as a defeated foe (Lehmann 103-4). For one versed in the medieval *memento mori* tradition, these are familiar concepts with the exception of Luther's fixation on imagery, which here forms the basis of an argument concerning sensory control on the deathbed.

Luther's eleventh point is equally familiar in that it begins an argument that he continues throughout points 12, 13, and 14: the saving power of grace through Christ's

215

Passion. Still concerned with imagery and the control of the senses through stoic meditation, Luther calls upon the *moriens* to cultivate the image of grace:

> …you must not look at sin in sinners, or in your conscience, or in those who abide in sin to the end and are damned. If you do, you will surely follow them and also be overcome. You must turn your thoughts away from that and look at sin only within the picture of grace. Engrave that picture in yourself and keep it before your eyes. *The picture of grace is nothing else but Christ on the cross with all of his dear saints*. (Lehmann 104, emphasis mine)

Luther supplements this with a homily on Christ as a sin-eater: "Here sins are never sins, for here they are overcome and swallowed up by Christ. He takes your death and strangles it so that it may not harm you, if you believe that he does it for you and see your death in him and not in yourself" (Lehmann 105). In his twelfth point, Luther advises the *moriens* not to think on predestination, but instead to focus on the image of Christ's Passion and recognize that God in His greater wisdom selects the elect and condemns the reprobate. He follows in his thirteenth point with a justification of the Passion's ability to defeat the three evil images that references both Judges 7:16-22 and Isaiah 9:4. This argument concerning the Passion concludes in point 14 with a rehearsal of Christ being tempted and overcoming the three evil images: Christ conquers death when He refuses to come down from the cross; sin, when he is accused of fraud; and Hell, when the Jews question whether or not God would save him. Throughout this process, Christ remains entirely stoic: "And now we mark that Christ remained silent in the face of all these words and horrible pictures. He does not argue with his foes; he acts as though he does not see or hear them and makes no reply" (Lehmann 107-8). In this sense, Luther—like

216

his Catholic predecessors—condemns "grutching" and calls for *imitatio Christi*. Moreover, it is this understanding of Christ's stoicism in the face of death that resurfaces in later English tracts circulating during the reign of Henry VIII.

Points 15, 16, and 17 return to and defend the saving power of the sacraments. In his fifteenth point, Luther writes, "He who thus insists and relies on the sacraments will find that his election and predestination will turn out well without his worry and effort" (Lehmann 109). Point 16 is concerned with trusting in the sacraments and the attending priest at the deathbed: "You must trust in the priest's absolution as firmly as though God had sent a special angel or apostle to you, yes, as though Christ himself were absolving you" (Lehmann 110). Point 17, the last in this sequence, returns to the three evil images and argues that the sacraments function as their countersigns, essentially weaponizing them. Again, after the fashion of the *Craft*, Luther is clear that they are unnecessary as long as the *moriens* believes in them and longs for them, but he also argues for them as a great advantage in terms of the ultimate ghostly battle—defeating the Devil and dying well (Lehmann 109-11).

In what I would define as the final collection of Luther's points; 18, 19, and 20—the latter of which serves as a summary of the entire tract—he turns to the faith community and makes what Appleford (above) refers to as his second major innovation to the *artes moriendi*: the shift away from the importance of deathbed attendants. He advises the *moriens* in point 18 not to doubt that he or she is protected by God and all His angels at the hour of death even if no one else is present. In this way, for Luther, no Christian dies alone. Point 19 returns to the sacraments and stipulates—perhaps to the chagrin of the literary King Ban and Sir Gawain who seek Eucharistic substitution—that

217

no one can perform them by his or her own power, and to presume so actually places the *moriens* in spiritual peril. Luther advises the solitary *moriens* to instead pray the Pentecostal prayer and ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to aid in dying (Lehmann 112-5).

While, as I have demonstrated above,[183] substitutions for the sacraments remained dubious at certain points throughout the Middle Ages, Luther's diminished role of the faith community places his *Sermon* at a remove from previous *artes moriendi*, including the *Visitation* series, the *Craft*, and even Caxton's considerably later *Ars Moriendi* printings, which date to the late fifteenth century and are based on widely circulated French and Latin originals. This diminished role is significant because it continues in the Henrician English *artes moriendi*, where it takes on a darker bent. In the wake of public executions following the 1534 Act of Supremacy, there arose a widespread fear that under the Anglican Church, the condemnation of the State was equivalent to the condemnation of God. The English way of dying would therefore require augmentation after the fashion of Luther's *Sermon*: a newly private craft catered to the individual who might be contending with a hostile crowd at the gallows comprised of none other than the *moriens*'s own faith community.

The Henrician *Artes Moriendi*

Following the Act of Supremacy, the English *artes moriendi* take a physical turn in terms of fear management due to the real threat of bodily dismemberment, as public execution became the official penalty for a myriad of perceived offenses against the now

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[183] See Chapters 1 and 2.

head of both Church and State, Henry VIII. It's unclear whether or not Luther's *Sermon*

helped to facilitate a shift away from the communal death ritual in England or if political

pressures should be identified as the sole catalyst, but three new English *artes moriendi*

appear from 1534-1538, and each are concerned with performing the good death before a

hostile community of "even-cristine" and the looming threat of public execution

(Appleford 188-9). These are Thomas Lupset's *A Treatise of Dying Well*, Richard

Whitford's *Daily Exercise and Experience of Death*, and Desiderius Erasmus's

Preparation of Death, which was composed at the behest of none other than Thomas

Boleyn between 1533-1534 but not released until 1538—two years after the infamous

execution of his children, Anne and George (Appleford 188).

A Daily Exercise and Experience of Death

As the title suggests, *A Daily Exercise and Experience of Death* requires daily

memento mori meditations that aim—similarly to Luther's *Sermon*—to drive away

entirely the fear of inevitable demise rather than seeking *timor filialis* as in the earlier

English tracts. Published in 1534 by Syon Abbey, Whitford's tract appears to reluctantly

update the English *artes moriendi* while remaining as orthodox as possible, and

Appleford stipulates that it must be read with the tumultuous political contexts of the

period in mind: "During much of the 1530s, Syon was fighting a losing battle against

evangelical theology, the king's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, the assertion of royal

supremacy over the English church, and its own dissolution in 1539" (193). Whitford,

like his contemporaries at Syon Abbey—some of whom refused to take the oath that

recognized Henry VIII as the new head of the Church—was faced with the choice of

accepting the king's new policies or dying a martyr. It is perhaps with this in mind that the first section of the tract focuses on alleviating the fear of physical death and deploys the stoicism of Aristotle and Cicero in addition to other patristic authorities, characterizing the body and soul as two companions joined in a task that naturally desire to separate when the task is complete.

Whitford's frequent and more traditional characterization of the *moriens* as "voyde of all the wyttes" in Part I differs from Luther's advice to control the senses and demonstrates his concern with reacting to a long sickness or a standing death proclamation, not *mors improvisa*. Like many of his predecessors, Whitford also relies on the traditional image of St. Paul desiring death and writes strongly against *avaritia vitae*: "it is great foly to feare and drede that thynge that by no meane maye be escaped ne auoyded. And who so euer wyll remayne in suche feare or dreade, shal neuer lyve in quietude and rest of mynde." Indeed, much of his doctrine concerning life as a loan given by God also resonates strongly with the English *artes moriendi* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries concerning "grutching": "Howe than may any person complayne or grudge, whan so euer he is taken by deth sith he receyued life by that condicyon." On the other hand, Whitford's argument at the conclusion of Part I—that good Christians should not fear death because they have the certainty of heaven as elect—is starkly Protestant.

Whitford's second section is reminiscent of Suso's *Learn to Die* and the "Of þre arowes on domesday" section of the *Tretyse* in that it calls for sending the soul into death and visualizing the death of a doppelganger or beautiful young person, but it differs in that one of the exercises depicts a deathbed sequence similar to that of the *Visitation* series wherein the deathbed attendants now seem powerless to aid the unprepared

220

moriens in making the transition. Interestingly, it contains the same image of the soul as a stone that must be polished before it can be placed in the wall of heavenly Jerusalem, but this act feels starkly solitary in comparison with *Visitation A* (Whitford, Appleford 191-3). Appleford notes that the Anselmian questioning remains intact and speculates that the *Daily Exercise* must therefore be in conversation with either the *Craft* or another tract inspired by the *Tractatus* (193). Also similar to the *Visitation* series is the notion that the moriens deserves death and to be chastised by pain for his or her sins, but the traditional pains of sickness have quite tellingly been replaced by State instruments of torture. Whitford compares the "ingyns of tourmentrye" with the traditional rod that must not be spared lest the child be spoiled, and the reader is directed to meditate on "a person that hathe ben condemned by judgement, unto bodily dethe, as to be brent, hanged, or heded [beheaded], or such other" (Whitford, Appleford 194).

Prior to Part II's daily *memento mori* exercises, Whitford provides an explanation of death-readiness and refers to death colloquially as "a change of lyfe." He further explains, "So the commune people done often use it, as whan they say of a deed person he is nat deed (say they) but he hathe chaunged his lyfe." Although at a temporal distance of nearly a half-century from Caxton's printing of *Morte Darthur*, this colloquial verbiage seems directly applicable to Arthur's death in Malory's Arthuriad;*[184]* however, Whitford goes on to say that changing one's life can also mean changing an evil life to a good one—yet here he still refers to the sacraments and the process of dying. He then provides a third reading of this phrase: a change of life can also represent the soul's separation from God and eternal death (i.e., damnation). While Whitford's understanding of this

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[184] See Chapter 6.

phrase does not "close the book" on how one should interpret Malory's verbiage concerning his personal view of King Arthur's death, this correlation certainly demonstrates that more scholarship concerning the *artes moriendi* and its application to the canonical literature of the Middle Ages is necessary to better understand the worldview of the medieval—and in this case, Early Modern—readership. For Whitford at Syon, all of philosophy can be simplified into *memento mori*, and those who fear death rather than living with the knowledge of how to die do so only out of ignorance: "Nothyng is more valyaunt to expel and put awaye synne from the soule: nor yet more profytable to replenyssh & garnyshhe the soule with good vertues: then is the dayly exercyse, & meditacyon of dethe."

Whitford's first exercise, which includes the aforementioned images of capital punishment, the beautiful young person/doppelganger who has died, and the polishing of the soul-stone also includes a nightly *imitatio Christi*. Just before going to sleep, the good Christian should rehearse the *ars moriendi* along with his or her nightly prayers and then use repose as a death simulation. Whitford also suggests making the sign of the cross with a holy candle three times: "…and so go vnto reste as you shulde go unto your grace." In this way, Whitford hopes to console his audience and alleviate the theoretical fear of death, yet he remains aware that the bodily pain of dismemberment is not so easily dismissed. To combat this more visceral form of fear, he proposes a second exercise.

The second exercise is designed to aid Whitford's audience in longing for death after the fashion of St. Paul but contains practical considerations as well. Essentially, it involves falling into a trance and making oneself dead to the "five wits," thus leaving the body "as a lumpe of claye without any mynde, care, or thoughte." Whitford's notion here

222

is that if one becomes practiced enough in this exercise, it will become a kind of automatic impulse during the actual process of dying. This is supported by a reference to St. Katherine's trances wherein she was allegedly so dead to the corporeal world that she could be pricked with pins and needles and feel no pain. It is also here that Whitford presents his homily on the soul and body as joint laborers along with the major argument that these two elements should be able to be separated at will and without grief, making the transition to death easier for the *moriens*. Other arguments make their way into these meditations—the sinfulness of the body in comparison with the spirit, the notion that the spirit belongs in heaven and not trapped in sinful corporeality, the superiority of God due to His lack of corporeality, and a homily on the life of Christ—but Whitford ultimately returns to ensuring that the *moriens* has no fear of the physical pain of death. This focus cements Whitford's preoccupation with the political events of his time. The second exercise had begun with a trance-like state, and one of its benefits was a lack of pain, but by the end of the exercise, this lack is presented as its chief objective. Whitford's conclusion returns to the faith community and their potential negative effects on the *moriens*: "For dethe only semeth euyll and onely is feared by opinyon & nat of any other right cause." He traditionally upholds death as an end of all misery on earth and the beginning of everlasting life—but again, even these statements must be understood in the context of Act of Supremacy and its aftermath.

Preparation to Death

Desiderius Erasmus's *Preparation to Death* is another tract that must be interpreted in light of the Act of Supremacy, and which additionally boasts convoluted

ties to the royal family and the disgraced Boleyns. Its Latin original, *De praeparatione ad mortem* (1534), was originally commissioned by Thomas Boleyn himself, and it was considered conservative and rigorous enough that it was ironically reported to have been used at Catherine of Aragon's deathbed in 1536. Erasmus—along with Boleyn's children, Anne and George, who were executed for treason and incest, amongst other alleged crimes against the crown—died the same year. An anonymous English translation of Erasmus's tract entitled *Preparation to Death*, legitimized by the king's seal, was printed in 1538. Thomas Boleyn died just one year later (Appleford 197-8).

Erasmus enjoyed the sobriquet "Prince of the Humanists"—he was a philosopher, Christian scholar, Catholic priest, and rival of Martin Luther. Appleford argues that Henry VIII may have approved of his work despite his Catholic status because of his Humanist background, which Henry famously shared as a younger man (198). Appleford also argues against previous scholarship which has taken the view that Erasmus completely abandons the structure of the traditional *ars moriendi*, pointing to the "explicit interplay between the *Preparation to Death* and the earlier *artes moriendi* tradition, especially the *Tractatus de arte moriendi*," but this is one instance in which I have to disagree—Appleford is correct in that most of the elements from previous traditions remain intact, but unlike the *artes moriendi* surveyed in Chapters 2 and 3, Luther's *Sermon*, and Whitford's *Daily Exercise*, Erasmus's tract is comprised of much more doctrine and consolation than direct instruction on death meditations or performing the act of dying well (198).

As in Whitford's *Daily Exercise*, the traditional references to both Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* and Paul's desire for death are present, but Erasmus's

224

understanding of fear management differs from both Whitford's and Luther's—for him,

fear cannot be entirely eliminated through stoicism. However, in Erasmus's introduction

to the tract, which is addressed directly to Thomas Boleyn,[185] he returns to a familiar

medieval method of death preparation that increases the *moriens*'s valor in the face of the

inevitable: ghostly chivalry. He writes to Boleyn of the dying act, "This is the laste fyghte

with the enemye, wherby the souldiour of Christe loketh for eternall triumphe, yf he

ouercome: and euerlastynge shame, if he be ouercome." Similar to the *Tretyse* and its

many predecessors (see Chapters 2-3), the *Preparation to Death* includes a section on

ghostly chivalry allegorizing spiritual virtues as weapons to be deployed against the

Devil. Christ vanquishes Satan with the "swerde of goddess worde," repels him with the

"bucklar of scriptures," and provides the *moriens* with ghostly arms as well: "There is left

vnto vs a mattier, wherein to fyght, but yet armours & weapons be ministered vnto us,

with whyche we beynge defended may ouercome." He even goes so far as to distinguish

between celestial and terrestrial chivalry, with the faults of the latter leading into a

passage on the dangers of worldliness:

> But before we ioyne handes with this gyaunt Golyath, let vs first caste frome vs
>
> the armours of Saul, which is the cote armour of pride, that is the truste of worldly
>
> wysedome, the confydence of our strength and merytes, whiche lade vs rather
>
> than arme vs, let the staffe of faith be sufficient for vs, whiche comforteth &
>
> steyeth vs in this our peregrination, and the fyue wordes, which Paule speaketh in
>
> the churche.

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[185] Appleford does not mention this, but it is locatable in the microfilm edition of the original printed text provided by the British National Museum Library.

In fact, if the introductory note is considered, ghostly chivalry bookends the entire tract, as Erasmus provides this ending for his sixteenth-century readership:

> And there nayled with thre nayles, feythe, hope, and charitie, we must constantly perseuer, fyghtyng valiantly with our ennemy the dyuelle, vntylle at laste, after we haue vanquyshed him, we may passe into eternall reste, through the ayde and grace of oure lorde Iesus Christe, to whom with the father and holy gooste be prayse and glorie without ende. Amen.

For Erasmus, Christ vanquished the Devil, but the Devil is also perpetually vanquished by good Christians and suffers an even greater fall as long as they abide in Christ and war against him. Moreover, Satan is described as the Prince of *this* world not because he has jurisdiction over it but because he reigns over those trapped in the bonds of worldliness. As in *Visitation A*, these bonds include not only worldly goods and titles, but as in *Pilgrim's Progress*, also the *moriens*'s own family. Appleford has pointed out another similarity to the *Visitation* series: Erasmus calls for a "trewe preest" to conduct the ceremony at the deathbed, and this priest still has the ability to size up the situation and apply the correct portions of chastisement and comfort to meet the *moriens*'s needs (200). As this fluidity is also present in the English *Craft of Dying*, it is likely that Erasmus drew from the *Tractatus* or another text inspired by it.

Another section seems informed by the late-medieval *Danse Macabre*, turning to an *enumeratio* of the estates to justify death as the grand equalizer: "And therfore the grekes call dethe in theyr langage moros… to allotte, bycause it is allotted, distributed, and appoynted to all men alyke and indifferently, to kinges, bishops, dukes, erles, barons, knyghtes, esquiers, gentylle men, yomen, and beggars." Erasmus's goal seems to have

226

been to compile and repurpose as much earlier material as possible to console and instruct the *moriens*, but his lengthy treatise, which would require more space than I have here to properly explicate, is not entirely without innovation.

One key difference from the other tracts surveyed—with the possible exception of the *Craft of Dying*—is that Erasmus takes a middle road when it comes to the death anxieties and expedients of his time. He dismisses perfectionist Christians as "merely temperamental"; he also addresses the fears of "weake soules" (i.e., sinners who have done more wrong than good) who should be afraid to die because of their sins but instead are afraid of the pains of bodily death (Erasmus; Appleford 200). He takes issue with the Carthusian doctrines and last-minute requests to be buried as a monk "or [to] pay for masses to be said on one's behalf in Rome," but does not disdain posthumous prayer in general (Erasmus; Appleford 203). Despite the first half of his treatise disputing the fear of death, he recognizes that it is not so easily conquered and therefore provides consolations rather than "radical exercises" as Whitford does (Erasmus, Appleford 199). He writes of the power of last rites but does not believe that they necessarily secure one's place in heaven—as in Luther's *Sermon*, Whitford's *Daily Exercise*, and the *Craft of Dying*, as long as the rites are desired rather than rejected and taken for the signs of faith that they are, the *moriens* may make a good death without them (Erasmus, Appleford 201-2).

But Erasmus's greatest contribution to the English *artes moriendi*—especially with the 1538 printing of *Preparation to Death* bearing the royal seal and for Appleford "naturalizing" State violence—may well be his dismissal of earthly condemnation in the wake of the Act of Supremacy (205). For Erasmus, being condemned to death by a king,

even one who had assumed spiritual powers as the now-head of the Anglican Church, did not hold the same weight as Catholic excommunication and therefore had no effect on one's chances for salvation:

> But what facion of death so euer chaunceth, no man is therby to be estemed. No, not so moch as of them, whiche by the lawes are for their myscheious dedes, put to execution, though they chaunce to haue a shamefull dethe, we maye not iudge temerousely.

Henry VIII's knowledge of this tract bearing his seal, like Erasmus's foreknowledge of the Act of Supremacy when composing its Latin original between 1533 and 1534 for Thomas Boleyn near the height of his favor, obviously remains debatable. However, the effect this combination of royal approval and clerical dismissal of the same would present a striking message for learned Henrician readers at the time of its distribution: seek salvation not here, but in the next world.

A Treatise of Dying Well

Thomas Lupset's *A Treatise of Dying Well*, another *ars moriendi* tract which bore the royal seal and with which Henry VIII might have been more familiar, presents a contrasting argument concerning State violence, public death, and the natural fear of dying. While Lupset and Erasmus were contemporaries and worked together on an edition of the New Testament, Lupset's untimely death in 1530 at the age of 35 after an illustrious career in the king's service propelled his works to a national status in England more quickly than Erasmus's, beginning with *A Treatise of Charity* in 1533 and culminating in a collected works edition in 1546. While Lupset himself died before the

Act of Supremacy, his *Treatise of Dying Well* was first published in 1534 and would likely have been the standard *ars moriendi* in the English language during the years following Henry VIII's ascendency to his new position as head of both Church and State (Appleford 205-7).

Two aspects of Lupset's tract that may have appealed to Henry VIII are the lionizing of the good servant and the allegorizing of service to the king with the service of God. This attitude, in effect, preempts and cancels Erasmus's argument published in English four years later that worldly and spiritual judgment need not coincide. Lupset also concurs with Whitford and Luther in that the *moriens* must entirely eliminate the fear of death and display Senecan stoicism despite his admission that the fear of death is natural. Also, similarly to his contemporaries, he treats the fear of *mors improvisa* in the face of public execution, but Lupset's treatise differs in that he makes it the major focus of his work. Most pointedly, Lupset believes that the general onlooker can determine the state of the *moriens's* soul and likelihood of receiving God's grace by observing his or her level of death readiness as exemplified by either fear or acceptance of death. This demonstrates that even before the Act of Supremacy, the English *artes moriendi* were moving away from a supportive community of "evene-cristine" towards a mob of hostile onlookers at the gallows (Lupset 1-42; Appleford 208-14).

Appleford has identified three practical agendas that speak to the politics of Henrician England embedded in Lupset's advice concerning death meditations: 1) he advocates for keeping the servant's passions in check, therefore protecting him or her from the judgments of his or her master; 2) he attempts to protect the soul of the politically active servant from *mors improvisa* due to a violent, public death; and 3)

229

failing this, he advises the servant in terms of making a "publicly appropriate" death when facing State execution (211). While Lupset's *ars moriendi* is certainly still concerned with the fate of the soul, these practical applications also suggest his concerns with keeping the reader alive long enough to prepare to make a good death.

Lupset opens his treatise with a note about oath-keeping directed at John Walker, the patron for whom the tract was originally commissioned, and admits to not understanding the enormity of the project he had undertaken until he was in the throes of composition. Once he expresses his own limitations, Lupset presents the pagan example of the stoic death of Canius, who under the threat of execution stood up to the Emperor Caligula, thanking the emperor for his death sentence and then appearing to be more concerned with a game he was playing in prison that he would never be allowed to finish than with his own demise (1-9). After considering Canius and other pagans who lacked access to the Word of God, Lupset arrives at his first conclusion: that a "naturall man, without the techyng of god" can still rise above the universal fear of death and make a good end (8-9). For Lupset, mankind has always known right from wrong even without the benefit of the Scriptures, and so to prepare for a good death, one must first live a virtuous life rather than turning to other expedients:

> Euer by goddess mere goodnes man knewe what was wel to be done, and what was contrarye yuelle to be done. It is a lawe written in the harte of man with the fynger of god in our creation, to be enduced by reason to prayse alway vertue, and to thinke synne worthye of disprayse. (9)

Lupset furthers this argument by juxtaposing the virtuous, or spiritual man, who sees beyond the vices of the five wits, with the worldly man, who is depicted as stumbling at

230

every straw and being choked by every mote of dust (9-10.) Lupset defines the

"spiritualle man" thus:

> …the whiche laboureth to pyche oute in euery thynge what is good and what is
>
> noughte. men of this sorte be called spiritualle menne. For you muste knowe, that
>
> a taylour, a showmaker, a carpenter, a boate man, withoute bothe learnynge and
>
> orders, maye be spirytuall, whenne a mayster of arte, a doctour of divinitie, a
>
> deane, a bishop bothe with his cunnynge and dignities may be temporall, seinge
>
> the trewe diffinition of a spiritual man is to be one, in whome the mynd and
>
> spirite chefelye ruleth. (10)

The sense of this juxtaposition is holistic rather than standing on precise doctrine: the

temporal man is content with the living world just as it is while the spiritual man instead

finds sweetness in death because he understands the wretched nature of the world, and

like St. Paul, does not feel that he belongs to it. In providing a pointed example of the

temporal man not ready to die, Lupset points to the abject fear displayed at the gallows

by Francis Phillip, a schoolmaster in the king's household who was executed for treason

on February 11, 1524, under what were likely implausible charges (Appleford 214).

Phillip—Henry VIII's political enemy—stands as Lupset's strongest and only named

example of Christian *mors improvisa*, and based on his doctrine of observing the death-

readiness of the individual as a means of determining the health of the soul, Phillip's

embarrassing public death demonstrates that his spiritual hygiene was dubious:

> …Frances Phillipe, that within fower yeres passed was put to execution with us
>
> for treason, the whiche dyed so cowardelye, in soo greatte panges of feare, that he
>
> semed extracte from his wittes: scante for quaking and trymbling the wreche

could speke one word. The fewe wordes that he coulde with moche stutternge

sewnde, were only in the declaration of his dispayre, nor nothynge was sene nor

harde of hym, but wepynge, lamentynge, wryngyne of his handes, with banynge

[baining, i.e., cursing] the houre and day of his byrthe, contynually sighing, as

thoughe his harte shulde have burste for sorrowe. (11-2)

Again, this condemnation of the Phillip suggests—contrary to Erasmus's position on the

matter—that temporal and spiritual judgment may indeed be elided if the *moriens* is

unprepared to make a good death in the public arena. This position is strengthened by

Lupset's propensity to deploy pagan examples of tyrants confronted with the stoic deaths

of their servants and, much later in the tract, to present the *moriens* with a preparation for

capital torture through a rehearsal of the physical pain suffered stoically by the martyrs:

Howe manye thousande martyrs suffered incredyble peynes of flayinge with

hookes theyr skyn from the fleshe, of scrapynge with tyle stones the fleshe from

the bones, of rentynge and tearynge membre from membre with horses, with

bowed branches of trees, of beatynge with whippes tylle the bowelles fall out, of

hangynge, of burnynge, of crucyfyinge, of infynte straunge and newe deuyles for

peyne? (Lupset 29-30).

Despite Lupset's acknowledgement that all creatures naturally fear death and pain, he

maintains that "the feare of death takethe awaye all gladnesse of dyinge, and therby after

myne opinyon, no man that dyeth ferefully can dye well" (14). His position is that God

has given mankind reason and spiritual immortality, and that these things place humans

above the natural world. He considers dying without fear miraculous but necessary—

something only creatures made in God's image can do, yet again, something that virtuous

pagans were able to do without the benefit of Christian doctrine (Lupset 15-8). Lupset is careful not to treat death as good thing because if it were so, then murder and suicide would not be against the bible's teachings; for him, death is neutral, but the way in which the *moriens* approaches death is either good or evil. Here, he presents the traditional examples of Christ's Passion and Judas's suicide, ultimately drawing the conclusion that if one fears death, he or she is doubtful of God or fears damnation because he or she has not properly prepared for death by living a life of virtue. For Lupset, such a person is no better than a beast without a soul (20-3).

Despite these seemingly extreme views, much of Lupset's treatise returns to and reinforces the traditional doctrines of the English *artes moriendi*. He consoles John Walker that the pain of death is quick and will be the last pain he will ever feel if he performs the good death appropriately (25-6). He warns against *avaritia vitae* and depicts it as foolish—a person at the gallows who prays to be killed last, he writes, is already spiritually dead (26-8). He rehearses, like Erasmus, the estates after the fashion of the Danse Macabre and their similar worldly desires that make them loathe to die (33). He invokes the Gospels condemning the rich in an effort to support almsgiving and the disconnection from worldly goods, which he argues are merely tools to aid the *moriens* in temporal life (34-5). He instructs, after the *memento mori* tradition, Walker to think of death when he rises in the morning and to go to his bed like his grave because we are always, already dying even though the point of death might not yet be upon us (37-8). Yet the strongest image in *A Treatise of Dying Well* remains the disgraced Francis Phillip at the gallows, serving as a palpable example for English of how not to die.

The Afterlife of the English *Ars Moriendi*

Other tracts such as Thomas More's posthumously published *The Four Last Things*,[186] the 1540 version of the Sarum Rite, Thomas Becon's *The Sicke Man's Salve* (1559), and ultimately *The Book of Common Prayer* in its various iterations either continue or carry vestiges of the English *ars moriendi*. As I have attempted to demonstrate, the craft did not simply die out in the face of the Act of Supremacy and the resulting English Reformation, but it did undeniably take a political turn that altered—at least for a time—the sense of what dying well in England would mean to parishioners of the Anglican Church. It's worth pointing out, however, that despite the focus on Humanism and stoicism in those Early Modern tracts surveyed above, the 1549 iteration of *The Book of Common Prayer*, which would have first appeared during the Edwardian Reformation, seems to have already returned to some of the *artes moriendi*'s medieval roots. The *Book* contains a chapter entitled "The Order for the Visitation of the Sick and the Communion of the Same," and as the title suggests, it functions as a step-by-step guidebook rather than the doctrine and consolation of Erasmus and Whitford, or the Humanist theories and condemnations of Lupset.

The "trewe preest," albeit Anglican now, enters into the sick person's house bestowing peace and blessings on the family. The priest prays a litany with the sick person and exhorts him or her to accept sickness as the chastisement of God. The pseudo-Anselmian confirmations follow; however, just as in the *Visitation* series and the *Boke of the Craft of Dying*, certain sections may be skipped over depending on the physical state

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[186] In Boethian fashion, written in the Tower of London while More awaited execution for refusing to take the oath.

of the ailing person. To wit, "If the person visited bee very sicke, then the curate may end his exhortation at this place" (Church of England 91). Other marginalia suggest that the confirmations of faith may be practiced first, demonstrating the fluidity of the tract but maintaining a sense of process that had gone missing in the Henrician *artes moriendi*.

As in *The Boke of the Craft of Dying*, the sick person should receive communion after this formal visitation and may even choose to be anointed at this time, but if he or she is too sick to ingest the Eucharist, the desire for the ritual is enough (Church of England 98). More than merely a return to process, tradition, and the religious authority of the clergy, this section of *The Book of Common Prayer* suggests a turning back to the faith community and *caritas*—a crucial element of the Christian faith that had gone starkly missing from the Henrician tracts. This version of *The Book of Common Prayer* would ultimately be replaced, but this chapter concerning visiting the sick and providing them with communion persists into at least the eighteenth century, as evidenced by Thomas Baskett's 1755 printing at Oxford.

Arthur's Rebirth: From *Y Mab Darogan* to Tudor Icon

The Catholic King Arthur of Malory's *Morte Darthur* does not simply disappear only to reemerge in Elizabethan England as the Protestant Prince Arthur of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Surprisingly, Lydgate's version of Arthur's death in the *Fall of Princes*, which proved influential to the Tudor court because it avoids the English *artes moriendi* and instead presents a favorable alternative to Malory vis a vis late-fifteenth century English politics, had a greater role in shaping the future of the Once and Future King. Much ado has been made about Caxton's printing of Malory's Arthuriad in 1485 because

235

it coincides with the Battle of Bosworth Field, which in turn marks the end of the Middle Ages for British historians, but the hem of this neat synergy unravels easily when examined more closely. While Malory's *Morte Darthur* eventually became the definitive version of Arthurian legend in the English tradition, it was not immediately so its own time, and Caxton's press at Westminster had been in operation for less than a decade by the time it was finally produced. Malory's version of King Arthur, drawn from the French tradition and at times presented in a starkly negative light due in part to his quarrel with Lancelot, could not have been the King Arthur that inspired Henry Tudor to raise the Red Dragon banner at the Battle of Bosworth Field in a politicized fulfillment of the *Prophecies of Merlin*. Nor could he have been the icon that inspired the later Henry VII to name his first-born son and heir to the throne Arthur and to further ensure that he was born at Winchester, long believed to be the original site of Camelot, by having his wife Elizabeth moved there from London in the final stages of pregnancy (Summers 94).

As late as the end of the Middle Ages, the Welsh had continued to believe in *Y Mab Darogan*, the Breton Hope, their messianic version of Arthur predating their conversion to Christianity and promising to drive the English from the island upon his return. The English, in turn, had remained focused on the Arthur of the Galfridian Chronicle Tradition and oral folk traditions—both of which, as we will see, continued into Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and beyond. Although the historicity of King Arthur had in fact been challenged following the initial publication of *Historia Regum Britanniae* and continued to be challenged well into the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, Arthur remained for many a historical figure, the chief of the Nine Worthies, and a lasting symbol for imperialism at the end of the Wars of the Roses. For these reasons, he was quite

obviously an attractive figure for Henry Tudor, a would-be king descended from the Welsh. As David A. Summers writes,

> The way Henry Tudor taps into the messianic component of the Arthur Icon, as well as the monarchal ideal implicit in the Arthurian Idea, indicates that both elements were active in public perceptions late in the fifteenth century and also serves to extend from the English throne a final and semi-official endorsement of the Arthurian legend as the British national myth. (81)

Moreover, Henry Tudor required this manner of endorsement due to his exceedingly weak claim to the throne. His marriage to Elizabeth of York may have been enough to stop the warring affinities during this tumultuous era, but it was not enough to legitimize his kingship. His victory at the Battle of Bosworth Field made him the *de facto* ruler of the realm, but without a legitimate claim, it also made him a tyrant. His tenuous Lancastrian lineage, which can be traced back to John of Gaunt and his mistress Katherine Swynford via the Beaufort line, had been established during the reign of Henry IV with the proviso that no descendent of Beaufort could inherit the English throne. Per primogeniture, after the Battle of Bosworth Field and the death of Richard III, George of Clarence's son Edward, famously killed by Richard III in Shakespeare's eponymous play, would have been the natural successor. It was, in fact, Henry Tudor who had the young earl arrested, committed to the Tower, and eventually executed in 1499 (Summers 87-8). To be able to secure his throne, Henry Tudor needed to be recognized not as king-consort or as a tyrant but as *Y Mab Darogan*, and to this end, he took several steps to identify himself and his eventual dynasty with the Welsh Arthur of prophecy.

237

Recognizing that Welsh bards had begun to identify him with *Y Mab Darogan* during his exile in Burgundy, Henry began to take pains to identify himself with King Arthur. "Upon landing at Milford Haven, Henry issued a proclamation intended to rally Welsh support for his campaign against Richard III in which he made a direct appeal to the Arthurian past" (Summers 92). Next, the Red Dragon flew over Bosworth Field. After Richard III's defeat, Henry had the banner carried in triumph with his retinue to London, where it was flown beside the more traditional English banner of St. George. Summers argues in favor of this Arthurian connection:

> Prior to Henry's accession, the Red Dragon had not been associated with the heraldry of the Tudor family, so it is difficult to see why there should be this sudden and dramatic—if accounts of the Battle of Bosworth are remotely accurate—raising of the Red Dragon banner over the Tudor cause if this was not an overt attempt to link the cause with the Arthurian rule lauded in Geoffrey's Historia and the myth of political messiahship. (94)

After the naming of Prince Arthur and selection of the child's symbolic birthplace at Winchester, the next major grafting of the Arthurian legend onto the Tudor dynasty arguably occurs in the pageantry during the reception of Catherine of Aragon, Prince Arthur's bride and the eventual first wife of Henry VIII. While the manner in which this pageantry should be interpreted is controversial because it is steeped in astrology, the astrological significance of Prince Arthur's pairing with the star Arcturus can be traced directly to King Arthur's death in Lygate's *Fall of Princes*, which—despite how modern scholars might balk against this—remained immensely popular and continued in an English Arthurian tradition more prevalent than Malory's even as late as 1501 when these

238

pageants were performed. In order to fully apprehend this connection, we must turn to Lygate and review one final way in which King Arthur "changed his life."

Like Malory, Lygate presents several potential ways in which Arthur avoids death, but he differs in that he includes the earliest known Classical ending for Arthur that results in his stellification. Sandwiched between two alternatives—a rehearsal of Geoffrey's explanation of Arthur travelling to Avalon and the Welsh prophecy of Merlin—are these lines:

Thus of Breteyne translatid was þe sunne

Vp to the riche sterri briht dongoun,--

Astronomeres weel reherse kunne,--

Callid Arthuris constellacioun,

Wher he sit crownid in the heuenl[y] mansioun

Amyd the paleis of stonis cristallyne,

Told among Cristen first of þe worthi nyne (VIII.3102-8)

[Thus the son/sun (a deliberate pun) of Britain was translated / Up to the rich, starry, bright dome (sky), / Astronomers are well able to identify [it], / Called Arthur's (Arcturus) constellation, / Where he sits crowned in the heavenly mansion / Amid the palace of crystalline stones, / Called by Christians the first of the Nine Worthies.]

Lygate's pun of son/sun is prefigured by his earlier connection to Arthur and Phoebus Apollo, and as Summers has pointed out, the fourth pageant in the sequence contains what appears to be a direct reference to Lygate's Arthur as the Sun King:

239

In the fourth pageant ("The Sphere of the Sun") Arthur is seen riding the golden

chariot of the Sun through a panoply of stars. While Anglo is surprised that the

eyewitnesses failed to identify the charioteer as a representation of Arthur Tudor,

Kipling assumes the rider is portraying King Arthur himself, an assumption which

makes sound sense in the light of Lygate's connecting Arthur to Phoebus. (101)

The first of these pageant stops, entitled St. Katherine and St. Ursula, further elucidates

this connection between Arthur Tudor, King Arthur, and the star Arcturus, which is

brighter than its surrounding celestial bodies and is sometimes referred to as the "British

Sun." It contains a speech by St. Ursula that is loosely[187] based on Geoffrey's *Historia* but

more importantly connects Ursa Minor, the star under which Catherine of Aragon was

born, with Arcturus, suggesting a strong natural bond between Catherine and Arthur

Tudor:

> Madam Katery,[188] because that I and ye
>
> Be come of noble blod of this land
>
> Of Lancastre, which is not oonly of amyte
>
> The cause, but also a ferme bande
>
> Betwene you and this realme to stonde;
>
> Nature shall meove us to love alwey
>
> As two comon owt of oon cuntrye.

---

[187] Summers points out that King Arthur is not literally descended from Ursula, who is a chaste figure in Geoffrey's *Historia*.

[188] An address to Catherine of Aragon

Trouthe it is that owt of myn linage cam

Arthure the wise, noble and vaillaunt king

That in this region was furst of his name,

And for his strength, honour and all thing

Mete for his estate, he was resemblyng

Arthure, the noble signe in heven,

Beautee of the northe, with bright sterres sevene.

Unto the kinge, stronge, famous, and prudent,

Nere kynne am I, and named am Ursula,

By which name I also represent

Anothir ymage callid Minor Ursa,

That otherwise is callid Cynosura,

Set fast by Arthure, with other sterres bright,

Gevyng great compforte to travellours by nyght.

As Arthure, your spouse, then the secunde nowe

Succedith the furst Arthure in dignite

So in lyke wyse, Madame Kateryn, yow

As secunde Ursula, shall succede me. (Kipling 14-5; lines 92-116)

This speech suggests several items of interest in terms of establishing the Tudor

Arthur prior to the version later popularized by Spencer. First, it is clear that the authors

of the pageant, who were writing for the Tudor royal court and tasked with creating the

matter for this important occasion, must have embraced Lygate's version of the death of Arthur due to the widespread popularty of *The Fall of Princes*, which—like Malory's Morte Darthur—was also printed and distributed by William Caxton, and its status as the first known text in which Arthur is stellified as Arcturus. Second, Arthur's stellification and status as the "Sun King" was being read in tandem with the Welsh *Mab Darogan* over the objection of Lydgate, who claims in *Fall of Princes* that the Bretons erred in believing that Arthur would return from Faerie Land and restore the Round Table—yet this is precisely where Spencer places Prince Arthur in his Arthuriad (VII.3109-16). Third, the passage suggests that had Arthur Tudor lived long enough to take the throne, he would have been stylized as "Arthure the Sucunde," further demonstrating that King Arthur was still being acknowledged as a pseudo-historical figure under the Tudors in no small part as a means of maintaining the unification of the State and legitimization of the dynasty. At this point in English history, there is not yet a reason to reject Malory's version of King Arthur based on the Catholic status of his *Morte Darthur*. Lydgate's version—albeit altered here for political purposes—wins out precisely because he does not marry the Arthurian legend with the *artes moriendi*. Henry Tudor and his dynasty needed their King Arthur very much alive in order to repurpose the legend to their advantage. To the Tudor court, Prince Arthur represented the second coming of a secular messianic figure that would lead the English into a new Golden Age. Ironically, it would instead be his niece, Queen Elizabeth I to whom Spenser dedicated his *Faerie Queene*, who realized these ambitions before herself dying without an heir.

Summers inculcates throughout *Spenser's Arthur: The British Arthurian Tradition and The Faerie Queene* that it is not *King* Arthur that Spenser presents as the ultimate

knight in his Arthuriad but *Prince* Arthur, a young man travelling through the realm of faerie signifying all the virtues of knighthood but unaware of his true destiny. This important distinction may indeed be the last word on the Arthurian *ars moriendi*. Culturally unable to cope with the loss of Breton Hope, the final *Morte Darthur* in the form of the Arthur Tudor's death coupled with the dynastic disappointments of Henry VIII's reign, Spencer places Britain's messianic figure safely back in Faerie Land—in the realm of myth. It is in this mythological context that King Arthur and Arthur Tudor, thus combined as an image of tradition and possibility, can continue endlessly to inspire, free from the jaws of death and the trammels of history.

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APPENDIX A

THE GHOSTLY ARMS AND ARMOR OF THE *MILES CHRISTI*

THE GHOSTLY ARMS AND ARMOR OF THE *MILES CHRISTI*					
Ephesians 6:10 (NIV)	**Moralia on Job**	**MS Harley 3244** (*Summa vitiis*)	**The Book of the Order of Chivalry**	**A Treatise of Ghostly Battle (Ephesians ME Translation)**	**A Treatise of Ghostly Battle (Additional)**
Helmet = Salvation	XXX	Helm = *spes futuri gaudii* (hope for future bliss)	Chapel-de-fer (Kettle Helm) = Fear of shame	Bascinet = Ghostly Health	Top of Bascinet = Trust in God
Breastplate = Righteousness	Breastplate = Patience	Hauberk = *caritas* (love of God and fellow human beings)	Hauberk = Castle and rampart against vices and misdeeds	Habergeon = Justice	Habergeon = Equality/"euen-christine"
Belt = Truth	XXX	XXX	Gorget/Collar = Obedience	Girdle = Chastity	Girdle = upholding Justice via Chastity
Sandals = Readiness of the Gospel of Peace	XXX	XXX	Chausses = Fortitude in safeguarding highways	Sabatons = Readiness of the Gospel of Peace	Sabatons and Cuisses = Ghostly Poverty
Shield = Faith	Shield = Patience/ Steadfastness	Shield = [*fides*] (faith) Three sides = Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Center = God)	Shield = Duty/Office of the knight	Shield = Faith	Shield = Holy Trinity
Sword = Holy Spirit/Word of God	Sword = Holy Spirit/Word of God/Love	Sword = *verbum Dei* (Word of God)	Cruciform Sword= Holy Cross/Power to	Sword = Holy Spirit/Word of God	Sword = Violent separation rather than sinful peace

			destroy God's enemies (Two Edges = Justice and Chivalry)		
Prayer (completes the set)	Spear = Preaching/Love	Lance = *perseverantia* (perseverance)	Lance = Unbending truth (Caxton version, Spearhead = Strength)	Death Meditations (completes the set)	Spear = Christ's Passion
XXX	XXX	Pennant = *regni celestis desiderium* (desire for the Heavenly Kingdom)	Pennant = Truth revealed to all	XXX	Vambraces/ rerebraces/ gauntlets = good occupations/ industry
XXX	XXX	Horse = *bona voluntas* (good will)	Horse = nobility of courage/ preparation	XXX	Horse = Body (Rider = Soul)
XXX	XXX	XXX	Shaffron/ Testiere (Horse head armor) = not to fight without good reason	XXX	Bridle = Abstinence
XXX	XXX	Reins = *discretio* (discernment)	Bridle/Reins = Restraint/ Willingness to be led by chivalry	XXX	Reins = Temperance

XXX	XXX	Saddle = *christiana religio* (Christian religion)	Saddle = Security of courage/Burden of chivalry	XXX	Saddle = Patience/ Humility
XXX	XXX	Saddle-cloth = *humilitas* (humility)	Bardings/Horse Armor = protection of the wealth needed to maintain chivalry	XXX	XXX
XXX	XXX	Spurs = *discipline* (instruction)	Spurs = diligence, expertise, and zeal	XX	Spurs → Right Spur = Love mankind owes to God; Left Spur = Dread of hell/purgatory
XXX	XXX	Stirrups = *propositum boni operis* (resolution to perform a good deed)	Horse's Bit (Gauntlets in Caxton Version) = Security against false oaths and uncouth words	XXX	Stirrups = Humility/ Stoicism/ Constancy
XXX	XXX	Horseshoes = *delectatio* (delight), *consensus* (concord), *bonum opus* (good deed),	Mace = Strength of courage	XXX	XXX

		consuetudo (habit)			
XXX	XXX	XXX	Misericorde (Dagger) = Trust in God	XXX	XXX
XXX	XXX	XXX	Blazon/Heraldic Emblem = Reputation/ Identity	XXX	XXX
XXX	XXX	XXX	Pourpoint/Outer Coat = Ordeals the knight must suffer	XXX	Jack de Fence (Inner or Outer Coat?) = Charity/Robe of Christ
XXX	XXX	XXX	Standard = Maintenance of the lord's and/or kingdom's honor	XXX	XXX