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Malory, Chivalric Medievalism, and New Imperialist Masculinity

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Abstract

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century work of Arthurian romance, *Le Morte Darthur*, underwent significant reevaluation, from being warily considered a trivial, morally problematic text to being hailed as a national epic with a central place in the English canon. This shift in Malory's status coincided with the rise of an increasingly competitive and unabashedly aggressive model of imperialism in the 1870s, which historians conventionally term New Imperialism. At the same time, a new model of masculinity emerged, one that bemoaned the "decadence" of the modernized, leisurely man and that celebrated the hypermasculine ideal of the "savage" and the "barbarian." It turned to "primitive" models of masculinity that it located in non-Western cultures such as the Zulus, and in the past, celebrating the heroism of ancient Greeks and Romans, Viking warriors, and medieval knights. I argue that Malory's ascent to canonical status was largely due to this rise of ultranationalism and atavistic masculinity. *Le Morte Darthur* provided England with a prestigious, national epic to rival other European nations, and its presentation of chivalric masculinity became the inspiration for the imperial masculinity promoted by the British Empire's champions, including writers like Rudyard Kipling, Sir H. Rider Haggard, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. I examine Kipling's consideration of empire, progress, and heroic masculinity in *Puck of Pook's Hill*, where he explores these issues in the context of medieval English history. I then look at the genre of Victorian romance, focusing specifically on *King Solomon's Mines* and *Sir Nigel*, examining the ways in which these works dramatize masculinist fantasies of English gentlemen reverting to "primitive," medievalist masculinities as an antidote to the "effeminized" masculinity of *fin-de-siècle* England. I conclude with T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, an unorthodox reworking of *Le Morte Darthur* that uses Malory's narrative to critique the militarism,

imperialism, and chivalric masculinity of the New Imperialists. Throughout the thesis, I examine the trajectory of hegemonic forms of masculinity, imperialism, and medievalism, over a span of nearly a hundred years, as they intersect with the reception and adaptation of Sir Thomas Malory's chivalric ideals.

Summary for Lay Audience

My thesis examines chivalry in the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Victorian Era in England saw a heightened interest in the legends of King Arthur and in the ideals of medieval chivalry. Consequently, the fifteenth-century work of Arthurian romance, *Le Morte Darthur*, began to be celebrated as a foundational masterpiece of English literature. This period also saw the rise of a movement that historians conventionally refer to as New Imperialism, an explicitly aggressive and competitive model of imperialism that saw European empires frantically attempt to colonize as much of the world as possible. A New Imperialist Britain, desperate to expand its territory and to fight off the armies of rival powers, needed men to fight and die for the empire, and this aggressive imperialism soon saw the rise of a more aggressive model of masculinity to support it. New Imperialist writers, such as Rudyard Kipling, Sir H. Rider Haggard, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, saw the modernized, "civilized" man as "decadent" and "effeminate," and they sought a remedy to this perceived weakness by turning to the heroic masculinity of the past. This "primitive" masculinity could be located either in non-European cultures or in the European past, and their literature often celebrates the "savage" masculinity of the Zulu warrior alongside the Viking and the medieval knight. In this thesis, I look at how writers of this period participated in this "rebirth" of chivalry, engaging with a form of masculinity that was inspired by *Le Morte Darthur*, and how their works shaped the way people viewed the Middle Ages and chivalry. I examine the trajectory of this New Imperialist chivalry, over the span of nearly a hundred years, from its rise in the 1870s to its decline after the Second World War.

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Soli Deo Gloria

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Introduction

The Middle Ages are often invoked as a conservative antidote to the modern world, and nostalgia

for the "good old days" often takes the form of longing for a time when the West was "pure" and

men were strong. For white supremacists of the far right and the "alt-right," the Middle Ages

functions as a cultural and social ideal, an archetype of "pure" whiteness and militant

Europeanism. Examples of this white supremacist medievalism abound. In March 2019, the

Christchurch shooter invoked this narrow version of the medieval as "white" and anti-Muslim by

citing Pope Urban II's First Crusade speech in his explicitly racist, xenophobic online

manifesto.[12] By invoking the Crusades, dehumanizing Muslim immigrants as "invaders," and

calling on "Europeans" to fight back against this "invasion," the shooter relied on a mythical,

propped-up Middle Ages that portrays medieval Europe as a beacon of white homogeneity and

social stability. In this fascist fantasy, chivalry and knightly duty are defined primarily as the

defense of white land, white culture, and white women from the "hordes" of non-white people

whose immigration to "the West" is considered a continuation of the relentless campaign of

conquest waged since the early Middle Ages. Two years before the terrorist attack in

Christchurch, the white supremacists who gathered for the "Unite the Right" rally in

Charlottesville in August 2017, carried, along with Confederate and Nazi flags, medieval

symbols of the Knights Templar and the Holy Roman Empire, including a "crusader" flag

bearing the Latin motto "Deus Veult." Like the Christchurch shooter, the white supremacists in

Charlottesville employed the Middle Ages as a synonym of whiteness, and celebrated medieval

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[1] A breakdown of the shooter's online activity, manifesto, and use of "meme culture" can be found in Kevin Roose's article for the *New York Times*, "A Mass Murder of, and for, the Internet."
[2] While Urban's speech itself did not survive, it is recorded, with varying content, in several medieval sources, Fulcher of Chartres, Robert the Monk, Guibert de Nogent and in the *Gesta Francorum.* The version quoted by the shooter seems to come, not from one of these medieval sources, however, but from a website called *Tradition in Action*, whose wording matches exactly with the excerpt included in the manifesto.

crusaders, alongside the more recent Nazis and Confederates, as the militant defenders of white,

Western purity from the threat of black, Hispanic, Muslim, and Jewish people.[3]

The alt-right's interest in the Middle Ages has raised concern from academic medievalists

and general medieval enthusiasts in recent years, evidenced by the abundance of news articles

and blog posts wrestling with questions concerning medievalism's ties to white supremacy.

David M. Perry's article for *Pacific Standard* asks in its title, "How Can We Untangle White

Supremacy from Medieval Studies?" and Jennifer Schuessler, in her article for the *New York

Times* similarly describes the alarming tendency of white supremacists to lay claim to

medievalism and asks the even more troubling question, "Does medieval studies have a white

supremacy problem of its own?" Dorothy Kim takes a stronger stance, calling medievalist

professors "ideological arms dealers," and warning that "doing nothing" or being "apathetic

weapons dealers" is, in fact, "choosing a side. Denial is choosing a side." Academics specializing

in the Middle Ages must, she argues, take a clear stand against white supremacy, and her article

asks, "So, what are you doing to overtly signal that your medieval studies class is not going to

implicitly or explicitly uphold the tenets of white supremacist ideology?" (Kim).[4] But the

intermingling of white supremacy and medievalism extends even beyond the academy, into

nearly every form of popular media.[5] Dante Douglas warns how video games such as *Mordhau*,

attempting what they think is historical accuracy, present medieval Europe as "a wholly white

and nearly-entirely-male landscape" and inadvertently, on their official forums and their in-game

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[3] A large number of articles in both academic and non-academic publications have been written on Unite the Right's medievalist imagery. See, for example, Becky Little's "How Hate Groups are Hijacking Medieval Symbols While Ignoring the Facts Behind Them" and Andrew B. R. Elliott's "Internet Medievalism and the White Middle Ages."

[4] Kim explores these ideas more fully in her academic work, including her recent book *Digital Whiteness and Medieval Studies* and in her introduction to the *Literature Compass* special issue *Critical Race and the Middle Ages*.

[5] For more on medievalism's problem with white supremacy, see a host of other blog articles on *In the Middle* and *Pacific Standard.*

servers, create "a hub for white supremacists seeking a convenient mythology to ground their beliefs in" (Douglas).[6]

The problems of medievalism and white supremacy have led to a good deal of academic study as well. In *Fossil Poetry*, Chris Jones discusses the "long history" of the "pseudo-ethnic use of 'Anglo-Saxon,'" (10), a use whose prominence "recent political events on both sides of the Atlantic have demonstrated" (10). He notes how "writing (even short phrases) of neo-Anglo-Saxon as a badge of 'ethnic Englishness' has also been enthusiastically adopted by jingoists and bigots in online discussion groups" (11). The appropriation of "Anglo-Saxon" by "jingoists and bigots" fits within the broader context of right-wing medievalism. Andrew B.R. Elliot uses the term "banal medievalism" to refer to this phenomenon of the far right's constant invocation of the Middle Ages where "there is no attempt to insist on the accuracy of those references" (8). As he explains, the power of these references to crusaders, Templars, Joan of Arc, and chivalry "lies in providing self-referential fodder for online groups, so that the references to the medieval past pass from intentional ways of using the past to banal, self-confirming references to contemporary issues from the present" (8). The far right's use of medievalist allusion is largely disconnected from what we know of the historical reality of the Middle Ages, and their rhetoric of crusade, of the endless war between a white, Christian Occident and a non-white, Islamic Orient that hails back to the days of Charlemagne, refuses the nuance and accuracy of medieval scholarship in order, as Elliot observes, to preserve an "imagined continuity of cultural ethnicity from the past to the present" (8). The idea of the "clash of civilizations," central to the imagination of white supremacists, has a long history, but was made more popular in recent decades by the political theorists, Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington. Daniel Wollenberg comments on how "The

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[6] For more on white supremacy and video games, see Anya Kamenetz's "Right-Wing Hate Groups Are Recruiting Video Gamers" and Zack Beauchamp's "White supremacists are trying to recruit American teens through video games."

Battle of Tours, the Crusades and the Battle of Vienna are crucial to … [their] historiographical framework because they act as undeniable confirmation of a virtually eternal and unresolvable struggle between Judeo-Christian Western heritage and Islam" (310).

The ideals of crusade and "clash of civilization" played a significant part in the rhetoric and policy of the post 9/11 Bush government, as Bruce Holsinger explores in his book, *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror*. He notes the persistent invocation of the Crusades and the constant use of the word "medieval" to cast al-Qaeda and the Taliban as the backwards enemies of modernity, represented by "the West." Holsinger writes, "The effect has been a mass enlistment of all things medieval into a global conflict in which the Middle Ages function as a reservoir of unconsidered analogy and reductive propaganda" (15). Neoconservative medievalism, like the medievalism of the white supremacist alt-right, turns to the Middle Ages as a source of powerful (even if historically inaccurate) imagery, and terms like "medieval," "crusade," and "chivalry" serve as shorthand for deeply rooted beliefs in such "fundamental" dichotomies as "East and West," "barbaric and civilized," and "medieval and modern."

The Middle Ages also often appears under the banner of the closely related "Men's movements" as part of an atavistic impulse to "reconnect" with a primitive masculinity that has been "tamed" and "weakened" by modern civilization and feminism. The infamous website, *Return of Kings*, as just one example, features a recurrent theme of banal medievalism among its bizarre, "red-pill"[7] panoply of pickup artistry, pseudo-philosophy, self-help advice, and consistently overt misogyny. One article that seeks to resurrect the wisdom of the Middle Ages contends, "Often erroneously named the 'dark ages,' this millennium was the greatest source of

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[7] The term "red pill," an allusion to the 1999 film *The Matrix,* is often used by members of the men's rights movement and the alt-right as shorthand for what they see as their enlightened views on gender and race.

light in the history of Western civilization" (Turner). The article presents various medieval Latin

mottos that are then marshalled in opposition to things like "pussified, politically correct gender-

diversification policies" and that will equip the reader to "defend yourself against modern

confusion and degeneracy" (Turner). Another article bemoans the fate of "the Western man

[who] has his natural aggressiveness repressed or shamed" (Poqueliche) and advises its readers

to counteract the emasculation of modern men by embracing obscure martial arts such as the

Florentine Renaissance sport, Calcio Storico Fiorentino, and the full contact sword fighting of

medieval re-enactment groups. Yet another article declares in its title, "The Concept of Chivalry

Has Been Distorted to Create Subservient Men" (David). Throughout this site, and many other

misogynistic websites, forums, and subreddits like it, we can see a pattern of persistent

masculinist atavism that informs an interest in history, tradition, and culture. The past, especially

the medieval past, is useful as a prop, a club with which to bash "feminists and liberals." To this

end, the alt-right constructs a narrowly focused, highly simplistic Middle Ages as a noble

alternative to the decadent and degenerate modern world.

Why is it that medievalism specifically has such a prominent place in the rhetoric and

iconography of the alt-right? I believe the answer to that question lies partly in the medievalism

of New Imperialism, the aggressive form of British Imperialism that dominated from the 1880s

to the end of the First World War. With New Imperialism, the dominant way of thinking about

the purpose of empire shifted dramatically as Tories, reacting against the "humanitarian" model

of Liberal imperialism, celebrated war and conquest for their own sake. While the British Empire

had existed in some form since the early sixteenth century, the period of New Imperialism,

beginning with the 1878 Berlin Conference and subsequent Scramble for Africa, saw the empire

expand more frantically than ever, engaging in fierce competition with rival European powers to

create new colonies and maintain old ones. Politicians such as Benjamin Disraeli and Cecil Rhodes headed this movement, and a great many popular writers, like Rudyard Kipling and H. Rider Haggard, took up the cause in their literary work.

Although the link between racism and medievalism already existed, it is in the chivalric medievalism of this era, in its obsessive preoccupation with masculinity and degeneration, with racial classification and hierarchy, and with violence and strength, that we see the foundations laid for the white supremacist, masculinist medievalism that still exists today. This modern medievalism does not look primarily to the medieval itself, but rather to the medieval as interpreted through the nineteenth century, aligning with Amy Kaufman's definition of neomedievalism as "a dream of someone else's medievalism. It is medievalism doubled upon itself" (4).

New Imperialists such as Rudyard Kipling, H. Rider Haggard, and Arthur Conan Doyle often invoked the Middle Ages as a golden age of hypermasculinity, celebrating it as "anti-modern" and thus free of the degeneracies of the modern world. Their romances construct the Middle Ages as both brutal and dark as well as heroic and noble. While these two categories are often seen as contradictory, belonging to different types of literary traditions altogether, we find these writers fusing them in the creation of a male fantasy of a world fraught with barbarity and peril, brutality and cruelty, in which hypermasculine attributes are necessary for survival. We also find the Middle Ages "revived" for nationalist aims, a revival that saw medieval romance such as Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* ascend, by the end of the nineteenth century, to the status of national epic, on par with the classical epics of Homer and Virgil.

In my thesis, I focus on a select reading of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century medievalism, tracing the genesis and development of the complex interconnection of

medievalism, chivalry, masculinity, and imperialism, an interconnection with a remarkable staying power. Since it is my goal, in part, to understand why New Imperialist narratives of masculinity and race retain such influence, especially among the ranks of the far right, I work very closely with each text to explicate the worldview presented by each author. By exploring and understanding New Imperialist medievalism, I hope to shed some light on the persistence of medievalism as a tool of the far right and explain, to an extent, why this specific construct of the Middle Ages, knighthood, and chivalry seems to be central to a nationalist, racist, and xenophobic imagination.

My thesis tracks the intersecting strands of imperialism, medievalism, and masculinity in several literary moments of British imperial literature from the 1850s to the 1950s. I examine the rise and fall of chivalric masculinity from the emergence of New Imperialism in the 1870s and 1880s, through the First and Second World Wars, until the eventual waning of the British Empire. Chivalry, and the nationalistic and competitive medievalism that accompanied it, was recruited for the services of an empire that required strong, aggressive young men to expand and maintain the ever increasing territorial holdings of the empire and to protect it from Western rivals. Represented by the Scramble for Africa in 1878 and the motto "Empire for Empire's sake," New Imperialism saw the rise of a new dominant masculinity in England and its territories: chivalric masculinity, embodied in such virtues as sacrifice, honour, camaraderie, and martial prowess and notorious for its celebration of violence and danger and its characterization of imperial conquest as a contest between strongmen. This hegemonic manly ethos of aggression and competition both shaped and was born from jingoistic nationalism that rendered global politics a glorified wrestling match. The rise of ultranationalism corresponded with a national investment in medievalism, particularly the medievalism of romance and chivalry, for it was in

the medieval knight that the British youth was to find his inspiration and his model for behaviour. *Le Morte Darthur*, bolstered by its many Victorian imitations, rose to become England's national epic, and public education and popular culture was saturated with images of Arthur's knights. Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, published serially between 1859 and 1885, brought Arthur and his knights to the public's attention with its rendering of Camelot as an empire and the knights as conquering ambassadors of civilization. Over the next several decades, New Imperialist literature turned to the Middle Ages, and to medieval chivalry in particular, to find models of manly behaviour unsullied by the effeminizing influences of modern Western civilization. It developed a model of history both atavistic and progressive, one that called for a return to the virtues of the past but that also saw Britain as more morally advanced than its European rivals or the peoples it conquered, and thus compelled to spread Britishness across the globe.

By the end of the Second World War, the British Empire had received major blows economically and politically, and could no longer maintain the expansionism of New Imperialism. As it waned in power, so too did ultranationalist and competitive medievalism and chivalric masculinity. The figure of the heroic gentleman, which rose in the late nineteenth century to become *the* dominant model of masculinity, was soon displaced by the "decent man," a man not caught up in the trappings of aristocracy, gentlemanliness, and martial prowess. In 1959, Martin Green wrote that the dominant "Establishment type" of masculinity, "the gentleman, has outlived its usefulness" (507), and defined the new type in opposition as "the decent man" (509). In my thesis, I examine several literary works that bear witness to the rise and decline of the entrenched dominance of chivalry and the gentleman. While medievalism continued of course to retain a hold on the British cultural imagination after the Second World

War, axiomatic assumptions about the relationship between the Middle Ages and modern Britain, between knights and modern gentlemen, were challenged post-WWII, along with ideas of progress, of a romantic and desirable medieval past, and of the desirability of medieval chivalry as a modern model of masculinity. This trajectory of hegemonic forms of masculinity, imperialism, and medievalism I map onto the reception and adaptation of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, which, along with other chivalric literature, medieval and modern, acted as a source text for middle and upper class masculine morality. I thus bookend my thesis with *Le Morte Darthur*, read alongside its Tennysonian adaptations, and T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Tennyson's epic marks the height of Victorian medievalism, imperialism, and chivalric masculinity while White's series of novels is in many ways the antithesis of the *Idylls*. White, like Tennyson, constructs his medievalism from a reading of Malory, but he does it to question expansionism, imperialism, and hegemonic, chivalric masculinity, those virtues associated with the Malorian tradition throughout New Imperialism. By examining these two literary examples, along with several others that lie between them, I provide a sketch of the interactions of imperialism, medievalism, and masculinity in English literature over a span of about a hundred years, tracking the ways in which those discourses morph and shape one another.

Medievalism

One of the main fields in which my thesis is situated is medievalism studies, a field that encompasses general theories about the motivations for and processes involved in invoking the Middle Ages as well as the study of specific instances of medievalism in art and culture.

To begin, we require a clear definition of the term "medievalism" distinct from "medieval" or "Middle Ages." Tom Shippey proposes a basic, comprehensive definition: "Any post-medieval attempt to re-imagine the Middle Ages, or some aspect of the Middle Ages, for the modern world, in any of many different media; especially in academic usage, the study of the development and significance of such attempts" (45). Here, Shippey makes the difference between medievalism and medieval clear; medievalism occurs once the Middle Ages are already seen as a thing of the past and is a post-medieval culture's attempt to reconnect in some way and for whatever purpose, with the Middle Ages. In this construction, "medieval" is authentic and original and "medievalism" is imitative, attempting to resist chronology and artificially recreate the language, dress, style, beliefs, or manners of the original Middle Ages. Definitions of medievalism abound, but I choose Shippey's as a starting point for its broad consideration of the term that allows for any conceivable kind of medievalism.

With this rough understanding of what I mean by the word medievalism, I now turn to address what medievalism means culturally and psychologically and to ask why medievalism is the phenomenon that it is. Umberto Eco was one of the first to theorize medievalism, and it is with him that many theories of medievalism begin. Eco himself, by writing both medievalist novels and academic studies of the Middle Ages, bridges the supposed gap between the medievalism of academic study and the imagined medievalism of the artist. His "Dreaming of the Middle Ages" brings in both aspects, in a playful attempt to explain what happens when we conjure up notions of the "medieval" and why exactly the Middle Ages in particular hold such influence in the modern world. Pointing to our construction of chronological history that positions the medieval as the foundation on which modernity is built, he writes, "The Middle Ages are the root of all our contemporary 'hot' problems, and it is not surprising that we go back

to that period every time we ask ourselves about our origin" (65). The reason, Eco argues, that

we turn to the Middle Ages, and not, say, to the "classical period" of ancient Greece or Rome is

that there is less continuity between the ancient world and us than there is with the medieval.

From the Middle Ages we have received "all the questions debated during the sessions of the

Common Market" (65), and, as Eco explains, "All the problems of the Western world emerged in

the Middle Ages" (64). Eco then proceeds to list the political, social, cultural, and technological

inheritances we have received from the Middle Ages. But perhaps his most intriguing suggestion

for why we are inexorably drawn to the Middle Ages comes from his psychoanalytic and

evolutionary structure, which plays on the idea of history as maturation. Eco theorizes, "Looking

at the Middle Ages means looking at our infancy, in the same way that a doctor, to understand

our present state of health, asks us about our childhood, or in the same way the psychoanalyst, to

understand our present neuroses, makes a careful investigation of the primal scene" (65). The

Middle Ages, in Eco's construction, are where we find the seed of all our problems, and we turn

to them through artistic representation and academic study to better understand our current

condition. This metaphor draws attention to the idea of essential difference between the modern

and the medieval but also to the continuum between them. The Middle Ages are attractive to us,

not for their foreignness, but for their familiarity; they are an earlier, less developed stage in our

history, a cultural childhood.

There are problems with Eco's simple evolutionary model, where he draws a straight line

of progress from the Middle Ages to modernity. Carolyn Dinshaw has made significant

contributions to the way we theorize medievalism and seeks to complicate the linear model that

Eco and other post-modernists have proposed. Her book *Getting Medieval* takes up the task of

queering the Middle Ages and medieval history, a process that she describes as "a queer

historical impulse, an impulse toward making connections across time between, on the one hand, lives, texts, and other cultural phenomena left out of sexual categories back then and, on the other, those left out of current sexual categories now. Such an impulse extends the resources for self- and community building into even the distant past" (1). Moreover, she criticizes the way that scholars, including some postmodernists, often render the Middle Ages a simplistic opposite to modernity. She objects to how, even in "some very influential theoretical and critical work developing out of postmodernism, the Middle Ages is still made the dense, unvarying, and eminently obvious monolith against which modernity and postmodernity groovily emerge" (15-16) and calls for scholars, "*especially* postmodern thinkers" (15), to abandon this reductive narrative and recognize the "indeterminate nature of medieval cultural phenomena" (15). The Middle Ages becomes meaningful and relevant precisely because of its instability, what Dinshaw labels its "indeterminacies, contradictions, [and] slippages," and allows us to "make relations with those discourses, people, places, and things *in their very indeterminateness*" (11). My thesis builds on Dinshaw's work to see, firstly, the inherent falsehood in any construction of a singularly "medieval" idea or characteristic. Even a single item like chivalry, which I examine in more detail later on in this introduction, has no unified, unvarying definition or characteristic in the Middle Ages, just as chivalry is an unstable category in modernity. Any attempts to speak broadly about the medieval mind or the reality of medieval chivalry is a distortion of history, a simplistic and rhetorical flattening of medieval complexity. Secondly, Dinshaw's work allows us to understand and interrogate the often contradictory and variable interpretations of the Middle Ages by the New Imperialists, found sometimes even in the same literary work. Medievalism is indeterminate and contradictory because medieval sources are, but also because the writers

themselves operate in a context of indeterminate and contradictory aims. Even New Imperialist chivalry is a category riddled with contradictions, exceptions, and variabilities.

Claire Simmons offers another useful way to think about medievalism, looking again at the motivations behind and psychological attractions of medievalism generally, but also particularly in a nineteenth-century context. In *Popular Medievalism in Romantic-Era Britain*, she proposes two points in her definition of medievalism:

> First, medievalism is not simply the recreation of the Middle Ages, but requires emotional and intellectual commitment … Indeed, a fundamental characteristic of the medievalist temperament is an acute awareness of one's subject-position as identified by nationality, history, social status, religion, and gender. Medievalism is never disinterested; even though unselfishness is one of the supposed virtues of the Middle Ages that the medievalists admired, when they were not speaking for their own interests, they were claiming to speak for the interests of others. (12)

Here, Simmons highlights the politicized nature of medievalism. It is crucial to understand that the invocation of the Middle Ages is not, as some of its critics suggested, a retreat from the world, or an apolitical, antiquarian interest, but, rather, it is a political and highly present-conscious movement that reads and uses the Middle Ages for specifically modern purposes. The political use of medievalism, Simmons argues in the second part of her definition, hinges on a comparison between the Middle Ages and the present:

> Second, medievalism is persistently comparative, compelling some level of conscious contrast between the reader's (or observer's) present and the recreated medieval past. Although it may generalize the Middle Ages, it particularizes the

present, making the reader aware of the specific conditions of his or her historical

moment. (12)

Medievalism, then, becomes a way of historicizing the present, setting it in contrast to the

medieval world, or, more accurately, a construction of the medieval world. In her book,

Simmons draws attention to the many ways medievalism can be mobilized, ways that can

drastically conflict in their political ambitions. I would add to Simmons's point that even within

the same authors, such a conflict appears. New Imperialist writers like Kipling will invoke the

Middle Ages to demonstrate the evolutionary advantage of modern England and to stress

continuity and tradition in English history, but also to elicit nostalgia for the Middle Ages as a

golden age.

As Dinshaw and Simmons indicate, there is more than one purpose to medievalism and

more than one kind, even within a single medievalist work. It is thus that scholars of

medievalism often speak of their subject in the plural: it is "medievalisms" with which we must

contend rather than a single, uniform, monolithic "medievalism." Tison Pugh and Angela Jane

Weisl, in their book, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present,* and Tom Shippey, in

"Medievalisms and Why They Matter," for instance, argue that it is necessary to speak

of "medievalisms," and Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul comment, "Medievalism, it soon

becomes apparent, can only be considered in the plural" (7). Embracing this multitude of

medievalisms allows for a more complex and detailed understanding of how and why a specific

medievalism is employed.

Having established the plurality of medievalisms, it is worth noting which medievalisms

specifically are to be considered in this thesis. I return to Eco, who, in the same essay, lays out

ten possible kinds of medievalism, ten ways of reconstructing the Middle Ages for modern

purposes:

1. "The Middle Ages as a *pretext* … There is no real interest in the historical

   background; the Middle Ages are taken as a sort of mythological stage on which

   to place contemporary characters" (68)

2. "The Middle Ages as the site of an *ironical revisitation*" (69)

3. "The Middle Ages as a *barbaric age*, a land of elementary and outlaw feelings …

   These ages are Dark par excellence" (69)

4. "The Middle Ages of *Romanticism*, with their stormy castles and their ghosts"

5. "The Middle Ages of the *philosophia perennis* or of neo-Thomism" (70)

6. "The Middle Ages of *national identities*, so powerful again during the last

   century, when the medieval model was taken as a political utopia, a celebration of

   past grandeur" (70)

7. The Middle Ages of *Decadentism* (70)

8. The Middle Ages of *philological reconstruction* (70)

9. The Middle Ages of so-called *Tradition*, or of occult philosophy (70)

10. The *expectation of the Millenium* (70)

Many of these categories overlap in problematic ways, as scholars since Eco have continued to

point out. Irony, barbarism, and romanticism, for instance, are not fully separable modes of

invoking the Middle Ages, and it is unclear how these intersect with "*national identities*" if at all.

Elizabeth Emery comments, "His types do not account well for the great variation within these

'dreams.' While there may be a 'Middle Ages of Romanticism,' for example, Romantic-era

writers and artists chose to evoke the Middle Ages for markedly different reasons" (82). Emery's

criticism points to Eco's omission of specific and political reasons for medievalism and the failure of Eco's list to account for the presence of multiple kinds of medievalisms operating at once.

In *Medievalism: A Critical History*, David Matthews revises Eco's cataloguing of the possible strands of medievalism, halving the list and attempting to account for more variants. His own list reads as follows:

1. "The Middle Ages 'as it was.' The Middle Ages depicted as if realistically" (37)

2. "The Middle Ages 'as it might have been'" (37)

3. "The Middle Ages 'as it never was'" (38)

4. "A cultural production based largely on medieval elements incorporates modern references or motifs" (38)

5. "A cultural production, essentially of its own time, looks back to the Middle Ages with greater or lesser explicitness" (38)

Matthews's list is less unwieldy than Eco's and proves more useful for discussing actual medievalist content. There is, of course, still overlap among the categories, as Matthews himself admits, but this list is more helpful for examining the different kinds of medievalism in a given period or work. Much of the historical fiction written by New Imperialists employs mainly the first medievalism that Matthews defines, but, to some extent, it also relies on elements of 2, 4, 5, and even 3. These categories are useful for parsing different kinds of medievalism, but they should not be simplistically used to label literary works.

More interestingly, Matthews identifies two strains of medievalism: the romantic and the grotesque. The romantic is found in such images as the chivalrous knight rescuing a captured maiden, while the grotesque "connotes darkness, obscurity, the hidden and repressed" (20). The

grotesque, Matthews argues, is the dominant element in characterizations of the Middle Ages, as "it was to represent grotesquerie in all its forms that the Middle Ages was invented in the first place" (20). And he adds, "When people invoke the grotesque Middle Ages they draw, whether knowingly or otherwise, on the dominant primary and original sense of the term 'Middle Ages' established in the sixteenth century" (24). Even romantic medievalism, supposedly diametrically opposed to grotesque medievalism on Matthews's dichotomy, is inextricably paired with the grotesque. It relies on a collective assumption of the Middle Ages as primarily dark and barbaric. As Matthews explains, "The *emergent* romantic Middle Ages to some extent presupposed a *dominant* grotesque Middle Ages, with the assumption that romanticism would effect the rescue from the grotesque, without always effacing that grotesque" (30). This understanding of the tension between romantic and grotesque is significant to how we approach medievalisms, as we keep in mind that since their invention as a historical epoch by such figures as Petrarch, the Middle Ages have been assumed to be predominantly grotesque. Any medievalist work, even one that attempts to recover some lost medieval virtue, contends with that connotation of barbarity, whether consciously or not.

While it has been possible to speak of medievalisms in general, it is imperative to locate a discussion of medievalisms in the specifics of place and time. Thus, I narrow my focus to medievalisms in the late nineteenth century. The "medieval revival" of the nineteenth century, has been well documented and studied, and I build on this scholarship to advance my own argument about the shift in medievalism that occurred during the end of the nineteenth century. Alice Chandler's *A Dream of Order*, published in 1970, covers this medieval revival in England. In her book, Chandler studies the conservative impulses of Victorian medievalism, which she argues arose as a search for order in a world where order increasingly seemed to be unravelling:

Behind all these varying expressions of a medievalizing imagination lay a single

central desire – to feel at home in an ordered yet organically vital universe. The

more the world changed, and the period of the medieval revival was an era of ever

accelerating social transformation, the more the partly historical but basically

mythical Middle Ages that had become a tradition in literature served to remind

men of a Golden Age. The Middle Ages were idealized as a period of faith, order,

joy, munificence, and creativity. (1)

According to Chandler, the Middle Ages as represented in the mid to late nineteenth century are

rendered into what Dinshaw calls a "dense, unvarying, and eminently obvious monolith."

Chandler understands the purpose of the Middle Ages in the medievalism of the nineteenth

century to be a fixed point in a constantly moving modern world. The Middle Ages operate as a

myth of order and of meaning and present the hopeful possibility that meaning might be once

again recovered in this modern world through engaging with the medieval past. The Middle

Ages act as "a metaphor both for a specific social order and, somewhat more vaguely, for a

metaphysically harmonious world view" (1) and as "a corrective to the evils of the present" (1).

Throughout the book, Chandler details all the ways in which Victorians clung to medievalism as

an antidote to industrialization, urbanization, democratization, and Darwinian challenges to

"traditional" beliefs about God and the world. Others like Elizabeth Fay have pushed back on

this narrative a little, pointing out the existence of more radical uses of medievalism. Fay, for

instance, argues that "the look back, always in order to look forward, can stem from conservative

impulses as well as radical ones" (1). She identifies the uses that both Tories and Whigs made of

England's medieval past, concluding that nineteenth-century medievalism encompassed both

traditions. Though Fay is focused on the Romantic period rather than Victorian, the radical

medievalism that she identifies continued throughout the Victorian era, especially among the Pre-Raphaelites. Ultimately, I agree with Chandler's assessment, however, that conservative medievalism was the dominant strain in the nineteenth century (or at least the latter half of it), fitting "in with the dominant pattern of the age" (11), and it is a strain that continued to dominate into the early decades of the twentieth century as well.

Michael Alexander has also contributed significantly to the scholarship of Victorian medievalism. His *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England* attempts to write a "coherent brief history of the Medieval Revival as a whole" (xxi) and is, in his own words, "the first book length study of this phenomenon to attempt an account of its social, political, religious, architectural and artistic aspects, as these are recorded in literature" (xxi). He defines medievalism as "the offspring of two impulses: the recovery by antiquarians and historians of materials for the study of the Middle Ages; and the imaginative adoption of medieval ideals and forms" (xxii). It is with the second of these impulses that Alexander is concerned, and his book sketches the trajectory of this imaginative tradition from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. Over the course of this long nineteenth century, Alexander argues, can be seen an ever increasing appreciation of and fascination with medieval stories and characters. Looking specifically at the reception of Malory, he observes, "The chronology of editions of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* offers a graph of its popularity, and editors' prefaces suggest how knights of romance were seen" (112). The growing popularity of Malory coincides with the love of all things "medieval," reflected even in the popular literature of the period. "Imperial adventure fiction" arose out of the tradition of "'Medieval' stories in prose [which] became adventure stories set in an exotic land of knights, ladies and castles, with decorative historical detail, often concentrating upon arms" (153).

Walter Kudrycz offers an interesting alternative perspective of nineteenth-century medievalism through a study of historiography. Kudrycz identifies two main philosophical strains in Victorian historiography: Idealism and Romanticism. The ideal, progressive approach is "based on the idea that freedom and reason have increasingly manifested themselves in the historical process. In Hegel's present-centred system, the Middle Ages marked both an advance on the ancient world, and a decisive step in the attainment of modernity" (4). The romantic, aesthetic approach, on the other hand, "implicitly or explicitly denies that progress can be discerned in history. If the historical process is assigned any shape or pattern, it will be one of peaks and troughs, recurrence, or even decline. Pessimism and irony therefore often feature prominently in aesthetic histories" (6). The study of the Middle Ages, Kudrycz argues, fits within that dichotomy and "developed within – and as a result of – tensions between Romanticism and Idealism" (81). Ultimately, however, Idealism assumed dominance, at least in the academic discourse of the nineteenth century. Kudrycz explains, "But being coherent and optimistic, Idealism fitted the process of professionalization better than Romanticism. And so Idealism provided the metaphysical framework for modern academic historiography" (81). Though its focus is on history and not literature, I find Kudrycz's work helpful, as it helps to clarify the academic background from which literary writers and their audiences received many of their general assumptions about the Middle Ages and their relationship to the modern world. Furthermore, it helps explain the often contradictory medievalisms found in literature, where texts are pulled simultaneously in the direction of both Idealism and Romanticism, and see history as both progressive and degenerative. Tison Pugh makes this point in his discussion of chivalry in the American south. He describes the "conflicted turn to chivalric medievalism as regressive and progressive, depending upon the circumstances of its enactment, [which] reflects

the amorphousness of the past when used to construct the present (and thus to create a vision of

the future as well)" (7). The dichotomy of Romanticism and Idealism, which exists in the

historiography of the period, breaks down and is rendered more complicated in literature, which

is better able to present elements of both philosophical camps.

Romantic and Victorian medievalisms are, as the previous examples indicate, well

studied, but what is less well studied is the shift that occurred around the 1880s, corresponding

with the rise of New Imperialism and the "crisis of masculinity." Some scholars have talked

about the shift in general terms, but a sustained study of the characteristics of the medievalisms

of the New Imperialism is still sorely lacking. Stephanie Barczewski's survey of the nineteenth-

century treatment of the King Arthur and Robin Hood myths does cover this period of radical

transition and offers some useful insights about the cultural and national forces that shaped the

nation's interest in its medieval myths. Barczewski ties the increasing interest in medieval

literature to the rise of hyper-nationalism and hyper-imperialism in Britain that sought to recruit

medieval texts in competition against other European empires and in an effort to justify the

domination of non-European countries. She writes, "This nationalist strand of English literary

studies became even more prominent in the final decades of the nineteenth century. The period

after 1880 was marked by a growing concern for 'national efficiency' brought about by increased

challenges to Britain's global economic, commercial, and military hegemony" (93). In such an

environment of increasing national pride and the desire to locate the root of England's current

greatness in the medieval past, works such as Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* came to have

epic status bestowed upon them. Barczewski continues, "The evolution of the respective

relationships of the Robin Hood ballads and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* to English culture over the

course of the nineteenth century demonstrates the importance of the construction of an English

literary tradition for contemporary nationalism" (123). The result is that, as she observes, "Sir

Thomas Malory came to be regarded as a master of English prose worthy of comparison to the

nation's greatest authors, which meant that the Arthurian legend could now be claimed as a

specifically English cultural product" (123). Especially interesting is her explanation of how the

actual content of *Le Morte Darthur*, rather than merely its antiquity, commended itself to the

imperialism of the late nineteenth century. She picks up on the emergence of "a new concept of

masculinity which reformulated the image of the gentleman as an idealized medieval knight" and

observes how English people saw in Arthur's knights' civilizing mission, "a precedent for their

own vast territorial empire" (214). While Barczewski provides a well-argued and sophisticated

analysis of how the Arthurian and Robin Hood legends fed into and rose to prominence through

New Imperialism, there is still much room to look at how that interrelationship played out. My

thesis builds on her work to explore more fully the connections among imperialism, nationalism,

masculinity, chivalry, and medievalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Others, such as Sandra Martina Schwan, have also looked at the fate of medievalism and

chivalric masculinity beyond the Victorian era. Schwan argues that "from the 1890s onward the

medieval ideal for male behavior came under increasing attack" (217), and she supports this

through a reading of anti-chivalric literature from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

She admits however, that "the chivalric ideal of masculinity, which was fully developed in the

Victorian Age, continued to be influential even in the early twentieth century" (219). Her

identification and analysis of these discordant, anti-chivalric texts serves only to demonstrate the

presence of subdominant models of masculinity, but these other models were not successful in

overthrowing the hegemony of chivalric masculinity in this period. Further, her argument that

"even though knights, soldiers, and gallantry still abounded in literature, especially in popular

literature, chivalry as a dominant code of conduct received its final deathblow on the battlefields of Europe" (229) tells a narrative that is too simplistic, that fails to account for the endurance of chivalric masculinity well into the twentieth century.

Barbara Gribling builds on Schwan's argument about the change in attitudes towards medieval masculinity. In "The Dark Side of Chivalry': Victory, Violence and the Victorians," her contribution to the collection, *Chivalry and the Medieval Past*, she develops the argument that by the end of the nineteenth century, attitudes towards medievalism and chivalry in particular, underwent a major shift. The romanticized vision of chivalry, she argues, was challenged and replaced by a representation of chivalry as dark and highly problematic. Gribling frames the tension in terms of a political divide between conservatives and liberals; while conservatives favoured a romantic representation of chivalry, which they saw as exemplary for modern times, liberals attacked what they saw as an outdated and barbaric creed. She writes, "From their [liberal] perspective, chivalry appeared to promote social and political hierarchy and was the product of a selfish class. Liberal evaluations of the medieval period tended to react against what these writers saw as rosy conservative versions of the relationship between medieval rulers and aristocrats and those they ruled" (126). Their reactions against conservative medievalism led to a drastic shift in public perception, so that, "by the turn of the twentieth century, the negative aspects of chivalry were a prominent part of the academic and popular dialogue about the medieval past" (125). Instead of the highest ideal of a golden age, "Chivalry was deemed a product of 'primitive mentalities' (125). She qualifies this narrative of the change in approach to chivalry, however, by allowing, "Chivalry was still usable, but not medieval chivalry. Instead, modern boys were to cast off this old form of chivalry that promoted violence and embrace a new one that emphasised modesty and moderation" (141). Leaving aside their

medieval heroes, such as King Arthur and Edward the Black Prince, boys were to follow "modern men, who were more restrained, like Horatio Nelson or the duke of Wellington" (141). While Gribling's case for the change in the discourse surrounding chivalry is compelling, she overstates the case for the fall of chivalry. As she herself points out, Baden-Powell's immensely popular *Scouting for Boys* does not shy away from medieval knights as unproblematic inspirations for boys, and this text's admiration of knightly characters is hardly uncommon for its time. My thesis aims to demonstrate the continued thriving of medievalist chivalry beyond 1900 and the First World War. In doing so, I build on Gribling's and Schwan's analysis of the turn-of-the-century challenge to chivalric masculinity; but, rather than accept the narrative that chivalry waned after the Victorian Era, I attempt to show how the "dark" element of chivalry did not prevent people from producing and enjoying heroic, chivalric narratives, but rather led to an embracing of darker, more violent concepts of medievalist masculinity.

Medievalisms in the early twentieth-century have received less study than those in the Victorian era, but there is some scholarship on medievalism and chivalry from the First World War to the end of the Second World War with which my thesis engages. Of the critics on this period of medievalism, Allen Frantzen and Stefan Goebel are the most significant. They argue against the popular thesis of the First World War as essentially "modernist," a war that saw the grip of medievalism and chivalry in Britain loosen in response to the demoralizing realities of modern warfare. Instead, both Frantzen and Goebel argue, the war saw the Victorian and Edwardian ideals of chivalry and sacrifice persevere with renewed fervour as people struggling to make sense of the war continued to find the imagery of medievalism comforting and politically expedient.

Frantzen's *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* looks at the endurance of chivalry as it was refashioned in the nineteenth century through and beyond the First World War. In this book, Frantzen challenges what he calls the "popular history" account of chivalry and the war that states, "Chivalry was born in the court of King Arthur and laid to rest in the trenches of World War I" (1). Instead, he argues that such a narrative is overly dramatic and simplistic, for "the novelty of the war is easily exaggerated" (2). He concludes that "chivalry did not die with World War I" (8). His book examines chivalry's complex relationship with the Christian ideal of a sacrificial saviour, leading to what he considers the three responses contained under the umbrella of chivalry. Chivalry encompasses both the sacrificial, which "calls for the taking of one life to avenge the loss of another and thus … perpetuat[es] the cyclical violence" (3) and the antisacrificial, which "opposes the taking of life and seeks to bring the cycle of violence to a halt" (3). Frantzen further complicates this choice by adding, "Chivalry … not only made both responses available to knights and to their modern descendants but validated a third response, self-sacrifice, that conflated prowess and piety and blurred the lines between sacrifice and antisacrifice" (3). The soldiers of the First World War, he argues, operated within that ambiguous chivalric space of self-sacrifice, which allowed for them to exercise a heroic masculinity through either giving up their own lives in the great cause or by killing others as a sacrifice to that cause.

In *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, Goebel similarly argues for the persistence of medievalism during and after the First World War. Introducing the "modernist" and "traditional" schools of thought on the war, he favours the latter, which, he writes, "Reads the war as a retarding rather than a progressive moment in cultural history. The upheaval of war led thus not to a rejection, but to a reiteration or even deepening of well-established Victorian sentiments and

the euphemisms of wartime propaganda. The war put the clock back from the modern in favour

of the traditional" (11-12). This argument, agreeing with Frantzen's, goes against the idea of a

waning medievalism in response to the war. Moreover, Goebel points out that the myth of the

war as the first modernist war was put forth by veterans of the Second World War like Paul

Fussell and Samuel Hynes and that these veterans were influenced by their own experience of

WWII in their approach to WWI. It is the Second World War, he counters, that marks the decline

of medievalism, and these writers project their own culture's disillusionment with medievalist

ideals back on to the preceding war. He concludes, "Medievalism was the ultimate casualty of

the Second World War. Inappropriate if not obscene after 1939-45, medievalist diction providing

solace through the historical continuum of the wars and warriors of yore flourished after 1914-

18" (13). This argument, that the real waning of medievalism came after WWII and not before,

informs my own reading of chivalric masculinity's trajectory. By the time that T. H White

completed the novels comprising *The Once and Future King*, that conservative medievalism had

waned, and my thesis examines how White makes significant departures from Victorian,

Edwardian, and post-WWI medievalisms in conjunction with a larger, cultural move away from

the chivalric, knightly gentleman as the ideal, hegemonic model of masculinity. Medievalisms of

course, abounded post-WWII and continue in our own day, but the medievalism of an

imperialist, ultranationalist Britain – competitive, political, and hegemonic – faltered by the

middle of the twentieth century.

Chivalry

Since chivalry is central to my argument, I find it necessary to define it properly before going

further into the characteristics and development of chivalric masculinity. Medieval models of

chivalry, of which there were a great many, have little in common with those in the cult of chivalry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, apart from the latter's avowed inspiration from the former. For one thing, there was no continuous line between medieval and Victorian chivalry, so that the modern veneration of knighthood emerged as a conscious revival of specific medieval ideals from the past rather than an evolving practice continued since the Middle Ages. Katie Stevenson and Barbara Gribling observe that chivalry was never, even in Malory's day, a realistic and contemporary philosophy. Rather, they argue, "We should understand that chivalry was *always* perceived to be from a 'medieval past.' It had always been a construct and thus was always constructed" (4). Along with this understanding of chivalry as an always backwards-oriented state of mind, they argue that chivalry "is an ethos which, while still integral to the military, masculine and elite cultures of each century since, has changed in meaning in different contexts" (2).

Even with this understanding that Victorian and Edwardian chivalry had little to do with the reality of chivalry in the Middle Ages, it is still beneficial to discuss scholarship on medieval chivalry in order to establish it as a foundation that was then refashioned and altered by Victorian medievalisms. Chivalry in the Middle Ages could mean one of three things, as Richard Kaeuper explains: "First, the term could mean nothing more theoretical or ethical than deeds of great valour and endurance on some field of combat, that is, heroic work with sword, shield, and lance. Second, the term could mean a group of knights … Third, chivalry might be used to mean a knightly code of behaviour" (4). It is the third usage here that Victorians and Edwardians referred to almost exclusively, and, thus, chivalry as a code of behaviour in the Middle Ages and in the modern world is the focus of my study.

Maurice Keen's *Chivalry* remains a central text in the scholarship of medieval chivalry. Keen points to the difficulty of producing an adequate definition of chivalry, calling it a word "elusive of definition, tonal rather than precise in its implications" (2). Despite this elusiveness, Keen attempts to offer a definition that does justice to the variableness of medieval chivalry: "Chivalry may be described as an ethos in which martial, aristocratic and Christian elements were fused together" (16). More specifically, Keen looks at the virtues commonly espoused by chivalric romances and manuals of knightly behaviour, and from that mass of primary material, draws out the main tenets of chivalry. He is able to point to the "classic virtues of good knighthood: *prouesse*, *loyauté*, *largesse* (generosity), *courtoisie*, and *franchiese* (the free and frank bearing that is visible testimony to the combination of good birth with virtue)" (2). And it is these virtues that modern people looked back on, adapted, and adopted. Towards the end of his book, Keen concludes, "The most important legacy of chivalry to later times was its conception of honour and the constituents thereof, specifically and especially in their relation to nobility" (249). The themes of honour and nobility resonated well beyond the Middle Ages, and saw a revival of interest in the Victorian era. Although Keen seems to appreciate these virtues and admits that he sees some good in them, in an earlier article he expresses far more skepticism about the restraining or civilizing influences of chivalry. He proposes, "Chivalry with its idealization of the freelance fighting man, could not be a force effective in limiting the horrors of war: by prompting men to seek wars and praising those who did so, its tendency, for all its idealism and because of it, was rather to help to make those horrors endemic" ("Chivalry, Nobility" 45). This observation of chivalry's propensity towards war and the horrors that accompany it reveals an interesting problem that other scholars of medieval chivalry have attempted to solve.

Kaeuper, for instance, builds on Keen's observation and begins his book, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, with a reminder: "We must not forget that knighthood was nourished on aggressive impulses, that it existed to use its shining armour and sharp-edged weaponry in acts of showy and bloody violence" (2). Kaeuper warns against the romanticization of chivalry both in popular and academic sources. He characterizes the romantic approach as one that "holds, in essence, that chivalry brought about the internalization of necessary restraints in a vigorous group of men" (2). The cruelties and atrocities that occurred in medieval war are explained as the doings of non-aristocratic soldiers or as a result of the failure of knights to live up to their code of conduct. Kaeuper maintains, however, that the violence of knights is not just to be attributed to their failure to live up to chivalric ideals. Rather, "The issues are built into some of the very ideals of chivalry, not merely in the lamentable inability of fallible men to attain them" (3). The inherent violence encoded in the highest ideals of chivalry is central to the problem of chivalry. It is important that we understand the complicated nature of medieval chivalry in order to understand how it was resurrected in the nineteenth century. Modern British imperialist versions of chivalry adopted large swaths of the code but divorced it from its medieval, feudal context. The violence and male aggression encoded in those medieval ideals were carried over, however, as they resonated with the hypermasculinity and competitive nationalism of New Imperialism.

More recently, Jennifer G. Wollock, in *Rethinking Chivalry and Courtly Love*, attempts to make sense of the competing attitudes towards chivalry and courtly love from the Middle Ages to the present day. Chivalry is the locus of a hot debate, she argues, that has persisted at least since its revival in the nineteenth century. She divides the debate into two opposing sides: "Against chivalry, on the one hand stand those critics for whom any attempt to glorify any form

of violence is obscene, and on the other those who see violence in a good cause as sometimes necessary, and the effort to encourage warriors to live by some code of honorable conduct as therefore essential, albeit perennially subject to frustration" (5). This debate was played out in Britain throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as writers appropriated and engaged with the modern, medievalist ideal of chivalry. Wollock, unlike Kaeuper, sees much of value in chivalric ideals. She argues, "However imperfect, ideals of human conduct have provided guidance and inspiration throughout their history, in a way that theories on their own simply cannot. Their removal or discreditation leaves only cynicism, defeatism, or unbalanced utopianism in the name of one theory or another" (5-6). Acknowledging abuses of the ideal, she maintains that "to reject the ideal in question as rotten to the core because of the conduct of the worst abusers makes no sense" (6).

Wollock takes a decidedly broad approach to chivalry, interpreting it as a state of mind or a valuing of certain virtues. Though chivalry thus defined is a part of the New Imperialist cult of chivalry, Wollock does not tell the whole story of a chivalry properly historicized; she fails to account for the incentive to perpetrate violence and overcome other men through physical contest that is integral to both medieval and Victorian chivalry. Chivalry as a heroic attempt to bring justice to the world and as a code available to both soldiers and human rights activists is something quite different from either medieval codes of knightly behaviour or New Imperialist codes of chivalric masculinity. Certainly, the ethos that Wollock identifies runs through these codes, but the violence inherent in medieval and Victorian chivalries, of which Kaeuper warns, is undeniably central to chivalry as construed by Malory, Tennyson, Kipling, Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle, and others.

The nineteenth-century reconstruction of chivalry focused on a code of behaviour, a code which still held relevance to modern gentlemen no longer dressed in suits of armour nor belonging to the feudal system. Mark Girouard's *Return to Camelot* is still the most comprehensive overview of chivalry in the Medieval Revival. Girouard portrays chivalric masculinity as an all pervading, inescapable force in British culture, a force which held dominance for the better part of a century. He emphasizes "the part which the revival of chivalry played in creating ideals of behaviour, by which all gentlemen were influenced, even if they did not consciously realise it" (i). Even though this revival was far removed from the Middle Ages, Girouard maintains that it was based on a perception of what medieval knights were actually like:

> How gentlemen lived and died was partly determined by the way in which they believed knights had lived and died. All gentlemen knew that they must be brave, show no sign of panic or cowardice, be courteous and protective to women and children, be loyal to their comrades and meet death without flinching. (7)

The Victorian gentleman's code of virtues was explicitly medievalist, inspired by the medieval knight as understood through a mixture of history and myth. Modern chivalry took on a life of its own, as Girouard points out throughout the book. He observes, "Victorian and Edwardian chivalry produced its own world of myth and legend, just as much as mediaeval chivalry" (14). The myth and legend of Victorian and Edwardian chivalry, much like chivalry in the Middle Ages, collected its inspirations from real life heroes of the British Empire, the kings and knights of history, and the characters portrayed in modern romance and historical fiction, and it exerted a tremendous influence on masculine behaviour and politics. But as much as it developed a culture

of its own, it never disengaged from its medievalist roots nor lost its close association with the knight.

Chivalry, both as a medieval and as a nineteenth-century cultural ideal, is closely tied to homosociality. My use of the term homosocial relies on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men*, in which Sedgwick seeks to complicate the simplistic distinction between the homosexual and the homosocial, pointing to what she calls "the radically disrupted continuum, in our society, between sexual and nonsexual male bonds as against the relatively smooth and palpable continuum of female homosocial desire" (23). Sedwick's understanding of homosociality as a facet of hegemonic masculinity is particularly important to my work. She writes, "In any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power: a relationship founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence" (25). Homosociality then, often functions to strengthen patriarchal bonds, celebrating male camaraderie and bonding. This has the effect of diminishing the importance and influence of femininity. It is this understanding of homosociality as exclusive male bonding and community building that informs my analysis of a chivalry that functions primarily in terms of relationships between men. A growing body of scholarship studies medieval masculinity through the lens of homosociality.[8] E. Amanda McVitty argues that "medieval masculine identities were discursively constructed and socially performed primarily in relation to other men rather than in opposition to women and the feminine" (460). And Ruth Mazo Karras, in her book, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, notes that women in medieval chivalric literature often "inspired the knights' great deeds, but they functioned mainly to fill

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[8] For more scholarship on chivalry and homosociality, see M.J. Ailes's "The Medieval Male Couple and the Language of Homosociality" and Derek G. Neal's *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*.

prescribed roles, not to wield real power" (153-54). Karras argues that this exclusion of women from the world of militaristic "deeds," led to the solidification of powerful homosocial male bonds. She writes, "The shared experiences of hardship and of violence created homosocial bonds – links among men in which women could never participate. Such homosocial bonds are evident everywhere in Arthurian literature" (62). Examples of these powerful homosocial bonds abound in *Le Morte Darthur*, such as the deep love between Lancelot and Gareth, Lancelot and Lamorak, and Lancelot and Tristram. And the strength of that homosocial love is perhaps most evident when, during his war with Lancelot, Arthur laments, "Much more I am sorrier for my good knights' loss than for the loss of my fair queen; for queens I might have enow, but such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in no company" (XX.ix). The homosocial bonds between knights are a significant component of chivalry, both medieval and modern, and defend and enforce patriarchal social structures.

History

In discussing the medievalism of writers such as Kipling, Haggard, Conan Doyle, and White I find it necessary to examine their understanding of history. To varying degrees these authors researched the history of the Middle Ages and saw the past as knowable. Hayden White notes that while the twentieth century saw challenges to "history's claims to a place among the sciences" (2), Europe in the nineteenth century considered "'historical knowledge' an autonomous domain in the spectrum of the human and physical sciences" (1). White adds that history was not viewed as a "rigorous science" but rather as a "combination of 'science' and 'art.' ... the historian should try to be 'scientific' in his investigation of the documents and in his efforts to determine 'what actually happened' in the past, and … he ought to represent the past

'artistically' to his readers" (136). As White and other scholars of Victorian history note, however, the status of history underwent major changes over the course of the Victorian era. P. J. A. Levine observes that "historical studies ranked alongside those of the sciences as the dominant intellectual resources which shaped Victorian culture" (1), and, writing on the relationship between science and history, she argues, "New and challenging conceptions of time initiated by scientific and technological innovation profoundly affected the Victorian historical perspective … In such a context, history was to acquire powerful human appeal as the intellectual mechanism whereby time could be measured and evaluated" (3). And Edward Adams similarly argues that "this era witnessed a determined and successful effort to advance, if that is the right word, history from the status of a literary art … practiced by accomplished amateurs to that of an academic discipline guarded by professional norms and aspiring, by the end of the century, to the still more heavily-policed status of an objective science" (415). This view of history as "objective science" reached its climax during the period in which Kipling, Haggard, and Conan Doyle wrote most of their work, but had considerably waned by the time of T. H. White's career. As John Burrow writes in his comprehensive study, *A History of Histories*, "The rhetoric of 'objectivity' and 'science' did eventually become muted or abandoned in the twentieth century, with greater awareness of the complexity of the issues the terms raised and some awareness of their costs in the writing of history" (466). It is within this context of the tension between history as either art or science, that the writers I examine read, researched, and wrote.

Kipling and Conan Doyle read widely in scholarly material available to them at the time, and attempted, in their historical fiction, to recreate accurately elements of the medieval world. Kipling seems to have done a fair amount of research for *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and*

Fairies, and, in his autobiography, where he notes the liberties that he did take, he reveals the extent of his historical knowledge. Kipling does not address the many places where his use of history is blatantly unorthodox (such as the medieval colonial adventure in Africa) or subtly inaccurate (such as the Saxons' wearing of the eponymous "winged hats"). Rather, he focuses on moments that display his historical "intuition," aided by his "Daemon," moments where he took liberties that were later supported by archaeological evidence. One such example he gives is from his Parnesius stories, where he "quartered the Seventh Cohort of the Thirtieth (Ulpia Victrix) Legion on the Wall, and asserted that there Roman troops used arrows against the Picts" (*Something of Myself* 189). Kipling alleges, "the first shot was based on honest 'research'; the second was legitimate inference" (189). As he is eager to point out, "a digging-party on the Wall" (189) later proved both of these "Daemon-inspired" hunches true. What Kipling ultimately presents is a model of himself, not as a careful historian strictly following what is absolutely proven in books, but rather as a poet, tapping into what Hayden White calls "historical consciousness," in part relying on the "facts" found in textbooks and in part making "educated" guesses about what might have been. History for Kipling maintains the level of empirical truth while also existing as a kind of living organism with which the modern person can engage. He reflects this understanding of history in the very structure of *Puck of Pook's Hill*, allowing the Edwardian children, Dan and Una, to interrogate historical figures of the past who are themselves imaginary, fictive characters placed in real, historical contexts.

Conan Doyle, like Kipling, conducted a great deal of historical research, which he foregrounds over and above the mystical inspiration touted by Kipling. In his introduction to *Sir Nigel*, Conan Doyle opens with the tongue-in-cheek statement: "Dame History is so austere a lady that if one has been so ill-advised as to take a liberty with her, one should hasten to make

amends by repentance and confession" (vii). His later references to the speech and customs of

the medieval person seem meant to reflect his authority as a historian, and he concludes his brief

intro with a catalogue of the "many books [that] have gone to the building of this one" (viii). He

lists:

> La Croix's 'Middle Ages,' Oman's 'Art of War,' Rietstap's 'Armorial Général,"
>
> De la Borderie's "Histoire de Bretagne," Dame Berner's "Boke of St. Albans,"
>
> "The Chronicle of Jocelyn of Brokeland," "The Old Road," Hewitt's "Ancient
>
> Armour," Coussan's "Heraldry," Boutell's "Arms," Browne's "Chaucer's
>
> England," Cutts's "Scenes of the Middle Ages," Husserand's "Wayfaring Life,"
>
> Ward's "Canterbury Pilgrims," Cornish's "Chivalry," Hastings' "British Archer,"
>
> Strutt's "Sports," Johnes Froissart, Hargrove's 'Archery," Longman's "Edward
>
> III," Wright's "Domestic Manners." With these and many others have I lived for
>
> months. If I have been unable to combine and transfer their effect, the fault is
>
> mine. (viii)

Conan Doyle's list of works spans a range of primary and secondary sources and seems designed

to impress readers with a sense of the depth of research involved. Three of these sources are from

the Middle Ages themselves, such as the *Boke of St. Albans*, which treats on the subjects of

hawking, hunting, heraldry, and fishing, Jocelyn de Brokeland's twelfth-century chronicle of

monastic life, and Jean Froissart, the famous fourteenth century chronicler and major source for

the history of the Hundred Years War. The rest represent what was then fairly recent academic

scholarship on the Middle Ages. I list the full author names, book titles, and years of publication

below: Paul La Croix's *The Arts in the Middle Ages and at the Period of The Renaissance*

(1869), Charles Oman's *The Art of War in the Middle Ages A.D. 378-1515* (1885), Johannes

Rietstap's *Armorial général, contenant la description des armoiries des familles nobles et patriciennes de l'Europe, précédé d'un dictionnaire des termes du blason* (1861), Arthur Le Moyne de La Borderie's *Histoire de Bretagne* (1896), Hilaire Belloc's *The Old Road* (1904), John Hewitt's *Ancient Armour and Weapons in Europe* (1855), John E Cussans's *Handbook of Heraldry* (1893), Charles Boutell's translation of Paul Lacombe's *Arms and Armour in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: also a Descriptive Notice of Modern Weapons* (1871), Matthew Browne's *Chaucer's England* (1869), E. L. Cutts's *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages* (1886), Jean Jules Jusserand's *Les Anglais au Moyen Âge: la vie nomade et les routes d'Angleterre au XIVe siècle* (1884), translated into English as *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages* (1889), Francis Warre Cornish's *Chivalry* (1901), Thomas Hastings's *The British Archer* (1831), Joseph Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (1801), Ely Hargrove's *Anecdotes of Archery: From Earliest Ages to the Year 1791* (1845), William Longman's *The history of the life and times of Edward the Third* (1869), and Thomas Wright's *A History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England During the Middle Ages* (1862). "Ward's 'Canterbury Pilgrims'" has proved difficult to locate, and it is likely that Conan Doyle is referring to Adolphus William Ward's *Chaucer* (1879).

The point of this reading list, which Conan Doyle assures is but a sample of what he read, is that it shows Conan Doyle attempting to go beyond the myths and stereotypes of the Middle Ages and to access the medieval world as a knowable past. His academic reading reflects an interest in "authentic" detail on a variety of subjects in the Middle Ages, from war, chivalry, armour, and archery, to the daily life, speech, and domestic habits of medieval people. This research is reflected in the historical fiction of his novels themselves, which attempt to paint a full picture of life in late fourteenth-century England. Like Kipling, or most any other

contemporary writer of historical fiction, Conan Doyle makes many changes to history and, as I explore in greater depth in the third chapter, uses his self-appointed position of historical authority to portray the Middle Ages in a way that easily serves his ideological beliefs about gender, violence, and nation.

For H. Rider Haggard, on the other hand, history is primarily a source of romance and adventure. Haggard read widely and was an avid student of history, and he grounds his romances in a certain degree of realism and historical specificity. But his work does not make the same pretences to historical authenticity as Conan Doyle or Kipling and is deliberately more liberal in its use of the past. In *King Solomon's Mines*, for instance, Haggard's inclusion of a mythical Phoenician city in South Africa connected with the ancient king Solomon is purely fanciful, based on popular misconceived theories rather than diligently researched scholarship. Patrick Brantlinger observes that "When Karl Mauch discovered the ruins of Zimbabwe in 1871, no European believed they had been constructed by Africans; so arose the theory that they were the ruins of King Solomon's Golden Ophir, the work of a higher, fairer race – a myth that archaeologists began to controvert only in 1906" (195). And Heidi Kaufman further elucidates how this theory of the "white ruins" of Africa was propagated in the years before Haggard wrote his book:

> Popular fiction and newspaper accounts helped produce the myth of Solomonic history in southern Africa. While most of these accounts were completely spurious, designed to entertain rather than educate audiences, they helped fuel the popularity of Biblical anthropology while also offering a justification for the presence of white men in Africa – in keeping with Solomon's empire tradition and in competition with it. Accordingly, Europeans mistakenly assumed that the

ruins of the Great Zimbabwe were the remains of King Solomon's Golden Ophir,

built by Phoenicians and financed by the Queen of Sheba. (518)

This theory, though popular in Haggard's day, was of course not based on any kind of rigorous historical research, and Haggard's employment of it is, at best, highly questionable. More importantly, it reveals a kind of playful attitude towards history that is less concerned with verifiable fact than with what is both "entertaining" and politically expedient. The Solomonic African theory, because it fits with Haggard's political and racial biases, and makes for what he saw as good fiction (he employs a similar trope in *She*), forms the "historical" basis for his pseudo-historical fiction. Similarly, the "medieval" functions as a kind of romanticized archetype in his work drawn from romanticized portrayals of Vikings.

T. H. White's medievalism represents a marked departure from the nineteenth-century empirical attitude towards history. The twentieth century saw significant challenges to teleological models of history and grand narratives of progress, pejoratively termed "Whig history" by Herbert Butterfield in 1931. Burrow examines the challenges raised in the 1920s-1940s, and notes how British historians especially, like Butterfield and Lewis Namier, "Struck a powerfully influential blow at key aspects of the liberal grand narrative of freedom" (467). It is in this context of radical reevaluation, that White wrote his Arthurian novels. Like Kipling, Haggard, and Conan Doyle, White was well versed in history, and his *The Once and Future King* teems with detailed descriptions of the medieval world — of falconry, heraldry, agriculture, warfare, etc. — that reveal his extensive familiarity with the historical facts of medieval history. Yet White often employs deliberate anachronism, playfully juxtaposing the history and culture of everything within the millennium conventionally categorized as the Middle Ages with starkly modern imagery and language. He draws explicit parallels between the chivalry of the Norman

aristocracy and the imperialist, public school ethos, and he mixes conservatives, liberals, communists, and fascists, with medieval barons, Lollards, Normans, and Saxons, complicating and breaking down the distinctions between past and present. White fits the whole of England's medieval history, from the Norman Conquest to the dawn of early modernity, within the single lifespan of King Arthur. These "errors" do not stem from ignorance, but, rather, from a deliberate attempt to challenge the grand narratives of history favoured in the nineteenth century by both Whigs and Tories and to offer more complex, less linear models for understanding history.

Masculinity

As Peter N. Stearns observes, "Manhood is an evolving social construct reflecting some continuities but many more changes. In talking about manhood, we are inevitably talking about history" (3). While that is true, it is still helpful, before narrowing the focus to historically specific masculinities, to engage with general theories of masculinity and to establish a basic definition of the term "masculinity." David D. Gilmore defines masculinity as simply "the approved way of being an adult male in any given society" (1) and suggests "that there is something almost generic, something repetitive, about the criteria of man-playing, that underlying the surface variation in emphasis or form are certain convergences in concepts, symbolizations, and exhortations of masculinity in many societies but – and this is important – by no means in all" (2-3). The nearly generic nature of performing masculinity allows us to trace common patterns of masculine norms and constructions throughout history, but we must be careful to locate our study within the specifics of the historical moment while also not overstating the radical exceptionalism of a specific instance of masculinity.

R. W. Connell, whose theory of hegemonic masculinity greatly informs my work, stresses the importance of recognizing the multiplicities of masculinities at play in a culture at the same time. She advises that we must be specific in locating exactly which kind of masculinity we are talking about: "We have to examine the relations between them. Further, we have to unpack the milieux of class and race and scrutinize the gender relations operating within them" (76). Attention to the number of competing masculinities leads us to identify a hegemonic masculinity, for one out of this variety of masculinities inevitably assumes the dominant position and actively subordinates the others. There is no universal hegemonic masculinity, Connell argues; rather, the dominant form of masculinity varies from culture to culture. As she defines it, "'Hegemonic masculinity' is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (77). She continues, "At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). Engaging with Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity, I examine the specifics of British, white, middle- and upper-class chivalric masculinity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and look at how the figure of the chivalrous gentleman achieved hegemonic status over all other competing masculinities.

A further point that Connell raises, which I return to throughout my thesis, is that hegemonic masculinity is always tied to real political power. She clarifies,

> That is not to say that the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are
> always the most powerful people … Nevertheless, hegemony is likely to be

established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual. (77)

The interplay between masculinity and power means that those most evidently embodying hegemonic standards and pursuing the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, even if not in power themselves, have always the backing of institutional, political power and that those in power acknowledge the supremacy of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. This means that the nation and men are locked into a mutually informing relationship in which each is dependent on the other for existence and identity, each constantly defining the other. Graham Dawson helps illuminate this idea nicely:

> Masculinities are lived out in the flesh, but fashioned in the imagination … If masculinity has had a role in imagining the nation, then so too has the nation played its part in constituting preferred forms of masculinity. These forms of manliness that have proved efficacious for nationalist endeavour have been approvingly recognized and furthered with all the power at the disposal of the state, while other subversive or non-functional forms (notably the effeminate man or the homosexual) have met with disapprobation and repression in explicitly national terms. A dominant conception of masculine identity – the true 'Englishman' – was both required and underpinned by the dominant version of British national identity in such a way that each reinforced the other. (1-2)

Dawson's model of the relationship between masculinity and power keeps us from overemphasizing the effect of one on the other. Hegemonic masculinity such as the chivalric masculinity of New Imperialism was partially formed by the empire as a response to its need for soldiers, but this masculinity also pushed the empire to become more aligned with chivalric

masculine characteristics. Thus, the aggressive masculinity of New Imperialism, formed in part

to uphold and protect the expansionist ambitions of the Empire, also shaped the British Empire

into a more aggressive and competitive political entity, that, in turn, required aggressive men to

continue its governance.

This aggressive masculinity of New Imperialism is often termed hypermasculinity in

scholarship. I thus find it necessary to define hypermasculinity in order to discuss how chivalric

masculinity compares. The term hypermasculinity was first introduced as an academic concept in

Donald L. Mosher and Mark Sirkin's 1984 paper, "Measuring a Macho Personality

Constellation." In it, they break down the hypermasculine male into three characteristics: "(a)

calloused sex attitudes toward women, (b) a conception of violence as manly, and (c) a view of

danger as exciting" (151). New Imperialism and chivalric masculinity fully embraced the latter

two points and engaged with the first to varying degrees. Some of the most jingoistic literature

displays overtly misogynistic attitudes, often excluding women or displaying discomfort with

their sexuality and the potential threat they pose to male community, while other literature

interested in chivalric masculinity is more neutral or even somewhat respectful to its female

characters. Even in the most respectful texts, however, women occupy a marginal place, and are

deliberately excluded from the idealized male community, but, on the other hand, even in the

most misogynistic texts, there is not much resembling the exploitative and callous sex to which

the paper refers. Despite some ambivalence with the first item then, Mosher and Sirkin's other

two points ring true for elements of chivalric masculinity. As they explain:

> Violence as Manly refers to the attitude among some men that violent aggression,
> either verbal or physical, is an acceptable, even preferable, masculine expression
> of power and dominance toward other men … Danger as Exciting reflects the

attitude that survival in dangerous situations, including "tempting fate," is a

manly display of masculine power over the dangerous environment. (151-152)

Certainly, we see positive constructions of violence and of danger appearing frequently in

imperialist literature in such quantity as to be considered tenets of chivalric masculinity.

Violence and risk taking are celebrated as inherently manly and as a form of ritual of manhood,

wherein a boy, by embracing peril and experiencing violence, matures into a man. Elsewhere,

Mosher, publishing with Silvan S. Tomkins, describes the figure of the hypermasculine warrior:

The macho warrior holds dominion over all he has conquered – he is master and

patriarch. Slaves, wives, and children are his property, owing him respect and

fealty. To maintain that dominion, the macho man must be prepared to risk all by

acts of great daring, to compel enemy men to submit through violence, and to

dominate female adversaries through callous sex. (64)

Though the character that they sketch has points in common with the imperialist chivalric male,

it would be inaccurate to suggest that his is the same ideal. There is none of the chivalrous

gentleman's restraint or willingness to sacrifice for others in this description, only an unbridled

fantasy of male supremacy. It is important, then, to make a distinction between chivalric

masculinity and hypermasculinity and not to treat the terms as interchangeable, though often

there is a great deal of overlap. In this thesis, I make use of both terms, using "chivalric

masculinity" to refer to the entire set of dominant masculine characteristics and practices and

reserving "hypermasculinity" for when the celebration of violence and peril for their own sakes

overshadows restraint and courtesy.

My thesis tracks the progression of hegemonic masculinity from the 1870s up until just

after the Second World War, a period that encompasses New Imperialism as historians

conventionally define it. The masculinity of New Imperialism has its roots in an earlier Victorian masculinity known as "muscular Christianity," or, alternatively, "Christian manliness," represented by its main spokesman, Charles Kingsley. Muscular Christianity has been well studied over the years, and my thesis builds on much of this great quantity of scholarship. I begin with Walter Houghton, who influentially characterized the mid-Victorian "ideal of strength" as "a combination of force and firmness" (198). He adds:

> On the one hand, there is enormous admiration for the power of machines, and of the men who make them and run them; for the healthy, vigorous body; for the combative and even belligerent temper with its refusal to recognize defeat or mistakes, and its useful assumption that those it dislikes are knaves or weaklings. On the other hand, there is the complementary admiration for "character" – the mastery of the passions, patience and resolution, the controlled energy focused on work. (198)

Houghton's analysis, old as it is, remains pretty standard in the field, though his linking of muscular Christianity to Puritanism, Darwinism, and "squirearchy" have been, to a degree replaced by other models. One enduring insight is his observation that "some of the most aggressive Victorians were profoundly insecure" (216). This insecurity, he suggests, is at the heart of their obsession with strength and virility, their need to categorize themselves apart from women, and their frequently cruel derision of "weaker" men. The recognition of this insecurity has been foundational to most studies of Victorian masculinity, as has Houghton's framing of muscular Christianity as a strained merging of Christianity and Social Darwinism.

Norman Vance's 1985 study, *The Sinews of the Spirit*, is another key piece of scholarship in the field of Victorian masculinity. Vance takes issue with the term "muscular Christianity," as

did Kingsley himself, because "it draws attention more to muscularity than to Christianity" (2)

and prefers instead the term "Christian manliness." Accompanying this manliness is the

coterminous rise of chivalric masculinity; as Vance describes, "By the 1850s chivalry had come

to be regarded as one of the attributes of the true English gentleman. The knight of mediaeval

chivalry and the gentleman of earlier times had fused in the popular imagination into a

conventional moral ideal democratically applicable to all classes of society" (17). Though

Vance's complaint about the focus on the muscularity of muscular Christianity is well founded,

the fact that this term caught on with Kingsley's contemporaries should not be readily dismissed,

for it is indicative of the general trend towards New Imperialist masculinity, which was far less

interested in the Christian aspect of muscular Christianity than in the celebration of physical

prowess. As Vance himself argues, the manliness found in the writings of a New Imperialist like

Kipling "is tougher and much less religious than in Kingsley and Hughes but it is also more

psychologically perceptive" (196).

There are a few other key aspects of Kingsleyan masculinity that I wish to highlight for

their influence on New Imperialism. One of these is the definition of manliness as strength that

remained pivotal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Donald E. Hall writes:

> For Kingsley, Hughes, and others of the period, 'manliness' was synonymous
>
> with strength, both physical and moral, and the term 'muscular Christianity'
>
> highlights these writers' consistent, even insistent, use of the ideologically
>
> charged and aggressively poised male body as a point of reference in and
>
> determiner of a masculinist economy of signification and (all too often)
>
> degradation. (9)

This conflation of manliness with moral and physical strength has enormous impact on the construction of the hegemonic, chivalric male. David Rosen expands on this celebration of aggressive masculine energy, embodied in the Victorian idea of *thumos*, originally one of the three parts of the human psyche in Plato's *Phaedrus*; together with *eros*, it is to be reined in and directed by *logos*. Rosen explains, "The force of *thumos*, as Kingsley imagines it, is spiritual, primal, animal, potent, and potentially destructive" (31). *Thumos* is integral to the formation of this rugged masculinity, for "manliness can only be achieved by allowing this primal force to flow" (30).

A major concern of Kingsley's, and of the writers who followed his tradition, was the degradation of masculinity and the weakening of this *thumos*. The idea that the modern Englishman was out of touch with primal energy proved the stimulus for the rise of the ideal chivalric man of New Imperialism and particularly for his fascination with the "primitive" man. The "primitive" had never lost touch with primal energy and was thus figured as a hypermasculine threat to the effeminized male. C. J. W. -L. Wee argues that "Kingsley's literary and historical investigations of the 'primitive' in both European and non-European cultures … helped give impetus to the rise of late-Victorian New Imperialism" (66). One way in particular in which this rise occurred is through the simultaneous investigation into both England's past and into the present cultures of "primitive" peoples. As Wee observes, "A primitive vigor and character could be recovered either from non-European lands – from someone else's culture – where manly energy was unconstrained by modern life, or from English historical precedents, where a united nation existed" (68).

Atavistic fascination with the "primitive" comes to dominate the literature of New Imperialism. In poetry, in romance, and in academic writing, primitive masculinity looms over

white masculinity, posing a threat to the European man, ostensibly effeminized by the convenience and technological advancements of the industrialized West. The "primitive" also offers the opportunity for recovering that lost primal energy, however, and thus we see British imperialist writers characterizing the "primitive" man as a worthy foe to be competed against and ultimately triumphed over. This idealized "primitive" or "barbarian" allows for the construction of elaborate masculine fantasies in which Englishmen are forced into "uncivilized" situations where a Darwinian struggle for survival sees them defeat a "primitive" foe through a measure of greater intelligence and brawn. This explicitly racist narrative demonstrates the superior evolution of European culture and allows modern men to reclaim their primal inheritance and quiet the insecurities concerning degradation.

Embracing New Imperialism, Britain underwent radical militarization and experienced a crisis of masculinity that exaggerated the muscularity of the Kingsleyan muscular Christian. The ideal male of the hegemonic, chivalric masculinity of the turn of the century was strong, aggressive, and willing to die for his country. Ostensibly modelled on the medieval knight, he was chivalrous, protecting women and children and demonstrating courtesy and respect to his male equals, even those on opposing sides. But he was also violent and dangerous, though that violence was supposed to be confined within acceptable limits. Often, in literature and in real life, the restraint of chivalric masculinity shows cracks, and seemingly limitless aggression is presented unproblematically, even admiringly. New Imperialism's militarism required men who were capable of extreme acts of violence against the Empire's enemies.

Several scholars have written on the complex and problematic class and racial politics of New Imperialism and its formation of a new ideal masculinity in service of the demands of the Empire. Rosen poses several possibilities for this shift:

> The fear of democratization and the growing voice of women, a desire for
> conquest, the muscular sciences of evolution and geology, and the later Freudian
> and Jungian psychologies perhaps reinforced aspects of Kingsley's idea of
> masculinity and allowed his idea of deep structure to inhabit even the most
> unlikely sectors of culture. (39)

And Regenia Gagnier describes "a crisis of masculinity in the 1890s of the male on all levels –
economic, political, social, psychological, as producer, as power, as role, as lover" (98). She
examines the social construction of the gentleman, focusing in particular on the role of public
education in taking boys from the domestic sphere and readying them for imperial life. She
argues that "in the strategies employed in the public schools, the emphasis on gender
construction of the British male cannot be overemphasized, from the removal of the boy from the
domestic matrix to the assumption of his role in the Empire" (94). She adds to her discussion of
this process of masculinization by contrasting the dandy to the gentleman, looking at how each
was defined in many ways against the other:

> The preoccupation with the definition and construction of the gentleman did not
> substantially differ from a similar preoccupation with the definition and
> construction of the dandy: both were commodified in the cult of personality. The
> gentleman was the magnum opus of the middle class, and the dandy was the
> repressed unconscious of mass society. (98)

Though the gentleman viewed the dandy as unnatural and contrived, Gagnier draws attention to
the likewise highly contrived and laborious process that went into the creation of the gentleman.
The perceived decadence and effeminacy of the dandy led in part to the heightened frenzy to

double down on the masculinizing of young English males, a process that continued to enshrine the chivalrous man as the ideal in British culture.

J. A. Mangan has written extensively on this process of crafting the hegemonic masculine role, especially in his book, *Manufactured Masculinity: Making Imperial Manliness, Morality, and Militarism.* In it, Mangan looks at how chivalric masculinity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was produced and enforced through education, popular culture, propaganda, and sport. He focuses in particular on the heightened sense of militarism and celebration of war. Mangan writes, "At the level of … 'high culture', emphasis on military matters was intense. It amounted to the worship of war as a sacred path to moral purity, ascendancy and domination. In the second half of the nineteenth century war came to be seen as a moral mandate" (127). This worship of war, Mangan argues, fed directly into the rush to take up arms in 1914, and contributed to a cultural fascination with military might. This militarism meant that a greater onus was placed on men to conform to a hegemonic masculinity that required strength and wholehearted devotion to the British Empire. The model for this hegemonic masculinity is the medieval knight, whose fearlessness, martial prowess, and unfaltering devotion to a great cause was manipulated in the service of empire. As Mangan describes, "The imagery of chivalry penetrated deeply into the fabric of late Victorian culture. The subaltern – the instrument of imperial force – was now frequently portrayed as a mystic pre-medieval paladin. Imperial heroes were regularly compared to knights and Empire was the Holy Grail" (130). The incorporation of medieval myth into the language of empire was for the specific purpose of recruitment and the construction of a useful masculinity. Mangan argues:

> The heroic myths of empire were essentially militaristic and were used to seduce the young into appropriate attitudes and actions. These mythical imperialists were

moral symbols, in life and in death. In the eyes of their contemporaries they

expanded the moral universe through the defeat of 'barbarism', the rule of

Western law and the extension of Christendom. (131)

It is this use of imperialist myth, specifically the medievalist myths of chivalry, to form men into

useful servants of the British Empire that I focus on in this thesis. Literary works from this

period, even works written by imperialist authors, engage with this dominant gender discourse in

complex, even surprising ways. Mangan's work is foundational to my study, but it examines

mainly popular culture, and what literature it does engage is placed within a larger social

framework, whereas I look at how this push towards hegemonic masculinity is taken up in

specific imperialist literary texts. Additionally, though Mangan does describe the role of chivalry

in the myth of empire, he does not examine in much detail the complex medievalisms of New

Imperialism, and how the resurgence of chivalry fits within a larger framework of enthusiasm for

the medieval past.

Another work on which I base much of my thinking on imperial masculinity is Bradley

Deane's *Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular*

Literature, 1890-1914. Like other scholars I have mentioned, Deane traces the radical shift in

masculine norms that occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the New

Imperialism, which he defines as the "cultural conviction, rooted in political discourse but

broadly diffused through the media of popular culture, that the Empire was the source and proof

of Britain's glory" (9). In New Imperialism, the new icons of masculinity became "the untamed

frontiersman, the impetuous boy, and the unapologetically violent soldier" (1). Deane

characterizes the new masculinity as a radical shift rather than a mere evolution of preceding

norms. He writes, "Just as the New Imperialism was not merely an escalation of earlier political

commitments but a seismic revision of the Empire's purpose, so too was imperial masculinity marked by its readiness to reject earlier masculine values" (7). More interestingly, he challenges the axiom of post-colonial theory and criticism that the colonizer regards the colonized as completely subservient and subhuman and the colonized male as essentially effeminate. Rather, he argues that an idealized brotherhood of manhood was popularized that saw "primitive" men as retaining an essential manly quality that "civilized" men had lost. In this thinking, the "primitive" man had a great deal to teach the "civilized" man. Deane writes:

> This agonistic model could imagine putatively savage peoples as important players in a perpetual masculine contest, and not only as the opponents of British men but also as their counterparts or guides. At the same time, the dream of unceasing competition between men could naturalize and support the increasingly aggressive values that characterized the politics of imperialism from the 1870s to the First World War. (4)

Deane's description of the New Imperialist position on the racial "other" is illuminating. It opens up the complexities of the imperial characterization of interactions between Englishmen and the peoples of the British Empire's colonies. What we have here is not a simplistic denigration of the savage other, nor is it an egalitarian appreciation for the non-white male. Rather, as Deane explores throughout his book, it is a fantasy in which male competition is the nature of all racial relations, so that aggressive masculinity becomes necessary and good. The racial other is a source of paranoia about the virility of English men and is viewed as a worthy challenger to be competed against and overcome. A part of Deane's argument that I find particularly useful is his examination of how the obsession with the "primitive" led to an increasing interest in "primitive" cultures, even those of the past. I build on Deane's ideas of atavism and a brotherhood of manly

men to argue that this idealized brotherhood was extended to the peoples of the medieval past, and that this impulse is partially responsible for the revival of chivalry and an interest in medieval masculinity.

As with studies of the Medieval Revival, the conventional narratives of New Imperialist masculinity see the First World War as the point at which New Imperialism ends. Deane, though he admits that "historians have disagreed about … the boundaries of the period to which it [New Imperialism] should be applied" (9), presents the typical view that New Imperialism lasted from the beginning of the 1870s to its "collapse on the battlefields of the First World War" (9). Similarly, Mark Girouard takes the history of chivalric revival in *Return to Camelot* up to the First World War, though he admits that it would be interesting to study the "chivalric elements" of the 1930s and 40s. Ultimately, however, he maintains that "the story has been brought to a close with the 1914-18 war; since the war both brought Victorian chivalry to its climax and helped to destroy it, it forms a natural termination" (i). But, as Frantzen and Goebel argue, chivalry did not perish in the First World War but continued to thrive well into the 1940s, seeing in fact a boost in the interwar years, along with the hegemonic masculinity modelled on modern chivalry. In fact, Praseeda Gopineth argues that this hegemonic masculinity lasted until the 1950s, at which point it was supplanted by what Martin Green, in 1959, called the "decent man" who "was a response to the nation's de-linking from a failing empire and the fear of an impending war" (Gopinath 8-9). In *Scarecrows of Chivalry*, Gopinath focuses on the "*long duree* of the Victorian gentleman" which she argues extends beyond the Second World War. She also seeks to connect the periods before and after the Second World War, "two periods that most literary and cultural scholars read as historically distinct" (5). She tracks the "move from the still functioning ideals of gentlemanliness in their fragmented form in the late imperial moment to the

democratized, post-imperial petit bourgeois mutations of an inherited gentlemanliness adapted to a shrunken ex-centric island" (4). She asserts the persistence in the inter-war years of gentlemanly values, such as "self-restraint, governance, disinterestedness or decency, chivalry, and detachment" (4) and concludes that there is overwhelming evidence for the "continued determining presence of an earlier gender script" (4). I build on Gopinath's work to examine how the lingering effects of chivalric masculinity after the Second World War are taken up in a literary text like White's *Once and Future King.* While Gopinath does not explore the medievalist roots that lay beneath twentieth-century English chivalry and looks at it almost entirely as a carry-over of Victorian norms, I tie the endurance and demise of chivalric masculinity to the concurrent state of medievalism and examine how White, within the context that Gopinath helps construct, demonstrates the interweaving and simultaneous collapse of both discourses.

Drawing together these strands of medievalism, hegemonic masculinity, imperialism, and chivalry, I interrogate specific moments during the period between the 1850s and 1950s, specific literary texts that take up these dominant cultural discourses and create narratives that engage with the political and social forces of New Imperialism in often surprising ways. Using the framework of the ultranationalism of New Imperialism, and the aggressive hegemonic masculinity and conservative medievalist myth that supported it, I examine how several white, male British authors hailing from the middle and upper classes dramatize these issues, whether to reinforce or to question them and how they manage such themes as England's medieval past and inheritance; the role, morality, and duties of the Empire; and what it means to be a man – particularly a white gentleman invested in upholding a set of "chivalric" principles – in a social climate that many feared was eroding the power and virility of the English male. The authors

whom I put forward for study in the chapters that follow approach these themes from a variety of different backgrounds, social positions, and lived experiences, and they explore them in a range of genres, yet, for all of them, the dominant discourses of medievalism, empire, and masculinity form a common framework. From this context, they draw their assumptions about the Middle Ages, about Britain's place in the world and in history, and about chivalry as a code of masculine conduct, and against it they diverge, react, and rebel, forming a body of literature that often exhibits racist, sexist, chauvinistic, and violent tendencies, but that, sometimes deliberately, also challenges hegemonic ideas of masculinity, imperialism, and historical progress. Ultimately, I believe that studying these authors with a focus on chivalric medievalism will help illuminate the close association of medievalism, chivalry, toxic masculinity and white supremacy that persists, as I discuss at the beginning of this introduction, in our present political, social, and cultural landscapes.

Though I limit my scope to the period between the 1850s and the 1950s, I by no means suggest that these dates are firm boundaries for the themes I take up here, nor do I attempt to account for every author or text within this period invested in chivalric masculinity. Rather, I highlight specific moments within that hundred-year period for their special significance specifically in relation to Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* either as direct adaptations of Arthurian legend or as texts that participate in the discourse of imperial chivalric masculinity inspired by Malory. Writers like Howard Pyle and Mark Twain, though they produced popular and influential adaptations of *Le Morte Darthur*, would have required me to broaden my focus beyond Britain to include the American literary tradition. Similarly, the Pre-Raphaelites were deeply fascinated by Malory – William Morris especially contributed significantly to Victorian Arthuriana – but they operated outside the imperialist, Tennysonian tradition that is my focus. In

selecting New Imperialists for study, I was again required to leave out significant figures such as John Buchan, Robert Louis Stevenson, and G. A. Henty to favour a selection of authors and texts that would best demonstrate the range of medievalism in Victorian romance.

I begin with a study of Malory, viewing him through Victorian Arthuriana, especially Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King,* by far the most significant of the nineteenth-century adaptations of Malory and a text whose influence on the medievalist imagination of Victorian and Edwardian England is difficult to overstate. By reading Malory in conjunction with his Victorian adaptors and editors, I interrogate the rise of the *Le Morte Darthur*'s popularity and the ways that Malory was read, celebrated, and problematized by the end of the nineteenth century. Through Tennyson, Malory came to have a tremendous influence on the understanding of the Middle Ages' pertinence to the modern British Empire and of the continued value of knightly behaviour. Tennyson erases much of the moral ambiguity of Malory's characterization, turning his Arthur into a spotless force of good, not plagued by the sin of incest that haunts and ultimately destroy him in Malory's text. Moreover, Tennyson emphasizes the imperialism of Arthur's court; in Malory, he defeats neighbouring kingdoms and even the Roman Empire to become an undisputed emperor of Europe. In the *Idylls*, Tennyson exaggerates that imperialism to make Arthur an even more aggressive conqueror and his questing knights the colonial agents of that imperialism. The masculinity of Malory's knights, embodied in their martial prowess, fearlessness, and loyalty to their king becomes, for Tennyson, the greatest element of imperial success, and the fate of Camelot depends on the cohesion of the masculine camaraderie of the round table. The fall of Arthur's kingdom, which serves as a warning to the British Empire of Tennyson's day, is caused by the unmanly treachery of some of its knights, as well as the adulterous, feminine intrusion of Guinevere, to whom Tennyson is much less sympathetic than

Malory, and on whom is placed the greatest weight for the tragedy of the Arthurian utopia. This chapter demonstrates one of the ways, arguably the most influential, that Malory was interpreted and refigured and introduces the medievalist origins of the chivalric masculinity that the next few chapters discuss.

I then proceed in my next chapter to a study of Rudyard Kipling, the English writer perhaps most synonymous with New Imperialism. Born in India, Kipling approaches the "homeland" with something of an outsider's perspective, and, throughout his vast literary corpus, reveals a deep concern for the moral, political health of the English nation and the British Empire. In *Puck of Pook's Hill*, a book ostensibly written for children, Kipling explicitly addresses his medievalist inheritance, modelling for England's youth a heroic masculinity and a sacrificial posture towards the nation, located in the "lost" virtues of England's past. Though Kipling does not concern himself with King Arthur or with Malory directly, his investment in chivalry, empire, and medieval history sees him deeply immersed in the discourse of chivalric masculinity that arose out of the increasing popularity of *Le Morte Darthur* and the many Victorian adaptations of Arthurian legend. Though he exhibits a conventional belief in progress, Kipling also represents history as repetitive; as the stories in *Puck of Pook's Hill* illuminate, colonization and change of power are constants, and the same chivalric virtues that aided the Romans, the Normans, and the Tudors need to be inculcated in young Edwardian Britons as well. Kipling ties these chivalric virtues directly to the health of the empire, and demonstrates the closely related, mutually informing discourses of hegemonic masculinity and aggressive imperialism. Kipling's influence over his own and the following generation was inescapable, even by those who loathed his jingoism, and this chapter attempts to sketch out how Kipling

engaged with and contributed to the discourse of New Imperialism, medievalism, and aggressive masculinity.

Other contemporary writers, such as Sir H. Rider Haggard and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, also do not engage with *Le Morte Darthur* or other Arthurian material directly, but, like Kipling, they reveal a fascination with the Middle Ages and knighthood, and their work zealously participates in the formation of an imperialist, chivalric masculinity deeply informed by Malorian medievalism. Their work dramatizes the New Imperialist fantasy of "going primitive," atavistically embracing the medieval past by temporarily shedding the trappings of "civilization." They explore this masculinist fantasy in a genre that they termed "romance," self avowedly a departure from the realist novel and all its associations with "femininity" and "domesticity." Unlike the novel, the romance eschewed realism and elaborate, psychologically complex characters for the heroics and action-based narrative of "pre-modern" literature. Named for the medieval genre, romance modelled itself on everything from the ancient epic poetry of Homer and Virgil to medieval heroic literature and relied on a particular strand of medievalism that drew from the violence and knight errantry of chivalric romance. My third chapter engages with this "romance revival" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing in particular on Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and Conan Doyle's *Sir Nigel* as texts that use romance to stage celebrations of hypermasculine virtues such as violence and thrill-seeking, and that seek to recapture the Kingsleyan *thumos* from the "primitive" in their own history and in other cultures.

Finally, my fourth chapter looks at T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, a literary response to the chivalric, imperialist, medievalist tradition with which the other three chapters engage and a direct response to the *Idylls of the King*, as it also directly adapts *Le Morte Darthur* for a modern readership. Like Tennyson, White constructs a strange and anachronistic medieval

world that is not directly located in any one time but is rather a conflagration of everything conventionally "medieval." In White's hands, the Middle Ages become a period as troubled as the modern world, serving as a mirror for the political and human ills of twentieth-century Europe. As the Middle Ages were the foundation of Victorian and Edwardian chivalry, White casts them as the perfect setting to depict and question the values of hegemonic masculinity, ultranationalism, and even the very idea of social progress itself, so integral to New Imperialism's characterization of England, the Western world, and the "primitive" places it colonized. The very act of rendering a recognizably modern medieval world challenges teleological models of history. White uses his mythical medieval Britain as the setting for an allegory of the rise and fall of the modern British Empire and challenges the idea of modern, Western superiority, refuting the concept that England has evolved for the better from its own past, or even, as we see in *The Sword in the Stone*, that humanity is nobler or more superior than other species. In Arthur's reign as king of Britain, White traces the full trajectory of Whig history from the anarchy of the "medieval" barons to the emergence of a "modern" constitutional monarchy. And while Arthur's utopian vision does usher in a period of idyllic stability that corresponds with the *Pax Britannica* of New Imperialism, his kingdom is soon thrown into even greater turmoil by the more "modern" and "civilized" ills that arise. The infighting among his knights of the round table and the rise of Mordred's medieval fascists brings the whole utopian, civilizing project to ruin and reflects White's pessimistic vision of the course of history and of twentieth-century politics. This last chapter brings the thesis full circle by investigating a text that, while also turning to Malory and engaging with the medievalism of chivalry, undermines the entire New Imperialist project of masculinity, medievalism, and imperialism.

Taken together, these texts form a rough literary history of hegemonic masculinity, medievalism, and imperialism in the hundred-year span from 1850 to 1950 and trace the influence of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* on modern British imperial literature. Malory's influence is felt in a multitude of artistic, musical, and literary media and in countries all across the Anglophonic world, but I focus on that influence only as it is felt in English literature. My study does however cover a fairly large spectrum of genres and authors, from epic poetry to young adult romance and encompasses medievalisms ranging from historical fiction to "medieval" fantasy to works that only invoke the Middle Ages obliquely. Through all of this, I reveal the inescapability of chivalric medievalism and offer insights into how texts in specific moments engage with these dominant cultural themes, how hegemonic values are altered by their depiction in literature, and how those values are then in turn embraced by the culture at large. In literature, we see these ideas complexly intertwined, see the cracks and insecurities of imperial hegemony revealed and confronted, and see the drama unfold of the rise and fall of the medievalist masculinity of New Imperialism.

Chapter 1 - An English Homer: Malory at the *Fin-de-siècle*

For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown.

– William Caxton's "Preface" to *Le Morte Darthur*

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century romance, *Le Morte Darthur*,[9] underwent a radical transformation from being looked upon as an antiquated curiosity or juvenile adventure tale to being hailed as *the* English national epic. By examining how Malory underwent this radical transformation to become viewed as one of the great artists of the Western tradition, and *Le Morte Darthur* a morally improving text for youth, we uncover the complex interwoven discourses of masculinity, chivalry, medievalism, nationalism, and empire that characterized the British Empire at the *fin-de-siècle*. This chapter examines how *Le Morte Darthur* functioned in a symbiotic relationship with New Imperialism. Malory's text served as both the direct and indirect inspiration for Victorian and Edwardian chivalry, providing an exemplar for masculine behaviour, attitudes towards women, and ways of conceptualizing violence on the individual and national levels. In return, these readers brought their own understanding of chivalry and the Middle Ages to their interpretations of Malory, seeing in him the nationalist and masculinist attributes they valued.

Writing at a historic low point, when English armies were being routed in Scotland, Ireland, and France and the country torn apart by the civil wars that comprised the Wars of the Roses, Malory looks longingly back on the fantasy of an idealized English past. Many Malory scholars have pointed out the ways in which Malory's Arthur seems to be a call back to former

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[9] Spellings of Malory's work, and the characters within that work, vary considerably. To avoid confusion, I have chosen to use the variants that are most commonly in use today. I thus refer exclusively to *Le Morte Darthur* (unless quoting a source that uses a different spelling) and I favour the more modern spellings of Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, Gawain, etc.

heroic monarchs such as Edward III or Henry V. Eugène Vinaver argues that "the idealized portrait of Arthur may well be interpreted as a tribute to Henry V" (xxxi), and Felicity Riddy adds that this book "reads like a fictional version of Henry's Norman conquests" (68). King Arthur, unlike the English monarchs of the late fifteenth century, rules over a stable, unified kingdom and exhibits the kind of strong leadership necessary to maintain a strong empire. He leads his armies against the neighbouring kings of Scotland and Wales and then against the Roman Empire itself, establishing Camelot as the centre of a vast chivalric empire, attracting the greatest fighting men in the Christian world to join his imperial project of taming and civilizing the world, bringing petty tyrants under his dominion and putting an end to barbaric customs.

The heroic masculinity that builds and sustains Arthur's Camelot is inextricably tied to violence. Men demonstrate that they are worthy of "worship" by demonstrating their "prowess" through various feats of arms against other knights. Acceptable chivalric violence is both corporate and individual, and *Le Morte Darthur* spends a considerable amount of time describing the demonstration of prowess in full scale battles, tournaments, and quests. In Gareth's tale alone, for example, the young knight engages in single combat with six knights, relieves the siege of Dame Lyonesse's castle by battling The Red Knight of the Red Launds, and concludes his adventure by participating in a grand tournament. As Vinaver observes, "The technique of fighting, and more particularly of single combat, is Malory's favourite topic; he speaks of it with confidence and authority" (xxxiii). And Andrew Lynch similarly argues, "It is in the thematics of combat themselves, more than in a wider pattern of moral conduct they may construct, that the significance of the fights, and hence of the 'hoole book' (1260/16) which they dominate, can be best located" (*Malory's Book of Arms* xiv). Fighting is central to Malory's whole chivalric vision

and it is in the specifics of martial technique and conduct in battle that his model of masculinity emerges.

For violence to be acceptable in Malory's ethos, it must be directed outwards, or else it inevitably devours the kingdom in civil war. Foreign war is just, moral, and necessary, and Malory asserts that just wars of conquest and knight errantry promote an ideal of healthy masculinity. Catharine Nall, in her study of late fifteenth-century war rhetoric, concludes that the "arguments concerning the mutual dependence of outward war and inward peace had particular force and relevance in the period in which Malory was composing his work" (209). Too much peace, on the other hand, allows for idleness, and becomes a gateway into a world of vices that prove fatal for the realm. The separate books in Malory's whole *Morte*, read by the Victorians as a unified whole, chronicle the rise and fall of a utopian Camelot, which, when it is manly and warlike, holds sway over the vast majority of Europe and becomes the centre of Christian chivalry. When it falls into an overly long period of peace, however, the aggression turns inward, and Arthur's empire begins to rot from the inside. Gawain and his brothers carry on their blood feud against Lamorak, and Lancelot and Tristram enter into adulterous relationships with their liege lords' wives. Eventually, Camelot is torn apart through two civil wars: between Lancelot and Arthur, and between Arthur and his traitorous son Mordred.[10] Malory's anxiety over the weak, destructive characteristics that emerge when a nation is no longer engaged in just outward wars and when its men are given liberty to pursue decadence and self-destruction speaks directly

[10] While some could object that the war with Lancelot takes place in the "French" territory of Guienne and thus cannot be considered a civil war, I follow Kenneth Hodges in questioning Lancelot's French identity. As Hodges notes, "Although Launcelot's home was under French control by the time Malory finished his work, it was English – or, more precisely, subject to the English king – for most of Malory's life" ("Why Malory's Lancelot" 556). Under English authority, Guienne was quite likely imagined as an "English" territory. As Hodges convincingly argues, "To assume that because Guienne ended up in France it somehow imagined its medieval identity as French is a teleological fallacy" (560).

to New Imperialist anxieties over the weakening effects of modern civilization and their association of masculine vigour with imperial strength.

1.1 Editions and Adaptations

To understand the influence of Malory on the Victorians, it is necessary first to establish in what form they would have encountered him. Malory's first editor was William Caxton, who published a printed version of the Arthurian romance in 1485. We are now aware, due to the work of scholars such as Vinaver and P. J. C. Field on the Winchester Manuscript (a version of *Le Morte Darthur* that predates the printed text) that Caxton heavily revised Malory's work, creating a more "unified" book out of a series of more disjointed romances.[11] While Vinaver viewed Malory's text, as borne witness to by the Winchester Manuscript, as a compilation of separate, individual romances, the modern consensus is generally to view it as a whole.[12] K. S. Whetter, perhaps the most notable contemporary champion of the Winchester's unity, argues "that the physical layout of the Winchester manuscript, especially its consistent rubrication of characters' names throughout the *Morte Darthur*, likewise provides just such a unity by consistently drawing attention to certain important thematic strands in the narrative" (112). Along with adding chapters and heavily revising certain sections such as the Roman War, Caxton seems to have given the work its very title. Vinvaver argues, "It was Caxton's idea, not Malory's, to publish these works under one general title" (xxxix). By calling the entire work *Le Morte Darthur*, a title Malory seems only to have intended for the final book, Caxton gave the

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[11] For more information on Caxton's role as an editor, see Vinaver (xxxv-lvi). For an overview of various ways of understanding the relationship between the Winchester Manuscript and the printed edition see Field (1-13)

[12] For the evolution and seeming resolution of the "unity debate" see Whetter and Crofts's "Writing the *Morte Darthur*" where they declare, "Although Vinaver never wavered in this conviction, almost all modern-scholars now accept that the *Morte* is in fact unified" (65n43).

work more of a tragic unity, drawing together the entire series of narratives from Arthur's conception to his death under the single narrative of his inevitable demise.

Since the Winchester Manuscript was not discovered until 1934, and Vinaver's edition of it did not come out until 1947, Caxton's edition functioned as the "original" text for all of the writers I examine, including T. H. White. Caxton's representation of the *Morte* as a unified whole rather than a loosely connected collection of an indeterminate number of romances had a powerful effect on the way Malory was read and critiqued in the nineteenth century. David Eugene Clark observes the effect of Caxton's editorial interventions: "In contrast to the Winchester Manuscript, Caxton's edition of the *Morte Darthur* clearly declares that there are twenty-one books and 507 chapters; readers and listeners alike know that they will encounter a system of major divisions (books) and minor divisions (chapters), so that whatever interpretive process readers use starts from a common understanding of the type and amount of divisions" (94). Inga Bryden points to the result of this editorial intervention, observing, "Caxton's editing drew the stories into one volume and this version was the one most widely recognized by nineteenth-century writers" (13).

In reality, however, most Victorian and Edwardian readers would not have been directly familiar with the Malorian version of the Arthurian narrative through Caxton, but, rather, through one of the many subsequent modernized editions that flooded the nineteenth-century book market. Editions of *Le Morte Darthur* lost popularity by the early seventeenth century, and William Stansby's 1634 edition was, as T. J. Lustig observes, "the last edition of the Morte until 1816" (107). Stansby's edition itself was not a completely faithful rendering of the original text, and its preface claims to correct the speech of Arthur and his knights, who "sweare prophane and use superstitious speeches" (2). As Marylyn J. Parins points out, however, these "expurgations

did not occur" ("Two Early Expurgations" 71), and the only real changes made to the text are

patriotic in nature. Nevertheless, this tradition of alleged expurgation carries over to the

nineteenth century. In 1816, two popular new editions – a hastily edited two-volume and a more

thoroughly edited three-volume edition – of *Le Morte Darthur* were published by Walker British

Classics, followed closely by Robert Southey's more scholarly version with Longman and

Company in 1817. While Southey attempted to work directly from Caxton, or at least Earl

Spencer's transcription of Caxton, the 1816 editions preferred the Stansby edition as their source

text. Although the two volume edition used the text "as is" – Barry Gaines notes that "there is

little evidence of editorial revision or proofreading" (10) – the three volume edition carried on

Stansby's practice of alleging censorship, claiming in the preface to remove profanity and use

more euphemistic language for the book's many sexual episodes. But, as with Stansby, this

edition fails to live up to the preface's promise, and much material that could be considered

"objectionable" survives the expurgations. This points to what Parins convincingly argues is a

prevailing perception that "in order to be acceptable to a contemporary audience, the *Morte

Darthur* did require cleaning up" ("Two Early Expurgations" 74). Even if that "cleaning up" did

not truly occur, a preface claiming that it did was deemed necessary.

The next edition of *Le Morte Darthur* did not come until 1858, when Thomas Wright

released a new edition also based on Stansby, criticizing the 1816 editions for their lack of

competency and calling them "little recommendable" (xii).[13] Wright did not try to expurgate the

text any further than Stansby already had, but he also did not attempt to work directly from

Caxton. While he gives fairly warm praise to some of the ideals of Malorian chivalry, he

ultimately echoes the earlier general sense of discomfort with the work's morality and concludes,

[13] The following section owes a great deal to Parins's *Malory: The Critical Heritage*, which contains a comprehensive collection of late nineteenth-century responses to Malory.

"The tone of the morality of this code is certainly not very high; but – it was the morality of feudalism" (xvii). Six new editions were released in the last half of the nineteenth century by Edward Strachey (1868), German scholar H. Oskar Sommer (1889-91), Ernest Rhys (1892), F. J. Simmons (1893-4), Israel Gollancz (1897), and A. W. Pollard (1900). The number of editions reflects the diversity of people involved in Malory from gentleman scholars like Strachey to professional editors like Rhys and Gollancz. It was not until H. Oskar Summer's 1889 scholarly edition, however, that Victorian readers had access to an unexpurgated edition of the *Morte Darthur*, "the first unaltered Caxton since Caxton" (Parins, *Sir Thomas Malory* 10).

This abundance of editions of *Le Morte Darthur* flooding the book market coincided with a massive overhaul in the conversation surrounding the book's morality. Parins credits this explosion of editions, in part, to "the increasingly acceptable idea that medieval chivalry could provide an appropriate guide to conduct in the shaping of a nineteenth-century gentleman" (*Sir Thomas Malory* 8-9). Similarly, Michael Alexander argues, "The chronology of editions of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* offers a graph of its popularity, and editors' prefaces suggest how knights of romance were seen" (112). Prior to the nineteenth century, Malory largely fell out of favour. Bryden writes, "Despite the Tudor emphasis on Arthur's political and historical dimensions, from the sixteenth century to the start of the nineteenth century the attraction of Arthurian legend as literary subject matter waned" (15). Roger Ascham, the notorious Early Modern puritanical school master castigated Malory's romance as a book "the whole pleasure of which … standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye" (231). This scathing indictment of the medieval romance is something that later critics returned to again and again in their own assessments of the artistic and moral quality of *Le Morte Darthur*. When Robert Southey edited *Le Morte Darthur* over two hundred years later, he sought to restore the

text to the place it had once held and suggested that this might be accomplished if it were "again modernized in the same manner and published as a book for boys" (xxviii). From the very outset of the nineteenth century, editors were explicitly masculinizing *Le Morte Darthur* and assuming a male audience. Even though Southey and others like him express discomfort with the work's immorality, they praise it for its strong pull on the imagination of young boys.

We see this similarly ambiguous approach to Malory's morality and appeal to boys widespread throughout the Victorian Era. With the release of nearly every new edition of the *Morte* came new appraisals of the appropriateness and quality of the text. Most editors, even after Sommer's Caxtonian edition, chose to expurgate the text in some way, even while the introductions to their editions often praised Malory's chivalric ethos. Edward Conybeare laments Malory's undeserved unpopularity yet in his introduction admits, "The coarse passages have been cut out" (iv). And Ernst Rhys praised its "animal energy," yet, by his own admission, made significant alterations to enhance "the fateful epic consistency of the book" (xx), resulting in "the omission of "seven out of twenty-one books of Caxton" (Lynch, "Malory Moralisé" 87). At the same time, many reviewers of Wright's edition saw in Malory's "boyishness" the seeds of healthy, active masculinity and in the work's chivalric code a much needed remedy for the ills of the modern world. One reviewer insists that the romance "does not merely feed the childish appetite for marvels, but answers the more mature wish, which exacts of fiction that it should, even under the unsettled conditions of romance, keep something of the interest of that conflict which goes on by the mingled good and evil in men's hearts and fates" ("Art. IV" 394-95). In another of the unsigned reviews of Wright's Malory, in *Blackwoods Magazine,* the writer commends the book for its appeal to the "schoolboy mind" since it is "healthfully active and energetic; with very little love-making, few of the finer flights of fancy, and no moral reflections,

there are plenty of terrific encounters and hard blows" ("King Arthur and his Round Table" 312).

In such appraisals, the old criticism of Malory's boyishness now becomes one of the work's

prime virtues, a facet of the movement to masculinize the medieval past.

Accompanying the many editions of Malory were its many adaptations and abridgements,

which served as perhaps an even more common avenue into the Arthurian narrative for most

Victorians. Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* was the most famous adaptation of

Malory, and seemingly more well-read than *Le Morte Darthur*. Robert Fraser observes, "when

Tennyson published 'The Morte d'Arthur', and subsequently incorporated it into his Idylls of the

King (1859-85), he was cashing in on a vogue, but he also sustained and strengthened it" (6).

And Alexander notes, "Malory was freshly available in modern spelling, yet Victorian versions

of Arthurian subjects are often not taken direct from his pages. The immediate source was often

not the Morte but what Tennyson had made of it" (153). Not all Victorians agreed on how

Tennyson made use of Malory; the decadent Victorian poet, A. C. Swinburne, complained that,

by attempting to sanitize Malory's Arthur, "Mr. Tennyson has blemished the whole story" (38),

while the American critic, William Minto, came to the poet laureate's defense, asserting that

"Lord Tennyson is fully entitled to bend the story to his own purposes" (82). Ultimately,

Tennyson's treatment and opinion of Malory proved highly influential, especially in the many

adaptations for youth that followed. While obviously indebted to Malory as his primary source,

Tennyson criticized Malory as:

> One
>
> Touched by the adulterous finger of a time
>
> That hovered between war and wantonness,
>
> And crownings and dethronements. ("To the Queen" 42-45)

The many changes that resulted from this low view of Malory's fifteenth-century morality –

removing Arthur's incest, decreasing much of the "pointless" violence, and increasing the

authorial condemnation of the adulterous Guinevere – had a profound impact on much of the

Arthuriana of late-Victorian and Edwardian England.

Between the freer literary adaptations and the more faithful scholarly editions stood a

large number of works that acted more as arrangements of Malory than either editions or

adaptations. One of the most significant and influential of these arrangers was James T.

Knowles, who produced an abridged and expurgated version of the *Morte* in 1862, one that was

meant to suit better the social mores of Victorian England. He describes this process as being in

line with the moral precepts established by Tennyson, to whom he dedicated his book, leading

him to have "suppressed and modified where changed manners and morals have made it

absolutely necessary to do so for the preservation of a lofty original ideal" (iii). Such changes

include the omission of Mordred's incestuous conception and the overall downplaying of

Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery, focusing more on their relationship in "purer" chivalric terms

and removing entirely the scandalous episode with Meleagant. Galahad's status as Lancelot and

Elaine's illegitimate son is similarly glossed over and is given a single line when Galahad is

introduced: "Though he knew him not, nor Lancelot him, Sir Lancelot was his father" (225). In

the tale of Gareth, another Victorian favourite, Knowles remains faithful to Malory in recounting

the series of increasingly powerful enemies with which Gareth must contend, but he deviates in

removing the episode where Gareth and Lyonesse attempt to sleep together before marriage. By

limiting much of the sexually "inappropriate" material and emphasizing the heroic martial

exploits of Arthur's knights, Knowles "preserves" the "lofty original ideal" and continues a

tradition of editorial bowdlerization that sanitizes Malory for mid-century, middle-class

Victorian morality. In his introduction to the edition, Knowles echoes "the suggestion of the poet Southey" (ii) that Malory should be popular among boys when modernized, and, by producing a version that carefully omits nearly every element of sexual misconduct in the original narrative, Knowles presents a book that would also be morally proper for those young boys.

By the late Victorian era, the bashful, almost guilty enjoyment expressed by writers like Southey and the moralistic censorship of editors like Knowles gave way to an unapologetic appreciation for *Le Morte Darthur* as both a literary masterpiece and as a fine exemplar of chivalric masculinity and honourable conduct for young British males. As Fraser describes it, "By the last quarter of the century enthusiasm for Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table amounted almost to a craze" (6-7). Editors and scholars treated Malory's moral vision as intelligible and read the work as a unified masterpiece, the rawness and "primitivism" of the *Morte* now a sign of its greatness rather than its lack of sophistication. Herbert Coleridge, philologist and editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, now attributed to Malory a genius that he was not often previously accorded, placing him among the pantheon of great classical writers. Coleridge casts him as the author of an "epic or dramatic whole" (158) rather than a mere compiler of disjointed and variegated tales. Through Arthur's incestuous relationship with Morgause, which ultimately destroys him through the conception of Mordred, "the legend acquires a kind of dramatic unity; it exhibits in Aeschylean phrase the working out of an Ate, a retribution long delayed, but surely developing itself at last" (163). By reading the entirety of the *Morte* as a classical, Aeschylean tragedy, Coleridge attributes to it both literary and moral merit, its overarching narrative of sin and retribution making it morally and structurally coherent. Coleridge was joined in this reading of the *Morte* as a unified tragedy by many others, including the renowned philologist, Frederick James Furnivall and the Anglican clergyman Samuel

Cheetham, who understood the work as a coherent narrative of the terrible Fate that accompanies Arthur "from his youth; and over all his glory hangs ever the dark cloud of unatoned-for sin" (Furnivall xvi).

This about-face at the end of the nineteenth century is represented perhaps most fully in the single person of Edward Strachey, who, in 1868, produced an expurgated edition of the *Morte* that, following what "Mr. Tennyson has shown us" (xviii) left out "such phrases or passages as are not in accordance with modern manners" (xviii), resulting in, as Barczewski observes, "the removal of hundreds of words and phrases, especially those which had sexual connotations" (119). Strachey, like Knowles, positions this censorship as necessary to make the text appropriate for England's youth. He writes, "When we have excluded what is offensive to modern manners there will [not] be found anything practically injurious to the morals of English boys" (xviii). At this time, Strachey clearly did not hold Malory's morality in high regard, as evidenced by his comment, "If it does not deserve the unqualified denunciation of the learned Ascham, it cannot be denied that Morte Arthur exhibits a picture of a society far lower than our own in morals" (xiii). In 1891, however, when Strachey rewrote the introduction for his edition of *Le Morte Darthur*, he had nothing but the highest praise for the medieval romance. Calling it "a true poem, the offspring of genius" (ix), he compares it to Homer's *Iliad*, which he argues is also a classic encountered and loved first by boys who later develop a scholarly interest in it as men. And while no one would contest the literary merits of the *Iliad*, so also must no one doubt the epic quality of Malory's romance. Strachey concludes, now fully won over by the "greatness" of the *Morte* and of Malory its genius creator, "They who have given their most of such reading, in youth and in manhood, to Malory's Morte Darthur will be the most able and ready to recognise its claim to the character of an Epic poem" (ix).

New Imperialists at the *fin-de-siècle* praised the *Morte* for its pre-modern, masculine, and enchanted worldview as well as its offer of an alternative to the enfeebled and effeminate domestic morality of the nineteenth century. In 1880 Sidney Lanier defended the high minded morality of the medieval romance, drawing attention specifically to Lancelot whom he sees as a very pinnacle of noble, manly character, saying "Larger behavior is not shown us anywhere in English literature" (xxi). In sharp contrast to the mid-century, Tennysonian model of reading the text's morals, the turn-of-the-century saw a radical reappraisal of Malory's morality. In 1886, Ernest Rhys declared that the text's "spirit of adventure, the spiritualized reflex of an age of animal energy, is a salutary one to move in our too reflective, critical modern order of literature" (xix). The primitive, "animal" energy of the *Morte* contrasts favourably with the overly tamed and domesticated spirit of the modern world; it represents an enticing alternative life of active engagement to the "latter-day morbid sentimentalism" of modern decadence (xix).

Perhaps the most ringing endorsement from this period, however, came from Andrew Lang, a champion of the New Imperialist Romance Revival, friend of both H. Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling, and ardent admirer of "ancient" art as a means of redeeming the present. In his 1880 review of *Le Morte Darthur*, he praises the book for its discordance and the fact that it is a "jumble" of tales, seeing it as monument to a once enchanted England that contained the spirit and ethos capable of producing an epic of such magnitude. He concludes by observing the great distance between the "heroic" age of Malory and the "disenchanted" age of the present, and argues, despite the proliferation of Victorian Arthuriana and Tennyson's attempt to write an Arthurian epic, that "a new epic is an impossibility" (xxv). With the *Idylls*, "new wine is put into old bottles" (xxii) and, though Lang admires Tennyson's work, he disagrees with the poet laureate's opinion of Malory and concludes, "we have not the epic spirit; ere that can come to

birth, the world, too, must die and be born again" (xxv). Malory, possessing the spirit of a heroic, vigorous past is given priority over Tennyson, Morris, and any other "modern" who rewrites Arthurian material. Lang's longing for the heroic, primitive vigour of the past characterizes the New Imperialist appreciation of Malory, seeing *Le Morte Darthur* become, by the turn of the century, of one of the great literary masterpieces of the English canon.

1.2 Chivalric Masculinity in *Le Morte Darthur*

1.2.1 Arthur's Accession

In its opening pages, *Le Morte Darthur* thrusts its readers into a violent, dangerous, and masculinist world, replete with violence. Malory recounts how Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, with Merlin's aid, assumes the likeness of his rival the Duke of Tintagel, deceiving and raping the Duke's wife Igraine, which leads to the conception of Arthur. Arthur's predecessor acts without restraint, warring against a vassal because he lusts after his wife, and using magic to act out that lust on the unsuspecting Igraine. Malory does not explicitly censure Uther; he has the king call his feelings towards Igraine "love" and describe himself as "sick for anger and for love of fair Igraine, that I may not be whole" (I.i). And Merlin has Uther swear "as a true king" and on "the Four Evangelists" to let the wizard have the child that will be conceived from the rape. The only real hint that perhaps readers should find this behaviour abhorrent is in Malory's troublingly sparse account of Igraine's reaction to finding out that her husband died three hours before she supposedly had sex with him. Malory says that "she mourned privily and held her peace" (I.ii). But the text does not dwell on Igraine and her violation, and moves towards what Malory seems to present as a satisfactory solution. Uther marries Igraine "with great mirth and

joy," and that seems to fix the whole problem. What we are supposed to make of Uther, who shortly later on in the text dies of "a great malady" (I.iv), is unclear. He seems to model the kind of wild and unrestrained hypermasculine impulses that Arthur, with the chivalric principles of the Pentecost Oath, seeks to curb. But the troublingly matter-of-fact manner in which Malory describes the rape of Igraine seems to foreshadow the complex and often problematic representations of women in the *Morte*.[14]

In the remaining chapters of Book One,[15] Malory demonstrates the necessity of warfare for making and preserving healthy masculinity. It is a myth of masculine prowess, wherein masculinity is proven and maintained and social advancement made by virtue of strength and martial skill. In the narrative of Arthur's rise, Malory's whole chivalric ideal is presented, and in this ideal we can see much that Victorians would adopt in their own version of the chivalric code. All of the key aspects of New Imperialist chivalry find their roots here: the idea of battle as rite of passage for young men, of the strong bond between the strength of a nation and the strength of its strongmen, and of the homosocial circle of masculine respect among warriors.

The story of Arthur's rise from obscurity to greatness lays the foundation for the career of every other knight in the *Morte* and serves as a model of male maturation. Merlin proclaims Arthur king based on his ability to draw the sword from the stone, but this proclamation is promptly resisted by the many petty kings of Britain. To be received into the homosocial circle of warriors, Arthur must go to war against his enemies, beginning with the kings who challenge his birthright. This war against the British kings is necessary as self-defense for the mere survival

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[14] Malory's ambivalence towards this rape, and his depiction of women in general, becomes all the more troubling in light of the discovery that Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, thought by most scholars to be the author of the *Morte*, was twice charged with rape (in addition to extortion, robbery, and kidnapping). Edward Hicks first made this discovery in his 1928 biography, *Sir Thomas Malory, His Turbulent Career: A Biography*.

[15] In this chapter, I refer to book numbers from Caxton's arrangement of *Le Morte Darthur*, divided into twenty-one books, rather than the Winchester manuscript's eight books.

of Arthur's own small kingdom, but it is also the first step along the way to the realization of the mighty empire that he establishes in the subsequent chapters. To be the strong leader of a strong state, Arthur must himself be strong and heroic on the battlefield and tactfully ally himself with well-established kings. He must also overcome the objection of the kings who reject his authority due to his boyishness and inexperience. As Malory writes:

> But the kings would none receive, but rebuked the messengers shamefully, and said they had no joy to receive no gifts of a beardless boy that was come of low blood, and sent him word they would none of his gifts, but that they were come to give him gifts with hard swords betwixt the neck and the shoulders; and therefore they came thither, so they told to the messengers plainly, for it was great shame to all them to see such a boy to have a rule of so noble a realm as this land was.
>
> (I.viii)

Here Malory presents a picture of a hypermasculine world where one must perform feats of manliness and exhibit the militaristic qualities of a man to receive respect in the world of men. The kings, well established and older men of arms, perceive Arthur's claim as an offense to their own manliness, and they consider it more shameful to submit to such an untried boy than to die in battle. Although Malory places these kings on the wrong side of the war for succession – for Arthur is actually the rightful heir and the best candidate for kingship – his version of chivalry supports their viewpoint. To achieve victory over them and to prove his right to be accounted one of the men, Arthur must prove his manhood, not by his inexplicable ability to draw the sword from the stone, but by demonstrating his capacity for fearlessness and ferocity in battle. Malory's Arthur does just this in his war against the kings, astonishing friends and foes alike. Malory writes with zest of Arthur's martial exploits, his prose nearly singing as he describes how

the young king fights: "And always King Arthur on horseback laid on with a sword, and did marvellous deeds of arms that many of the kings had great joy of his deeds and hardiness" (I.ix). This episode witnesses the first real test of Arthur's manliness, and he passes his test with flying colours, demonstrating a level of prowess and knightly courage that the kings who oppose him doubted him capable of.

His initiation into the company of manhood is not yet complete however, and though he has gained a foothold in the world of men by participating ferociously in battle, it is only by achieving victory, thereby demonstrating that he is stronger than they, that he will ultimately be hailed as a man of worth by the rebellious kings. To achieve this victory, Arthur cannot rely on strength alone, for, as Merlin counsels him, "Unless that our king have more chivalry with him than he may make within the bounds of his own realm, an he fight with them in battle, he shall be overcome and slain" (I.x). To surmount these limitations, the young king forms a secret alliance with the French kings, Ban and Bors, bolstering his numbers and allowing for strategic outmanoeuvring by placing the allied forces "in an ambushment" (I.xiv). In the battle against the eleven kings, this ambush allows him to nullify his enemies' advantage, making possible the chivalric exploits that demonstrate his masculine status. Malory remains focused on the establishment of Arthur's manly reputation through these battles, announcing, "Then Sir Arthur did so marvellously in arms, that all men had wonder" (I.xi). Malory's reference to "all men" shows a line of clear progress in Arthur's rise to manhood; it is more general than the previous reference to the astonishment of the "kings" and firmly shows that Arthur's ascendance to the company of men is acknowledged by even his enemies. Merlin concludes "ye have matched this day with the best fighters of the world" (I.xvii).

While introducing this plot of the young man's rise to glory and recognition, Malory also presents the idea of the homosocial, masculine world of martial respect among comrades, allies, and enemies. Arthur's enemies respect him after witnessing his prowess and being defeated by him. But Malory also includes those enemies within the chivalric brotherhood, and his descriptions of their exploits ring with almost as much admiration as his descriptions of Arthur's allies. He goes into great detail chronicling the highs and lows of Arthur's allies and his foes, stressing above all their capacity to endure pain and continue fighting in a "medley passing hard for both parties" (I.xiv). While Arthur proves his masculinity by defeating his enemies, they simultaneously prove their masculinity by opposing him. The chivalric contest requires that both belligerents be strong and brave, so that the ensuing battle might allow each party to demonstrate their strength. Thus we see, when Bors springs his ambush upon the unsuspecting eleven kings, Malory expressing admiration for the courage and prowess of the leaders on both sides. King Lot admires his opponent Bors as "one of the most worshipfullest men," and Malory adds that Bors "did marvellous deeds of arms, that all parties had great wonder thereof" (I.xv). And within the very same chapter, Malory turns to praise one of Arthur's enemies, The King with the Hundred Knights, "for he was a passing good knight of a king, and but a young man" (I.xv). In the midst of full-fledged battle, chivalric masculinity makes room for, and necessitates mutual respect and admiration. In fact, the fiercer the battle, the greater the mutual respect, and as the knights rage increasingly, shedding one another's blood, they draw closer to unification. As Jill Mann notes, throughout *Le Morte Darthur* "opposition becomes a means of achieving union" (241), and the relentless opposition of either side in this conflict sees a greater understanding form between both warring parties.

King Lot speaks of his enemy Ban as "the most valiant knight of the world, and the man of the most renown" (I.xvi) and he and Bors return the admiration by telling Arthur, "They are the best fighting men, and knights of most prowess, that ever I saw or heard speak of, and those eleven kings are men of great worship; and if they were longing unto you there were no king under heaven had such eleven knights, and of such worship" (I.xvi). This hyperbolic, superlative ridden language is central to the code of manners embedded in Malory's chivalry; good knights often pepper their descriptions of each other with the words "best" and "most," and the use of such superlatives only increases as the violent resistance of their opponents grows stronger.

The long established practitioners of chivalry, Ban and Bors, show off this distinctive respect for a powerful enemy, but Arthur, still new to the practical application of chivalry in armed conflict, replies, "I may not love them … they would destroy me" (I.xvi). This element of realism seems to point to a real difficulty for knights to achieve lofty chivalric ideals and points to the gap that exists, even in the pages of chivalric romance, between ideal and practice. While Malory as narrator models chivalric respect for both the hero and his antagonists, as author, he points to the problems with that model through his depiction of characters actually embroiled in the conflict unable to detach themselves so fully from the heat of hatred that overcomes them in battle. Malory's characterization of his knights as sometimes respectful and courteous in battle and sometimes overcome with anger or envy has led some scholars, such as Kenneth Hodges, to argue that "chivalry is noble but fatally flawed, fatally unstable" (2). Yet others, like Paul Rovang, locate chivalric failure in human inability to live up to that ideal. Rovang sees Malory's knights as individuals yet also "living exemplars of the strengths and flaws extant in the only secular institution that Malory believed held any hope for his society – historical chivalry" (xix). The natural response of competitiveness and enmity will crop up again and again in *Le Morte*

Darthur and will be the source of much of the division that ultimately tears apart the knights of the Round Table.

But in this ethos where masculinity and honour are defined by the ability to inflict and endure violence, there is no conceivable end point other than total annihilation, and Malory's knights look with bewilderment on "the great slaughter that there was" (I.xvii). To get around this problem, Malory has Merlin intervene to put a stop to the battle by warning Arthur that further bloodshed will cause his fortune to turn; meanwhile, his enemies discover that "Saracens are landed in their countries" (I.xvii) and they hurry back to fight them. And while he conveniently brings a close to the endless bloodshed that seems endemic to chivalric masculinity, Malory offers a glimpse of the dangers of this ethos that leads to the endless blood feuds that will bring about the fall of the Round Table.

Ultimately, Arthur emerges from the battles with the kings with greater wealth and an improved reputation, an important currency in the chivalric world. Merlin visits his master Blaise, "and there he told how Arthur and the two kings had sped at the great battle, and how it was ended, and told the names of every king and knight of worship that was there" (I.xvii). Blaise continues in his role as chronicler of heroic deeds throughout Arthur's reign, recording the results and deeds of battles and heroic quests. Blaise records "all the battles that were done in Arthur's days" and "all the battles that every worthy knight did of Arthur's court" (I.xvii). Those who participate in warfare are forever remembered, and every courageous deed they commit is written down and preserved. Warfare then, presents itself as a clear cut avenue to success for Malory's Arthur, as it will be for his knights later on, providing the young man with economic security and reward and with a reputation that will allow him to rise socially.

1.2.2 The Roman War

Arthur's accession to the throne of Britain is closely followed by his war with the Roman Empire, his only real campaign beyond the British Isles. While Lynch observes that "in the many subsequent Tennysonian retellings and selected editions of Malory, the Roman wars were usually the first item to be cut" ("Imperial Arthur" 177), he credits this to a general sense of the Victorian tendency to downplay imperialism even while aggressively pursuing imperialist aims, a phenomenon well-studied by historians like Bernard Porter.[16] Unlike the Arthurians of the Middle Ages, "Victorian and Edwardian writers of the imperial age were freer to downplay and transmute [the empire]" (Lynch 177), so that "its presence is registered obliquely" (178). While downplayed in many Victorian adaptations, the Roman War does still feature significantly in many Malorian works, such as Knowles's *The Legends of King Arthur and his Knights*, and the image of Arthur as the ruler of a global chivalric empire permeates nineteenth and twentieth-century Arthuriana.

While the Victorians were on the whole not very interested in this part of Arthurian legend, the Roman War plays a crucial role in *Le Morte Darthur*. Dorsey Armstrong argues that it is one of the most important of Malory's episodes, largely because of its strategic placement in the work's narrative as a whole. Along with scholars such as Rovang and Hodges, Armstrong points out how Malory breaks with his source material by placing the Roman War so early in the text when it is usually – in Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Alliterative *Morte*, and the Vulgate Cycle – placed right before his civil war with Mordred and his death. Armstrong writes, "In Malory, it stands as the high point of Arthur's career as an individual player on the field of chivalry, and seemingly makes possible the marvellous adventures that will be performed by Arthur's knightly

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[16] See for instance, Bernard Porter's *The Absent Minded Imperialists.*

agents in the episodes that follow" (10). Rovang similarly argues that by placing Arthur's demise

well after the Roman War "Malory characterizes Arthur as the first truly just and successful

world emperor in history and contravenes the traditional pattern of earthly rulers who overextend

their rightful influence and are cast down by Fortune" (7). The presentation of Arthur as a just

world emperor triumphing over Rome has resonance with the imperial ambitions of an

expansionist fifteenth-century England and, of course, for a nineteenth-century British Empire.

Riddy calls the tale "an imperialist narrative" (69) and adds that she uses "the term 'imperialist'

in a modern, as well as in a medieval, sense" (69). Hodges notes, "Arthur thus gets to reject

elements of the Roman subjugation of the British, while reaffirming a fundamental connection

that explains the Roman influence on British culture" (65). And Meg Roland argues that the tale

"functions as a narrative vehicle for positioning England as a real-world empire" (68). The

Roman War functions as an imperialistic fantasy in which *translatio imperii* is demonstrated and

yet which overthrows the hierarchy of authority usually implied by that concept.

Building on these ideas, I read the Roman War as a pivotal moment in Malory's depiction

of the development of Arthur and his kingdom. It is the most important of Arthur's wars and the

one where he most visibly plays the role of both the questing knight and the warrior king. It is

also where many of Arthur's knights are given their chance to shine and to demonstrate their

worth, winning economic and social prestige. Having unified the various kings of Britain, Arthur

is confronted by the twelve ambassadors of the Roman Emperor Lucius, who issue the

Emperor's order that Arthur acknowledge his lordship and pay tribute to him. Arthur's

subsequent defiance of the Roman Empire's right to Britain and his assertion of his own claim to

the Empire demonstrate his unwavering belief in the efficacy of militarism. In Arthur's dealings

with the Roman Empire, we see once again the hypermasculinity of the Malorian world, where

matters of respect, personal and political, are decided through force. Malory presents battle as the most fundamentally manly way to settle disputes, conduct diplomacy, and earn respect. Arthur and his counsellors present this aggressive solution as the method adopted by their ancient predecessors, citing how "Belinus and Brenius, kings of Britain have had the empire in their hands many days, and also Constantine the son of Heleine" (V.i). Based on these precedents and a history of Roman injustice, they conclude, "ye ought of right to be above all other kings" (V.ii). Again, as in Arthur's conflict with the British kings, Arthur's rivals issue a challenge to his very masculinity, allowing him no option where he may retain his honour other than full-scale warfare. The senators' message is arrogant and condescending, declaring Arthur "a rebel" and threatening that the emperor will "make strong war against thee, thy realms and lands, and shall chastise thee and thy subjects, that it shall be ensample perpetual unto all kings and princes" (V.i). Having already escalated the terms of diplomacy by threatening war and shameful treatment of Arthur should he refuse their terms, the Romans leave him to choose between swearing fealty to Lucius, thereby losing all credibility as a king and as a man, and declaring war against Rome to redress the insult done to him. Arthur, of course, chooses to meet the haughty Roman demand with a haughty threat of his own, telling the ambassadors, "I pretend to have and occupy the sovereignty of the empire, wherein I am entitled by the right of my predecessors, sometime kings of this land; and say to him that I am delibered and fully concluded, to go with mine army with strength and power unto Rome, by the grace of God, to take possession in the empire and subdue them that be rebel" (V.ii). Arthur rises to the emperor's challenge, threatening Lucius that he will best him in open combat and conquer all his lands.

In the campaign against Rome, Arthur himself continues to build upon the manly, knightly reputation established during his wars against the British kings. The episode with the

giant of Mont St. Michel affords Arthur the opportunity to win renown across the channel beyond his own domain, to eliminate an opponent who threatens his own kingdom's safety, and to put into effect the chivalric principles established by the Pentecost Oath. Upon arriving in France, Arthur is met by a local peasant who informs him of "a great giant which had slain, murdered and devoured much people of the country, and had been sustained seven year with the children of the commons of that land" (V.v). This peasant implores him to "revenge us all as thou art a noble conqueror" (V.v) and to save the giant's latest victim, the Duchess of Brittany. Arthur's first conquest in the Roman War is as a lone knight errant, and his battle with the giant serves as a depiction in miniature of the themes of the war as a whole. Like the emperor, the giant threatens Arthur's kingdom, his chivalric principles, and his masculinity and invalidates his own right to rule through unjust practice.

When Arthur speaks to the widow mourning at the Duchess's "grave new made" (V.v), she warns him that the giant "setteth not by the king ne by no man else" and that his attempts to "treat with that tyrant" (V.v) are in vain. The giant is beyond the pale of chivalric discourse and custom and his complete disregard for courtesy and chivalrous treatment of women make him a monstrous foe to all the ideals of Arthur's kingdom. The widow tells him that if he were to bring "Arthur's wife, dame Guenever, he shall be gladder than thou hadst given to him half France" (175). The giant threatens civilization by desiring to rape and kill Guinevere just as he has raped and killed the Duchess, and he threatens Arthur's masculinity through his coat of beards. As the widow recounts, the giant "hath vanquished fifteen kings, and hath made him a coat full of precious stones embroidered with their beards" (175). Beards in medieval literature, as Laura Clark notes, are often synonymous with masculinity. Clark writes "Beards represent the qualities of a man's character – wisdom, experience, maturity, military prowess, nobility, and honour (or

lack thereof) – medieval beards also serve the more obvious and natural purpose of distinguishing men from women" (101). The giant's desire to cut off and appropriate the beards of his enemies, including, presumably, Arthur's, connects to the earlier challenge of the eleven kings to being ruled by a "beardless boy" and King Rience's earlier, strikingly similar "mantle with kings' beards" (I.xxvi).[17] Here, Malory diverges from his primary source for this episode, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, where the giant explicitly desires Arthur's beard to be added to his coat, and adds his more pressing desire for Guinevere,[18] resulting, as Catherine Batt notes, in Guinevere becoming "metonymically the ground of the conflict between Giant and Arthur" (76). In Malory's hands, Arthur's quarrel with the Giant becomes less about the threat to his masculinity and more about his defense of chivalric civilization as represented by Guinevere.

Arthur is pulled into this quest initially out of a chivalric sympathy for the murdered duchess but is now given even more compelling motivation to kill the giant. Significantly, Arthur's first move is to "hit him again that he carved his belly and cut off his genitours" (V.v); his "carving" of the belly destroys the giant's ability to consume human flesh while his amputation of the genitalia literally emasculates the giant and nullifies his hypermasculine threat of rape. After killing the giant, Arthur receives the thanks of the now liberated people, tells them to "depart the goods among you" (V.v) taken from the giant, and erects a church on Mont St. Michel. Malory's Arthur demonstrates his courage, generosity, and ability to protect his subjects, in direct contrast with his nemesis, Emperor Lucius, who, at the end of the chapter, is reported to have "destroyed and made great slaughter of people, and burnt towns and boroughs" (V.v). This

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[17] Malory's sources contain multiple variants of the beard mantle story. Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace both give the coat of beards to the giant Ritho, whom Arthur remembers after his fight with the giant of Mont St. Michel. The alliterative *Morte*, however, on which Malory relies heavily for his account of the Roman War, instead places the coat of beards in the hands of the giant of Mont St. Michel. For more on this, see Moll 106-8.

[18] In the alliterative *Morte Arthure* the widow tells Arthur, "But thou have brought that berde boun thee no further, / For it is a bootless bale thou biddes ought ells" (1013-14).

episode sees Arthur begin his rise from king to emperor, assuming rule over the people of a foreign country after deposing the tyrant who reigned over them. The initial challenge Arthur faced concerning his boyishness and lack of manly leadership qualities is soundly squelched, for the once beardless Arthur now defeats a monster covered in beards, and, in assuming his cloak, he appropriates the giant's masculine status.

The war against Rome has significant colonial implications both for its fifteenth and nineteenth-century contexts. Elizabeth Archibald observes how, in the Late Middle Ages, "the English sometimes used the legend of Arthur's Roman expedition as supporting evidence in political claims" (150), fitting, along with the Brut legend, a pattern of *translatio imperii* that saw England as the successor to Roman rule. Caxton's edition, as Roland observes, "intensifies the rhetoric of East-West polarization" (76) through such alterations as "the stripping of noble identity from the allies of Rome" and "the introduction of the term 'infydeles'" (76). Malory's characterization of the Roman enemy as allied with the "East" has special resonance in a Victorian age that saw the British Empire entangled with various "oriental" countries. Malory lists the countries:

> First to Ambage and Arrage, to Alexandra, to India, to Armenia, whereas the river
> of Euphrates runneth into Asia, to Africa, and Europe the Large, to Ertayne and
> Elamye, to Araby, Egypt, and to Damascus, to Damietta and Cayer, to
> Cappadocia, to Tarsus, Turkey, Macedonia, Calabria, Cateland, Portugal, with
> many thousands of Spaniards. (V.iii)

While Fabienne Michelet argues that "taking a closer look at the list of Lucius's allies, one notices that the Orient … is omnipresent" (212), this list is not entirely made up of countries in the Orient and is actually a fairly accurate representation of the holdings of the Roman Empire.

However, Malory emphasizes the otherness of the empire; along with the "fifty giants which had been engendered of fiends" – symbols of a monstrous otherness – the emperor Lucius fortifies a castle with "two hundred Saracens or Infidels" (V.iii). Many scholars note the imprecision of the term Saracen in Malory's day, used to describe a varied number of peoples lumped together as "other." Siobhan Bly Calkin notes, "Saracens can represent both proximate alterities within western Europe, and a historical Muslim presence of which Christians were aware and with which they interacted many times" (3). And Donald L. Hoffman succinctly adds, "Whoever they are, they are quintessentially Other even if that otherness is not always determinate" (43).

In this context, the explicit references to Saracens enforce the characterization of the Romans as "exotic" and "other." Throughout the encounters between Arthur's and Lucius's forces, the men of the Empire are repeatedly called "the Romans and Saracens" to the point that the two parties become inseparable. In listing the dead in the aftermath of the battle, Malory describes how Arthur "rode straight to the place where the Emperor Lucius lay dead, and with him he found slain the Sultan of Syria, the King of Egypt and of Ethiopia, which were two noble kings, with seventeen other kings of divers regions" (V.viii). Again we find the Roman linked inseparably to the Saracen. The only specifically identified dead are the Emperor and two Saracen kings, highlighting the alien otherness of the Roman Empire.

Malory presents the Roman Empire as a decadent and decaying ancient state whose place as the leading world power is ready to be taken by one of the newly emerging, young nations. The narrative of the old, weakened empire giving way to a young, energetic power was widely circulated in the latter part of the nineteenth century, serving as a common way to justify European expansionism and to characterize the British Empire as a plucky underdog toppling ancient giants. The Roman ambassadors call their power "that noble empire which domineth

upon the universal world" (V.i), they trace their existence back for thousands of years, and their

army is full of actual giants. They are a vast and unchallenged force ready to be toppled by

brave, militaristic young men like those that comprise the Round Table. Although the Romans

and Saracens seem at first intimidating and invincible, they are defeated remarkably easily and

yield vast riches to be plundered. Arthur proceeds through Italy, receiving either "great sums of

money" for mercy or "wast[ing] all in his way that to him will not obey" (V.xii). He finishes his

campaign by being "crowned emperor by the Pope's hand, with all the royalty that could be

made" (V.xii), signifying a total defeat of the Roman Empire and demonstrating the rise of

fortune of the militaristic young Britain.

1.2.3 Questing

Though war occupies much of the beginning and ending of *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory spends far

more of his narrative on the individual exploits of questing knights errant. At the end of Book III,

before Arthur's last major war against Rome, Malory recounts the formation of the Round Table

and the establishment of the Pentecost Oath, an annually renewed pledge where knights swear:

> Never to do outrageousity nor murder, and always to flee treason; also, by no
>
> means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy, upon pain of
>
> forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always
>
> to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour, upon pain of death. Also, that
>
> no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law, nor for no world's goods.
>
> (III.xv)

The oath is necessitated by the knights' failure to measure up to these very standards, and is

created as a corrective measure. The actions of both Gawain and Pellinore that directly precede

the oath lead to the death of ladies, which draws the censure of Queen Guinevere, who explicitly

foregrounds the importance of women to the new chivalric code, telling Pellinore, "ye were greatly to blame that ye saved not this lady's life" (III.xv). The knights' failure to give women "succor," along with the exploits of Balin in Book II, necessitate the restraint and courtesy insisted on here.

With these early questing narratives, Malory foregrounds the tensions between the expectations of chivalric ideals and the realities of knightly practice. The chivalric guide of the Pentecost Oath directs the knights to look higher and to rein in their baser instincts, but it is an ideal that must contend with the excesses that are natural to fighting men. As critics such as Lynch and Whetter have pointed out, Balin's unfortunate career serves as a foreshadowing of the exploits of the "greater" knights in the *Morte*. Lynch calls his story "a failure or travesty of the normal chivalric pattern" (*Malory's Book* 21) while Whetter maintains that the "Tale of Balyn" is "misunderstood" ("On Misunderstanding" 150), and that while Balin is the subject of tragedy, he possesses "very few stereotypical tragic flaws" (161). Whatever his degree of personal culpability, Balin is clearly the subject of a tragic tale. Both the "dolorous stroke" and his fatal duel with his brother Balan are products of ignorance; he brings calamity upon himself and others while attempting to achieve great deeds. At each unfortunate incident in Balin's tale, Malory, often through Merlin, leaps forward in time, anticipating the exploits of "greater" knights such as Lancelot or Galahad. When Balin delivers the "dolorous stroke" to King Pellam, for instance, the narrative relates how Pellam "might never be whole till Galahad the haut prince healed him in the quest of the Sangreal" (II.xvi). And after Balin and Balan slay each other, Merlin erects Balin a grave, beside which, "Merlin let make there a bed, that there should never man lie therein but he went out of his wit, yet Launcelot de Lake fordid that bed through his noblesse" (II.xix). And Balin's scabbard lies by his grave until "Galahad should find it" (II.xix).

His every failure serves to highlight both how later knights will nearly perfect the chivalric experiment and also how they will unwittingly bring about their own destruction.

Upon achieving victory over the Roman Empire, Arthur is left with no more major wars to fight. Yet the movement outward continues, with the knights of the Round Table now being sent out on quests, conventionally read in the nineteenth-century as analogous to the "civilizational mission" of British imperial agents. In *Scouting for Boys*, for instance, Lord Baden-Powell declares that "the History of the Empire has been made by British adventurers and explorers" among whom he includes "The knights of King Arthur" who "carried British chivalry into distant parts of the earth" (13). And Barczewski notes how "in the final decades of the nineteenth century imperial heroes were often explicitly compared to medieval knights" (220). Most of Malory's narrative is spent recounting the deeds performed on such quests, and it is these tales, or a romanticized version of them, that was most heavily featured in Victorian adaptations of *Le Morte Darthur*.

To the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century readership, aside from the morally problematic Lancelot, the two most important questing knights were Gareth and Galahad. Victorians and Edwardians were obsessed with Galahad, a pure, innocent knight, seamlessly blending purity with martial prowess. Countless works of visual art, literature, and popular fiction held up Galahad as the ideal model of chivalric masculinity. J. A. Mangan examines "the identification of Galahad and the Legend of the Grail with nationalistic militarism in the final quarter of the nineteenth century" and notes how "the Eton master H. E. Luxmore was in the habit of giving prints of Watts' *Sir Galahad* as parting gifts to selected boys on their departure from the College" (xlv). And Christine Poulson, in her study of the rise of depictions of Galahad in art and in stained glass installations, concludes "the appearance of Galahad at all in such a

very conservative art form is indicative of the extent to which he had entered the popular

imagination" (121). Unlike Lancelot, Gawain, or even Arthur himself, Galahad possesses no

faults, resists all temptations, and overcomes every foe he encounters through the sheer power

afforded him by his spotless purity. He is thus a model for modern youth and he serves as one of

the primary models for chivalry in the curriculum of the New Imperialism. Rovang notes that

Galahad is almost too perfect to be a satisfactory role model, and argues that "Malory cannot

present Galahad as a realistic model for emulation because his perfection is inimitable" (72).

Despite (or perhaps rather because of) what Rovang calls Galahad's inimitable perfection,

however, the young knight was often held up in the Victorian and Edwardian adaptations for

youth as the chivalric ideal.[19]

Gareth, though not as morally spotless as Galahad, proved to be a perhaps even greater

favourite among those who sought to encourage the values of chivalry in the emerging

generations of British youth. Rovang calls Gareth "a secular counterpart to Galahad" (81) and

argues that "Gareth becomes a catalyst to the raising of questions about the nature of chivalry"

(81). Velma Bourgeois Richmond concludes, based on a study of Edwardian children's literature

that "Gareth's story, as already seen, was favored for young readers; its themes are filial piety,

acceptance of hardship and humiliation with modesty and self-discipline, physical triumph in

feats of arms against ferocious knights of various hues (Black, Green, Blue, and Red). In short,

boys learn in an exciting way about development from youthful obscurity to honor and

happiness" (59). Certainly, in many abridgements and adaptations of Malory, while many

sections are often cut and narratives diminished, the story of Gareth remains, for the most part,

faithfully represented. In Lanier's *Boys' Own King Arthur*, for instance, the book "Of Sir Gareth

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[19] Barczewski notes, "In the late 1890s Watts presented a copy of Sir Galahad to Eton College, where it was hung in the chapel in an attempt to inspire generations of Britain's elite" (221)

of Orkney" remains largely faithful to Malory, even while entire sections like the Roman War are cut. Ascot R. Hope's *Stories of Old Renown*, chooses from among Arthur's knights only Gareth as one of its nine protagonists. And Lang's *Tales of King Arthur and the Round Table* similarly truncates the narratives of other knights, such as Balin and Gawain, and entirely leaves out those of others (like Tristan and Lamorak), while allotting about thirty pages to Gareth's tale.

Sir Gareth's quest offers the clearest depiction of the trajectory from obscurity to celebrated fame in the whole work and serves as a blueprint for how to prove one's manhood and achieve recognition. Gareth, though the son of King Lot of Orkney and brother to Gawain, chooses to enter King Arthur's court in disguise, keeping his illustrious heritage a secret. He has to work for his place at the Round Table by allowing himself to be a kitchen servant for a year under the tutelage of Kay, who nicknames him Beaumains (meaning Fair Hands) and treats him with scorn, declaring he "never will make man" (VII.i). Gareth's subsequent rise from kitchen knave to renowned knight is, like Arthur's rise in Book I, a narrative of chivalric success, serving as an inspirational example of what can be achieved by a young man who embodies the principles of the chivalric ethos and demonstrating the kind of ideal career made possible by Arthur's new Round Table fellowship ideals.

Despite Kay's mockery, Gareth immediately shows signs of his capacity for greatness. His physical size and strength are complemented by a keen interest in martial activity and a courteous humility. Malory writes:

> And so he endured all that twelve-month, and never displeased man nor child, but
>
> always he was meek and mild. But ever when that he saw any jousting of knights,
>
> that would he see and he might … And where there were any masteries done,

thereat would he be, and there might none cast bar nor stone to him by two yards.

(VII.ii)

By keeping his head down and voluntarily and obediently suffering the rules and hard labour that Kay imposes upon him, Gareth lays a solid foundation for a highly successful career as a knight. After undergoing this condensed education, the young Gareth is ready to venture out into the world as a force of good and moral reform. When the year has passed, Gareth takes upon himself the quest to save Dame Lyonesse and graduates to the status of knighthood. He unhorses and humbles his persecutor Kay and fights ferociously with Lancelot, "more liker a giant than a knight" (VII.v), yet is courteous and respectful when Lancelot asks to call off their fight. Lancelot knights him and, in answer to his question of whether he will become a worthy knight, tells him "Do as ye have done, and I shall be your warrant" (VII.v). Lancelot commends Gareth's mastery of the chivalric union of martial prowess and courtesy, and assures him that this is the path to success.

Along the quest, Gareth's persistence in these chivalric values is greatly challenged, psychologically – by his companion Lynette's near constant belittlement – and physically – by the series of increasingly dangerous knights culminating in the Red Knight of the Red Launds. Lynette, one of Malory's more vocal female characters, is understandably infuriated that her appeal to Arthur is answered by "none but one that is your kitchen page" (VII.iii), and she continually berates Gareth in an attempt to make him leave her alone. He remains courteous and patient with Lynette, however, and his heroic resolve to face whatever danger lies in his path carries him through every obstacle. His stance is encapsulated in one of his knightly responses to Lynette's mockery:

'It may happen me,' said Beaumains, 'to be beaten or slain, but I warn you, fair

damosel, I will not flee away, nor leave your company, for all that ye can say; for

ever ye say that they will kill me or beat me, but howsomever it happeneth I

escape, and they lie on the ground. And therefore it were as good for you to hold

you still thus all day rebuking me, for away will I not till I see the uttermost of

this journey, or else I will be slain, other truly beaten; therefore ride on your way,

for follow you I will whatsomever happen.' (VII.vii)

In this speech, Gareth demonstrates his commitment to the chivalric values established by the

Pentecost Oath, especially to "always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour, upon

pain of death." He resolves to follow Lynette, despite the increasingly perilous battles that

following her means he must fight, and, rather than resent her mockery or be deterred by his

enemies' challenges, he uses them as motivation, driving himself to greater deeds of martial

prowess. As Gareth tells Lynette when she finally acknowledges his knightliness, "All the

missaying that ye missaid me furthered me in my battle, and caused me to think to show and

prove myself at the end what I was" (VII.xi). His restraint, courtesy, and courage eventually

impress Lynette, who recognizes in his actions an "innate" nobility and declares, "for it may

never be otherwise but that ye be come of a noble blood" (VII. xi).

Throughout this tale, Lynette tests Gareth, ensuring he keeps to the worthy path of

knighthood. Her rebukes force him to prove himself to her and perform great chivalric deeds,

and, later, when he unites with her sister, Lyonesse, and the two attempt to have sex before they

are married, Lynette intervenes "to abate their hot lusts" (VII.xxii) by sending an armed knight to

attack Gareth and disrupt their lovemaking. When Gareth complains to her, she assures him "all

that I have done shall be to your worship, and to us all" (VII.xxiii). Lynette proved to be a

popular character in the many adaptations of Book VII. Tennyson's rendition of this tale,

"Gareth and Lynette," follows Malory closely in many respects; as David Staines notes, it

"remains faithful to the tone, the narrative structure, and often the details of Malory's text" (103).

But Tennyson diverges significantly by elevating Lynette's position (and the degree to which

Gareth wins her over), highlighting what he saw as the importance of her relationship with

Gareth by having Gareth wed Lynette rather than Lyonesse.

In the end, after defeating The Red Knight of the Red Launds and rescuing Lyonesse,

Gareth is rewarded with material and immaterial wealth. Arthur declares, "I am much beholding

unto that knight that hath put so his body in devoir to worship me and my court" (VII.xxiii). In

Malory's fantasy of chivalric achievement, Gareth's efforts are recognized by the very highest

figure of his society and his personal rise is linked to the rise of his community. As Gareth's

narrative draws to a close, Arthur pronounces his blessing on the young knight's union with

Lyonesse and tells him, "Ye shall have my love and my lordship in the uttermost wise that may

lie in my power" (VII.xxxiv). The book concludes this movement towards unity and order with

the wedding of Gareth and his brothers Gaheris and Agravaine to Lyonesse, Lynette, and Laurel,

thus promising future stability for not just Gareth alone, but also his family and his community

as a whole. By beginning his illustrious career in obscurity and untested merit before

meteorically rising to prominence, Gareth demonstrates for Victorian and Edwardian youth that,

by diligent obedience to the precepts of chivalry, the young man can achieve personal glory and

glory for his country.

1.3 The Fall of Camelot

One major question that readers of the *Morte* have long debated is why Arthur's Camelot falls.

Modern medievalists often place Malory's tragic narrative in the context of medieval theories of

Fortune or read the work as a failure of chivalry as an ethical system. Barbara Nolan, for

instance, argues that Malory's narrative fits within the medieval construct of an inexorable

Fortune turning her wheel regardless of what people do, and thus does not see the *Morte* as

conforming to either Aristotelian or Christian models of tragedy. She writes, "The best knights in

the world fall to forces largely beyond their control, leaving behind them only the memory of

their greatness and the painful, irreversible fact of their loss to the Arthurian kingdom" (156).

Rovang, on the other hand, maintains, contrary to Nolan's model of inexorable destiny, that

"Malory meant to show how choices, deeds, and interactions of individual knights and ladies

successively established and brought down the Round Table" (xiii). A third critical perspective,

as represented by Hodges, argues for a tragic moral of ideas. "Read dialogically," he writes, "*Le

Morte Darthur* is not simply a tragedy of characters; it is a tragedy of ideas. Chivalry is not

intrinsically evil, nor do the best characters fundamentally fail to live up to some true code;

rather, chivalry is noble but fatally flawed, fatally unstable, and so too must be its practitioners"

(2).

      For my purposes, however, I wish to examine the ways that the Victorians and

Edwardians interpreted the morality behind the rise and fall of Arthur's fortune. Of these, there

are two that are most dominant and pervasive, each with implications about the masculinist

biases and assumptions of many Victorian readers. These interpretations include the view that

the chief cause of Arthur's decline is the sin of incest that leads to the conception of Mordred and

the view that Arthur's fall is the result of the adulterous relationship between Guinevere and

Lancelot. In both cases, women function problematically as disturbers of a homosocial male order. While the focus is on the specific sins of incest and adultery, the general problem seems to be with women invading an ideal homosocial space. The assignment of blame to women in those episodes where they come between men or interfere in virtuous, martial, masculinist activity betrays a profound discomfort with women's presence in chivalric literature and renders them a dangerous intrusion. This misogynistic interpretation comes more from the Tennysonian reading of Arthur than from Malory himself. As Jennifer G. Wollock notes, "In earlier forms of courtly love, women were far from passive figures" (7). She adds, "It is a mistake to think of chivalry and courtly love as purely masculine enterprises in which women could expect to play only passive roles … this is a post-Victorian interpretation" (7). In the Victorian attempts to explain the moral of *Le Morte Darthur*, we see how that "post-Victorian" interpretation became so entrenched, to be passed on to the succeeding generations of Arthurian readers.

Many Victorians, seeking to attribute a modern understanding of unity to the text, focus on Arthur and Morgause's incestuous liaison, and the conception of Mordred that results from it. It is this sin that can be blamed for the evils that creep into the realm and for Arthur's ultimate fall. In Malory, the causal link between incest and the fall of the Round Table is made explicit from the beginning, when Merlin warns Arthur, "But ye have done a thing late that God is displeased with you, for ye have lain by your sister, and on her ye have gotten a child that shall destroy you and all the knights of your realm … it is God's will your body to be punished for your foul deeds … and ye shall die a worshipful death" (I.xx). After Arthur unsuccessfully attempts to have Mordred murdered, *Le Morte Darthur* seems to forget all about this prophecy, but, in the last book, everything Merlin predicts does come to pass, and Mordred indeed proves to be the chief agent of his father's destruction. This "coherent" narrative of sin and delayed

punishment fed into the dominant late-Victorian reading of Malory as artistic genius and "author." Herbert Coleridge, as I have discussed earlier, read the work as a unified Aeschylean tragedy, a reading that depends on seeing Arthur's incest as the king's "tragic flaw." Additionally, Cheetham comments, "As in all the versions of the great king's story, the treachery of Modred, himself the offspring of Arthur's sin, is the cause of the ruin of that goodly fellowship of the Table Round" (501). A. C. Swinburne agrees, saying, "The hinge of the whole legend of the Round Table, from its first glory to its final fall, is the incestuous birth of Mordred from the connexion of Arthur with his half-sister, unknowing and unknown" (35).

However, not all late nineteenth-century readers of Malory agreed that Arthur's youthful incest is the sole cause of his downfall, and, even among those who maintained that position, other factors were seen as hugely important to how that downfall is brought about. In Victorian adaptations of Malory, the incest is often left out entirely. In Tennyson's and Knowles's versions (as well as the many other adaptations that followed Tennyson's example), Mordred is not even Arthur's son and the whole blame is put on Lancelot and Guinevere, with a heavier emphasis on Guinevere. One anonymous American critic in 1890, in presenting a barebones summary of the plot, does not even mention the incestuous conception of Mordred. He describes the plot by merely stating, "Arthur grows up, the Round Table is fitted with knights who have glorious adventures of fighting and of love, then the sin of Launcelot and Guenever sets the knights against each other, and they perish in two bloody battles" (*The Nation* 15). Here it would seem the real hinge of the plot, and the flaw that causes the whole of Arthur's kingdom to fall, is not his youthful indiscretion but the adultery between Lancelot and Guinevere.

Of all the critics, Furnivall presents perhaps the most nuanced and balanced view of his contemporaries. In the preface to his edition of *La Queste del Saint Graal*, he writes that "any

one knowing his Maleore" would know "that Arthur's own sin was the cause of the breaking up of the Round Table, and Guenever's the means only through which that cause worked itself out" (vi). Furnivall reads the entire work as delayed tragedy caused ultimately by Arthur's mortal sin in the beginning of Malory's book. The adultery between Guinevere and Lancelot, however, is the method by which the tragedy is actually realized even if the root cause is that the Fates are against Arthur because of his sin. Furnivall comments, "Arthur's earlier incest, which, in accordance with Merlin's prophecy, must and does ruin his Round Table; the destruction being wrought out through the less unnatural though more wilful sin of his wife" (vii). In Furnivall then, we have a syncretized understanding of the morality of the *Morte* that combines the attribution of blame to both Arthur's incest and Guinevere's adultery.

The understanding of Arthur's fall as the result of sin arising from decadence fits within a persistent, imperialist ideology that equates war and martial discipline with virtue and civic health and that likewise sees the decadence that comes with peace as a sickness, gnawing away at imperial virtue. The connection between chivalry and civic health, between strong men and strong empire is made in the *Morte*, picked up by the New Imperialists, and echoed in much of the strongman, ultranationalist rhetoric of the early twentieth century and beyond. It also fits within a general trend of attempting to masculinize the medieval past by overemphasizing the importance of homosocial male bonds and casting women as unimportant or intrusive when they enter into or "interfere" with that homosocial world. While Malory's portrayal of women can hardly be called unproblematic, this misogynistic reading does not do justice to his complex characterization of both Lancelot and Guinevere, but rather reflects the poet laureate and his followers' own preoccupation with adultery and feminine purity.

It is in the periods of peace that all of the causes for the fall of Camelot, as identified by Victorians, are to be found. The episode of Mordred's conception takes place directly after Arthur successfully defends his claim to the throne against the rival kings and enters into a state of peace. Lancelot and Guinevere's adulterous relationship reaches its disastrous climax long after the Roman War during the period of relative peace when all adventure is to be found only in solitary questing. Before either Lancelot or Guinevere properly enter the narrative, Merlin warns Arthur "covertly that Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned him that Launcelot should love her, and she him again" (III.i). And when Arthur leaves other knights to govern while he is gone, thereby separating Lancelot and Guinevere, Malory mentions that "Launcelot was wroth" and Guinevere "made great sorrow for the departing of her lord and other" (V.iii). The inappropriate dimension of this relationship, explicitly foreshadowed by Merlin and now hinted at here, only becomes more apparent, and thus more of a problem, after the war. In Book VI, Malory, looking at the narrative of their relationship as a whole, writes that because of Lancelot's chivalric prowess, "Queen Guenever had him in great favour above all other knights, and in certain he loved the queen again above all other ladies and damosels of his life, and for her he did many deeds of arms, and saved her from the fire through his noble chivalry" (VI.i). As of yet, the relationship contains nothing explicitly inappropriate and Malory describes it with the acceptable language of chivalry and courtly love in which there is nothing untoward about Arthur's best knight choosing his queen as his lady, yet Merlin's warning casts an ominous shadow over their relationship. Lancelot's devotion to Guinevere attracts undesirable attention, including from the four enchantress queens (including Morgan le Fay) who complain about his attachment to the queen and attempt to force the knight to "choose one of us four" (VI.iii). Lancelot rejects their insinuations and declares Guinevere "the truest lady unto her lord

living" (VI.iii) yet, in his subsequent adventures, the theme is repeated. A damsel whom Lancelot helps tells him, "It is noised that ye love Queen Guenever" (VI.xi), and the jealous sorceress Helawes laments "there may no woman have thy love but Queen Guenever" (VI.xv).

Other occasional references to the adulterous relationship, or at least the rumours of it, come up such as the drinking horn that proves if a wife "were true to her husband" (VIII.xxxiv) that is sent to King Arthur "because of the Queen Guenever, and in the despite of Sir Launcelot" (VIII.xxxiv). And Malory again mentions how an envious Morgan "deemed that Sir Launcelot loved Queen Guenever paramour" (xli) The noun "paramour," in the fifteenth century, could mean, according to the *OED*, both "an object of chivalrous admiration and attachment" and "an illicit or clandestine lover or mistress." And as an adverb, as Malory uses it here, it meant, "To be in love with; to love or desire passionately or sexually. Also: to have a clandestine or illicit affair with." When Elaine deceives Lancelot into sexual relations, she does so by pretending to be Guinevere, which, along with Guinevere's jealous rage, seems to confirm the rumours of their adulterous affair.

It is after the quest for the Holy Grail that the affair becomes increasingly discussed and disastrous. Lancelot attempts to conduct himself with moral purity after being confronted with his sinfulness in his pursuit of the Grail, but shortly after returning to the court, "Sir Launcelot began to resort unto Queen Guenever again, and forgat the promise and the perfection that he made in the quest" (XVIII.i) The consequences post-Grail are much more dire, and Malory concludes grimly, "And so they loved together more hotter than they did toforehand, and had such privy draughts together, that many in the court spake of it, and in especial Sir Agravain, Sir Gawain's brother, for he was ever open-mouthed" (XVIII.i).

The open knowledge of their adultery begins to cause a multitude of problems. Lancelot himself warns Guinevere, "And wit ye well, madam, the boldness of you and me will bring us to great shame and slander" (XVIII.i). Lancelot's apprehension proves warranted, and shortly after this speech, Malory presents three successive occasions where Lancelot must save Guinevere from an accuser. First he defends her from Sir Mador's false accusation that she poisoned Sir Patrise by defeating the accuser in combat. Things continue to escalate, however, when Sir Meliagrance, who, because he "loved passing well Queen Guenever" (XIX.1), ambushes the queen and her unarmoured guard of knights, whose lives are only saved by Guinevere's plea to spare them in return for her surrender to Meliagrance. When Lancelot comes to her rescue, Meliagrance surrenders and agrees to release Guinevere and the wounded knights. But that night, as Malory recounts definitely, "Sir Launcelot went unto bed with the queen" (XIX.vi), wounding his hand as he breaks open the bars of her window and staining her bed with his blood. When Meliagrance finds the blood from Lancelot's hand covering her bed he accuses her of being a "false traitress unto my lord Arthur" (XIX.vi), and, in a trial that prefigures the ultimate, tragic one that sees Arthur and Lancelot fully split, Lancelot "proves" Guinevere's innocence by overpowering and killing Meliagrance in single combat. As Armstrong notes, "This passage identifies all the elements of the final collapse of the Arthurian order" (174), and each time Lancelot saves Guinevere "the socially divisive impact of his act of rescue increases" (176). The "boldness of you and me" of which Lancelot warns causes the fabric of Camelot to undergo tremendous strain as Lancelot continues to "prove" Guinevere's innocence (and his own) through his martial prowess despite the truth of the accusations. Yet Malory remains sympathetic to these characters, portraying their accuser Meliagrance as a coward and traitor whose accusations are motivated, not by a desire for truth and justice, but by lust and envy.

Closely on the heels of this scandal comes the fatal accusation made by Agravaine and Mordred. While Guinevere and Lancelot's adultery provides the occasion for the fall of Camelot, it is hardly the only reason for the fall. Indeed, although Agravaine and Mordred use the affair to tear down Lancelot and Guienevere, Malory places most of the blame on the accusers themselves, as he does with Meliagrance, beginning Book XX by recounting, "It befell a great anger and unhap that stinted not till the flower of chivalry of all the world was destroyed and slain; and all was long upon two unhappy knights, the which were named Agravaine and Sir Mordred, that were brethren unto Sir Gawain" (XX.i).

Malory treats Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery with much less severity than the Victorians later would, even questioning whether or not a sexual liaison occurred at all in the moment when Agravaine and Mordred attempt to seize the lovers (though at other points Malory speaks of the affair as a certainty). D. S. Brewer observes, "His fault is very great, but it is Malory's achievement that we never pause in our love and admiration for Lancelot, and that Lancelot himself always appears so noble" (31). Corey Olsen similarly comments on the sympathetic treatment that the lovers receive in the medieval text, noting, "Malory makes no apology for Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery; it is a sin, a crime, and a major contributor to the collapse of the court. However, Malory also never allows his narrative to condemn Lancelot and Guinevere as people" (41). And at the end of Book XVIII, when Malory extols the virtue of constancy in love, he faults the fickleness of his contemporaries and commends Guinevere for her constant love of Lancelot, not making a distinction between adulterous and "chaste" love. Before he relates the events of "the most piteous history of the morte of King Arthur" (XIX.xiii), he admonishes his readers, "Therefore all ye that be lovers call unto your remembrance the month of May, like as did Queen Guenever, for whom I make here a little mention, that while

she lived she was a true lover, and therefore she had a good end" (XVIII.xxv). Thus, though Guinevere's adultery allows Mordred to foster dissent among the knights of the Round Table, Malory holds up the queen as a role model for lovers rather than a cautionary tale of female sexuality run amok.

After the tragedy of Arthur's wars with Lancelot and Mordred are underway, Malory is less positive, yet, even in recounting the life of penitent asceticism that both Guinevere and Lancelot adopt, he focuses on their nobility and their hope in the next life. As she says farewell to Lancelot for the last time, in a scene that once again elicits our sympathy for the tragic lovers, Guinevere highlights their equal share in the blame, saying "Through this man and me hath all this war been wrought" and "through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain" (XX.ix). But, in taking ownership of her fault, she looks forward to a sanctified status in heaven and tells Lancelot she hopes "after my death to have a sight of the blessed face of Christ, and at domesday to sit on his right side" (XX.ix). Lancelot follows her lead, and rejecting her sacrificial advice to "take thee a wife, and live with her with joy and bliss" (XX.ix), he similarly promises "the same destiny that ye have taken you to, I will take me unto" (XX.ix). Malory presents their faithfulness in love, even though that love was adulterous and disastrous, as their great redeeming quality, now leading them to forsake the world and devote themselves in prayers for each other's souls. And he presents Guinevere as the driving force behind this move to penance; she does not passively accept the role of sinful queen in exile, but rather actively adopts the penitential life to atone for her sins.

But Lancelot and Guinevere did not always receive the same magnanimity from nineteenth-century adaptors. Of the major Victorian treatments of Guinevere, the most generous is William Morris's "The Defence of Guenevere," the titular poem in the medievalist collection,

The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems. Published in 1858, it preceded Tennyson's *Idylls*, and, unlike the poet laureate or his many imitators, Morris attempts a defense for the queen even while acknowledging her adultery. He was very familiar with Malory, through Robert Southey's 1817 edition, and, unlike many other Victorian writers, his poem captures elements of Malory's sympathy for, and dignified depiction of, the adulterous Guinevere and Lancelot. Guinevere accuses Gawain (who Morris makes her main antagonist) three times of lying and questions the validity of his accusation, while simultaneously admitting guilt. She begins her defense by presenting an analogy of "A great God's angel" (28), presenting "you" with a choice between a blue and a red cloth:

> After a shivering half-hour you said:
>
> "God help! heaven's colour, the blue;" and he said, "hell."
>
> Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,
>
> "And cry to all good men that loved you well,
>
> "Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known." (37-41)

While this defense depends on an admission of guilt, that Guinevere made the wrong choice without fully understanding the nature of the choice, she shifts the basis of her defense to the inappropriate nature of the accusation, violating her rights as a woman and as a queen. Referencing the episode from Malory where Sir Meliagrance kidnaps her and interrogates her over the blood stain on her bed, she asks, "Is there any law / To make a queen say why some spots of red / Lie on her coverlet?" (173-75). Her defense, much like that offered in the *Morte*, is not based on her innocence, but rather her nobility and the unseemly character of her accusers. As Ingrid Hanson observes, "Unlike Tennyson's Guinevere, whose post-adulterous supine body, as she 'grovelled with her face against the floor', is evidence of her sinfulness, Morris's

Guenevere is upright, articulate, and deliberate in her use of her body to defend herself" (352). And, in opposition to the silent queen of Malory's treatment of this episode, Morris's queen is the only character who is allowed to speak in "The Defence of Guenevere," her dramatic monologue cut short only by the arrival of Lancelot.

But many of Malory's other Victorian readers and imitators were less willing to excuse Guinevere for being "a true lover" or to allow her to give voice to her repentance and hope for forgiveness. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* notoriously simplifies the *Morte*'s complex web of causes for the fall and put the blame squarely on Guinevere's shoulders. As Tennyson scholars have long noted, the *Idylls* greatly reduce the agency and importance of women in the Arthurian myth. In "What Tennyson Really Did to Malory's Women," Maureen Fries, after looking at Tennyson's portrayal of Vivien, Enid, and Guinevere, concludes, "Whatever his worth to the (male) Victorian ethos, Tennyson must be seen as working contrary to, and contradictory of, feminine – to say nothing of feminist – values" (53). Specifically focusing on his representation of the tragedy of Camelot, how he "bowdlerized the tragedy and focused it upon female guilt" (53), she argues that Tennyson renders Malory's complex narrative a simple, moralistic tragedy.

I agree with Fries that the effect of Tennyson's omissions and alterations is that Guinevere's unfaithfulness to her husband becomes the central sin on which the moralizing tale hinges. In the *Idylls*, Mordred is no longer the product of Arthur's incestuous union with Morgause, so Arthur is without any fault when Mordred treacherously makes a bid for the throne. And Gawain's desire for revenge against Lancelot, which pushes Arthur into France and allows Mordred to take the throne, is similarly absent from the text. Also unlike Malory are Tennyson's many long passages devoted to censuring the adulterous queen. Guinevere's flight to the convent is occasioned, not by Mordred's incestuous attempt to wed her – a detail Tennyson

omits entirely – but by the discovery of her affair with Lancelot. In stark contrast to Malory, Tennyson makes Guinevere especially to blame and has her tell Lancelot, "Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou / Unwedded" (119-20). But Guinevere is not the only one to voice this conclusion; the young novice at the convent, in which the queen is hiding anonymously, tells her:

> This is all woman's grief,
>
> That she is woman, whose disloyal life
>
> Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
>
> Which good King Arthur founded. ("Guinevere" 218-21)

And while Guinevere tries to dismiss the novice as naïve, Arthur, who speaks with textual and moral authority, confirms the young girl's words. While granting her forgiveness, he places all of the blame on her, telling his queen:

> Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
>
> … till the loathsome opposite
>
> Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
>
> And all through thee! ("Guinevere" 487, 491-93)

According to Tennyson, whose adaptation of Malory was more popular among his contemporaries than the original, the fall of the great masculinist chivalric utopia of Camelot is due to the interference of an immoral woman. Both Arthur and the novice remark on the greatness of Camelot before the Queen arrived, and both place the lion's share of the blame on her instead of Lancelot.

While Malory almost excuses both Lancelot and Guinevere for their adultery and focuses on how nobly they approach their penitence, Victorian and Edwardian writers who followed

Tennyson's lead continued to focus on adultery as the worst of sins and as the chief cause of the fall of Camelot. Knowles robs Guinevere of the hopeful end she has in *Le Morte Darthur*, removing the entire pathetic scene at the convent and simply narrating, "And in that nunnery evermore she lived, sorely repenting and mourning for her sin, and for the ruin she had brought on all the realm. And there anon she died" (302-3). While Lancelot similarly embarks on "a mighty pilgrimage for many years, and after lived a hermit till his death" (303), Knowles follows Tennyson in describing the adultery as "her sin" rather than Malory's "our love," and he ends her tale on the hopeless note of death, absent her vision of heavenly bliss. Even in Lang's version, which follows Malory more closely and does include the final interview at the nunnery, there is no mention of Guinevere's hope of sitting at the right hand of God. The overall effect of these late Victorian representations is to increase the moral censure of adultery, to place the burden of sin more on Guinevere than Lancelot, and to focus more on tragic doom than on the Malorian picture of redemption and sanctification.

By looking at the way that nineteenth-century British imperialists rearranged and reprioritized Malory's narratives in their editions, commentaries, and adaptations, we can see the process of historical appropriation that is fundamental to the construction of New Imperialist chivalric masculinity. *Le Morte Darthur*, like the Middle Ages itself, provides the inspiration for Victorian ideas of chivalry and masculinity, providing the Victorians with characters and stories that serve as object lessons of heroic masculinity and of the pitfalls that may befall the man of arms. But it also acts as a tool appropriated in the service of the very specific ideological trappings of New Imperialism. It is for this reason that we find Malory often being read and manipulated in ways that seem to contradict what he himself expresses in the *Morte*. The downplaying of women's agency in chivalry, and the demonization of specific women who come

between men, along with the seemingly obsessive need to moralize the text, point to the ways

that Malory sometimes functioned more as a prop for the New Imperialist project of

masculinizing the past than as a legitimate inspiration. Malory and the Middle Ages become

rhetorical weapons, and appeals to a construct of the past in stark contrast to the present "ills" of

women's suffrage and democratization are a regular feature of this kind of conservative

medievalism. The "medieval" masculine ideals of New Imperialist romance rely on the specific

understanding of the Middle Ages that emerged in tandem with the "rise" of *Le Morte Darthur*

as a canonical, "epic" work of English literature.

Chapter 2 - Recovering Medieval Heroism: Masculinity and Empire in Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*

And there was he sworn unto his lords and the commons for to be a true king, to stand with true justice from thenceforth the days of this life. Also then he made all lords that held of the crown to come in, and to do service as they ought to do. And many complaints were made unto Sir Arthur of great wrongs that were done since the death of King Uther, of many lands that were bereaved lords, knights, ladies, and gentlemen. Wherefore King Arthur made the lands to be given again unto them that owned them.

– Le Morte Darthur I.vii

Perhaps no other literary figure is so closely tied to New Imperialism as Rudyard Kipling, a writer who managed the difficult task of linking immense popular appeal with overwhelming critical praise. A champion of Britain's empire, while at the same time a scathing critic of its failures, Kipling has been and remains a controversial figure to critics and scholars of his work. Roger Lancelyn Green calls him "the most controversial author in English Literature" (1) and most studies of Kipling open with some kind of acknowledgement of the many problems his work presents. Yet despite their rightful condemnation of his overall worldview, with its explicit racism, militarism, and jingoism, within that troubling worldview lies a subtlety and an evocativeness that is not so readily dismissed and that continues to see Kipling as a site of scholarly and popular fascination. George Orwell famously united this condemnation and fascination in his 1942 essay where he wrote, "Kipling *is* a jingo imperialist, he is morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting. It is better to start by admitting that, and then to try to find out why it is that he survives while the refined people who have sniggered at him seem to wear so badly" (32).

Kipling's survival, at least as a subject of scholarly interest, is in no small part due to the substantial role he played in the formation of late Victorian and Edwardian attitudes towards empire and gender, aggressive imperialism, and chivalric masculinity. His work appealed to youth and adults, uniting the disparate strands of soldier-centred militarism, history and myth

making, and the rhetoric of a just and necessary British Empire to create what critics such as

John Peck view as a unified national vision:

> The extraordinary achievement of Kipling in the 1890s is that he unites such
> divergent strands, bringing them together in a vision of militarism that, for a brief
> moment, seemed to appeal to the whole country. Kipling, for a short period, and
> even though there were hostile critics, seems to speak in a national voice and for
> the nation. This is, however, an illusion, for the splintering of culture towards the
> end of the century is absolute. (144)

As the voice of Britain at the height of New Imperialism, Kipling served as an unofficial

spokesperson for militarism, imperialism, and hegemonic masculinity. It is thus nearly

impossible to contend with the nature and role of these ideas in British culture without engaging

with their most dominant champion, a writer whose influence was felt even well into the

twentieth century, so that the war poet David Jones referred to the environment in which he was

raised as a "Kipling-conditioned world," and scholar Harry Ricketts can say of Kipling, "To

grow up in England (and its colonies) in the two decades or so preceding the war was –

consciously or not, willingly or not – to absorb Kipling. His work, both poetry and prose, was a

shared possession, almost as deeply imprinted as the Bible and Shakespeare, and for public

schoolboys the classics" (95).

But even apart from his role as a "voice of New Imperialism," Kipling is fascinating as a

writer who at times seems to undermine and question the very ideas of masculinity, empire, and

progress that he is famous for championing. His body of work does not present one single voice

of propaganda, but rather, while being propagandistic, is full of contradictions and tensions,

some of which Kipling seemed to be aware of himself. Kipling scholars such as David Aberbach

note this tension, and Aberbach argues, "Rudyard Kipling, the poet most widely associated with the power of the British empire and who, to a large extent, expressed and even created its spirit, was also the chief national self-doubter and subverter of the stereotypes of empire" (272). Kipling's work sings the praise of empire yet fears for its moral health, subscribes to the idea of history as social evolution, yet atavistically yearns for the past, and assumes the superiority of white, British men over colonized, non-white men, yet looks to these very same "primitives" as the noble bearers of raw, powerful masculinity. For Kipling, civilization, specifically the project of British imperial civilization, is the highest good, yet his work tends to feature bearers of anti-civilizational, "savage" qualities such as the feral, jungle-dwelling Mowgli, the violent, undisciplined school boys of *Stalky and Co.*, and the courageous warriors of a chaotic, lawless medieval world.

In many works, Kipling examines the close association between the civilizational project of empire building and the education of English children. In *Stalky and Co.* (1899) specifically, Kipling explores how the wild mischief of schoolboys, when harnessed for the good of the empire, makes them effective imperial agents. Throughout the series of self-contained, yet connected, short stories, Kipling follows the exploits of three adolescent boys – Stalky, Beetle, and Turkey – as they navigate life at a British boarding school. The boys exhibit a blatant disregard for the school's rules and play numerous pranks on the housemasters and other boys, demonstrating throughout a pragmatism and cleverness that prefigures their later successes as military officers. In *Stalky and Co.*, Kipling portrays the boys' life in school as analogous to that of life in the empire and as the training ground on which they master the skills of imperial conquest and governance. In "In Ambush," for instance, Kipling describes their attempts to conceal their secret hideout and outwit their housemasters in strikingly militaristic language; the

boys pepper their speech with references to raids and allies, and the narrator even ironically compares their situation to "the Mutiny" (29) of 1857. But while they revel in humiliating and outwitting the housemasters, Mr. Prout and Mr. King, they show deference for the ultimate authority of the headmaster, Mr. Bates, reflecting Kipling's own promotion of imperial ideals amid his fierce criticism of much imperialist policy. In two of the Stalky stories, "Slaves of the Lamp, Part I" and "Slaves of the Lamp, Part II," Kipling explicitly demonstrates how the boys' mischief directly translates into effective military strategy. In "Part I," Stalky gets revenge on Mr. King by covertly shooting the carrier, "Rabbits-Eggs," with his slingshot, leading him to wreak havoc on the housemaster's study. "Part II," set fifteen years later, shows how Stalky plays what is essentially the same prank on the British Empire's enemies. His old school friends, Tertius and Dick Four, recount how Stalky saved them in a conflict in what is now Pakistan by tricking the coalition of Khye-Kheens and Malots into fighting against each other, a feat he accomplishes by making it look as if a Malot killed one of the Khye-Kheens. This final story makes clear what is perhaps the most significant implication of Kipling's entire book: that the successful military officer is essentially still a rowdy schoolboy, and the courage and cunning that are formed during his youth should not be discouraged but directed against the empire's enemies.

But while *Stalky and Co.* is among Kipling's most famous works, it is my purpose in this chapter to explore how Kipling approaches the connection between children and empire specifically in relation to the, for him, inseparably linked issues of chivalric masculinity and England's ancient and medieval heritage. These issues of empire, chivalry, and medievalism, are ones that he takes up throughout his writing, but nowhere with as much focus and detailas in *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), a series of poems and short stories ostensibly written for children.

Scholars of Kipling have often overlooked this book and its sequel, *Rewards and Fairies* (1910),

ignoring their characterization of masculinity, militarism, and imperialism. Peter Hinchcliffe

calls these "the neglected Kipling books" but adds that they are "among the most urgent and

visionary books that Kipling ever wrote" (159). The urgent and visionary quality of specifically

Puck of Pook's Hill lies, I believe, in its explicit merging of hegemonic masculinity, New

Imperialism, and chivalric medievalism. In this book, we see Kipling explicitly address

England's medievalist inheritance, searching for a heroic masculinity and sacrificial patriotism

that is always "lost" to the present and found in the past. While Kipling does not engage with

Arthurian legend – indeed, there is no evidence that Kipling ever read Malory – his work directly

participates in the discourse of chivalry that sprang up amid the revival of interest in *Le Morte*

Darthur, and we cannot fully understand the influence of medievalist chivalry in the Victorian

and Edwardian periods without examining his work.

In *Puck of Pook's Hill*, Kipling explores the tumultuous history of England from the

waning days of the Roman occupation to the dawn of the Protestant Reformation during the

reign of Henry VIII, all through a frame narrative in which heroic figures from the past

magically appear and tell their life stories to two Edwardian children, Dan and Una, whose

names themselves are rooted in the English medievalism of Spenserian romance. As Corinne

McCutchan observes, "Kipling gives the children names strongly suggestive of *The Faerie*

Queene: Una, the name of the first book's heroine, and Dan, which by association with Daniel of

the Bible recalls the lion that befriends and defends Una in the forest" (73). The seemingly

independent sets of stories in *Puck of Pook's Hill* are not presented chronologically, but, when

rearranged into a linear timeline, they manifest themselves as a sweeping account of the history

of medieval England. Bookended by either extreme of the fall of Rome and the rise of the Tudors

and stopping at many key stages such as the coming of the pagan Saxons, the beginning of the

Norman Conquest, and the signing of the Magna Carta, *Puck of Pook's Hill* sketches out a rough

outline of England's medieval past. Though he demonstrates a conventional belief in progress,

Kipling also represents history as repetitive; as the stories in *Puck of Pook's Hill* illuminate,

colonization and change of power are constants, and the same chivalric virtues that aided the

Romans, the Normans, and the Tudors are to be inculcated in young Edwardian Britons as well,

lest the British Empire follow the path of all former empires. Kipling ties these chivalric virtues

directly to the health of the empire and demonstrates a belief in the strong bond between

hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic imperialism, cementing a narrative of national identity

that continues to exert itself in contemporary British political rhetoric.

2.1 Progress and History

Puck of Pook's Hill, with its explicit focus on England's history, represents Kipling's

contradictory, yet compelling, take on history that relies on many of the progressive tropes of

whig history, yet also employs the anxious rhetoric of modern degeneration characteristic of

conservative historiography. In this ambiguity, Kipling seems to employ an attitude towards the

medieval past favoured by many nineteenth-century conservatives, an attitude that Tison Pugh

characterizes as both "regressive and progressive" (7). Kipling combines the modern idea of

Britain's imperial destiny with the cyclical model of history favoured by many medieval

historians and which continued throughout the nineteenth century in the form of what Walter

Kudrycz terms Romanticism. Opposed to Idealism, and its ideas of constant progress, the

romantic, aesthetic approach, "implicitly or explicitly denies that progress can be discerned in

history. If the historical process is assigned any shape or pattern, it will be one of peaks and

troughs, recurrence, or even decline. Pessimism and irony therefore often feature prominently in aesthetic histories" (6). As this next section will demonstrate, Kipling's model of history is not satisfactorily labelled Idealist or Romanticist, progressivist or conservative. Rather, Kipling approaches the Middle Ages as both the less evolved, less enlightened predecessor of the modern English state as well as the site of lost virtues that need to be recovered in a decadent age. History marks constant progress but at a significant cost, and Kipling presents his imagined medieval world as the place to find worthy models of chivalric masculine behaviour.

From the first to the last page of *Puck of Pook's Hill*, Kipling constructs a narrative of English[20] history that moves inexorably towards a more stable, more civilized society, yet sees England always remain essentially the same. Driving Kipling's history is the problem that the series of successive invaders on English soil poses for any assertions of English exceptionalism or "purity," or even of tracing a clear English identity from the Middle Ages to the present. Kipling attempts to answer this problem through his depiction of an England that "conquers" its conquerors. His is an England governing its own imperial destiny, moving from the chaos left by the fall of Rome to the rise of the Tudors, all while preserving its essential "Englishness," which, though threatened by continual invasion, survives and guides its own evolution. The first poem of the volume, "Puck's Song," stresses the continuity of England in the face of these many historical crises. Narrated by the ancient fairy, Puck, a being who has lived throughout the length of English history, the poem draws the audience's attention to the, at first glance, unimpressive physical landmarks of the ordinary English countryside, where it then uncovers a rich and glorious national history. In the first stanza Puck points to the seemingly unremarkable "dimpled track that runs, / All hollow through the wheat" that he proceeds to imbue with historical and

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[20] Kipling's focus in *Puck of Pook's Hill* is primarily on "Englishness" rather than "Britishness". He uses the terms "England" and "English" throughout, using "Britain" only to speak of the Roman province in Parnesius's stories.

national significance when he reveals, "O that was where they hauled the guns / That smote King Philip's fleet" (3). Similarly, he highlights the book's theme of enduring Englishness from the Roman Empire, on through the Middle Ages, to the present by pointing out the geographical reminders of "a Legion's camping-place, / When Caesar sailed from Gaul," (4) the woods and ditches that saw when "the Saxons broke / On the day that Harold died," and the workings of "our little mill," which "has ground her corn and paid her tax / Ever since Domesday Book" (3-4). Along with a number of other physical landmarks that have witnessed the passing of time and the changing of political powers, these examples all taken together testify to the endurance of England over the centuries. Puck summarizes this sentiment in the penultimate stanza, "Old Wars, old Peace, old Arts that cease, / And so was England born" (4). The wars and invasions that take place do not see the creation of a new nation, but rather serve as important stages in the growth of England.

Just as he renders the many chaotic invasions of Romans, Saxons, and Normans in Puck's song into a narrative of progress and constancy, so too, throughout the stories in *Puck of Pook's Hill*, Kipling constructs a broad narrative that delineates a clear line of progress from Rome to the Tudors yet renders the past a thing of imminent concern to the present. Through the frame narrative structure, in which the protagonists of the past appear to tell their stories to the children, the distance between past and present is all but erased, allowing the lessons of the medieval world to speak directly to Edwardian England. Joanna Tomlinson takes this frame narrative to suggest "that understanding history is an active rather than a passive process, and that historical narratives can and should be questioned" (288). Along with encouraging questioning, the dialogue between the children and the historical figures demonstrates the immediate and tangible

relevance of medieval history, and marks the transferral of historic imperial authority from the medieval conquerors of the past to the emerging generation of Britons.

Kipling presents progress and English constancy both through the story of gradual disenchantment and through the underlying story of the sword, the law and the treasure. Beginning with the book's first story, "Weland's Sword," Kipling introduces the status of the fairies in England's history. The fairies, Puck explains, were formerly gods, brought to England by every foreign people – Phoenicians, Gauls, Jutes, Danes, Frisians, and Angles – who settled there. He says, "They were always landing in those days, or being driven back to their ships, and they always brought their Gods with them." (14-15). And though this influx of foreign people and foreign gods would seem to overpower whatever there was to begin with of English identity, these foreigners are in fact merely temporary guests. Kipling casts England as "a bad country for Gods" (15), and it is this natural inhospitality that plays such a key role in the evolution and progress of English history. It progresses as follows: "First they were Gods. Then they were People of the Hills, and then they flitted to other places because they couldn't get on with the English for one reason or another" (15). Against this backdrop of an England impervious even to gods, Puck recounts the story of Weland, a smith of the gods related to the Norse deity, Thor. Weland comes to England with a band of pirates, and, singing his own praises, tells Puck "how he was going to rule England" (16), to which the experienced fairy replies, "The time comes when I shall meet you plying your trade for hire by the wayside" (17). Weland proudly ignores this prophetic warning and soon becomes "a most important God" (17). His season of power is limited, however, and, after a thousand years, already the people treat him with less reverence than at the beginning. And after another few hundred years, Puck reports, "Weland and his temple were gone, and there was a Christian bishop in a church there" (18). The advent of

Christianity in England, and the abandonment of pagan deities altogether spells the complete end of power for a god like Weland, and he who was once ruler of England is forced to ply the trade of smithing in service to that land, unable, he tells Puck, to return to Valhalla "till some human being truly wishes me well" (20). His identity is thus entirely subsumed in England; in shoeing horses for common English farmers, he is humbled and taught his place in the country he thought to rule. By the end of the story, he demonstrates his full surrender to Englishness and to the inexorable march of progress after a young Saxon noble named Hugh thanks him for his services to the English people. Released at last, the smith repays Hugh's kindness with the gift of a sword, "the best blade that Weland ever made" (23). Weland's sword, the first of three important talismen in the allegory of English history, becomes, as Daphne Kutzer observes, "a symbol not only of authority, but of the very nature of Englishness" (36). The conflation of authority with Englishness means that whoever truly possesses authority must become English, and that a conquering people cannot truly rule the country until they become English. By gifting the sword to Hugh, Weland symbolizes the transition of power from the pagan to the Christian world of Anglo-Saxon England. He passes authority to a Saxon who will represent Englishness for the next epoch of history.

That epoch proves to be short lived as we discover in the stories of Sir Richard, for Hugh fights on the losing side at the Battle of Hastings, and eventually hands the sword over to the Norman Sir Richard. Kipling delays this transferral, however, until Sir Richard is fully Anglicized. The sword sings at the end of "Young men at the Manor," but Hugh retains it until after his adventure against the apes in Africa, when he is too maimed to bear a sword anymore. The gifting of the sword corresponds with the increasing Anglicization of Sir Richard, who himself seems to understand that, although he and his fellow Normans appear to rule over

England, they are in fact the ones being ruled. He tells Dan and Una, "I set out to conquer England three days after I was made knight. I did not then know that England would conquer me" (36). Though he and the Normans at large do physically conquer England and rule over the Saxons, his Norman identity is gradually overtaken by a much more powerful English identity. Puck tells Sir Richard, "The Custom of Old England was here before your Norman knights came, and it outlasted them, though they fought against it cruel" (43). It is inevitable that Sir Richard should be conquered by England, or else driven out by it, just as Weland and the pagan Saxons are forced to serve the land.

In "Sir Richard's Song," Kipling makes the point of England's mastery over its Norman conquerors even more clearly, establishing a pattern in which the first two lines of each stanza set up a Norman expectation that is then undermined or overruled by England, articulated in the refrain, "England hath taken me." Sir Richard begins by revealing his intention to "take from England fief and fee," only to find that "this game is the other way over," and that "England hath taken me!" (51). He then characterizes this being taken by England as a romantic venture that causes him to abandon home and family for the sake of his new love. He lists the concerns and fears of father, mother, brother, little sister, and comrades who wait for his return, and to them all he repeats, "Tell them England hath taken me" (51). In the final stanza he explains the inexorable pull that he feels from the country:

> Howso great man's strength be reckoned,
>
>   There are two things he cannot flee;
>
> Love is the first, and Death is the second –
>
>   And Love, in England, hath taken me! (33-36).

In the stories, as I will examine later in this chapter, love for the Saxon Aelueva is inseparable from love for England, and the English woman becomes the avenue through which England ensnares its conqueror. Sir Richard cannot resist the draw of the English country any more than he can resist the draw of Aelueva. His own destiny, and with it the destiny of the Norman ruling class as a whole, becomes inextricably linked to the destiny of England, until the Norman conquerors are themselves fully conquered.

The second important talisman of English progress, the treasure, first enters the stories in "The Knights of the Joyous Venture" in which Sir Richard and Hugh win a great quantity of gold by defeating gorillas in Africa. They bring back this gold to Pevensey where they bury it in a well. The passing on of the sword to Richard and the acquisition of gold both signal the movement of Englishness and imperial authority from the Saxons to the Normans. The treasure won by the sword does not make a further appearance in the book until the very final story, "The Treasure and the Law." This story, narrated by the medieval Jewish moneylender Kadmiel, brings the underlying narrative of progress and the passing on of authority to an end, revealing a providential narrative of England's destiny. On the one hand, Kipling's portrayal of Kadmiel in many ways conforms to the racist caricature of the conspiratorial, power-hungry Jew, with Kadmiel telling Dan and Una, "We sought Power—Power—Power! That is our God in our captivity. Power to use!" (237). On the other hand, Kadmiel ends up playing a significant role in the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, an event, in English national myth, that stands as one of the most pivotal moments in the nation's history, a crucible in which tyranny was limited and a clear step was taken towards the liberalism of the modern English state. By casting a Jew as the hero of this story, and emphasizing that, unlike the England of the twelfth century, in Edwardian England "there is but one Law in Old England for Jew or Christian" (237), Kipling seems to

celebrate the comparatively greater tolerance of Edwardian England as a sign of progress. Kipling employs Magna Carta to assert the superiority of English civilization and uses the document as a kind of shorthand for modernity and English exceptionalism. Its place in the timeline that Kipling constructs has great significance, presenting a model of history that goes from the anarchical predominance of might (the sword) to the ordered ascendance of justice and the law. Between those two extremes of medieval evolution lies the treasure, an intermediate stage that directly brings about the institution of fairer laws.

But embedded in this very narrative of progress is a strong atavistic pull. Though Kipling's narrative seems to celebrate the advance of civilization and progress, we find him yearning throughout the book for the time before the law, the time of the sword. The sword represents the raw masculine energy required to survive in harder times, the character building crucible in which men – and it is men specifically for Kipling – are thrown into perilous situations. This theme of the primitive, uncivilized world as a test and developer of masculine virtue is central to his body of work, and sees his protagonists often immersed in untamed, hostile environments. It is this atavistic longing for the days of the sword that explains why the book is primarily comprised of the stories narrated by Sir Richard and Parnesius, both warriors and eager participants in the expansion of empire. Their survival in hostile colonial environments, where the law of civilization must be ably defended by the sword, demonstrates Kipling's ideal masculinity, a masculinity that must be rescued from the past to save the present.

2.2 Masculinity and Empire

Kipling's masculinity is intertwined with the nineteenth-century ideal of chivalry, predicated on a reconstructed code of behaviour hailing from the reimagined Middle Ages. The Victorian

gentleman's code of virtues was explicitly medievalist, inspired by the medieval knight as he came to them through a mixture of history and myth. It is no coincidence then that Kipling chooses two figureheads of chivalry for the two main narratives of *Puck of Pook's Hill*: a Norman knight and a Roman centurion. Kutzer, placing these characters into the context of contemporary popular fiction, writes, "Parnesius, like Richard, has parallels in other popular works of the period. Not only was Rome and its empire a popular subject with nineteenth-century historians, but there were any number of historical fictions based on ancient Rome" (33). The Romans, of course, held special significance to the English as their imperial forebears, and Girouard observes that "imperialists tended to see themselves as modern Romans" (228). Patricia Owen notes the pervasiveness of Roman imagery in children's popular culture, commenting, "It was inevitable that children who learned to recite "Horatius," often before an admiring audience, should see England's empire as the successor of Rome's, and themselves as inheritors of Rome's traditions" (65).

The knight, meanwhile, was one of the most popular characters of children's historical fiction, featuring in adventure novels by authors like G. A. Henty and H. Rider Haggard and in the numerous juvenile adaptations of *Le Morte Darthur*. And Kipling himself, as Deanne Williams observes, was steeped in medieval lore, for "Medievalism was second nature to Kipling, who was raised in a Victorian England that was captivated by its medieval past" (111). Kipling's use of these medieval and Roman historical figures is more than for mere historical curiosity. As John McBratney writes, "By juxtaposing past and present, he stressed that events of Roman or Anglo-Norman times, for example, held a clear allegorical significance for the society of Edwardian England" (143). These parallels allowed Kipling to trace the origins of modern

imperialism into England's own past and to launch a critique of the British Empire while also modelling an ideal, historic imperial masculinity.

Within the book itself, Kipling embeds a number of references to contemporary popular art, art that conditions children to see the immediate relevance in their own time of stories of medieval and ancient warriors. When the children first lay eyes on Sir Richard clad in full martial attire, they call to mind Victorian depictions of the medieval knight, filtering him through the construction of the past with which they have grown up. As they stare at the knight, Una says to Dan, "It's like the picture in your room – 'Sir Isumbras at the Ford'" (32). This 1857 painting by John Everett Millais depicts an old knight clad in gold armour seated on a large black horse along with two children (a boy and a girl) whom he is helping to cross a ford. The painting refers to the long narrative Middle English poem, *Sir Isumbras*, though it does not depict any specific scene from that text. The significance of Kipling's reference to Millais's painting seems to be merely a demonstration of the prevalence and cultural relevance of medievalism in Edwardian England, although of course the detail of the two children in the painting is more than mere coincidence. Williams, focusing on this moment, comments, "Una's connection reveals her viability as an imperial subject: medieval history – and, more importantly, an idealized past mediated through Pre-Raphaelite painting – is foremost in her mind" (112). The "idealized past" that she is able to call to mind points to the ubiquity of medievalism in children's popular culture and demonstrates the close relationship between knights and children in the Victorian and Edwardian imagination. Likewise, Parnesius meets the children when they are already preconditioned to hear his tale; they are already quoting extensively from *Lays of Ancient Rome*, a book of narrative poems written by Thomas Babington Macaulay and published in 1842, which introduced Roman myth and history to generations of Victorian children. Though often "looked

down on by more refined critics," as Catharine Edwards observes, the Lays were "to become one

of the most often read texts in the schools of imperial Britain and indeed educational institutions

in the Empire" (77). Frequently compared to Kipling's own writings, Macaulay's Roman verse

was familiar to any well-educated British child of the early twentieth century.

In both story sets, Kipling demonstrates an interest in the intertwined, mutually

dependent ideals of masculinity and empire. Both narratives are deeply concerned with the issue

of maintaining order on the frontiers of empire, an issue that is explored through a character

study of individual men. Sir Richard and Parnesius, both members of a ruling elite tasked with

maintaining order over a large indigenous population, exhibit what Kipling sees as the manly

character necessary to govern the colonies and uphold the empire. Their chivalric virtues of

courage, courtesy, and loyalty allow them to establish colonies successfully and protect them

from attacks by rival empires. I largely agree with Kutzer's argument that "the tales in *Puck of*

Pook's Hill emphasize not the political or military skills necessary to build and maintain empire,

but rather the human qualities or the qualities of what late Victorians would term 'character'

necessary in empire builders. This accounts for, among other things, the masculinity of the

stories" (34). However, though Kipling does indeed focus more closely on strength of character

in his fictitious leaders than on the details of colonial bureaucracy, he understands the

relationship between men and empire as interdependent. The "moral," "manly" character of men

is synonymous with good leadership and a healthy empire, but a "good empire," a good ideal, is

what creates those men, what inspires them to be the kind of hero that this book celebrates. So

though he is more focused on manly character, Kipling does in fact also present a more

pragmatic model of good governance, predicated on understanding and negotiating with the

colonized subject

2.2.1 The Norman Stories

In the first story in Sir Richard's tale, "Young Men at the Manor," Kipling launches into one of the most pivotal moments in the creation of English national identity, the Norman Conquest of 1066. Though something of a cliché in popular history, it was an event fraught with controversy in the nineteenth century. In 1958, Christopher Hill famously defined the Victorian theory of the "Norman Yoke," which saw Norman rule as a disastrous move away from the democratically inclined Anglo-Saxons, who "lived as free and equal citizens, governing themselves through representative institutions. The Norman Conquest deprived them of this liberty, and established the tyranny of an alien King and landlords" (57). This view was made popular by Sir Walter Scott in his medievalist novel *Ivanhoe*, which imagines the tensions, even in the late twelfth century, between the misruled Saxons and their arrogant, cruel Norman masters. Scott's novel anticipates the union of Saxons and Normans to create the English nation, embodied in the novel's titular figure, Ivanhoe, a young man of Saxon blood who embraces and masters the Norman chivalric arts. Countless novels in the tradition of *Ivanhoe* took up the idea of the Norman Yoke. Charles Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake* follows the adventures of the rogue Saxon Hereward as he wages a guerrilla war against the cruel, foreign Normans. The Norman Yoke theory was not accepted by everyone, however, and Thomas Carlyle famously rejected it, racially self-identifying as a Norman. In *Reversing the Conquest*, Clare Simmons devotes a book length study to just this issue, concluding:

> The Conquest presented perhaps the greatest problem in all British history. The
> connotations inherent in the very word "conquest" clashed with the image that
> nineteenth-century Britons were creating of themselves. The task, then, was to

interpret the Conquest as a historical corroboration of that self-image and not as a
contradiction. Nineteenth-century considerations of the events of 1066 thus
become questions of how a writer treats a historical fact that fails to conform with
his or her personal ideal of history. (5)

In Kipling's case, Simmons's thesis becomes complicated. The disruption of conquest seems to
contradict the notion of an eternal "Englishness" but Kipling, by depicting England as the master
of its own destiny, makes it, in its abstract form, the conqueror of the Norman conquerors. In this
way, he manages the historical problem of 1066.

It is not obvious then that Kipling would choose a Norman as the hero of his stories
about the Conquest. Even Hugh, one of the narrative's sympathetic Saxon characters, is
rendered noble largely by virtue of his loyalty to the Norman conquerors. Kipling makes a
deliberate choice to tell the history of the Norman Conquest from the side of the Normans,
transforming the events of 1066 from the story of Englishmen resisting foreign invaders – as
many Victorians did – to the story of a forerunner to the British Empire that must rule over an
indigenous population. In Kipling's story, neither Saxon nor Norman truly own England, but
rather are successors to an ancient, imperial power that is translated throughout history.

Kipling uses the opportunity of this setting to explore his ideals of the close connection
between manly virtue and successful imperialism. Sir Richard demonstrates both of these
qualities, being both a paragon of chivalry and the successful governor of a Saxon manor.
Throughout his stories, Kipling weaves the two together, so that the very principles that make Sir
Richard knightly and manly are the same principles that allow him to be a good imperialist. As a
young man, only three days after being knighted, he joins Duke William's expedition and
participates in the Battle of Hastings. In the bloody aftermath of that battle, he encounters Hugh

and the two fight away until the Saxon "by pure ill-fortune" (35), slips and loses his sword. Courteously, Sir Richard spares his life, showing his foe honour and respect for his manly defense. He immediately reaps the reward for his chivalric behaviour, for, when a "clump of Saxons" (37) emerges to kill him, Hugh claims that the Norman is his prisoner, thereby saving his life. The Norman and Saxon demonstrate extreme respect for one another, so much so that Sir Richard calls Hugh "the most perfect, courteous, valiant, tender, and wise knight that ever drew breath" (42). This high praise for a Saxon, a cultural "other" in Sir Richard's world, though less so in Kipling's, proves the Norman's embodiment of the work's chivalric virtue of transnational respect, a respect that is reciprocated by the Saxon noble.

When they arrive at Hugh's manor however, the Saxon falls into a swoon from his wounds, and his sister, Lady Aelueva, resenting her Norman conqueror, threatens to hang him should her brother die of his wounds. Fortunes again quickly shift when the Norman De Aquila arrives to restore him, giving him control over the manor and ushering Sir Richard into the position of a colonial governor. His first act is to shield the Saxons from De Aquila's vengeance, a vengeance that offers a glimpse into broader Norman cruelty. Next he must make a decision on whether or not to hang the Saxon churls who were prepared to hang him. De Aquila, representing the draconian style of colonial rule, suggests that he hang the men, but Hugh, on whose shoulders rests the full burden of representation for the colonized Saxons, warns him that if he kills these three men, "then my churls will fight" (41). Sir Richard again chooses the courteous, chivalrous option and decides to spare the members of his new subject population, wisely following the advice of his Saxon friend.

Though De Aquila puts little faith in Sir Richard or his more humane methods, the narrative proves the political efficacy of the chivalrous imperialism Sir Richard espouses. De

Aquila warns him, "I have given thee this Manor, which is a Saxon hornet's nest, and I think thou wilt be slain in a month" (39). Leaving him to govern a large hostile Saxon population, De Aquila does offer Sir Richard the advice, "'Here and now fighting is foolishness and' he reached for the reins – 'craft and cunning is all'" (40). Sir Richard shrewdly answers this call to be cunning by demonstrating respect for native Saxon customs, creating laws that apply equally to Saxons and Normans, and trying to win the Saxons' consent. He lays out his precarious position to the children, telling them, "Here was I … left alone with my thirty men-at-arms, in a land I knew not, among a people whose tongue I could not speak, to hold down the land which I had taken from them" (39). As he would describe the situation in British controlled India, with which he was personally familiar, Kipling presents the outnumbered colonist as the one in danger, rather than the overpowered colonized people. His narrator invites us, through the direct appeal to the children, to sympathize with the one who has just taken away another's land more than with the one whose land has been taken away. Kipling's imperialist Norman knight represents himself as alone, outnumbered, and trapped in a foreign land, with the arduous task of maintaining order amongst a hostile people, through a mixture of force and ingenuity.

Kipling makes the analogy between medieval Norman and modern British imperialist clear by projecting contemporary colonial paranoia on to the past. Richard's fears of Saxon uprising seem to be based, at least in part, on events of recent memory to Kipling's original readers, especially the breakdown of imperial order in Britain's colonies. In India specifically, the British saw their mastery over the colony severely tested on several occasions, most significantly during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The horrors of that uprising, along with the draconian reprisals that followed, left their mark on the British consciousness throughout the rest of the century and beyond. Kipling himself condemned the Mutiny in his work, most strikingly

in his novel *Kim*, where an old soldier who stayed loyal to the British, even when most of his people were joining the rebellion, describes how "a madness ate into all the Army, and they turned against their officers. That was the first evil, but not past remedy if they had then held their hands. But they chose to kill their Sahibs' wives and children. Then came the Sahibs from over the sea and called them to more strict account" (100). Glossing over the brutality of the British reaction and instead focusing on the monstrosity of the native mutineers, Kipling depicts resistance to imperial rule as beyond reason, a sign of "madness," and he presents colonial rule as always precarious. At any moment, the colonial subject could rise up against the colonist with murderous intent. He presents the failure of British colonial rule as a failure of chivalry, and his focus on the sufferings of women and children, aside from being used to demonize and delegitimize the Sepoys, shames British men for failing to protect them from the violence of the racialized other.

Sir Richard pre-empts such a scenario by demonstrating his chivalrous, masculine virtue, creating an avenue of respect between Normans and Saxons. His friendship with Hugh stems from the respect formed by their martial encounter, a friendship that becomes instrumental for his colonial policy. Sir Richard acknowledges, "I made shift by Hugh's help to govern the valley" (42), and he relies on the Saxons as well as the Normans to help protect the manor from robbers, the first of which are rogue Normans attempting to steal pigs. Fighting off these robbers allows Sir Richard to show his fairness and ability to defend his colony. He announces, "Norman or Saxon ...we must beat them back, or they will rob us every day," and he recounts how, "Side by side we fought against all who came" (42). It is through this fighting, these demonstrations of masculine worth, that the Normans and Saxons come to respect one another, and stand "side by side." Fighting together becomes a foundation of social unity, as, in the interest of protecting the

colony from invaders, the colonized and colonists must put aside their differences becoming equals in the martial space of the battlefield. That equality formed in battle bleeds into the policy and legislation governing the manor, as Sir Richard announces that "any man, knight or churl, Norman or Saxon" (41) will be punished if they attempt to steal. Hugh commends the Norman for his fairness, telling him, "'Thou hast gone far to conquer England this evening'" (41). And Sir Richard concludes, "I think some of them, even then, began not to hate me" (42).

Another key to successful governing modeled by Sir Richard is winning and maintaining the Saxons' consent. In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba, draws on Antonio Gramsci's definition of hegemony as "power achieved through a combination of coercion and consent" (48), and notes how this consent could often be dramatized as sexual, pointing to "the intricate overlaps between colonial and sexual domination" (160). Loomba observes how "from the beginning of the colonial period till its end (and beyond), female bodies symbolise the conquered land" (154). In *Puck of Pook's Hill*, Kipling employs this colonialist trope and characterizes colonization as a consensual arrangement, a characterization that has pragmatic as well as larger, more racist, implications. Pragmatically, it means that a colonizing empire cannot rule a colony if the colonized people are up in arms against them, and so makes a level of magnanimity necessary for survival. But it also downplays the violence inherent in conquest and colonization, making the forcible rule of one culture over another a troubling romance between a wooing man and a coy, stubborn woman, who must be coaxed into a mutually beneficial relationship. Unlike the more conventional sexualized relationships between colonist and colonized, such as the doomed relationships between white men and black women found in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*, the budding romance between Sir Richard and Lady Aelueva – both part of the "white" race and central to the makeup of English "identity" – is

gentler and ends happily with marriage. This marriage, the climax of the first story, symbolizes the merging of Saxons and Normans, and the acceptance of Norman leadership over the manor.

Throughout the remaining two stories in the Norman series, Kipling continues to develop the interconnection of chivalry and empire building, and explores his heroic ethos, his vision for how the modern chivalric hero, the colonial adventurer, should behave. McCutchan, listing the many central themes of the book, cites "the responsibilities of leaders and followers, justice and law, religious tolerance, vocation (the talent or destiny innate in a character), craft (the art or skill that furthers the vocation), and healing" (77). She leaves out one of the most important of the book's themes, especially in the Norman and Roman stories: the necessary characteristics and actions of a heroic young man. Kipling developed his heroic ethos throughout his literary career, generally locating it in the common soldiers of the British Empire who shed their blood to create and preserve the empire's power. In *Puck of Pook's Hill*, Kipling turns to the past where he finds traditional, historical models for modern heroic masculinity, demonstrating a continuity in English history that provides the basis for and lends greater legitimacy to a modern revival of chivalry.

In "The Knights of the Joyous Venture," the second of Sir Richard's stories, Kipling takes his medieval knights on a bizarre quest closely resembling a colonial enterprise, allowing him to make the already conventional comparison between medieval knights and colonial adventurers explicitly. Picking up well after the events of the previous story, after Lady Aelueva dies and his son reaches maturity, Sir Richard recounts how he was struck with wanderlust, desiring "some journey or pilgrimage – to forget" (60). With Saxon England already colonized by the end of the previous story, the Norman imperialist must set off to "tame" new lands. Aelueva's death leads him to flee domesticity and thrusts him back into the realm of character

forming, manly peril. Whereas the manor was defined largely by the feminine presence of the

Saxon lady, the world of this story is an entirely male space, so that the bonds formed are

entirely homosocial. For New Imperialist romance, as I explore more in the following chapter, an

exclusively male world is often presented as necessary for heroic masculine development, the

antithesis to the "weakening" influences of domesticity. Sir Richard is joined by his Saxon friend

Hugh, and together they board a merchant ship headed for Bordeaux. While aboard the ship, they

meet a knight of Artois, who has campaigned against the Moors in Spain and who intrigues them

with the prospect of a crusade. Sir Richard tells the children, "He sang us strange Moorish songs

that first night, and half persuaded us to go with him" (61). Kipling sets up the beginning of the

story as a conventional medieval romance, one that would fit the historical and literary record

where knights embarked on crusades against the Islamic powers in the Holy Land or in Spain,

but he soon moves past this only tangentially colonial narrative to set the action in a more

obvious and familiar colonial landscape.

Sir Richard and Hugh's interest in the crusade in Spain is abruptly interrupted by the

advent of a Dane ship, which, striking against the hull of the merchant vessel, causes the heroes

to fall into it. They are promptly captured by the Danes, who rob them of everything they have

except for the sword that Hugh carries, which sings when Witta the ship's captain attempts to

steal it. Duly impressed by the runes that Weland inscribed upon his masterwork, the Danes

determine to keep Richard and Hugh for the good luck that they are sure to bring them on their

voyage. Witta does give his captives the "choice" to "swim to England or France," (63) but they

remain on board rather than risking their lives in the water.

The voyage that Witta takes them on is fraught with peril, peril that sees Sir Richard

exhibit and model the ideal masculine characteristics that preserve the ideals of empire. Again

we see the interplay of imperial demand and masculine provision. For just as the colonial

adventure on which they embark requires hypermasculine courage, so the masculine character

that a knight like Sir Richard possesses makes imperial adventure necessary in order to satiate

the need for violence and peril. Setting out on the "No Man's road" (66), the crew make their

way south towards the continent of Africa by means only of a compass, mirroring the legendary

figures of the Age of Exploration, so lauded in Kipling's own time. This medieval version of an

imperialist voyage involves the coming together of the chivalric heroism of the knight and the

icy pragmatism of the pirate-explorer, those two temperaments that make up the ideal colonial

adventurer. As they approach the continent, what Sir Richard calls "beyond the world's end"

(67), the aging knight admits, "We were not young, but I think no shame to say whenas we drove

out of that secret harbour at sunrise over a still sea, we two rejoiced and sang as did the knights

of old when they followed our great Duke to England" (66). Seized with the enthusiasm of a

young knight following his liege lord to honourable conflict, Sir Richard brings nobility to a

perhaps otherwise ignoble enterprise, which he recognizes when he acknowledges, "yet was our

leader an heathen pirate" (66). Witta's very transgressiveness, as both pagan and outlaw, ensures

the manly nature of this adventure, for while Sir Richard and Hugh have potentially grown soft

in their lives of peace on the manor, Witta embodies the kind of raw, primitive masculinity that

Kipling fears is lost as society progresses. The pirate is motivated by greed, which he reveals

when he tells them more about their mission, a sequel to his father Guthrum's previous voyage to

Africa, where "naked men sold gold for iron and beads. There had he bought much gold, and no

few elephants' teeth, and thither by help of the Wise Iron would Witta go. Witta feared nothing –

except to be poor" (67). Yet Kipling makes this promise of gold and ivory, the two great material

motivators of European colonization in Africa, secondary to the nobler concerns of attaining

honour and experiencing adventure. Conveniently, he makes the wealth a mere accessory, a proper reward for manly behaviour but not its motivator, so that his heroes are not tainted by the mercenary aspects of actual, historical colonialism. By giving Sir Richard and Hugh noble motivations and having them participate in the colonialist fantasy of "liberating" indigenous people, Kipling glorifies colonization as a chivalrous, knightly quest.

The precarious passage across the sea is far from the only peril of this mission, however. Witta, continuing the narrative he received from his father, tells them, "All that country, he said, was full of Devils who lived in trees, and tore folk limb from limb. How think ye?" (67). His attempt to frighten or impress his new companions merely excites their lust for adventure, prompting Hugh's heroic response: "'Gold or no gold,' said Hugh, fingering his sword, 'it is a joyous venture. Have at these Devils of thine, Witta!'" (67). Hugh nobly rejects gold as his primary motivation, citing the potential danger posed by these "Devils" as the reward in and of itself. Witta, as the "savage" of Kipling's tale, however, corrects what he sees as Hugh's naive heroism. He tells them, "I do not set my life adrift on a plank for joy, or the venture" (65). The promise of wealth is enough to entice Witta to endure the hardships involved in attaining it, but he does not take the chivalric joy in risking death for its own sake. His bravery is unquestioned though; Sir Richard says admiringly of him, "Yet Witta was a wolf in fight, and a very fox in cunning" (67).

The marriage of courage and cunning is key to the character of a Kipling hero and echoes De Aquila's advice to the young Sir Richard that "craft and cunning is all." And over the course of the venture, Sir Richard sees in the heathen Witta the admirable, manly qualities that he cultivates within himself. As the narrative progresses, Sir Richard, Hugh, and the Danes enter into a brotherhood, forged by shared suffering and risk taking. Before narrating the events of the

encounter with the Devils, Sir Richard tells the children, "Those were good days – for a wifeless man – with Witta and his heathen – beyond the world's end" (69). Wifeless, and submerged in this savage, unrestrained masculinity, Sir Richard reflects the very same atavistic tendency that sees Kipling turn to the past in the first place, sampling the "primitive" and temporarily adopting a "savage" masculinity. The temporary nature of this sampling is key, for the civilized Sir Richard must return to civilization, stronger and better equipped to rule the empire after his immersion into barbarism.

The good "wifeless" days of the sea give way to the climactic struggle of the story: the contest with the Devils. This whimsical adventure in Africa closely follows a fairly typical colonial fantasy but with the jarring alteration of a medieval setting. Heading down the "many muddy waterways" and "winding channels between the trees," (70) the crew proceeds in a parody of the steamer in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). As they advance through the dark waterways, they come across the natives, who, apparently in some kind of distress, ask for their aid, offering "gold in bars and in dust from their huts, and some blackened elephants' teeth" (71). Like the peasant and the old woman who warn Arthur of the Giant of Mont St. Michel, Kipling here presents the colonialist fantasy of the native who legitimizes the incursion of the foreign adventurer, and the fantasy of the battle between monsters and heroes as a battle for the right to rule and colonize this "primitive" territory.

Before Witta's crew have time for a response, the villagers flee back to their huts, and the Devils come into view. Though the "Devils" are later revealed to be apes, the medieval adventurers fear these monsters that are "taller than a man; covered with reddish hair" (71), so much so that they are reluctant to take the treasure sitting on the shore. Finally, Hugh leaps into action, saying simply,"I go" (72), and Sir Richard admits, "I was afraid to my four bones'

marrow, but for shame's sake I followed" (72). Accompanied only by Thorkild, one of the

Danes, and covered by the archers aboard the ship, they proceed to battle the Devils for the

treasure, in a fight that takes them beyond the bounds of "civilized," "Christian" combat, as Sir

Richard dramatically describes, "Never was such a fight fought by christened man" (73). Though

all acquit themselves manfully, it is Hugh who wins the greatest measure of honour, fighting in

single combat against one of the Devils: "Body to body there, by stark strength of sword and

hand, had Hugh slain him, and, dying, the Thing had clenched his teeth on the sword" (74).

Though he successfully kills a Devil single handedly, and earns his comrades' respect, it comes

at the cost of his right arm, so that he "can never hold hilt again" (74). The other two combatants

suffer lesser injuries: Sir Richard receives a broken foot and a fever and Thorkild a bitten ear.

Bravery, for Kipling's heroes, comes at a great cost, making the chivalrous sacrifice of their

bodies all the more significant. While Kipling emphasizes the attainment of "honour" over the

plundering of riches in the colonial enterprise, his budding imperialists still carry off a vast

quantity of treasure. Sir Richard recounts how Witta "brought away all the gold on the bank, and

twice as much more, that the people of the village gave him for slaying the Devils. They

worshiped us as Gods" (71). Employing imperialist tropes such as superstitious indigenous

people deifying white men – a trope Haggard also made use of quite often – Kipling has his

idealized natives freely surrender their wealth. There is no need for pillage, or any form of

forcible taxation in this fantasy wherein the imperial project is construed primarily as a

humanitarian action. Intervention, Kipling's narrative argues, is necessary to save the native

peoples from oppression (in this case by gorillas), and any financial gain is purely secondary,

coincidental, and freely offered by grateful dark skinned people.

This hybrid of chivalric romance and colonial adventure story espouses the same moral found in *Le Morte Darthur* and in the Victorian romances of R. M. Ballantyne, which Kipling alludes to explicitly at the end of the story. The courageous adventurer who leaves the comfort of his home and risks his life in some "uncivilized" place receives both material and immaterial reward, returning with riches and a strengthened masculine honour. This wealth benefits not only him, but his country as a whole. Linda Dryden characterizes boys' adventure fiction of the period as featuring, "heroes anxious for thrilling adventures in tropical locations where they prove their manliness, assert English racial superiority, and plunder the land of its riches" (4). In line with the conventions of contemporary adventure fiction, Kipling has his heroes advance their own cause as well as the cause of England generally, bringing home with them from this foray into savage hypermasculinity the treasure that, when Kadmiel finds it and buries it at sea to prevent his fellow moneylender Elias from lending it to King John, leads to the signing of the Magna Carta, propelling England forward along the path to modernity.

By the conclusion of "The Knights of the Joyous Venture," Kipling draws his disparate characters into a brotherly union based on mutual respect, courage, and loyalty. Sir Richard and Hugh, already bonded in the previous story, become even closer, fully transcending the cultural divide when Hugh gifts his singing sword to his Norman companion, thus signifying the full and final consolidation of Saxon and Norman elements. The quest also sees imperial hegemonic masculinity spread, as respect is exchanged across the border between "civilized" and "savage" peoples. The heathen Witta tells the English knights, "I love ye more than brothers" (75). And Sir Richard, who all throughout the narrative has spoken admiringly of his captor and captain, demonstrates his full appreciation of the heathen's honourable conduct. He appreciatively states, "He made no promise; he swore no oath; he looked for no thanks; but to Hugh, an armless man,

and to me, an old cripple whom he could have flung into the sea, he passed over wedge upon wedge, packet upon packet of gold and dust of gold, and only ceased when we would take no more" (77). Here Witta exhibits an impressive degree of good faith by honouring an unspoken covenant. He is not obliged to give them a single bar of the captured gold, and, as a pirate, he might be expected to take advantage of their vulnerability, but Witta sees to it that his brothers-in-arms are duly rewarded for the part they played in the "joyous venture." And Sir Richard, recognizing his status as a "true man," despite the wide cultural gulf between them, states, "Witta was an heathen and a pirate; true it is he held us by force many months in his ship, but I loved that bow-legged, blue-eyed man for his great boldness, his cunning, his skill, and, beyond all, for his simplicity" (77). By expressing his love of Witta, Sir Richard embodies the ideal of a masculinity that bonds men across the "white" spectrum of Norman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norse identities. On this subject of transcultural brotherhood, McBratney writes, "The male friendship across cultural borders here anticipates the deep affection between men of different tribes, nations, and religions in many of the succeeding stories" (152). Certainly this is a central theme, not only in *Puck of Pook's Hill* but in Kipling's literary output as a whole. It also serves as one of the major points of connectivity between medieval chivalry as represented in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* and the hypermasculinity encouraged by New Imperialists, with their interests in transcultural bond of men united by shared values of courage and martial prowess.

2.2.2 The Roman Stories

The next series of short stories in *Puck of Pook's Hill* goes back earlier in time to offer a look at the empire Britain most modeled itself after and focuses on the waning days of the Roman occupation in the fourth century. Narrated by the centurion Parnesius, these stories continue to

explore the book's theme of the interconnectedness of heroic masculinity and a strong, dominant empire. While Sir Richard's narrative saw the rise of Norman power, Parnesius's tale focuses instead on an empire's fall. Parnesius, along with his close friend Pertinax, is tasked with keeping order on Hadrian's Wall, in a land that Kipling characterizes as unmistakably colonial. The three stories that comprise the Parnesius narrative – "A Centurion of the Thirteenth," "On the Great Wall," and "The Winged Hats" – portray the delicate combination of courage and cunning necessary to keep order in a dangerous, contested colony. Kipling represents the struggle between two "master races" – the Romans and the Germanic "Winged Hats" – for control of the "inferior" Pictish race as a conventionally ultranationalist fight between aggressive strongmen. Against the backdrop of a decaying, degraded Rome falling to virulent Germanic barbarians, Kipling once again constructs an elaborate masculine, imperial fantasy where the tale of soldiers defiantly yet vainly defending Hadrian's Wall tragically models the kind of masculinity he argues would have been necessary for the preservation of the empire as a whole.

Parnesius, the protagonist of Kipling's Roman stories, is a colonist born in the very country that he is destined to govern and occupies the problematic, hybrid category of British-Roman. As he tells the children, "I'm one of a good few thousands who have never seen Rome except in a picture" (118). His connection to the mother city from which the whole empire emerges is thus different from the Rome-born, and he is in fact more connected to the land in Britain than in Italy. Trying to explain his complicated position and cultural allegiances, he says, "Like many of our youngsters, I was not too fond of anything Roman. The Roman-born officers and magistrates looked down on us British-born as though we were barbarians" (123). His attitude towards the purely Roman is hostile, yet he is unquestionably loyal to the empire.

Throughout his writing, Kipling draws a complex distinction between the nation and the empire, and he projects this understanding on to fifth-century Roman politics. The empire becomes something much bigger than the nation from which it originates, and so one's loyalties ought to lie, Kipling argues, with the ideal of the empire rather than the particular of the nation. In "A British-Roman Song," a poem appearing after the first of Parnesius's short stories, Kipling adopts the voice of these colonial Romans, and expresses the idea that the territories are more true to the ideals of the empire than the nation. These colonials are extremely distanced from Rome, yet they revere it as the place from which "the Race began!" (8) and as the "strong heart with triple armour bound" whose "life-blood runs, / Age after age, the Empire round" (13-15). And yet, even with this reverence, and because of their undying loyalty to Rome, the speakers of this poem finish the song with doubt, admonishing the people of Rome, the citizens of the home nation, to preserve the integrity of the Roman ideal. They command:

> Us thy Sons,
>
> Who, distant from the Seven Hills,
>
> Loving and serving much, require
>
> Thee, – thee to guard 'gainst home-born ills,
>
> The Imperial Fire! (16-24)

It is the task of the "sons" of the empire, born and living abroad, to serve and preserve the empire, but that task is all in vain if the people of the nation give themselves over to the vices and indulgences of a decadent society, what Kipling's speaker calls "home-born ills." For Kipling, this concern that the nation was betraying imperial ideals and forsaking tradition appears throughout his writing and drives many of the scathing critiques of England delivered in poems like "The Islanders."

The "home-born ills" are not made explicit in the poem, but Kipling hints at them a little more in Parnesius's narrative. The centurion's father warns him before he embarks on his mission to the wall: "Rome has forsaken her Gods, and must be punished. The great war with the Painted People broke out in the very year the temples of our Gods were destroyed" (124). The problems on the frontiers of the empire can be traced back to Rome itself according to this line of reasoning. What we are to make of this sentiment is left slightly ambiguous. Parnesius says mirthfully, "To listen to him you would have thought Eternal Rome herself was on the edge of destruction, just because a few people had become a little large-minded" (124). Parnesius does not pay much heed to this warning, but the rest of the narrative bears out his father's warning. The "large-mindedness" certainly refers to an abandonment of the ancient, tested virtues that allowed Rome to achieve its empire, and, as the story progresses, this disregard for tradition is revealed to be far more concerning than Parnesius as a young man believes it to be. Immediately, he concedes the point somewhat to his father, who gets the last word, announcing with surety, "There is no hope for Rome … She has forsaken her Gods, but if the Gods forgive us here, we may save Britain. To do that, we must keep the Painted People back" (124-5). The distinction between decadent Rome and virtuous Britain prefigures the end of the Roman stories in which the locus of Parnesius's battle for the future of the imperial ideal shifts from Rome to Britain. Andrew St John argues that "Parnesius' disloyalty to Rome renders his defence of Britain an extremely ambivalent and discomfiting notion to conventional patriots and imperialists" (63). But this argument assumes that Kipling wants us to consider the Roman and British empires as essentially the same. What St John forgets is that, in serving Britain over Rome, Parnesius is anticipating the translation of authority from the Roman to the British Empire, all while remaining loyal to the ideal of empire and not the now corrupted reality of Rome.

One thing that Parnesius's father does not understand is that the main struggle that Parnesius will face on the Wall is not keeping the Picts at bay, but rather holding off the much more dangerous Winged Hats, an ancient prefiguration of the Anglo-Saxons who eventually will conquer and rule England (although historically the Anglo-Saxons never invaded from this direction). The Picts, on the other hand, Kipling turns into a misunderstood and misruled people who, if governed correctly, have the potential to be highly useful to the Romans. The Romans, excepting Parnesius and his comrade Pertinax, do not attempt to govern mercifully or intelligently, instead adopting a policy of intimidation that ultimately builds only resentment in their subjects. As Parnesius states:

> There is never harm in a Pict if you but take the trouble to find out what he wants. Their real grievance against us came from our burning their heather. The whole garrison of the Wall moved out twice a year, and solemnly burned the heather for ten miles North. The Picts, of course, scampered away, and all we did was to destroy their bee-bloom in the summer, and ruin their sheep-food in the spring. (152)

Through Parnesius's observations, Kipling criticizes a heavy-handed style of governance, which makes a show of authority but in fact does little to promote law and order in the colony. His sympathy for the Picts as a colonized people extends only so far, however, and while he wishes for them to be better ruled, more contented subjects he does not want to see them free of Roman rule altogether.

The result of this politically strategic sympathy for the Picts is that Parnesius and Pertinax earn the respect of both the Picts and the Romans, making them invaluable resources in the colonial world, so that, as McBratney observes, they come to "represent, in Kipling's ongoing

meditation on the question of imperial agency, model officers and citizens of the Empire" (144).

Parnesius says that because of their association with their subjects, "the Roman-born officers

rather looked down on us" (145), but, ultimately, their time amongst the Picts makes them more

useful than their Roman peers. When Maximus plans to go to war with Gratian, he needs a loyal

and capable commander at the wall who will protect Britain when he takes the majority of the

army with him. He is thus impressed when he discovers Parnesius's understanding of the

indigenous population, and informs him, "They tell me you have quite a following among the

Picts, Parnesius" (151). And the Pict king Allo reiterates the Roman's understanding of his

subjects: "'He is the only armoured man of you all who understands us,' said Allo, and he began

a long speech about our virtues, and how we had saved one of his grandchildren from a wolf the

year before" (151).

Winning the good opinion of the Pict king leads to the good opinion of the Emperor.

Maximus is duly impressed by his rapport with the Picts, and asks him, "If I gave you the old

Province of Valentia to govern, could you keep the Picts contented till I won Gaul?" (152).

Maximus is met with assurance and a strategy for success that fully reverses the current policy.

Parnesius instructs his emperor to show mercy to the Picts, allowing them more autonomy and

dignity. He tells him to "leave the Picts alone" and to "Leave them their village councils, and let

them furnish their own soldiers" (152). After years of imperial abuse and inept governance,

Parnesius says, "They have been too oppressed by us to trust anything with a Roman name for

years and years" (152). With these provisions, however, the Romans will be well on their way to

repairing relations between the rulers and the ruled and may, in the future, see a more stable

social order in a place that Parnesius earlier describes as "a fair of peoples from every corner of

the Empire" (141-42). His firsthand knowledge of the Picts and his good relationship with them

pays off by significantly advancing his career, putting him in a privileged position of authority.

And the gentler approach that the Romans consequently take, treating their subjects with greater

mercy and dignity, strategically allows them to maintain their hold on the province, fending off

the advances of their Winged Hat rivals. Good and successful imperialism, in Kipling's imperial

fantasy, requires a leniency and cultural understanding that most home-born imperialists lack,

and that only those in a hybrid, hyphenated category such as the British-Romans possess.

Culturally positioned between the nation and the colony, they are able to represent the interests

of the empire as well as those of the indigenous population.

Kipling's stories teach that, along with patronizing benevolence to the indigenous

population, successful rule requires fierce and aggressive struggle against rival empires. The

climax of Parnesius's three part short story cycle recounts the great conflict between two such

powers and sees Parnesius and Pertinax face off against the Winged Hats, a fellow "master race"

and future conquerors of Britain. In Parnesius, Kipling finds a prototype for the heroic ethos that

he believed should govern the youth of his own day. Parnesius, along with his comrade Pertinax,

displays a tremendous degree of courage in the service of the empire. Although his unswerving

devotion to a higher principle of manhood seems at first to irreparably damage his career, it

proves to lead him to a theatre of action where he is able to prove his manliness and his devotion

to the empire, all while avoiding the dishonour and moral peril of the civil war being waged

throughout the rest of the empire. When his superior, the general Maximus, tells him to kill his

insubordinate soldier, Parnesius refuses, telling his general, "I should only be your butcher if I

killed him now" (129). Parnesius's disobedience of temporal authority in order to obey the

enduring principles of honour tells Maximus, whose ambition to make himself emperor typifies

the now fractured morality of Rome, that his centurion does not have what it takes to aid him in

his coup, and he thus exiles him by giving him a position at the very edge of the empire on Hadrian's Wall. Maximus warns him, "You on the Wall, among the heather, will weep because your notion of justice was more to you than the favour of the Emperor of Rome" (130), and although this seems at first to reveal a significant error on Parnesius's part, Rome is already corrupted and torn by civil war, and it is on the frontiers of the empire that he can better practice martial virtue.

Kipling portrays the wall as a dismal place for a principled and idealistic warrior, as a haven for undisciplined, corrupt soldiers with no interest in high-minded concepts of honour or sacrifice. Parnesius tells the children, "I would not wish my worst enemy to suffer as I suffered through my first months on the Wall" (143). Among his comrades, there is "scarcely one who had not done something of wrong or folly" (143). All is not as bleak as it first appears, however, and soon Parnesius finds himself drawn into a manly brotherhood, forged and upheld by men of action, spanning beyond even cultural boundaries. The Cult of Mithras, the ancient god of light, unifies Parnesius, his fellow soldiers, and, later, even his enemies. It is also where he first meets Pertinax, who is to become his close companion. Parnesius explains, "In the Cave we first met, and we were both raised to the Degree of Gryphons together" (145). The children do not understand his mysterious references to the Cave, the Temple, or the Bull-Killing, so Puck, attempting to offer them a modern parallel, tells them it is like church. A better modern analogue, and the one that Kipling clearly uses as his model, is Freemasonry. Several critics have noted Kipling's Masonic take on Mithraic worship. B. M. Bazley observes that "Kipling seems to be tracing an analogy between Mithraism and Masonry" (11), and McBratney calls Parnesius's cult "a kind of early Freemasonry embodied in the worship of Mithras" (145). Kipling himself was a Freemason, and his writing repeatedly makes use of Masonic language

and imagery. Kutzer comments on Kipling's personal interests in this society, explaining, "For a man who lacked a sense of home, both in the sense of family home and in the sense of a national home, the Freemasons could provide a reasonable substitute" (38). In Kipling's body of work, Freemasonry figures repeatedly into his construction of masculine community, as it serves as a transcultural brotherhood uniting men across the globe.

Freemasonry for Kipling becomes a utopian space, dispensing with the more arbitrary limitations of race or class, to form a society of the best men striving towards one ideal, an ideal such as that celebrated in his "A Song to Mithras," a poem appearing before the last of the Roman short stories. The final lines in each of the four quatrains petition the God of light to "give us strength for the day!", "keep us true to our vows!", "keep us pure till the dawn!", and finally, to "teach us to die aright" (157). This devotion to soldierly ideals that unites the worshippers of Mithras allows for respect and honour to be shown to soldiers across the political divide but does not erase the, for Kipling, unbridgeable divide between races. In the cult of Mithras, as in battle, there is room for admiration and respect across otherwise uncrossable borders, but only within those narrow militant spaces.

These stories attempt to work out a solution to the problem that plagues much of Kipling's writing on empire, as they tenuously harmonize his biting outrage at the British Empire's political and moral "failings" with his fervent belief in the good of, specifically British, imperialism. This tension becomes most obvious in the depiction of the battle between the Roman garrison and the invading Winged Hats where Kipling again models his militaristic, imperial ideal of young men willingly giving their lives for a decadent and crumbling empire. When Maximus goes to war in Gaul to defeat his rival Gratian, he leaves Parnesius and Pertinax in charge of a depleted garrison, signalling the decline of Rome and positioning the British-

Romans as inheritors of imperial virtue. The increasingly British heroes accept their duty with stoic resignation: "'Hail Caesar! We, about to die, salute you!' said Pertinax, laughing. 'If any enemy even leans against the Wall now, it will tumble'" (164). Yet despite Maximus's betrayal and the overwhelming number of the Winged Hats who assault their defenses, Parnesius and Pertinax remain loyal to the ideal of empire and carry out their duty until the last, manifesting a chivalric willingness to sacrifice themselves for the "cause" of empire. Parnesius relates the events in a matter-of-fact manner, as it is merely his duty that he performs. Of the opening battle he merely says, "Certainly they fought in the open. We dealt with them thoroughly through a long day" (166).

Parnesius's chivalric code of honour proves politically valuable as a bridge between the Roman garrison and enemy Winged Hats. Amal, a chief of the Winged Hats, escapes the wreckage of one of his ships and arrives at Parnesius's feet on shore. There, Parnesius sees that "he wore such a medal as I wear" (166), proving him to be a fellow adherent to the cult of Mithras. Parnesius tests him as he describes, "I addressed him a certain Question which can only be answered in a certain manner. He answered with the necessary Word – the Word that belongs to the Degree of Gryphons in the science of Mithras my God" (166). The result of this discovery is an immediate kinship, one that unites soldiers and men of action no matter their side. Parnesius states, "I knew that those who worship Mithras are many and of all races," (167) and, having now encountered a fellow worshipper on the side of the hostile army attempting to wipe him out, he treats him with courtesy by letting him escape back to his friends. The military cult binds soldiers across political and racial divides and allows for mutual respect and chivalric courtesy. As a result of Parnesius's courtesy, Amal sends him a golden necklace and, through a messenger, tells him, "You are a Man" (167), to which the Roman responds "He is a Man, too" (167). By

calling each other "a Man," these warriors demonstrate respect for the other's masculinity, using the language of the Mithraic cult to assert the other's honourable, principled manhood.

This mutual respect buys the Romans some time to prepare themselves for further attack, but it ultimately does not prevent battle from taking place. The Winged Hats attempt to persuade Parnesius and Pertinax to join them, but the Romans refuse the offer, even when Maximus is taken and slain by Theodosius. Parnesius tells his comrade when they suspect that their emperor is now dead, "It concerns us to defend the Wall, no matter what Emperor dies, or makes die" (172). And the final letter written by Maximus which the Winged Hats intercept and show to them as proof of his death only serves to further inflame their resolve to stay and fight. In his letter, their former emperor reminds them, "Remember, I have been; but Rome is; and Rome will be" (175). Maximus's invocation of an eternal Rome is clearly problematic, and potentially ironic, given that Kipling's readers are assumed to have knowledge of the imminent fall of Rome. Even within the frame narrative of *Puck of Pook's Hill*, in the temporality inhabited by Dan and Una, the Roman Empire is already a thing of the past, an historical era that the children access through the mediation of either Macaulay or Parnesius himself. But if Britain is understood as the inheritor of Roman imperialism, a point Kipling seems keen to make, then Maximus's parting words ring true. Parnesius and Pertinax's loyalty does not lie with a temporal figurehead of power but with the eternal and abstract concept of empire which does not die with Rome or its emperors. It is not for Rome but for the imperial ideal that they must fight, and, in this moment, Kipling seamlessly conflates the imperial ideal and Britain, for the fate of both is to be contested on the Wall. After hearing the letter read aloud, the Winged Hats begin to realize that they will have no luck persuading these Romans to join them: "'I was mistaken,' said Amal. 'The servants of such a man will sell nothing except over the sword. I am glad of it'" (175). And

in the interchange between the Romans and the Winged Hats, Kipling displays the true extent of

his heroes' loyalty to empire. They prefer to fight and die on the wall even when they have a way

out. One of the elders of the Winged Hats implores them, 'You are certainly free to serve – or to

rule – whom you please. Join – do not follow – join us!" (175). Pertinax replies that the Wall

must be won at a price, and both parties come to understand that there must be war. They bond

over this understanding, sharing the Romans' "best Southern wine," and Amal announces "we be

a goodly company" (176).

With this mutual respect firmly established, both parties prepare for the ensuing grim

clash in which their soldierly brotherhood will be more strongly forged. They fight for nearly

two and a half months before being relieved by reinforcements from their new emperor

Theodosius, and, after this, they are finally able to retire, having served their country and

indisputably won for themselves a manly reputation. And for their behaviour they are given a

Triumph. Clearly, this resolve that Kipling holds up for admiration disproves G. K. Chesterton's

influential interpretation of his militarism that "the fascination of the standing army upon Mr.

Kipling is not courage, which scarcely interests him, but discipline, which is, when all is said and

done, his primary theme" (23). While discipline certainly is a central and recurrent theme in

Kipling's oeuvre, so too is courage, especially in his historical fiction, where he heavily

promotes the chivalric ideal of a soldier willing to sacrifice for his country not merely because he

is told to, but because his honour allows him to behave in no other way.

Though the heroes receive a triumph, Parnesius's story does not end triumphantly, but

rather tragically prefigures the Roman Empire's fall, despite the successful defense of Hadrian's

Wall. Rejecting the Emperor Theodosius's offer of command over a legion should they serve

him, Parnesius and Pertinax symbolically turn their backs on the Roman Empire. Having already

made a shift in identity by allying with the Picts and by launching their spirited defense of Britain, they have already accepted the translation of imperial authority from Rome to Britain. All throughout the three stories of Parnesius's narrative, Kipling scatters allusions to the decadence and imminent collapse of Rome, from Parnesisus's father's grim warning at the outset of the young Roman's military career to the distant civil wars that see Maximus overthrow Gratian before he is himself overthrown by Theodosius. The armies of Winged Hats fail to take Britain in Parnesius's story, as they are kept at bay by men who are able to match them in "manly" strength. But once these grizzled British-Romans are replaced by Ambrosius, a "fine and well-fed child," (179) there will be no defense left against the Winged Hats, who, as "Weland's Sword" already recounts will overrun the island, ushering in the Anglo-Saxon era. Historically, Theodosius's son, Honorius was emperor during the infamous sack of Rome in 410 and the one who ordered the Roman legions out of Britain, effectively leaving the province at the mercy of Germanic invaders. The ascension of Theodosius within the story signals the end of Roman hegemony and the ultimate failure of Roman masculinity to defend the empire.

The stories that come after Parnesius's narrative continue the themes of modernization and disenchantment, and, consequently, are less focused on heroic masculinity and good governance, featuring protagonists who are not warriors and who are not actively involved in ruling over colonial territory. As the sword is replaced by the treasure and the law and as the Middle Ages gradually wane, chivalric masculinity becomes less central. But, in Kipling's understanding, this erosion of chivalric values spells trouble for modern Britain, for, like the Roman Empire, it is beset on all sides by enemies threatening its imperial domain. As A. M. Matin notes, "In this period, security anxieties tended increasingly to apply neither merely to England nor to Great Britain as a whole, but to the territories of the empire as well and especially

to the most prestigious and profitable of all British possessions – the jewel of the crown …

India" (319). In this environment of paranoia over the possibility of invasion by a stronger rival

empire, Kipling's historical fiction has clear implications. Like Parnesius, Pertinax, and Sir

Richard, the men of the modern British Empire must embrace a colonial policy of listening to

and winning the consent of colonized peoples and must be prepared to match the empire's

enemies in martial readiness.

Since, to Kipling, the state of masculinity and the state of empire are joined, the character

of the men who manage and defend the empire is of equal if not more importance to their success

as are their governmental policies. Representing them as chivalrous knights errant, Kipling

argues that, to be capable leaders, they must be men who embody the principles of chivalric

masculinity: a celebration of danger, an adherence to a transcultural code of manly conduct, and

a willingness to sacrifice themselves for the good of the empire. The imagined audience of

British youths are encouraged to embrace the example of these romance heroes, and, like Sir

Richard and Parnesius, the young British man must be willing to take up the burden of "taming"

the "uncivilized" places of the world, overpowering Britain's enemies, and instituting a "just"

system of law and order. Although each story features exclusively male heroes and an almost

exclusively male cast of characters, the stories are told to both Dan and Una, and their response

to all the stories they have heard, in the book's final poem, "The Children's Song," would seem

to show that they have both accepted the "burden" of serving and sacrificing for the empire. In

the final stanza of their song, they pledge:

> Land of our Birth, our faith, our pride,
>
> For whose dear sake our fathers died;
>
> O Motherland, we pledge to thee

Head, heart and hand through the years to be! (29-32)

The children, as a direct representation of Kipling's imagined audience, demonstrate the ideal response to the collection of narratives told by Puck and the other storytellers. Though Una makes the same pledge as her brother, the masculine focus of the stories, and of Kipling's fiction as a whole, primarily emphasizes the role of young men in empire building. Kutzer argues that "Una, Dan's sister, may listen to the stories and admire Richard and the others, but there is not a single important female figure in any of the stories, nor is there a female narrator" (34). Even in the "prayer" that both Dan and Una sing, the focus is on men as the shapers of empire, the "fathers," such as Sir Richard and Parnesius, who made sacrifices for the "Motherland" and who inspire England's youth to similarly offer their lives in service of England and its empire.

Kipling's heroic model of masculinity and apology for imperialism is directly tied to his presentation of medieval history, and it is this tripartite narrative of British identity that seems to have resonated with so many of his contemporaries and with many today. The variously defined "decadence" of the present can be corrected by returning to the (also variously defined) traditions and values of the "glorious" old days of the past. And Kipling's idea of an eternal England, conquering its conquerors as it retains its national purity, supports jingoist notions of English "exceptionalism." While Kipling exerts less influence today than in the "Kipling-conditioned world" of David Jones's youth, he retains a hold on English culture unparalleled by other imperialist writers of his time like H. Rider Haggard or John Buchan. Kipling's poetry and ideals, along with a Kiplingesque medievalism, have inspired much of the political rhetoric and historical imagination of the "Brexiteers." The Brexit-championing British Prime Minister Boris Johnson drew considerable controversy for publicly quoting Kipling's "Road to Mandalay" while visiting a temple in Myanmar. And the journalist Simon Jenkins begins an article in *The*

Guardian arguing that "Brexit will be good for Britain," by invoking Kipling's lines on the Boer War, "we have had no end of a lesson: it will do us no end of good!"[21] The ardent Brexiteer, Jacob Rees-Mogg, has grounded his argument to leave the European Union in a version of medieval history that is highly influenced by Kipling. Rees-Mogg cites Alfred the Great as "the first Eurosceptic, who got rid of the Danes and made England independent," relying on a very strained parallel between Vikings and the European Union, with Alfred the Great as the symbol and defender of English independence. Invoking another of his medieval heroes, the Anglo-Saxon St. Alphage who was killed by the Danes after refusing to pay the Danegeld (a tax enforced by the Viking conquerors), Rees-Mogg even explicitly alludes to Kipling's poem, "Dane-geld," tweeting the lines, "If once you have paid him the Danegeld, you never get rid of the Dane" (15-16). Historian Christopher Kissane complains that "the pied pipers of Brexit have peddled a past that blinds Britain to reality" and that their "historical narrative begins by mangling the medieval." They draw on old Victorian and Edwardian ideas of race and nation, understanding "Anglo-Saxon" as "pure" English and the conquests by Vikings and Normans as the oppressive imposition of "foreign" European values on the indomitable English people. The Brexiteers' assumptions of English exceptionalism, rooted in an understanding of the Middle Ages that sees Englishness in opposition to foreign Norman and Viking invaders, along with their penchant for quoting Kipling, reveals just how influential the Kipling blend of medievalism, masculinity, and imperialism continues to be. We can better understand why these appeals to England's unique position carry so much rhetorical weight by studying Kipling's medievalist, imperialist, and masculine ethos. And while other Kipling texts are more famous

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[21] See Simon Jenkins's article, "Ignore the prophets of doom. Brexit will be good for Britain."

and more frequently cited, it is in *Puck of Pook's Hill* that Kipling most clearly lays out the

medievalist underpinnings of his imperialist masculinity.

Chapter 3 - The Romance Revival and Medievalist Masculinity in *King Solomon's Mines* and *Sir Nigel*

> I have promised to do the battle to the uttermost by the faith of my body, while me lasteth the life, and therefore I had liefer to die with honour than to live with shame; and if it were possible for me to die an hundred times, I had liefer to die so oft than yield me to thee.
>
> – *Le Morte Darthur* IV.x

3.1 Romance and Atavism

In his 1887 article "Realism and Romance," Andrew Lang speaks of a "new Battle of the Books" waged over "the question of Novel or Romance – of Romance or Realism" (683). This "battle," sees "authors and reviewers, like Malory's men, 'lash at each other marvellously'" (684) and centres on a supposed dichotomy between "the study of manners and of character, on one hand; on the other, the description of adventure, the delight of romantic narrative" (684).[22] Lang himself argues that we should be able to appreciate both "sides of the shield" (684), that both romance and realism have a place in modern literature. Yet in his attempt to break down the oppositional binary of romance and realism, Lang introduces another simple binary of "civilized" and "savage" corresponding to realism and romance respectively. Lang posits that Romance appeals to our savage, primal nature, "the savage within us" (690), while realism speaks to the mannered civilized nature that we have gradually evolved. The modern, "civilized" person, however, retains at their foundation the essence of the savage. As Lang explains, "The advantage of our mixed condition, civilized at top with the old barbarian under our clothes, is just this, that we can enjoy all sorts of things" (690).

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[22] Interestingly, though Lang's quotation sounds like Malory, it is not actually found anywhere in *Le Morte Darthur*. Malory's knights lash together "eagerly" (VI.xvi), "fiercely" (X.xxxvi), "wonderly" (X.xliv), and "mightily" (X.xlvii) but not "marvellously."

This understanding of the modern white man as essentially a barbarian dressed in civilized clothes has profoundly interesting implications for the genre of New Imperialist romance beyond Lang's explanation of the continued appeal of "savage" adventure stories. It points to a paradox in imperialist thought, in which categories of race, civilization, and progress are both flimsy and rigid. The dichotomy of the savage and the civilized places the white British man at the top of an evolutionary hierarchy, and puts the members of a "savage" people like the Zulus below him. But the metaphor of civilization as a garment that merely conceals a universal savage also implies that white men have the capacity for atavism, for temporarily shedding the comfort and "softness" of civilized life to embrace the hypermasculine savagery of their "primitive" brothers, a fluidity of evolutionary category not granted to "primitive" men. It is this assumption that underpins the male fantasies of Victorian men's temporary reversion to the primitive, a central conceit in New Imperialist romance.

It is my purpose in this chapter to present a reading of two romances – Sir H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sir Nigel* (1906) – that both, in different ways, dramatize this Victorian fantasy of "going primitive," reverting to a savage Darwinian world of strength against strength, rescuing the ancient *thumos*, and silencing the paranoid suspicion that "primitive" men are more virile and powerful. Parallel to the impulse to explore the "savage" stratum lying beneath the surface of the civilized man,[23] is the medievalist impulse, the desire to come to grips with modern man's medieval ancestor. This form of atavistic medievalism, in which an imagined Middle Ages is rendered in order to explore

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[23] Throughout this chapter, I sometimes use the word "man" to reflect the masculinist focus of authors like Haggard and Conan Doyle. Frequently, when they speak of the "modern man" or the "primitive man," they are not simply using "man" to speak of "humanity," but rather to speak about men and masculinity specifically, which they often focus on to the exclusion of women. Thus, when specifically talking about men, I use the term "man," but, for humanity as a whole, I use more inclusive words such as "person" or "humanity."

hypermasculine fantasies of a world dominated by brutal violence and trials of strength, is woven into the New Imperialist rhetoric of primitivism, barbarism, and heroic masculinity.

My analysis of chivalric masculinity and atavistic medievalism builds on a large body of work that has thoroughly studied the social forces informing the Romance Revival. As most critics agree, the revival figured as part of a larger white, upper-class, male reaction to democratization, growing female suffrage, and racial competitiveness.[24] Romance was, as Elaine Showalter terms it, "a men's literary revolution intended to reclaim the kingdom of the English novel for male writers, male readers, and men's stories" (78). On the level of genre, it pitted itself against realism and the novel, which it associated with femininity, and turned, as critics such as Phillip Mallet and Rohan Amanda Maitzen have shown, from a drama of the conscience or of the mind to a drama of the body, shifting the focus from interior to exterior and valorizing strong, powerful bodies, to privilege hypermasculine men over women and physically weaker men. Phillip Mallett argues that romance "focus[es] on the 'brute incident', and the life of the body rather than the mind" (153), and Maitzen highlights the strong links between gender and genre, commenting, "Because the novel, from its earliest days, was an artistic medium accessible to and widely associated with women, the contest over genre was inevitably gendered" (5).

The obsession with atavism and primitivism that characterizes so much of imperial romance is also well studied. Varda Burstyn and Leo Braudy both point to the prevalence of appropriating primitivism and the idea that the "primitive" held the remedy for British masculine degeneration.[25] Degeneration or decadence was a common fear for many European writers at the

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[24] See, for example, the work of Stephen Arata and Elahe Haschemi Yekani. Arata notes how "through this genre male middle-class writers responded, not always coherently, to their sense of disenfranchisement in the world" (89). And Yekani calls romance "an antidote to the more feminine encoded domestic novel and the genre of realism" (50).

[25] Burstyn explores how primitivism "celebrated and cultivated the energy and aggression of the 'lower' orders in men, while using it for 'civilized,' 'Christian' goals" (92). And Braudy argues, "For modern man, then, the depiction

turn-of-the-century, where it was feared that rapid technological advancement had led middle

and upper class men to lead "soft," leisurely lives that threatened to weaken their masculine

vigour. In his influential book *Degeneration* (1892), the Hungarian writer Max Nordau

complains about "the ego-mania of decadentism, its love of the artificial, its aversion to nature,

and to all forms of activity and movement" (317), and he presents degeneration as a byproduct of

civilizational evolution, the "excessive organic wear and tear suffered by the nations through the

immense demands on their activity, and through the rank growth of large towns" (43). "The

consequence of decadence," Nordau warns, "is anarchy and the ruin of the community" (302).

Motivated by the fear of "anarchy and ruin," New Imperialists looked to the "primitive"

masculinity of "uncivilized" cultures as the remedy for the degradation of white European

masculinity.

Bradley Deane examines the "apparent paradox of an imperialism that openly embraces

the primitive" ("Imperial Barbarians" 205) and argues for the centrality of this "representation of

a fundamental human barbarism" in imperial literature. I also build on the association, embedded

in Victorian anthropology, of primitivism, childhood, and the Middle Ages, all, in evolutionary

terms, earlier stages of development. The Victorian pioneer of cultural anthropology, E. B.

Tylor, theorized that "this hypothetical primitive condition corresponds in a considerable degree

to that of modern savage tribes, who, in spite of their difference and distance, have in common

certain elements of civilization, which seem remains of an early state of the human race at large"

(21). And Anna Vaninskaya notes that "drawing parallels between the childhood of an individual

person and the 'childhood of the human race' was a common practice throughout the Victorian

period" (69). The "primitive" included the medieval, a point that Laura Morowitz makes when

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of the primitive in anthropology represented a lower, earlier form of the life that led up to modern civilization, as well as an antidote to its ills" (346).

she writes, "Against jaded modern man – self-conscious, worried about social approval and material gain, intellectual – stood the 'primitive' medieval inhabitant" (197).

One aspect of Romance that has not been fully studied is its deeply embedded medievalism. While it is a critical commonplace to point to surface medievalist references such as the genre's very name, a sustained study of the medievalist underpinnings and implications in Romance is mostly absent. Scholars like Robert Fraser point to the influence of medieval romance, especially "the cluster of stories surrounding King Arthur" (6), on the Victorian romance writers and examine some of the allusions to medieval and classical material in Haggard and Conan Doyle's works. And similarly, Deane looks at how romance attempts to unite "the ancient and modern" ("Imperial Barbarians" 206), but both critics stop short of fully examining the implications of medievalism in romance as a genre or how it is worked out in particular works of romance.

Haggard and Conan Doyle's medievalism takes its inspiration from the medieval world as represented in chivalric literature and in medieval chronicles, but, like Kipling, they do not draw directly from *Le Morte Darthur*. Rather, their understanding of chivalry and the Middle Ages, even when it is informed by historical research, is immersed in the discourse of Victorian, Tennysonian chivalry and saturated in the hypermasculine trappings of New Imperialism. The result is a characterization of the medieval and chivalry that focuses on and celebrates their supposed connection to barbarism and primitivism. To embrace the "medieval" in this sense is to temporarily devolve, to shed the artificial clothing of modern civilization for the "authentic" primitivism that makes for "real" masculinity. They depict the medieval as synonymous with the savage or the barbaric, and they invoke the Middle Ages as a kind of modern subconscious. While portrayals of the Middle Ages in the late-Victorian period ranged from a brutal age from

which modernity has evolved and on which it has improved to a golden age whose way of life surpasses the modern world, the atavistic medievalism of New Imperialist romance combines elements of both these depictions.[26] For Haggard and Conan Doyle both, the medieval is "uncivilized" and "savage," yet it is this very savagery that fascinates them and that turns the Middle Ages into a golden age of primitivism.

This chapter examines how both *King Solomon's Mines* and *Sir Nigel* approach the subject of atavism and how they rely on a brutal version of the Middle Ages to bolster their hypermasculine fantasies. For Haggard, the medieval registers obliquely – being conjured up through allusions to knighthood and Vikings – yet the whole work is saturated in a medievalism that interprets the interaction between the Englishmen and the Kukuanas as modern man's confrontation with his own medieval past. Haggard uses the romance world of Kukuanaland to address late-Victorian concerns over the weakening of white English masculinity and the threatening potential of black virility, a concern exacerbated by the Zulu defeat of the British army in 1879. His atavistic fantasy attempts to address this cultural anxiety through the triumphal narrative of British reversion in a kind of dramatic rewriting of the Anglo-Zulu War. He presents a version of chivalry heavily focused on violence and battle with as little influence from women as possible, creating a medievalism that inspires and reinforces his views on empire, race, and gender.

Conversely, Conan Doyle's *Sir Nigel* is explicitly medievalist, a historical novel set directly in the Hundred Years War. The atavism of this romance is found in the narrative structure: Conan Doyle's narrative construct of a narrator from the present guiding readers into the past. Like Haggard, Conan Doyle presents a version of chivalry heavily focused on violence

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[26] Examples of the varied approaches range from William Morris's socialist utopia in *News from Nowhere* to Charles Kingsley's brutal, masculinist retelling of the Norman Conquest in *Hereward the Wake.*

and hypermasculine competition between men, in which women are largely pushed to the margins. His protagonist, Nigel, whom the text holds up as a figure to be emulated and admired, is thrown into a cruel and violent world that the narrator continues to remind us is "authentically" medieval. Like the lost world of Kukuanaland, Conan Doyle's Middle Ages are a kind of hypermasculine playground, where men must excel at combat and endure physical hardship to succeed. Conan Doyle responds to the increasing "pressures" of the *fin-de-siècle* by retreating to a golden age of aristocracy, where an elite class of nobles wage war according to a chivalric code, accompanied by members of the lower classes that do their bidding, and where women feature as distant motivators of male greatness, but, otherwise, have little influence in the political world. Conan Doyle's conservative medievalism justifies the continued existence of a hypermasculine, aristocratic masculinity by looking back on a world of romance, a fantasy in which conflicts are resolved by force and in which "honour" holds the homosocial, patriarchal, and exclusively masculine world of knights together.

3.2 Sir H. Rider Haggard

Sir Henry Rider Haggard was a prolific author of adventure novels and a main figurehead of New Imperialist literature. His 1885 work, *King Solomon's Mines*, is significant as both the first English adventure novel set in Africa and as the first major example of lost world fiction. It is, in many ways, *the* quintessential work of Late Victorian romance, setting the tone for many of the conventions of adventure fiction: an idealized male dominated space, a plot that centres on violence and peril, and an encounter with historic, primitive models of masculinity. Most significantly, Haggard's close association of the colonial lost world with a European medieval past imprinted a lasting medievalism on the genre.

The plot to *King Solomon's Mines* is simple ("universal" or "timeless" Haggard would say) involving a journey from civilization to the primitive and back again.[27] The novel is narrated by Allan Quatermain, an experienced English-born hunter living in the South African city of Durban, who falls in with two other English gentlemen, the wealthy aristocrat Sir Henry Curtis and the former navy officer Captain Good. Curtis persuades Quatermain to assist him in his search for his lost brother, whom he believes to have headed off into the mountains in search of the mythical King Solomon's Mines. The trio sets out in search of the Mines and Sir Henry's brother, accompanied by a number of servants and the mysterious Zulu warrior, Umbopa. After a number of trying ordeals, they reach the ancient kingdom of Kukuanaland, locked in a heroic age that seems to correspond with Western civilization's own past. There they encounter a party of the primitive Kukuanas, who, initially hostile, are duped into believing that the white men are powerful beings from the stars. The party leads them back to King Twala, a ruthless despot who rules with the assistance of the ancient Gagool after murdering his own twin brother to ascend to the throne. Umbopa, it is revealed, is really Ignosi, the son of the rightful king, Twala's brother, and he enlists the aid of the Englishmen and loyal members of the Kukuanas who are disgruntled with Twala's tyranny. To Quatermain specifically he promises whatever riches he should find in the Mines.

After Ignosi reveals his identity to the Kukuanas, a civil war breaks out, and the three Englishmen are forced to recover and embrace their own submerged primitivism to temporarily "go savage," donning armour and spears and entering into fierce hand-to-hand combat. In this fantasy world of strength against strength, they rescue the mythical Kingsleyan *thumos* from the past, and, by competing with and overpowering "primitive" peoples at their own "primitive"

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[27] Haggard wrote extensively on the "universality" of romance, and commented in his article "About Fiction" that "the love of romance is probably coeval with the existence of humanity" (172).

warfare, they pass the romance's test of hypermasculinity, silencing anxieties concerning foreign men's superiority. Once Ignosi's party achieves victory, culminating with Sir Henry's decapitation of Twala, the adventurers discover the wealth of the mines, narrowly escape dying within them, and emerge with pockets full of priceless diamonds. The Englishmen take their leave of Ignosi, now firmly settled as King of the Kukuanas, and return to Durban. On the return journey, they find Sir Henry's brother, George, crippled yet alive, and so, each of the men getting what they wished for, they return to civilization, having tested their mettle in a lost, primitive land, trapped in ancient history.

3.2.1 Gender and Chivalry

The version of chivalry that Haggard presents is focused on the homosocial bonding of hypermasculine warrior males and is fundamentally misogynistic, working, as Sedgwick argues, to maintain and transmit patriarchal power. A significant component of Haggard's imperialist fantasy is the celebration of heroic masculinity and the creation of an idealized male space to the exclusion of women. Throughout the romance, female characters play marginal antagonistic or supportive roles but do not feature as protagonists or even important secondary characters. Even Lang himself, who extensively promoted Haggard's work, admitted, "Female characters are not the strong point … of Mr. Haggard" (691). Deane couches this omission of women in terms of the genre's larger rejection of domesticity and the desire to engage with narratives that appealed to the "inner savage" in men. He explains, "Aimed at a readership of men and boys, these stories centered on interactions between male characters; women – especially British women – were driven to the narrative margins" (*Masculinity* 2). This is a male homosocial world in which the bonds between men are stronger and more valuable than those between men and women.

Haggard himself, as Joseph Bristow notes, "Was concerned to promote a type of romance that drew on a specifically masculine (not just male) group of readers" (135). And in *King Solomon's Mines*, he foregrounds this male focus in the opening chapter of his work, where Allan Quatermain presents the reasons for setting down his account:

> Because I am going to tell the strangest story that I know of. It may seem a queer thing to say that, especially considering that there is no woman in it – except Foulata. Stop, though! there is Gagaoola, if she was a woman and not a fiend. But she was a hundred at least, and therefore not marriageable, so I don't count her.
>
> At any rate, I can safely say that there is not a *petticoat* in the whole history. (14)

Haggard presents this female absence – or at least the absence of European women – as a selling point of the story, to the extent that his narrator Quatermain feels obliged to assure his audience that there is "not a *petticoat* in the whole history." The petticoat here is being used metonymically and, seemingly, pejoratively, to implicate women as a distraction from the truly important matter of masculine development.[28] Through his chauvinistic narrator, Haggard assures his audience of assumed juvenile males that it need not worry about female characters detracting from exciting manly adventure. This guarantee of "not a *petticoat* in the whole history" seems aimed to please an imagined readership of young males, a readership that was assumed, according to Vaninskaya, by both its proponents as well as its detractors, to be aimed at the "youth of mankind" (58). The women that do make an appearance in the story, Foulata and Gagool, do not qualify as "petticoats," presumably because neither are marriageable nor part of "civilized" society. They do, however, have a part to play in the novel's plot. Gagool is a worthy antagonist, vexing and betraying the heroes and enhancing the drama, and Foulata provides a

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[28] The *OED* cites two usages of the word "petticoat" that apply here: "The article of clothing viewed as the characteristic or typical feminine garment and hence as a symbol or metaphor for the female sex or feminine attributes" and "By metonymy: the wearer of a petticoat; a woman or girl. Frequently *derogatory*."

reason for the heroes to intervene as well as a temptation for Good to abandon his white "Englishness" and his commitment to the brotherhood for a compromising domestic life.

When Haggard introduces Foulata, Quatermain reiterates his opinion that women are a complicated distraction. When Twala invites the strangers to choose women to take as their wives, he recounts how he foresaw "the endless complications that anything of the sort would involve, for women bring trouble so surely as the night follows the day" (159), and thus tells the king that they only wed "white women like ourselves" (159). The Kukuanan ritual commences regardless; a number of "flower crowned girls" come forth and dance before the audience. When Quatermain proclaims Foulata the "fairest," Twala reveals that she must be sacrificed "to the Old Ones who sit and watch on the mountains" (161) as a measure to safeguard his reign. Haggard uses Foulata as a useful plot device, an excuse for the Englishmen to intervene and set the civil war in motion. She becomes attached to Good and the two fall in love, much to Quatermain's disapproval, who remarks, "I did not like Miss Foulata's soft glances, for I knew the fatal amorous propensities of sailors in general, and of Good in particular" (219). Laura Chrisman explains Quatermain's fear as the novel's fear as a whole, for "the young, beautiful and nubile Foulata … does indeed explicitly pose a specific threat to colonialism: the threat of miscegenation" (41). Ultimately, this threat of miscegenation and this feminine intrusion into the brotherhood that is Quatermain, Sir Henry, and Good, is conveniently resolved when Foulata is fatally stabbed by Gagool who is simultaneously crushed under the heavy door. The men, especially Good, mourn her death, but the exclusivity of the masculine world is re-established. As Richard Patteson argues, her death is necessary to maintain the integrity of the imperialist romance, for "when a native girl happens to fall in love with a white man, she almost always dies. The reason for her death is not merely racial; marriage is unmistakably presented as a

betrayal of masculine camaraderie" (116). Quatermain's phobia concerning Foulata is both racist and misogynistic; her blackness is a threat to the whiteness of the chivalric brotherhood and her femininity a threat to its masculinity. Marriage threatens masculine camaraderie by introducing a heterosocial bond that has the potential to overpower the homosocial brotherhood. As Mallett observes in Haggard's fiction, "There is no role … for wives or mothers; only for the male relationships of brothers, or of father and son, and the homosocial bond that forms between the three white men" (156). Marriage is also a threat to the genre of romance, for it would drag back the male fantasy of adventure and exteriority to the "suffocating" influence of domesticity and interiority. Haggard maintains the strength of the male bond by giving Foulata a tragic death, ensuring her threat to the chivalric community is neutralized.

Haggard's ethos of male camaraderie in *King Solomon's Mines* builds on prevailing cultural ideas of Victorian chivalry but exaggerates them to create an atavistic masculine ethos that celebrates the "primitive" and the "savage." This atavism serves as a hypermasculine, racist fantasy that explores the possibilities for aristocratic Englishmen to adopt temporarily the manner of "savage" black Zulu men and overcome them, while still retaining the ability to put on once again the "civilized clothes" of the white gentleman. Each of the three Englishmen in the story is a gentleman by birth, and, at the end of their immersion among the Kukuanas, they return to the civilized life of a gentleman. Haggard presents Captain Good as mostly ridiculous – with his bared legs, false teeth, and half shaved face – and he is also the only one to have any sort of romantic attachment, yet this romance has the effect, not of asserting Good's masculinity but of pointing to his jeopardizing of the homosocial bond. The work's unlikely protagonist Allan Quatermain, fifty-five when the story begins, is a far cry from the conventional young adventurer of romance. In addition to his advanced age, Quatermain seems uninterested in conventional

chivalric masculinity. In the opening paragraph of the first chapter he says of himself, "I am a timid man, and dislike violence" (13), and he repeats this self-assessment of timidity three more times in his narrative. Quatermain is not quite as he presents himself, however, and, as the story unfolds and his immersion into the primitive becomes greater, he reveals the savagery lying beneath the supposedly timid exterior.

As with Lang's assessment of romance and realism, Haggard points to the instability of the word "gentleman." Quatermain asks, "Am I a gentleman? What is a gentleman?" (15). As he questions the definition of "gentleman" at the beginning of the book, he engages with the complexities of performing chivalric masculinity in the Victorian Era. Quatermain neither looks nor talks like a gentleman, though he is "born a gentleman" (15). He also seems to reject the word's Eurocentric baggage, stating that he has known "natives who *are* … and mean whites with lots of money and fresh out from home, too, who *ain't*" (15). While this sounds large minded, Quatermain first begins his statement by saying "I have had to do with niggers" (15) before correcting himself because "I don't like it" (15), and changing it instead to the less pejorative descriptor, "native." This self-correction reveals a great deal about the nature of the transcultural respect demonstrated in the novel. Quatermain can claim to respect the "native" who is more honourable than the white man, yet the word "nigger," erasing all acknowledgement of shared masculine honour, lurks beneath the surface, revealing the precarity of the respect given across this racial divide.

Unlike Quatermain, Sir Henry is a more straightforwardly heroic figure, steeped in medievalism and closely allied with the primitive. As a knight, Sir Henry has the clearest claim to chivalry of anyone in the romance, and his physical appearance suits that claim. Quatermain's initial description of him is telling; he is drawn to his powerful, hypermasculine features and

calls him "one of the biggest-chested and longest-armed men I ever saw. He had yellow hair, a big yellow beard, clear-cut features, and large gray eyes set deep into his head. I never saw a finer-looking man" (16). Whereas Quatermain and Good are far from Haggard's ideal of masculine beauty, Sir Henry becomes the locus of heroic white masculinity, leaving Quatermain to admire his friend's form. Fraser observes that "the impressive virility of Curtis's appearance has the peculiar effect of feminizing his two white companions" (33). And while both Quatermain and Good do also embrace the "savage" masculinity of Kukuanaland, it is the physically "perfect" Sir Henry who is to fully model that atavism, and thus, at this early stage, Haggard emphasizes his "savage" potential, located in his "Danish blood" (17).

Powerfully built and covered in blonde hair, Sir Henry – like Haggard's other hero, Leo, in *She* (1886) – embodies the Aryan ideal and is a Germanic medieval warrior of the modern day. Quatermain makes the allusion explicit:

> He reminded me of an ancient Dane. Not that I know much of ancient Danes … but I remember once seeing a picture of some of those gentry, who I take it, were a kind of white Zulus. They were drinking out of big horns, and their long hair hung down on their backs, and as I looked at my friend standing there by the companion-ladder, I thought that if one only let his hair grow a bit, put one of those chain shirts on to those great shoulders of his, and gave him a big battle-axe and a horn mug, he might have sat as a model for that picture. (16-17)

There are a number of telling points in this description. Firstly, Haggard depicts Sir Henry as both medieval and primitive, establishing a conflation of the two concepts that is crucial to the medievalism of the text. His choice of medieval figure is not the knight, but rather the Viking warrior, a figure far more "uncivilized" and more "primitive." Sir Henry may be a modern day

knight and gentleman by birth and by title, but, beneath that exterior, he is a Viking, like Kipling's Witta, a rough and hypermasculine warrior even more distantly removed from the domestic English gentleman than the knight. In a move that reflects his atavistic admiration for savages and barbarians, Haggard allies this powerful Englishman with the primitive African warrior, calling the ancient Danes whom Sir Henry resembles "a kind of white Zulus." In this description, Haggard establishes the precedent for a transcultural, virile brotherhood of warriors encompassing white Europeans, their ancient ancestors, and the primitives of the African continent. Quatermain's vision of Sir Henry decked out in the warrior garb of a Viking and his explicit comparison to Zulus foreshadows the romance's later climax of reversion, in which Sir Henry embraces his primitive ancestry by adopting the garb of the ancient Zulus.

In accordance with this celebration and conflation of medieval and Victorian "primitives," the other significant embodiment of heroic masculinity in *King Solomon's Mines* is not a white man, but rather, the African Ignosi, the prince of Kukuanaland first introduced under the disguise of the Zulu warrior Umbopa. In Ignosi, Haggard presents a problematic, uncertain portrayal of the heroic masculinity of the "primitive" other, one that contains both respect and disdain for the hypermasculine black male, echoing Quatermain's earlier attempt to include "natives" in the category of gentlemen. Matthew Nye argues that while, for the most part, Haggard's African characters are essentialized and "transparent," Ignosi "subtly perverts the implicit hierarchy between white and black" and, ultimately, "cannot be easily read or manipulated" (100). And Deane finds in Haggard's homosocial masculine ethos the potential to "trump other cultural differences and … cross boundaries of race" ("Imperial Barbarians" 206), yet the recognition of the equal standing of both white and black men, a direction towards which Haggard often gestures, is undermined throughout by Haggard's persistent need to assert the

white man's superiority even in primitivism. Even in his admiring description of Ignosi, Haggard will not grant him the same treatment afforded to his white counterpart, Sir Henry. Merrick Burrow's position, that Haggard seeks "to preserve elements of barbarianism while at the same time negating the threat that the colonial Other poses to the privilege of white, gentry masculinity" (75), highlights the kind of competitive respect shown to Ignosi, valuing his "barbarianism" while simultaneously trying to wrest it from him.

Quatermain is initially dismissive of Ignosi's "failure" to defer to white men, but once he observes and listens to Ignosi talk, he is impressed. The way Ignosi describes himself distinguishes him from the book's stereotypically greedy and dishonourable African characters. Haggard's idealized black warrior presents himself in chivalric terms that appeal strongly to the Englishmen, emphasizing his honour and his physical prowess, the currency that sustains transcultural respect in Victorian romance. Ignosi offers to accompany the Englishmen on their journey, and, after listing an impressive catalogue of military exploits, he tells them, "I want no money, but I am a brave man, and am worth my place and meat. I have spoken" (48). Speaking as a "gentleman," Ignosi's words puzzle the three white men, but they do not accept him into their brotherhood until he shows them his all-but-naked body. Ignosi's ideal masculine physicality impresses Quatermain, as he recounts: "He certainly was a magnificent-looking man; I never saw a finer native. Standing about six foot three high, he was broad in proportion, and very shapely. In that light, too, his skin looked scarcely more than dark, except here and there where deep black scars marked old assegai wounds" (48). Tall, powerful, scarred, and physically impressive, Ignosi typifies the hypermasculine primitivism that is the goal of late-Victorian atavisim. His possession of a muscular, battle-scarred physique makes his "assumption of dignity" palatable to the Englishmen and allows them to respect him as an almost equal. He is

also, "scarcely more than dark," and thus seems to approach "whiteness" as far as possible while still remaining "black." His "whiteness" makes him, as Gustavo Generani argues, a logical ally of the Englishmen, "the kind of ally the British Empire needs, to justify its military intervention in the world" (57). Quatermain's description of his whiteness points to Ignosi's more European sensibilities, especially in comparison to the blacker and tyrannical Twala. The characters evaluate Ignosi based on his bodily prowess: "'They make a good pair, don't they?' said Good; "one as big as the other'" (48). And the two masculine figureheads acknowledge their shared masculine virtues when Sir Henry tells the Zulu,"I like your looks, Mr. Umbopa" to which Ignosi replies, "with a glance at the white man's great stature and breadth, 'we are men, you and I'" (49).

But while Haggard might seem to be placing the white and black men on the same level and be presenting a militant heroic ethos that makes a kind of transracial respect possible, his text insists on a fundamental difference between them. For one thing, though Quatermain offers two similarly admiring physical descriptions of the men, the circumstances of that description differ greatly. Quatermain does not need to see Sir Henry's naked body to respect and admire the hypermasculine savage that he knows lies beneath. Like Lang's metaphor in "Romance and Realism," Sir Henry is the civilized man wearing his civilized clothes, beneath which lies the naked body of the primitive. Ignosi, on the other hand, is not afforded that same dignity. Rather, he must bare his naked body to the English gentlemen and submit himself to their critical gaze to receive their admiration. The implication is that there is nothing to Ignosi beyond the raw, primitive masculinity of his naked body. Unlike Sir Henry, who is free to shed his civilized "clothes", temporarily embrace primitivism, and then return to being a Victorian gentleman, Ignosi, as the "savage" Zulu, is valued only as a primitive, as the barbarian potential dormant

within the civilized white man. Ultimately, the transracial respect of Haggard's masculine community operates in one direction, of an Englishman being willing to "lower" himself temporarily to the primitive man's ways.

3.2.2 Medievalism and Atavism

As the heroic brotherhood enters the primitive Kukuanaland, it is immediately brought face to face with the ancient, heroic Kukuanas. As with his description of Sir Henry, Quatermain filters this encounter through the art of antiquity and the Middle Ages, noting how one attacker "bent forward in the attitude of a Grecian statue of a spear-thrower" (101). And when the party attempts to converse with the hostile warriors in the Zulu language, Quatermain discovers, to his surprise, that he is understood, for these people speak an antiquated form of modern Zulu. Again, Haggard sets up this encounter as an encounter with the medieval past, for, Quatermain elaborates, "As we afterwards found out, the language spoken by this people is an old-fashioned form of the Zulu tongue, bearing about the same relationship to it that the English of Chaucer does to the English of the nineteenth century" (101). By invoking the medieval poet Chaucer and the language of Middle English, Haggard sets up the encounter with the lost world as a medievalist encounter with a European past. Haggard of course, does not include actual Zulu, or its fictitious ancient form, in his text, but rather attempts to simulate it with an artificial, antiquated form of English, full of "thee" and "thou." In this, he follows a convention of nineteenth-century medievalist historical fiction, going back to Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, where, rather than attempting to recreate Middle English, the novelist settles on the language of Shakespeare and the King James *Bible*, to achieve an "authentic" antiquated mode of speech.

Haggard initially uses this meeting of modern and primitive for comedic effect as he employs the racist colonial trope of Europeans deceiving indigenous peoples into believing that they are gods. Haggard emphasizes the technological superiority of the Englishmen; the Kukuanas are stunned into compliance at the sight of Good moving his false teeth, and Quatermain easily dupes them into believing that they are men come "from the biggest star that shines at night" (104). He also instills fear in them with his demonstration of the power of "the magic tube that speaks" (104). Yet as the narrative continues, Haggard's tone becomes much more serious and eager as the distance – technological and cultural – between the Englishmen and the Kukuanas decreases. The fantasy of the "barbarian immersion" requires them to minimize the more "artificial" advantages of modernity to compete on a "fair" level with pre-modern men.

At the outset of their meeting with Twala, the Englishmen use their "magic tubes" to impress the "primitives," employing their advanced technology as a buffer, keeping them from fully allowing the atavistic process to overtake them. But they soon become intertwined with the "primitive" world for a variety of reasons: Quatermain for wealth, Good for love, and Sir Henry for honour, the "purest" and most chivalric of motives. Their decision to support Ignosi against his uncle sees them lose their irony and detachment (the cynicism of a decadent modern civilization) as they begin to embrace and adopt the language and weapons of the Kukuanas. When Ignosi offers them wealth if they support him, Sir Henry corrects him, saying, "He mistakes an Englishman. Wealth is good, and if it comes in our way we will take it; but a gentleman does not sell himself for wealth" (139). Again, Sir Henry and Ignosi find common ground, and Haggard favourably compares Zulu honour to that of the Englishman. Good follows suit, and adopts "the language of hyperbole, in which all these people seem to indulge" (139),

demonstrating his gradual devolution to noble primitivism. Even Quatermain, the most cynical

and "unchivalrous" of the three, adopts this primitive masculine language of honour and tells

Ignosi, "You have stuck to us and played the part of a man, and I will stick by you" (140).

Having formed this pact, they each arm themselves with "a shining shirt of chain armour, and a

magnificent battle-axe." Though they continue to use their modern advantages, such as guns,

monocles, and astronomical knowledge, for a time, they show signs of the eventual total

immersion into primitive masculinity that arrives at the novel's climax.

The Englishmen remain on the sidelines while Twala conducts the ritual killings of

supposedly treacherous men, a ritual that further legitimizes colonial intervention. When Twala's

son Scragga, however, attempts to kill the innocent Foulata, they are given cause and opportunity

to intervene. The tension that has been building in the preceding chapters between Twala and the

Englishmen comes to outright blows, in a struggle that pulls the Englishmen into the barbaric

world of hand-to-hand combat. Scragga takes up his spear, driving it into Sir Henry, but,

forgetting "the mail shirts that the king had given us," (167) his assault fails. Sir Henry, now

fully crossing the threshold into romantic, chivalric action, seizes the ancient melee weapon and

sends "it straight through him" (167). In one short sentence, Haggard declares, "Scragga dropped

dead" (167) and demonstrates the full effect of Sir Henry's intervention and adoption of

medieval heroism. The ancient weapon that Sir Henry appropriates becomes a symbol of

romance, and his use of the barbaric Scragga's own weapon to defeat him demonstrates

Haggard's ideal of redeeming primitive masculinity for civilized aims.

In the battle that follows, Haggard's heroes continue precipitously along the path into

reclaiming the past that the killing of Scragga began. Of them all, Sir Henry throws himself most

dramatically into the role of a romantic warrior, telling Quatermain that he prefers to die fighting

than any other way and that "fortune favours the brave, and we may succeed. Anyway, the battle will be awful, and having a reputation to keep up, we shall need to be in the thick of the thing" (177). Making use of a Latin proverb that appears in Virgil's *Aeneid* before the climactic battle of that epic, and announcing his intentions to fight in the midst of the battle line like an ancient or medieval captain, Sir Henry shows his willingness to shed the guise of the modern man for the "ancient Dane" that lies beneath. Quatermain picks up on this eagerness, concluding, "I have an idea Sir Henry Curtis actually likes fighting" (177). That hypermasculine love of violence serves as a virtue in the world of *King Solomon's Mines*, joining men like Sir Henry and Ignosi into an idealized camaraderie.

As they ready themselves for battle, the Englishmen again embrace primitive masculinity, arming themselves with chainmail, spears, and shields. And even in this, Sir Henry goes the extra mile and performs the "savage" by "dress[ing] himself like a native warrior" (178). When Sir Henry is fully decked out in Kukuanan garb and armaments, Quatermain remarks that "it showed off his magnificent physique to the greatest advantage" (178), and when the similarly outfitted Ignosi arrives, he says, "I thought to myself that I had never before seen two such splendid men" (178). From the outset of their meeting, Haggard joins Sir Henry and Ignosi as kindred heroic males, and now, each dressed in the same ancient, "barbaric" garb, they become nearly indistinguishable. Each Englishman keeps his revolver on him and keeps his rifle within reach, but, as ammunition is limited, they are more or less fully committed to waging war in a primitive manner.

The battle between the good and evil factions of the Kukuanas in which the English participate is an elaborate masculine fantasy, embedded in the larger masculine fantasy of the quest for King Solomon's Mines. Haggard's language, as Hensley observes, is self-consciously

reflective of epic poetry, echoing Lang's translation of Homer's *Iliad.* Lang strove to recapture what he saw as the original archaism of Homer's diction, and "the result was the same quasi-King Jamesian prose line, loaded with thee's and thou's, later to be be transposed almost without alteration into the pages of Haggard's pseudo-Homeric combats" (Henley 235). Attaching his battle to the great war epic of the Western world, Haggard elevates the climax of his work to mythical status and ties it to the primeval battles at the bedrock of European civilization. The primitive battle allows modern Englishmen to cast aside the "civilized" weapons of modern warfare and to engage in a romantic battle of spears, swords, and axes, where men test their strength against one another in the kind of hand-to-hand combat celebrated so often by Homer and Virgil, and in medieval romances like *Le Morte Darthur*. In the second wave of fighting, even Quatermain undergoes a radical transformation from a self-professed coward to a heroic warrior, as he recounts, "For the first time in my life, I felt my bosom burn with martial ardour" (198). Filled with the "savage desire to kill and spare not" (199), he feels himself joined to the "serried ranks of warriors" (199) about him, and in that moment of warlike thrill, he becomes one with a brotherhood of heroes across temporal and cultural divides.

Over the course of the battle, Sir Henry undergoes the full transformation to medieval Viking warrior, as he holds the front line against the advancing hordes. Quatermain sings his praise like an epic bard, proclaiming, "There he stood, the great Dane, for he was nothing else, his hands, his axe, and his armour all red with blood, and none could live before his stroke" (200). The savage potential that Quatermain recognizes upon first meeting Sir Henry is now fully realized, as the hypermasculine hero wades through battle "like his Berserkir forefathers" (200). His apotheosis arrives when he, rather than Ignosi, faces off in single combat against a desperate

Twala, "fallen from his high estate."[29] Twala, now abandoned by his followers, merits

Quatermain's pity and even his respect. He admits that "a pang of compassion shot through me"

(204) at the sight of the tragic king, and the victors allow him an honourable death suited to his

station. The two engage in a heroic duel, in a struggle that sees their weapons displaced and

forces them to test their sinew against the other, in the purest form of masculine struggle. This

wrestling match sees them strangely bonded, united in a hypermasculine brotherhood,

symbolized by their literal embrace as they "hug each other like bears" (208). This duel that

descends into primitive wrestling match strongly echoes *Le Morte Darthur*'s battle between

Arthur and the Giant of Mont St. Michel, in which the king is caught "fast in the giant's arms"

(V.v). As with Malory, Sir Henry and Twala's "hug" brings the battle between "civilized"

gentleman and "savage" tyrant to its regressive climax, forcing the chivalric hero to confront and

embrace the "primitive" before conquering it. Eventually, the embrace is broken, and Sir Henry

gains hold of Twala's axe and cuts off the head of the fallen king, appropriating the black man's

primitive weapon to assert the white man's superiority in the use of primitive violence. Sir

Henry's ultimate appropriation of and triumph over the black warrior king is made complete

when he spends the night "on Twala's own couch, and wrapped in Twala's own particular

karross" (213).

At the end of the romance, the English adventurers of *King Solomon's Mines* complete

their full immersion into the "savage" and enter deep into the recesses of their own history,

revealing, in part, what Patteson calls a desire – perhaps subconscious – to get back to the animal

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[29] This quotation comes from John Dryden's *Alexander's Feast; or, The Power of Music: An Ode in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day* IV.77 and refers to the fallen King Darius of Persia, a symbol of Oriental despotism and decadence. When his time comes he is overthrown by the youthful Greek Empire, embodied in Alexander the Great, representing the *translatio imperii* from old powers to young. This allusion also points to the respect that Twala earns even despite his villainy, for Darius's final, pitiable end is remembered in Alexander's feast halls, just as Twala is commemorated by Quatermain's history.

or savage within, face and conquer it" (116). As they descend into the Place of Death, a typically

Haggardian archetype and a metaphor for both history and Hell, they are made aware of the

"white" origins of this lost civilization. Upon seeing the colossal statues of ancient deities,

Quatermain remembers how Solomon in the Old Testament "went astray after strange gods"

(228), and, quoting 1 Kings 11:33, he describes them: "Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians,

Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon" (228). And

Sir Henry credits these wondrous monuments "to some Phoenician official who managed the

mines" (229). As Haggard scholars have observed, Victorian anthropology often credited

impressive African ruins to "white" civilizations, and Haggard's romance generally involves the

finding of "ruins indicating white rule at some time in the past" (Patteson 114). Quatermain

"whitens" the impressive ruins of this ancient African kingdom by comparing it to edifices of

"white" civilization, "the vastest cathedral" (231), "a broken column in an old Grecian temple"

(232), and "the doorways of Egyptian temples" (232).

        The statues of these "strange gods" also make the Place of Death a classical, Western

Hell into which the heroes must descend. Haggard alludes implicitly to the underworld voyages

of Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid* and explicitly, in one of the work's few footnotes, to the

descriptions of Hell in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which is populated with the deities of pagan

pantheons:

> With these in troop
>
> Came Astoreth, whom the Phoenicians called
>
> Astarté, queen of heav'n, with crescent horns;
>
> To whose bright image nightly by the moon
>
> Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs. (I.437-41)

The descent into Hell is the final moment of reversion, and, through it, Haggard symbolizes the mythical archetype of death and rebirth. The hypermasculine, primitive identity that they have embraced for a time now dies so that they will once again be able to return to the life of civilized gentlemen. It is here that both Foulata and Gagool die, so that now Good has no heterosexual attachment keeping him trapped in the primitive world of Kukuanaland. They emerge from their resurrection literally enriched by a few of the diamonds they are able to carry out of the mines, but also enriched by the masculinizing experience of temporary immersion in a primitive world. Their successful journey to and from Kukuanaland and their triumph over the savage tyranny of Twala quiets late Victorian anxieties concerning decadence and the loss of national manly vigour and serves as the ultimate display of the superiority of English masculinity. Haggard's narrative fantasy of atavism and triumph, of Western adventurers descending into "primitive" lost worlds that serve as a stage for heroic development, had a profound impact on his Victorian contemporaries and its effect continues to be felt in the adventure fiction and lost world narratives of the present.

3.3 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, like Haggard, also played a significant role in the Romance Revival of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Though he is best remembered for his short stories and novels about the private detective Sherlock Holmes, Doyle himself sought recognition for his other works, preferring specifically to be remembered for his historical novels. In his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures* (1924), he writes, "I believe that if I had never touched Holmes, who has tended to obscure my higher work, my position in literature would at the present moment be a more commanding one" (81). That higher work he thought to be his medievalist historical novels, such as *The White Company* (1891) and *Sir Nigel* (1906), which he

believed "would illuminate our national traditions" (81). Though these works offer interesting insights into the medievalist and masculinist assumptions that dominate Conan Doyle's writings, as well as New Imperialist romance as a genre, they have largely been left without serious scholarly treatment. The remainder of this chapter attempts to address this scholarly gap and explore the interesting imperialist and masculinist implications of these works

These two novels chronicle the adventures of the English knight Nigel Loring as he participates in the many battles and conflicts of the early half of the Hundred Years' War. *The White Company* features an already well-established and respected Nigel, and more closely follows the rise of the young Alleyne Edricson as he sets out into the world after remaining cloistered in the Cistercian Abbey of Beaulieu from childhood. As he tentatively interacts with the "world of men," Alleyne sheds the naivety and timidity, bred from a life among monks, and sees himself drawn to the ways of romance, falling in love with Nigel's daughter Maude and accompanying the famous knight to the wars. Over the course of his adventures, he risks his life, proves his manhood, and wins Nigel's permission to marry his daughter. While this work also explores a chivalric masculinity founded on hypermasculine medievalism, I focus on *Sir Nigel*, the last of Conan Doyle's historical novels, as the better representative of Conan Doyle's developed thoughts on and contributions to the New Imperialist attitudes towards the Middle Ages, chivalry, and masculinity. Conan Doyle himself called *Sir Nigel* "the better book" (*Memories and Adventures* 80), though he thought that "the two of them taken together did thoroughly achieve my purpose" (80). This section looks at Conan Doyle's complex atavistic association of the medieval with savagery and animalism, redeemed by the masculine ethos of chivalry, and examines the anatomy of this chivalry: the celebration of violence and danger, the patriarchal, homosocial bonds between upper-class white men, and the fraught, uneasy

relationship with women who are ultimately relegated to the sidelines, before concluding with an analysis of how Conan Doyle traces Nigel's atavistic plunge into the anarchic medieval world and what lessons he draws out for readers there.

The plot to *Sir Nigel* follows a typical romance narrative structure in which Nigel Loring leaves behind the comforts of his home to face hardship in a dangerous, masculine world. It is a movement from the feminine and the domestic to the masculine and the unfamiliar. Over the course of the narrative, Nigel performs an increasingly impressive series of heroic deeds, first in his own homeland, then in the contested waters of the English channel and port cities, and finally in the heart of Brittany and of France itself. All throughout, he seeks to perform three significant and noteworthy deeds for Lady Mary, whom he promises to marry only once he has proven himself. At the very end of the novel, he heroically participates in the Battle of Poitiers, one of the major battles of the Hundred Years War, fought in 1356, in which Edward the Black Prince led the combined English, Welsh, Breton, and Gascon forces in a decisive victory over the larger army of the French king, John II. In Conan Doyle's version, Nigel personally overpowers the French king, and, as his reward, he is knighted by the Black Prince himself. Having achieved his third significant deed, Nigel returns to England where he weds Mary, concluding the romance plot.

Like Haggard, Conan Doyle's work reveals a preoccupation with redeeming a heroic masculinity from the past. In other works, such as *The Lost World,* Conan Doyle more directly imitates Haggard's narrative of modern Englishmen thrust into the past, but in *Sir Nigel* the travel back in time and the encounter with the primitive occurs primarily at the narrative level. Though not as fully developed a character as Alan Quatermain, Conan Doyle's narrator similarly functions as a buffer between the modern and medieval worlds. While he speaks from a clearly

modern position, he presents himself as an expert and interprets the customs and beliefs of the medieval world for a modern audience. In his introduction, Conan Doyle's narrator presents his version of the Middle Ages as "authentic," citing the "many books" (vi) that served as his sources. Admitting that he has played around a little with dates for the sake of narrative, he maintains the overall authenticity of his depiction, announcing, "It is as accurate as a good deal of research and hard work could make it" (v). Through this protestation of historical authenticity and expertise, his narrator seeks to create a sense of legitimacy and longstanding tradition for the hypermasculine ethos his text presents and celebrates.

Conan Doyle's understanding of England's medieval past, and chivalry's place within that past, ties into the same ideas of primitivism and barbarity central to Haggard's romance. *Sir Nigel*'s Middle Ages are a dark and violent period of human history, in which chivalry features as the redeeming light, acting as a romantic antidote to barbarism. In his introduction, the narrator acknowledges, "I am aware that there are incidents which may strike the modern reader as brutal and repellent. It is useless, however, to draw the Twentieth Century and label it the Fourteenth. It was a sterner age, and men's code of morality, especially in matters of cruelty, was very different" (v). Again, by addressing the "brutal" incidents that will upset the "modern reader," Conan Doyle's narrator assumes the superior position of guide into the primitive past. Medieval England, for Conan Doyle, is less evolved and consequently less humane than Edwardian England, but it is precisely this "sterner," more "brutal" character that holds appeal. The assumed modern male reader, accustomed to a soft and civilized life, must, like the characters in a lost world romance, immerse themselves in a primitive environment of savagery and peril and redeem a lost heroic masculinity. For Conan Doyle, the chivalric, martial model of masculinity that he locates in the Middle Ages offers a corrective for what he sees as the

effeminized masculinity of the threatened upper-class white male, and allows him to legitimize the hegemony of the "gentleman."

Within this brutal, primitive context, Conan Doyle presents chivalry as the redemptive form of masculinity, the riches to be gained from an atavistic engagement with the past. He writes, "The fantastic graces of Chivalry lay upon the surface of life, but beneath it was a half-savage population, fierce and animal, with little ruth or mercy. It was a raw, rude England, full of elemental passions, and redeemed only by elemental virtues" (vi). At work in this sensationalist portrayal of the medieval world is a teleological understanding of history, in which the chaos of the Middle Ages gives birth to the ordered civilization of modern England. But Conan Doyle does not employ a whig understanding of historical progression; rather, his approach both solidifies and problematizes historical periodization and linear progress. The process of reversion collapses the distance between past and present, yet the very idea of atavism relies on the fixed binary of savage and civilized, medieval and modern. For Conan Doyle, the medieval world itself is like Lang's savage in modern clothes, and the chivalrous knight, like Haggard's English adventurers, possesses the "graces of Chivalry" on the surface yet is "half-savage" and "animal" beneath. Chivalry may be the element that redeems and sets apart Conan Doyle's gentleman warrior, but he also derives his potent masculine strength from the animalistic savagery beneath. It is the uneasy union of these two natures, savage and civilized, that constitutes Conan Doyle's chivalric ethos.

3.3.1 Chivalry, Gender, and Class

More than any of the characters in *King Solomon's Mines,* Nigel is a glutton for punishment, continually throwing himself headlong into peril without a thought for his safety. He is almost a

caricature of chivalric masculinity, with his obsessive love of violence and knightly activity. Antonio José Miralles Pérez, one of the few scholars to publish on *Sir Nigel*, reads Nigel, contradictorily, as both an ironic character as well as the fantasy of a mentally disturbed Conan Doyle. He concludes that "when the knight's psyche is subjected to close scrutiny, signs of mental disorder are detected" (195), and that "individuals who rush headlong into warfare and feel inspired by the ethos of epic champions and Arthurian knights cannot be mentally sane" (197), though he makes these diagnoses without either sufficient textual evidence or a proper critical framework. It is more productive to read Nigel as embodying Conan Doyle's heroic masculine ethos, grounded in his construction of the "stern" age of medieval warfare, rather than as the product of a mentally ill writer. Conan Doyle's grim portrait of the Middle Ages corresponds with a heroic ethic that fully embraces the potential and actuality of severe bodily harm and holds up an active life governed by martial prowess as the truest course of a man's life. We see this early in our introduction to Nigel where he expresses his desire for peril and adventure. The song he sings to his grandmother foreshadows Nigel's later behaviour and provides a brief summation of the chivalric mindset. Divided into three stanzas, Nigel's song calls first for a sword, then for a horse, and finally for a heart in order to "rise to circumstance" and act manfully. The song features many bold assertions of the brave man's ability to overcome great odds and presents the importance of seeking out the "path of tears and wrath" (41). The speaker asks for the ability to go "where blackest need and grimmest deed / And sweetest perils are" (40), where he might risk "the hazard of the chance" (41). Moreover, he prays to be spared from indolence and passivity, the "glutted days / Where poisoned leisure lies" (40). Conan Doyle's aristocratic chivalric masculinity is dependent on this dichotomy of leisure – a uniquely

upper-class malady – set against martial activity, the former breeding effeminacy and weakness and the latter forging virtue and strength.

In addition to the worship of bodily peril, Conan Doyle's chivalric framework is built on the foundation of a homosocial world of upper-class white men who share a loyalty to the masculine virtues of chivalry. This homosociality seeks to set apart the aristocratic, white man, and to enforce and justify the power structures that allow him to dominate the working class, women, and people of colour. One of the most striking of these homosocial relationships is the friendship formed between Nigel and the French squire Raoul who bond over their shared knighthood and their love of fighting. On opposing sides, they first engage in an impromptu horse race, where Nigel attempts to run Raoul down and capture him. Once Raoul's horse is tripped by a group of bandits, the nature of their game changes, as Nigel rushes in to save his foe, for, as the narrator informs his modern audience, "There was a comradeship among men of gentle blood and bearing which banded them together against all ruffianly or unchivalrous attack" (275). When faced by the "ruffians" of the lower classes – people whom the narrator derides as "rude fellows" and "uncouth" (275) – the "men of gentle blood" band together and stamp out the insurrection. The polite game of gentlemanly combat does not extend to the lower classes, and, as the peasants pull Raoul from his horse, a symbol of his social position, his peer, Nigel, still mounted, kills four of them, restoring the "proper" hierarchy. Conan Doyle's description revels in Nigel's invulnerability against the bandits; he swiftly kills four of them as "in vain they thrust at the steel-girt man" (276). This episode seems to reflect the fantasy of the work as a whole, a nostalgic turn back to a mythical golden era when social hierarchy was rigidly enforced by gentlemen who ruled on the basis of their martial skill. The narrator offers the slaughtered peasants no sympathy, and dehumanizes them through his description of their "cries

and shrieks" (276). Chivalry, in Conan Doyle's understanding, is strictly for gentlemen, and the

attempts of lower class men to appropriate it or otherwise challenge gentlemen are met with

swift and lethal "justice."

There are moments when Conan Doyle's narrator seems more sympathetic to the lower

classes, such as in the introduction where he celebrates the liberation of the medieval peasant as

the result of the Black Death. Foreshadowing the democracy of modern England, he writes:

> Oppressive laws slackened for want of those who could enforce them, and once
>
> slackened could never be enforced again. The laborer would be a slave no longer.
>
> The bondsman snapped his shackles. There was much to do and few left to do it.
>
> Therefore the few should be freemen, name their own price, and work where and
>
> for whom they would. It was the black death which cleared the way for that great
>
> rising thirty years later which left the English peasant the freest of his class in
>
> Europe. (3)

But while Conan Doyle takes this opportunity to celebrate the emerging "freedoms" of the

"common man" as a proof of English exceptionalism, he is, on the whole, not interested in the

rights or freedoms of the peasants in his novels. In the actual narrative of his medievalist works,

the peasants who transgress the social order receive severe punishment, punishment given

implied authorial approval. In *The White Company,* Nigel and his men rescue French nobility

from the Jacquerie, the French counterpart to the very same "great rising" that the narrator seems

to celebrate in the beginning of *Sir Nigel*. While his narrator acknowledges the cruelty and

oppression that the peasants suffer, he offers them little sympathy, and, in his depiction, he

demonizes them, as "the howling and dancing peasants, their fierce faces upturned, their

clenched hands waving, all drunk with bloodshed and with vengeance" (391). These peasants are

soon slaughtered by Nigel's company, and Conan Doyle's savage portrayal of them leaves little room for sympathy. In *Sir Nigel*, yet more pitiless scenes of the execution of the transgressive lower classes are presented. Later in the novel, when two peasants are apprehended for murdering English soldiers, the archers turn their execution into a competitive archery game to which Conan Doyle's narrator merely rejoins, "Human life was cheap in those stern days" (268).

Not all of the "lowborn" characters in Conan Doyle's medieval world fit into this mould however. Between the "mob" of peasants and the knights, are the professional soldiers and mercenaries. These men-at-arms are not gentlemen and are willing to act against the high-minded ideals of chivalry, yet Conan Doyle expresses clear admiration for their raw, "savage" hypermasculinity, much like the "primitive" masculinity of Haggard's Kukuanas whom Quatermain describes, on the one hand, as "seething lines of savages" (184), and, on the other hand, as possessing "perfect discipline and steady and unchanging valour" (197) In fact, like Haggard's Ignosi, characters like the mercenary Black Simon and Nigel's faithful archer Samkin Aylward achieve a level of narrative respect that approaches, but never reaches, the level afforded knights. Their hypermasculinity distinguishes them from the "typical" peasant of the works – the subservient labourer or the howling, bloodthirsty rebel – and Conan Doyle's narrative is full of complimentary descriptions of Simon's "fierce" and "savage" body and of Aylward's "brawn."

The episode on the Island of Sark sees both of these men engage in the least chivalrous venture of the novel, yet Conan Doyle clearly admires the poetic justice of their hypermasculine revenge fantasy.[30] The male quest to exact revenge comes up occasionally in Conan Doyle's

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[30] For scholarship on the close association between hypermasculinity and revenge, see Thomas J. Scheff who observes that the type of film that features "revenge by men acting out anger through aggression and violence, seems to be the favorite of hypermasculine men" (131), and Roger Berkowitz and Drucilla Cornell who discuss how, in revenge stories, the "omniscient viewpoint subdues the fear of unjust revenge with the promise that the

work, notably in the Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, where Jefferson Hope tracks down and murders the men responsible for the death of his beloved Lucy. His revenge is criminal, yet Conan Doyle is highly sympathetic, and Holmes and Watson do not readily condemn him for his actions, even though they assist the police in apprehending him. Similarly, in *Sir Nigel*, Simon's brutal mission, to be paid the "wager" he is owed by the merciless king, La Muette, who enslaved and mistreated him, is a far cry from Nigel's chivalry, but Conan Doyle presents it as its own crude form of justice. The quest has Simon and Aylward descend into the Hellish world of the Island of Sark, a place which Simon calls the home of "broken folk from all countries, justice-fliers, prison-breakers, reavers, escaped bondsmen, murderers and staff-strikers" (251). The people of the island are the antithesis to order and chivalry, murderers who sell "a woman for a keg of apples" (255). Simon confronts La Muette, and cuts off his head to settle their wager, much to Aylward's horror, but Simon says in his defense, "if you had such memories as I, you would have wished that he should die like a sheep and not like a man" (259). And after Simon reveals the severed head to Sir Robert Knolles, his captain merely states, "It is in my mind that I carry some hard men with me to Brittany" (261). More savage, animal, and elemental than the knight, these characters embody the grotesque, primitive masculinity that Conan Doyle considers synonymous with the very concept of "medieval." And while the text exhibits a fascination with the hypermasculinity of these lower class characters, their lack of chivalry keeps them from being fully accepted into the homosocial order of knighthood.

Another significant aspect of Conan Doyle's chivalric masculinity is his portrayal of women. While it would be unfair to characterize his treatment of female characters as thoroughly misogynistic, Conan Doyle, like Haggard, relegates women to a supporting role where they

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heroic avenger will get the right man. Whatever ethical problems with revenge might remain, the question of the need for due process is rendered mute [*sic*] by the moral clarity of the final act of justice" (125).

largely serve as distant motivators of heroic deeds, or as a suffocating, emasculating influence. The novel attempts to merge a New Imperialist mistrust and fear of femininity with medieval chivalry's conventions of courtly love, resulting in an uneasy portrayal of women, in which they operate as potential obstacles to manly development as well as potential inspirations for heroic masculine achievement.

There are three important female characters in the novel, each of whom sheds light on Conan Doyle's characterization of women's role in chivalry. The primary influence on Nigel at the beginning of the novel is his grandmother, Dame Ermyntrude, who is his sole educator in the customs of knighthood. His grandmother helps to instil in him an antiquated code of ethics hailing from the world of romance and heroes, one highly distinct from the predominantly mercenary and brutal world that he is later to encounter. But she also exercises an overly protective influence over him and fails to educate him on the "stern" ways of the "masculine" world. Because she has lost her husband and her son, Nigel's father, she lavishes on him "All the tenderness and love of her nature" (5), and consequently, "she could not bear him away from her" (5). Because of this overly protective love, "Nigel, with his lion heart and with the blood of a hundred soldiers thrilling in his veins, still at the age of two and twenty, wasted the weary days reclaiming his hawks with leash and lure or training the alans and spaniels" (5). In the character of Ermyntrude, Conan Doyle pits domesticity against heroic masculinity, and portrays the peaceful, idyllic life that Nigel leads as a kind of imprisonment. Like the family hawks and dogs, Nigel is a wild animal leashed and trained, and he will not be free until that wildness is unleashed. As long as Nigel remains with his grandmother, he remains boyish, secluded from the dangers of the world and unable to perform heroic deeds.

Conan Doyle displays an even greater unease with the intrusion of women in the homosocial world of chivalry as Nigel interacts with younger women: the two sisters, Edith and Mary. Nigel naïvely believes in the innate goodness of women, yet, through this belief, he keeps them at a distance motivated by fear:

> Fearless of all else, his spirit was attracted and yet daunted by the delicate mystery of woman. To his pure and knightly soul not Edith alone, but every woman, sat high and aloof, enthroned and exalted, with a thousand mystic excellencies and virtues which raised her far above the rude world of man. There was joy in contact with them; and yet there was fear, fear lest his own unworthiness, his untrained tongue or rougher ways should in some way break rudely upon this delicate and tender thing. (131-32)

Unlike Haggard's Quatermain, Nigel does not dislike women, yet his fearful worship of the mystical feminine similarly puts them at a distance from the homosocial chivalric fellowship. His naïve worship of the aloof, pure, and archetypal woman is soon complicated when Edith seeks to enlist Nigel's aid in avenging a slight from the crippled knight Paul de la Fosse. When he refuses, she insults him for his principles, and, in response, "Nigel flushed and winced under the words, but he said no more, for his mind was fighting hard within him, striving to keep that high image of woman which seemed for a moment to totter on the edge of a fall" (135). Nigel's beliefs do not survive long, and he comes to a more "realistic" understanding of women after the ensuing quest to save Edith from the scandal of running off with the predatory de la Fosse. Without the simple worship of idealized woman, Nigel is left with the misogynistic fear of a "typical" femininity that Edith is made to represent. This "problem" of the influence of the feminine is a theme found throughout Conan Doyle's literary work, with Sherlock Holmes's

general discomfort with women, and, in *The Lost World*, where Edward Malone risks his life to please Gladys, only to have her forget all about him and marry another man while he is away.

Unlike her sister Edith, Mary is Conan Doyle's ideal woman, precisely because she is more "unfeminine" and thus less of a threat to the masculine world of chivalry. In his description of her, he says, "none could call her beautiful" (130), thereby distinguishing Mary from the kind of dangerous femininity embodied by her sister. She displays a great interest in chivalry; she hears Nigel tell of his jousting adventure at Tillford, and "the eyes of the dark woman burned the brighter as she sat at her tapestry and listened" (136). And her father also notes her masculine tendencies, telling Nigel, "Be it lore – of chivalry or heraldry or woodcraft or what you will, I can always turn to Mary. Many a man can she put to the blush" (139). With Mary, Conan Doyle retains the figure of the chivalric lady so central to medieval chivalry and courtly love, while largely downplaying the femininity that he sees as a danger to homosocial order. Conan Doyle represents Mary as eager to remove herself to the narrative margins where she will be in no danger of hindering the workings of the masculine chivalric plot. She cites how "Galahad and other great knights of old have put women out of their lives that they might ever give their whole soul and strength to the winning of honour" (161). By choosing the uniquely virginal Galahad as the model of conventional chivalric behaviour rather than one of the many other knights of the Round Table – such as Gareth – whose lady loves inspire their chivalrous deeds, Mary presents women, not as the significant participants in medieval chivalry that they often are – often as significant as the knights themselves – but rather as potential obstacles standing in the way of masculine heroism. In *Le Morte Darthur*, Galahad is an exception rather than the rule, and "the other great knights of old," do not, as Conan Doyle implies, seek to extricate themselves from feminine influence. Rather, the "great knights" such as Lancelot, Tristram, Gawain, and Gareth

perform their great deeds in the service of ladies. With Mary's speech, however, Conan Doyle draws on a common Victorian interpretation of Arthurian legend in which the interference of women is read as the primary reason for the fall of Camelot.

Whereas Edith threatened to throw Nigel off the course of masculine virtue and Dame Ermyntrude kept him trapped in the domestic world, Mary serves as a catalyst to his chivalric achievement, and thus becomes the text's example of ideal, virtuous femininity. In response to her concerns, Nigel swears, "I will do three deeds in your honour as a proof of my high love before I set eyes upon your face again" (162), and through this oath, the remainder of the work's plot is mapped out. Mary essentially removes herself from the rest of the novel, since Conan Doyle turns the narrative to the exclusively male world of warfare, and Nigel, along with readers, will not see her face again until the last few pages of the novel.

3.3.2 Chivalry and Atavism

The rest of the plot works out a hypermasculine fantasy in which Nigel receives recognition and achieves success through his strength and skill in fighting. Beginning with the adventure at the Bridge at Tilford where he challenges the king's knights to joust, Nigel embarks on an atavistic journey into a past that is both a golden age of knight errantry and a savage, primitive age of cruelty and brutality. The narrator tells us:

> Such ventures as these where an aspirant for fame would wait for days at a cross-
> road, a ford, or a bridge, until some worthy antagonist should ride that way, were
> very common in the old days of adventurous knights and were still familiar to the
> minds of all men because the stories of the romancers and the songs of the

trouvères were full of such incidents. Their actual occurrence however had become rare. (106-7)

Nigel himself stands apart from his time, hearkening back to a more heroic age. Sandro Jung draws on the quixotic tradition to explain Nigel's attitudes and behaviour. He argues that "Conan Doyle emphasises the quixotic character of Nigel by placing it in stark contrast with the 'new' values and standards that were emerging at the time when Nigel was born" (209) and concludes that "Nigel stands for the quixotic values of chivalry – which are, however, not in tune with those of the time – and, like Don Quixote, he finds himself unable to reconcile some of his values of chivalry with the reality of being a soldier" (209). I agree with Jung that, like Cervantes's Don Quixote, Nigel stands apart from his time with his inspiration from romance and heroic verse, but, though he does often suffer humiliation, he is not primarily a figure of ridicule even amongst the more pragmatic characters of the novel. Rather, his turn to the heroic past for inspiration mirrors Conan Doyle's own turn to the Middle Ages as a model for modern chivalric masculinity.

In the conclusion to the adventure at Tilford, Nigel walks a fine line between inviting ridicule and commanding respect. After conducting himself well and unhorsing one of the squires, he faces a famous historical figure, the legendary knight Sir Walter Manny, who knocks Nigel from his horse and seemingly takes his head off with the blow. After a brief moment of horror, the knights discover that Nigel, too short for his father's armour, is still unharmed within the corselet. While the party is "weary with laughter" (112) after this bizarre and comedic incident, Nigel still succeeds in gaining their respect. The king tells Nigel "You have shown that you can use your father's weapons … and you have proved also that you are the worthy bearer of his name and his arms, for you have within you that spirit for which he was famous" (113).

Despite his humiliation and the economic constraints that forced him to wear such ill-fitting

armour, Nigel's commitment to attaining honour and his eagerness to participate in the

hypermasculine ritual of armed combat earn him the respect of the most powerful men of his

time, and even wins him the good opinion of the king, so that he is allowed to accompany

Edward's knights in the fight for Calais.

Though Nigel continues to meet with setbacks, he perseveres on his quest to achieve his

three deeds, the attaining of which corresponds with his social advancement and personal

maturation. His first deed sees him capture the enemy knight, the Red Ferret, and his

commitment to chivalric ideals of homosocial respect, sees him defy the king's orders to have his

captive hanged. But as, Nigel's quest continues, he moves from the more civilized, chivalric

domain of knight against knight into a more barbaric and hypermasculine world. Deep in the

"colonial" world of Brittany, Aylward and several other English archers are captured by the

Butcher of La Brohiniere, a merciless tyrant operating in a no man's land hotly contested by

English and French armies. Fitting into neither of these civilized camps, the Butcher is beyond

the pale of chivalric respect and openly flouts the polite conventions of chivalric masculinity. He

commits atrocities by hanging three prisoners every day that the English continue to siege his

castle and pulls them into a conflict where mere chivalry alone is insufficient to overcome him.

Thus, when Nigel's prisoner and friend, Raoul, suggests enlisting the help of the French to rid

the country of this mutual enemy, after which they can allow for jousting for any knight who

wishes "to advance himself, or to shed a vow and exalt his lady" (286), an idealized, chivalrous

suggestion which Nigel highly approves of, their captain, Sir Robert Knolles responds

scornfully, "Things are not ordered thus, save in the tales of the minstrels" (287). While Sir

Robert is, throughout the novel, more pragmatic than Nigel, eventually even Nigel's romantic

ideals of mutual respect and heroic combat seem to break down in the face of a monstrous "other" that defies chivalric convention. Placed under stress, Conan Doyle's chivalry reveals cracks. Its transcultural respect extends only to others who share the same ideal; the policies of romance break down in conflict with the "grotesque," just as they seem not to apply to those who are not "highborn." The homosocial community of chivalric white gentlemen functions in part by exclusion – of women, people of colour, and the working class – and only offers the chivalric courtesies of fair combat and the opportunity to yield to other members of that class.

The commencement of Nigel's second deed, the taking of La Brohiniere, bears witness to the modern colonial implications of Conan Doyle's chivalry. An unstable province torn between two larger, expansionist powers, Brittany functions as a colonial space. Within that space, the Butcher is the "native despot," like Malory's Giant of Mont St. Michel – who is also associated with Brittany and possibly served as an inspiration for the Butcher – embodying an unbridled, wild savagery that threatens to overwhelm the restraints of chivalry. The Butcher is also the locus of the medieval gothic, acting as an archetype of the cruel medieval lord. His large, beastly physicality, and his torture of the English prisoners fits within a long tradition of the horror of the medieval grotesque, which David Matthews argues "connotes darkness, obscurity, the hidden and repressed" (20), perhaps most famously represented by Sir Walter Scott's Reginald Front-de-Boeuf in *Ivanhoe*, who from the gothic castle of Torquilstone rules the land through the fear of rape and torture. The Butcher has his prisoners stripped and either chained before a scorching fire so that they "danced and whirled in front of the fire" (309) to avoid being burned to death, or placed in large barrels of cold water based on how they answer his question of "whether they were of a hot-blooded nature or of a cold" (311). This sadistic relish of ingenious methods of torture is a key part of the popular conception of the term "medieval" and the "Dark Ages." Chris

Bishop, tackling specifically the misunderstandings surrounding the supposedly medieval "pear of anguish," a torture device implausibly attributed to the Middle Ages, argues that the modern preoccupation with medieval torture "evidences the 'dark medievalism' of the modern consciousness, a dystopian view of the Middle Ages that imagines pre-Reformation Europe as a nexus of cruelty and sexual perversion" (591). That inhumane cruelty connoted by the very word "medieval" typifies all that the modern world is meant to have left behind. Nigel's encounter with La Brohiniere is a colonial encounter between civilization and savagery and an atavistic encounter between modernity and the medieval. In light of Conan Doyle's introduction, where he posits chivalry as the saving grace of an otherwise savage medieval world, this conflict becomes a battle between civilized chivalry and Dark Age primitivism.

In his downfall, the Butcher receives much different treatment than the Red Ferret, Raoul, or later, the French king. Like the King of Sark or the peasant bandits, the Butcher defies the social norms of chivalry, and, in defeat, he is not granted chivalrous treatment. Conan Doyle describes the Butcher's gruesome end at the hands of his victims in lurid, horrific detail:

> Like a pack of wolves they were on him, and he clanged upon the floor with a dozen frenzied naked figures clutching and clinging above him. In vain Nigel tried to pull them off. They were mad with rage, these tortured starving men, their eyes fixed and glaring, their hair on end, their teeth gnashing with fury, while they tore at the howling, writhing man. Then, with a rattle and clatter, they pulled him across the room by his two ankles and dragged him into the fire. (312)

This image of the naked, starving, and frenzied men, "mad with rage" and "teeth gnashing," tossing the butcher into a blazing fire echoes medieval and Early Modern paintings of the sufferings of the damned in Hell, an image further enforced through words like "howling" and

"writhing." It is a form of justice, like Black Simon's wager with the King of Sark, but one savage and far removed from the "graces of chivalry," which can do nothing to prevent the wild punishment of the Butcher.

Since Nigel's deeds are arranged in climactic order, seeing him face greater difficulties and engaging in more prominent and dangerous affairs, the third deed must take him beyond the kinds of events in which he has already partaken. Conan Doyle teases as the last deed the Combat of the Thirty, a historical event in which thirty knights and squires from the English and from the French-backed Breton forces engaged in an arranged battle, but subverts expectation by having Nigel receive a terrible wound before performing any worthwhile exploit, making him "the first to fall" (333). Though historically considered an example of true chivalric ideals in practice, the Combat of the Thirty sees Nigel win no honour for himself. Instead, he must wait for his third deed, enduring yet more hardship before achieving gratification. That opportunity does come, at the climactic battle of the novel, the famous Battle of Poitiers. Nigel's participation in this battle is substantial; Conan Doyle describes him as "a very angel of battle ... as he drove his maddened horse through the thickest of the press" (374). Along with his overall heroic comportment, Nigel makes his most significant intervention in the political landscape of his day in this battle by overpowering the French king himself. Not recognizing his prisoner, Nigel fails to accept his surrender properly, thus allowing the material reward of ransom to go to another. His is the greater reward, however, and Edward the Black Prince, declares, "I swear by my father's soul that I had rather have the honour this squire has gathered than all the richest ransoms of France" (387). And as the overwhelmed squire falls to his knees before his prince, Edward knights him, commanding, "Rise up, Sir Nigel" (387).

After his immersion in the stern world of medieval warfare, Nigel is free to return to domesticity without the fear of succumbing to decadent malaise. Conan Doyle finds it necessary to include within his description of Nigel's marital bliss an assurance that "in many lands did Nigel carve his fame" and a report of his many sorties abroad to keep that chivalric masculinity alive. Conan Doyle's concern, as expressed through Mary, that women threaten the achievement of honour, is similarly answered, and the narrator adds, "As the years passed Nigel's name rose higher in honour; but still Mary's would keep pace with it, each helping and sustaining the other upon an ever higher path" (392). Having proved by the performing of the three deeds that Mary's love was a help and not a hindrance to his commitment to chivalry, Nigel and Mary continue to exhort one another on to the "higher path" of chivalry.

At the very end of the novel, Conan Doyle's narrator concludes his role as atavistic guide with an exhortation to his audience to draw inspiration from the medieval world. He explains his understanding of how the past continues to feed the present through the metaphor of dead leaves that "nourish for ever that great old trunk of England" (393). Just as the dead leaves of the past "live" by nourishing the tree, so the medieval past, or at least its noble, redeeming elements, lives by nourishing the present. Thus, Conan Doyle concludes, "the rumour of noble lives, the record of valour and truth, can never die, but lives on in the soul of the people" (393). By reading *Sir Nigel*, "the people" return to the past and ensure that the virtues of the medieval world, the virtues of chivalric masculinity, do not fade away. And so Conan Doyle directly enjoins his audience, "Our own work lies ready to our hands; and yet our strength may be the greater and our faith the firmer if we spare an hour from present toils to look back upon the women who were gentle and strong, or the men who loved honour more than life on this green stage of England where for a few short years we play our little part" (393-94). By casting back to this

"lost world" of medieval chivalry, Conan Doyle's readers are promised, among other things, the possibility of greater strength, an idea comparable to the primal fire, the Kingsleyan *thumos*, rescued from the depths of primitive masculinity.

Sir H. Rider Haggard and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, like the majority of their fellow imperialist romancers, reveal a fixation in their writing on reviving the heroic traditions and "lost" manliness of a former age. Faced with a culture that they thought to be increasingly succumbing to "pressures" from the women's suffrage movement, the rise of the New Woman, and the spread of Decadence from France to England, these men turned for inspiration to "the primitive," found both in England's past and in "savage" cultures of the present. These imagined primitive spaces that they carved out excluded women and physically weaker men by celebrating the hypermasculine virtues of physical strength, martial prowess, and courage on the battlefield and led to the creation of fantasies in which such virtues are necessary for survival and social advancement. Generically, they made a point of shunning the novel, preferring instead to revive the pre-modern form of romance, seemingly unsullied by the decadence of modern civilization. The New Imperialist romance pushes women and domesticity to the narrative margins, marking both as traps to masculine development, a development that requires the pursuit of danger and the experience of war. For the upcoming generation of young men who grew up reading Kipling, Haggard, Conan Doyle, Stevenson, Buchan, Henty, Cramb, Baden-Powell, and others, war was presented as something to be longed for, as it would provide the necessary setting in which they would prove their masculinity. And while the First World War greatly challenged these romantic ideas, the intertwining of empire, chivalry, and medievalism maintained considerable influence well into the 1940s and 1950s, where it would receive its most significant challenge within Arthurian medievalism from T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*.

Chapter 4 - Might in the Service of Right: Chivalry, Utopia, and Education in White's *The Once and Future King*

Alas that ever I should see this doleful day, for now, said Arthur, I am come to mine end.
– Le Morte Darthur XXI.iv

T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, perhaps the most significant twentieth-century adaptation of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur,* participates in and rewrites the Arthurian tradition of the nineteenth-century medieval revival. Engaging with the dominant themes of chivalric masculinity, ultranationalism, and medievalism, White ultimately subverts New Imperialist ways of viewing and using the Middle Ages, chivalry, and Arthuriana. Like Tennyson, Kipling, Haggard, and Conan Doyle, White turns to the Middle Ages as a mirror to the modern world and as a stage on which to examine issues of masculinity and empire and the history of England and its uncertain future. For White, as for Tennyson or Kipling, the imagined medieval world provides a productive space for interrogating political systems, human nature, history, and national identity.

White uses the Middle Ages in both conventional and surprising ways, through deliberate anachronism, the fusing together of many periods into a general "medieval" world, and explicit parallels between the Middle Ages and modernity. Throughout the novels, White constructs an idealized Middle Ages that draws on countless medievalist stereotypes, featuring, among a host of other elements, knights in full plate armour, post-1066 Norman-Saxon tensions, crusades, and an early medieval Britain divided by autonomous barons. Unlike either Kipling or Conan Doyle, whose medievalisms aimed for the appearance of historical specificity, locating their stories in the Norman Conquest or in a specific portion of the Hundred Years War, White deliberately avoids historical specificity, so that the setting becomes generally "medieval" without being located in any one period of the Middle Ages. In many ways, White seems to follow the example

of Mark Twain's comic Arthurian novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, published in 1889. The two works share many similarities: an amalgamation of the full range of medieval history and culture, a heavy reliance on Malory, an unromantic take on knightly combat, and the use of the Middle Ages to criticize elements of modernity. And White's Merlyn[31] even has much in common with Hank Morgan, similarly functioning as a "modern" social architect, steering medieval Britain away from "barbaric" customs. But while Twain has moments where his pragmatic American protagonist admires elements of medieval life, on the whole he looks down on the knights' "primitive" ways, calling them "white Indians" (19) and "a polished-up court of Comanches" (112). White's use of the Middle Ages, on the other hand, often questions the rigidity of historical periodization and challenges chronological snobbery. In a 1939 letter to Sydney Cockerell, he explained his approach as following the spirit of Malory in writing "of an imaginary world imagined in the 15th cent. … Malory and I are both dreaming. We care very little for exact dates, and he says I am to tell you I am after the spirit of Morte d'Arthur (just as he was after the spirit of those sources collated) seen through the eyes of 1939" (Warner 133-34). White appeals to a less direct form of historical accuracy and attempts to embody the role of medieval author, taking the same extreme liberties with historical periodization as Malory. Janet Montefiore comments on White's "post-modern" approach:

> In its awareness of historical relativism, fictionality, and multiple perspectives, this declaration of conscious anachronism by a modern writer re-inventing a Malory who himself imagined a legendary past in terms of his own medieval 'present', makes the projected work sound like proleptic post-modernism. Even White's allegiance to 'the spirit of Morte D'Arthur' which seemingly appeals to

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[31] Throughout this chapter, I adopt White's spelling of the Arthurian characters, such as "Merlyn" and "Guenever."

an old-fashioned Romantic essentialism, allowed him to rewrite Malory as a

modern fable about finding an antidote to war. (43)

White was something of a medievalist himself and encountered medieval literature at Queen's College, Cambridge. In a letter to his former tutor, Leonard James Potts, White remarks how "I once wrote a thesis on the *Morte d'Arthur*" and adds, "I did a lot of research into the 14th-15th centuries, in a mild way" (*Letters* 86). White's "mistakes" are intentional and reveal a purposeful break with the established norms of periodization. For White, history, while still linear, fails to teach the easily digestible lessons of either a progressivist or an atavist approach. White's Middle Ages is neither the barbaric past that serves to highlight the more civilized present nor the golden age of heroism and lost virtues. Rather, it is a period as intensely complicated as the present, full of dark "medieval" brutality and romantic "medieval" heroism, but also modern "civilized" senses of justice, equality, kindness, and peace. White refuses to treat the medieval as some kind of homogenous entity, practicing the kind of postmodern approach to the Middle Ages for which Carolyn Dinshaw strongly advocates. He extends what Dinshaw calls a "queer historical impulse," (1) which recognizes and incorporates the "indeterminate nature of medieval cultural phenomena" (15). White uses a constructed medieval world to teach lessons about human nature, power, war, and tragedy, but in ways that transgress the dominant medievalist discourses I have been examining throughout this thesis. Ultimately, White's history is not straightforwardly linear but rather casts aspersions on teleological history.

White situates the whole drama of "progress," from primitivism to modernity, in the short span of time covered in his novels. While New Imperialist writers like Kipling, Haggard, and Conan Doyle often complicate the simplistic narrative of progress by yearning for the "lost" virtues of the past and creating atavistic fantasies of modern Englishmen embracing

"primitivism," even these narratives rely on a basic assumption of the fundamental difference between past and present, medieval and modern, "primitive" and "civilized." Conversely, White complicates the rigidity of those categories by playing with temporality and mixing the medieval and the modern all within the period of the Middle Ages. Thus, we see the move from a "barbaric," "Dark Age" society made up of individual, somewhat autonomous barons and tyrants and governed by an unquestioned belief in the doctrine of "Might makes Right," to a "civilized" society brought under a centralized authority that rules through laws.

The world Arthur inherits, "medieval" in the most pejorative sense of the term, provides the context in which White's utopian Arthur rises. To build his utopian civilization, however, Arthur must make use of might even as he tries to make it obsolete, and, in his conquest of the free, yet cruel barons, he creates an empire that acts, as it does in Tennyson's *Idylls*, as a metaphor for the British Empire. As Arthur's empire grows, it declines into a state of decadence, in which the tensions between knights are allowed to fester and eventually bring the kingdom down. On a superficial level, it would seem that White is merely following the conventional Arthurian narrative as presented by Malory and the typical "rise and fall" New Imperialist model of history, where vigorous young empires conquer and expand until, whether due to moral failing or "natural law," they decline and give way to new empires. The fiercely imperialist historian J. A. Cramb lays out this dual understanding of history in his book, *Reflections on the Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain* (1900), where he proposes two theories for the fall of empires: the Theory of Retribution, where "the fall of an empire is the punishment of sin and of wrong-doing" and the cyclical theory where "the rise and fall of empires [are controlled] by a law similar to that of the seasons and the revolutions of the heavenly bodies" (239). But while Cramb asserts that Britain is the final destination of imperial history "built upon a design more liberal even than

that of Athens or the Rome of the Antonines" (139), White expresses a profound skepticism of this kind of teleology that positions the failed empires of the past as stepping stones leading to the British Empire. He also diverges from this ultranationalist history in his ultimate pessimism about the immoral actions it takes to make that empire rise in the first place. For White, it seems that empires fall not because martial virtue is neglected, but because all power is inherently unstable and human beings are difficult to "cure."

In this chapter, I examine how the four novels that make up the 1958 edition of *The Once and Future King* engage with the exclusive homosociality and grand narratives of New Imperialist chivalry. I examine how White wrestles with the problems of ultranationalism and hypermasculinity, but also education, progress, and basic human nature.[32] Throughout the work, there is a tension between determinism and free will, the idea that some characters are inexorably headed for good or for evil, and the more hopeful belief that with the right education and the right civilizational structure, people's natures can be improved. As critics such as Elizabeth Brewer, Alan Lupack, and Heather Worthington have observed, the tone and subject matter of the novels significantly changes from the initial publication of the standalone novel, *The Sword in the Stone*, in 1938, to the publication of the final book, *The Candle in the Wind*, in 1958, aging as the young Arthur ages. Lupack observes that "White reflects this aging in the macro-structure of his book. In a rather brilliant structural experiment, at the same time that the characters age in the sequence, the book itself is growing up with them" (107). The change in the novels demonstrates White's intensifying pessimism over the rise of human evil, set against the background of the rise of Nazism and the outbreak of the Second World War. Though White's concerns about the limits of civilization are made most explicit in the final volume, they are

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[32] In this chapter, I primarily cite the 1958 version of each of the novels in *The Once and Future King*. While making reference to the earlier editions of *The Sword in the Stone*, *The Witch in the Wood*, and *The Ill-Made Knight¸* and to the posthumously published *The Book of Merlyn*, I treat the 1958 editions as White's "finished" text.

anticipated from the very earliest version of *The Sword in the Stone*. White vacillates between believing in the human being as an essentially malleable *tabula rasa*, who, if civilized and educated, will be morally upstanding, and despairing that human character is fixed, so that education has tragically little effect on human depravity. Goodness and kindness, of the kind that Merlyn instills in the young King Arthur, contends with the hypermasculine depravity of Might is Right throughout the whole series. And though Arthur manages to create an ethical system through his Round Table fellowship, he seems to ultimately lose out to the violence his education fails to curb.

Critics such as Jake La Jeunesse argue that "war and its antidote are really White's main concern" (23) and often focus on White as anti-war and anti-imperialist. Though such readings are certainly warranted, that focus runs the risk of missing *The Once and Future King*'s many sympathies with chivalric masculinity. One of the most obvious ways in which White reiterates New Imperialist notions of gender is in his depiction of idealized homosocial spaces. Many critics have pointed out White's problematic portrayals of women, often felt through their narrative absence, but also, when they are included, in their position as threats to homosocial order. Heather Worthington suggests that "*The Once and Future King* allowed White a textual space in which to explore his ambivalent feelings towards his mother and women generally" (98), and that, "following Malory, White's Arthurian world attempts to embody a masculine domain, where women are figured as either incidental or disruptive" (98). Kurth Sprague similarly argues, "According to White himself, it was his mother's influence on him while he was a child that led him to regard women with deep distrust" (9) and notes that White "frequently omitted female characters contained in Malory or diminished their importance to the story" (9). Sprague does commend the portrayal of Guenever as a "real" female character,

despite the work's general aversion to presenting fully fledged female characters, an opinion that Brewer also shares, calling "the portrayal of Guenever … one of the most successful features of *The Once and Future King*" (*T. H. White* 90).

White's portrayal of idealized homosociality in *The Once and Future King* ties directly into the work's theme of education and is foundational to Arthur's idyllic upbringing. Worthington notes the ideal homosociality of Arthur's "motherless boyhood," and she observes that "the world of Arthur's childhood is almost exclusively masculine: the absence of women appears to guarantee the stability and happiness of the Wart's early life" (100). And White's biographer, Sylvia Townsend Warner, describes *The Sword in the Stone* as an avenue for White to express, "two wish fulfilments" (99). She observes:

> He gave himself a dauntless, motherless boyhood; he also gave himself an ideal old age, free from care and contradiction of circumstance, practising an enlightened system of education on a chosen pupil, embellished with an enchanter's hat, omniscient, unconstrainable and with a sink where the crockery washed itself up. (99)

This idealized, all-male environment seems, for White, to be necessary for Arthur's character formation. As the series progresses, we find, as Sprague notes, this ideal, homosocial environment contrasted with the "corrupted," feminized educations of Galahad and Mordred.

Along with reiterating the homosociality of the Victorian and Edwardian chivalric tradition, White, like Kipling and Conan Doyle, often embodies a conservative nostalgia for feudalism that seems to yearn for the "simpler," "better" past. Aaron I. Jackson, focusing specifically on *The Sword in the Stone*, argues:

> The opening of White's novel presents a synecdoche of national space that establishes the authority of the past and homogenizes the present by submitting it to the past's sovereignty and scrutiny. More precisely, White submits the present to the examination of myth, specifically the myth of England's green and pleasant land. (49)

Jackson points to White's idyllic depiction of "a sociopolitically ordered British society" (49) and the implicit assertion throughout his description of the medieval harvesting season "that it was a better England. Even the weather, the narrator implies, was better then" (48). But while White nostalgically describes the medieval countryside – synonymous with the world of "the out-of-date huntin'-shootin'-fishin' public-school officer class of pre-1914 England" (Jackson 56) – this characterization does not do justice to the fuller picture White presents of life in the Middle Ages. Janet Montefiore similarly notes how White's "'Arthur' books idealise feudal society" (42), but she differs from Jackson in maintaining that they are "very far from being a patriotic re-creation of 'Merrie England'" (42). While I agree with Jackson and Montefiore that White's depiction is often idealistic and nostalgic, especially in *The Sword in the Stone*, such a reading leaves out the other element – the Middle Ages as cruel and barbaric – which White also incorporates heavily into his work, especially in the later volumes. His attention to both romanticized and brutal versions of the Middle Ages points to his deliberate confusion of historical linearity and his resistance to the overly simplistic usage of the Middle Ages.

4.1 *The Sword in the Stone*

First published in 1938, *The Sword in the Stone* presents the possibilities of education to intervene in human development and create a better world by eliminating the vices of violence,

tribalism, and greed. Since Arthur's childhood is largely unexplored in most Arthurian material, especially Malory, White has free rein to invent an ideal homosocial upbringing for the young boy. In *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory provides few details of Arthur's upbringing, skipping from when Merlin hands him over as a baby to Sir Ector to when he appears again to pull the sword from the stone, yet some of the details that he does provide are changed in *The Sword in the Stone*. For instance, Malory makes it clear that "Sir Ector's wife nourished him with her own pap" (I.iii), yet, significantly, White alters Arthur's childhood to have him raised in a motherless, homosocial environment, at the Castle of Forest Sauvage with his guardian Sir Ector, his foster-brother Kay, and his tutor Merlyn. The boys' education at the outset of the novel, modelled on the public school system that White savagely criticized throughout his life, is extremely focused on sports and martial training and is treated as a way to keep them from being nuisances. It comes with arbitrary corporal punishment, a notorious element of public school as represented by White: "If you did the wrong thing at the mort or the undoing, for instance, you were bent over the body of the dead beast and smacked with the flat side of the sword" (3). And Sir Ector, an embodiment of conservative, turn-of-the-century England, opines, "We can't have the boys runnin' about all day like hooligans – after all, damn it all?" (3). He views education as kind of unfortunate necessity, a way of keeping boys out of trouble. As he continues, "Ought to be havin' a first-rate eddication, at their age. When I was their age I was doin' all this Latin and stuff at five o'clock every mornin'. Happiest time of me life" (3-4). The education model of "doing Latin and stuff" to stay out of trouble, treats the boys as problems, and attempts, rather than bring out the rich potential of the student, to suppress their baser instincts. Sir Ector is only prevented from sending the boys to Eton, the most archetypical of English public schools, as his friend Sir Grummore suggests, by the fanciful obstacle of Galapas the giant.

It is at this point that Merlyn enters the narrative to rectify the problems with the educational landscape and properly prepare Arthur for moral, responsible kingship. In White's utopian imagined project, of which Merlyn is the grand architect, Arthur must be able to think beyond the conventions of his world. This project requires tutoring from Merlyn, an outsider and a social outcast. Through Merlyn, White presents many of his own ideas about nationalism and heroic masculinity. Through a number of scenes, many added to the 1958 edition and taken from the then unpublished *The Book of Merlyn*, White presents the pitfalls of totalitarianism, both fascist and communist, and of aggressive nationalism in general. Just as hegemonic, aggressive masculinity is closely joined with aggressive ultranationalism for imperialist writers like Kipling, so White couples his warnings against power hungry, territorial nationalism with warnings against competitive, violent masculinity.

Through the Wart's experience of being turned into a perch, an ant, a merlin, an owl, a goose, and a badger, he encounters the many possible extremes of political power and the difficulty of so called "civilization" to rein in humanity's seemingly natural tendency towards violence. Beatrix Hesse argues that this transformation "allows him to look at Man 'from outside,' a perspective formerly reserved for the Gaze of God" (87). Along with allowing us to look at "Man" through "non-human" eyes, these episodes function as a kind of modernized beast fable, in which the different animal species often take on specific political or moral positions. Many of these scenes were added to the 1958 edition where they help tie *The Sword in the Stone* together with the later novels by foreshadowing the political ideals that define and destroy Camelot. As a perch, in one of the original chapters from the 1938 edition of the novel, the Wart encounters Social Darwinism in the character of Mr. P, a tyrannical pike who rules the castle moat and whose physical features wear the consequences of his excessive love of power. He

possesses "a face which had been ravaged by all the passions of an absolute monarch – by cruelty, sorrow, age, pride, selfishness, loneliness and thoughts too strong for individual brains" (47). As Mr. P pontificates, he presents a reductive worldview in which power is everything, where morality is determined by whoever is strongest. His vision of a world where strength is the ultimate virtue echoes the masculinist fantasies of Haggard and Conan Doyle's romances, where the plots hinge on martial contests between men. Mr. P's speech reflects these writers' prioritization of the body over the mind. He tells the Wart, "There is only power. Power is of the individual mind, but the mind's power is not enough. Power of the body decides everything in the end, and only Might is Right" (48). Here, White first introduces the concept of "Might makes Right" by name, a concept that is thematic to *The Sword in the Stone* and the other novels in *The Once and Future King* and that poses the greatest challenge to the ideals of Camelot. The pike king teaches the Wart the easiest, most "natural" path to success as a king, the path of least resistance. The worship of power inevitably leads to brutal tyranny, and the corrosion of character, which he so clearly evidences even on his face. Andrew Hadfield convincingly argues that "Mr. P.'s conclusion that 'Might is Right' is echoed throughout the next three novels as Arthur debates this difficult issue and tries to establish the rule of law in the face of overwhelming opposition" ("T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*" 431). The episode with Mr. P. shows what is always a possibility for the future King Arthur and provides an intellectual framework that is not easily dismissed. Even as White's Arthur will attempt to abolish cruelty and injustice, he will be forced to do so by overpowering others. Even attempting to do away with the doctrine of Might is Right requires the use of might, a paradox that haunts Arthur for the remainder of the book series.

In the 1958 edition, White added a chapter, in which the Wart becomes an ant and is

thrust into a nightmarish dystopian world of menial labour, propaganda, and aggression modelled

on the Nazis. The ants sing violent, xenophobic anthems and deliver fascist warnings about the

threats to "the dear race" (127) over what White describes as "like a wireless broadcast. It came

through his antennae" (121). Through the depiction of aggressive, mind-numbing propaganda,

extreme bellicosity, and a fettered language limited to "Done or Not Done" (123), White evokes

the deep roots of totalitarian power. A totalitarian regime like that of the ants controls even the

very language they use. Like Orwell and Huxley's dystopias, alluded to in this chapter, the

horrors of the projected totalitarian future are arrived at by a slippery slope of eroding liberties,

White's ant colony has taken thousands of years to arrive at this hopeless, inescapable

enslavement, an enslavement of the mind itself. The narrator speaks of "a time when ants were

still like men" (128), and, observing a religious service that hails from just such a time, he notes

their bellicose version of Psalm 24, "If we allow for the difference of language" (128). The

perversion of religious expression for militaristic and nationalist aims is a part of the fascism that

White warns against, but also of militarism more generally, featuring in such nationalist

"prayers" as the one that concludes Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*. The philosophy of Might

makes Right, which White critiques so heavily in the book, makes uncomfortable bedfellows of

British imperialists and Nazis, and though White does not fully equate them, he seems to see in

both ideologies the seeds of bigotry and war. From the ants, White intends us to learn, along with

the Wart, the severe threat to individual freedom posed by militarism and nationalism, parodied

in the ants' eagerness "to dispute the imaginary border between their glass trays" (129), and the

extreme difficulty of avoiding the lure of nationalism's tireless propaganda. Before the Wart

returns to being a boy, he finds himself worn down by the "repeating voices in his head" and

"the lack of privacy" all of which threaten to consume his identity, making him a pawn of a militarist regime. Ultimately, in the patent absurdity of the vitriolic hatred between two virtually identical ant colonies, this chapter points to what White sees as the self-destructive foolishness of ultranationalism and aggressive militarism that contest "imaginary borders."

After his harrowing experience as an ant, the Wart continues his education as a wild goose.[33] The geese are radically different from the ants and seem to embody what White considers an ideal attitude with regards to community, nationalism, and violence. The Wart looks on the loosely joined groups of families among the geese with shy admiration, feeling his own intense loneliness magnified. White writes, "He wanted to join in, and to enjoy the exercise of a morning flight, which was so evidently a pleasure. They had a comradeship, free discipline and *joie de vivre*" (168). The geese are truly free, unlike the so called "free" human societies, for they are free from the enslavements of national boundaries, of tribalism, of lonely individualism, and even of war. In addition, the camaraderie of male and female geese opposes the exclusive homosociality of Malorian and New Imperialist chivalry, just as the geese's pacifism challenges the violence of chivalric masculinity. The female goose with whom the Wart becomes friends, Lyo-lyok, is scandalized by his suggestion that the geese might go to war with each other, and responds angrily, "What creature could be so low as to go about in bands, to murder others of its own blood?" (171). Unlike ants and humans, the geese do not have boundaries, she informs him, and she adds, "those ants of yours – and the humans too – would have to stop fighting in the end, if they took to the air" (172). For White, boundaries are an endemic evil that give rise to xenophobia, nationalism, and endless war.

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[33] Like the episode with the ants, this chapter is not found in the original 1938 version of *The Sword in the Stone* and was also taken from *The Book of Merlyn*.

Throughout the book, White consistently casts the heroic masculinity that he opposes as analogous to the modern British public school games ethos. That connection was commonly made by writers throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods, perhaps most famously by Sir Henry Newbolt in poems such as "Vitai Lampada." But while Newbolt celebrates the public school obsession with the manly virtues of camaraderie, competition, and courage, which supposedly translate directly into the virtues of a soldier, White is highly critical of that ethos, while remaining fascinated by it. Brewer argues, "He could represent chivalry on the one hand as glamorous and exciting, and on the other as grotesquely silly. It is hardly surprising therefore that his attitudes to war were inconsistent, both in *The Once and Future King* and in actual life" ("Some Comments" 128). While a reformed chivalry will provide the foundation of Arthur's new civilization, White continues to represent it as always bordering on the absurd and the horrific. Such scenes as the clumsy, amusing, yet violent duel between Sir Grummore and King Pellinore portray chivalric combat and the supposed glory that comes with it as a ridiculous, awkward display, made even more ridiculous by the potential for real bodily harm.

By showing him this combat and by continually lecturing him, Merlyn tries to disabuse the Wart of his seemingly inevitable attraction to knightly activity. The wizard complains about the knightly obsession with martial training and physical exercise. As White writes:

> Tilting and horsemanship had two afternoons a week, because they were the most important branches of a gentleman's education in those days. Merlyn grumbled about athletics, saying that nowadays people seemed to think that you were an educated man if you could knock another man off a horse and that the craze for games was the ruin for scholarship - nobody got scholarships like they used to do when he was a boy, and all the public schools had been forced to lower the

> standards - but Sir Ector, who was an old tilting blue, said that the battle of Crécy
>
> had been won upon the playing fields of Camelot. This made Merlyn so furious
>
> that he gave Sir Ector rheumatism for two nights before he relented. (52)

Although Merlyn complains about the declining academic standards of Uther's medieval Britain and refers back to the better days "when he was a boy," his boyhood, since he is living backwards in time, would be in White's own day, which White often criticized for the same "muscular" ethos. Another example of White's deliberate anachronism, this passage satirizes the games culture of modern public schools. Sir Ector's insistence that "the battle of Crecy had been won upon the playing fields of Camelot" is an obvious parody of the Duke of Wellington's supposed assertion that "the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." As J. A. Mangan explains, the idea that sport instills good virtues in boys and prepares them for military service was dominant throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He writes, "In late Victorian and Edwardian Britain … to an extraordinary degree both sport and war were welded into a fused expression of sublime middle-class heroic manhood with one as preparation for the other" (15). White's Merlyn has no tolerance for this worship of sport, partly because it celebrates war as fun for its own sake and partly because it is so disconnected from battlefield realities. Organized tilting is as far removed from the experience of medieval warfare – in both recorded history and in *The Once and Future King* – as cricket or rugby is from the combat of the wars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Battle of Crécy especially, among medieval battles, is famous for the "unchivalrous" victory of longbow-wielding English yeomen over French knights. Through Sir Ector's statement, White lampoons the New Imperialist celebration of sport and the schoolboy ethos and the naïve, romanticized view of warfare.

But the problems with the games approach to boys' education goes deeper than the Newboltian elements of Sir Ector's speech. The main problem with public education as White presents it is that, if young males are taught primarily to be good at riding horses and striking each other with lances and swords, then they will create and perpetuate a world where such skills are a necessity. As Stephen Knight contends, White's novels argue that if people are "skilled at anything, they will gravitate to their skills to solve problems. If they practice slaughter, conflict resolution manifests itself as war" (28). They need to be taught something beyond the senseless violence encouraged by the old rule of knighthood that precedes the Pentecost Oath, if they are to make a world that rises above Might makes Right. As Merlyn explains in one of his rants:

> A lot of brainless unicorns swaggering about and calling themselves educated just because they can push each other off a horse with a bit of stick! It makes me tired. Why, I believe Sir Ector would have been gladder to get a by-our-lady tilting blue for your tutor, that swings himself along on his knuckles like an anthropoid ape, rather than a magician of known probity and international reputation with first-class honours from every European university. The trouble with the Norman Aristocracy is that they are games-mad, that is what it is, games-mad. (55)

White's Norman aristocracy, which he explicitly compares to the modern British established ruling class, is obsessed with games as a demonstration of its class status, and as a preparation for the wars that are integral to sustain its way of life and its place at the top of the social hierarchy. These arms-crazed knights cling to tradition and resist the tide of necessary evolution by upholding a system in which physically overpowering other men or other kingdoms demonstrates good breeding and class status. With this "unevolved," "primitive" ethos of the "knuckle dragging anthropoid ape," they perpetuate the cycle of endless war. Merlyn intervenes

in the young Arthur's education so that he can bring a halt to the cycle of violence and create a world order that does not simply glorify might for its own sake.

This new education that Merlyn provides, with its focus on empathy and compassion and its anti-chivalric model of masculinity would seem on first glance to have hopeful implications for humanity. Despite the wretched state of the medieval world sketched out in *The Once and Future King*, with its anarchy and senseless violence, a properly educated Arthur seems like the ideal candidate to transform the world around him, leading a moral evolution from a disordered violent chaos to a morally conscious civilizational order. And the Wart's education has some profound effects on his character, teaching him empathy for all living things and challenging his ingrained beliefs in the glories of war. However, he enters into that education with an already kindly disposed nature, which we see exemplified on the quest where he first stumbles upon Merlyn. He accompanies Kay as he decides to fly Cully, one of the castle hawks. Despite, the Wart's concern that the moulting bird is in no state to fly and that the falconer Hob would be devastated by the loss of his bird, Kay dismisses his concerns and tells him, "Hob is only a villein anyway" (10). When Cully flies away and hides in a tree, Kay is ready to abandon him, but the Wart pleads with him:

> 'Oh, we could not leave him,' cried the Wart. 'What would Hob say?'
>
> 'It is my hawk, not Hob's,' exclaimed Kay furiously. 'What does it matter what Hob says? He is my servant.'
>
> 'But Hob made Cully. It is all right for us to lose him, because we did not have to sit up with him three nights and carry him all day and all that. But we can't lose Hob's hawk. It would be beastly.'

'Serve him right, then. He is a fool and it is a rotten hawk. Who wants a rotten

stupid hawk? You had better stay yourself, if you are so keen on it. I am going home.'

'I will stay,' said the Wart sadly, 'if you will send Hob when you get there.' (11)

This passage highlights the essential differences between the Wart and Kay, contrasting the

younger boy's thoughtfulness and humility against the older boy's entitlement and arrogance.

White clearly bases his characterization of Kay on *Le Morte Darthur*, where Malory has him

pretend to be the one who drew the sword from the stone in Book I and as the arrogant and

scornful tormentor of young Gareth when he comes to Arthur's court in Book VII. In other

moments of the *Morte*, however, Kay behaves heroically, and Malory has nothing but the highest

of praise for him. In White's invented childhood for Arthur and Kay, he presents them as already

bearing the character traits that readers familiar with Malory would recognize.

I agree with Jackson's argument that through this scene and others that highlight "the

Wart's connection to the land and connection to the common people" (54), the text "is quick to

legitimize its claim for the illegitimate Wart to be 'The Once and Future King of all England'"

(54). While technically Kay is correct, and the hawk does belong to him as the future feudal lord

of the Castle of Forest Sauvage, his dismissal of Hob's claim to the bird he trained from infancy,

and his assertion of ownership of a hawk he is able to abandon casually, as well as his stubborn

and arrogant insistence to take the moulting Cully out to the woods in the first place, make us

side with Wart against him, and make us see in his character the potential for tyranny, wielding

his power over others as a matter of course. The Wart on the other hand, demonstrates an attitude

toward the less powerful that is empathetic and thoughtful, and reveals a system of morality that

appeals to a standard beyond mere power alone. While Kay insists that it is permissible for him

to lose Hob's hawk because he has more power than Hob, the Wart understands that it is wrong

of them to lose Hob's hawk even if he cannot do anything to punish them. He is so conscious of the wrong that he "did not dare to face the look of reproach which would be in the falconer's eye" (11).

This scene also has interesting implications for White's position on human nature, oscillating as it does between optimism and pessimism, free will and determinism. Merlyn's tutelage encourages the Wart's empathy for all life forms and his belief in a justice beyond that located in physical and political power. And while this educational approach would seem to indicate that with the right education, human nature can be re-formed, such characterizations trouble that assumption. The Wart is already kind, already compassionate, and Kay is already prone to being mean-spirited and arrogant. The education that the Wart receives is crucial to making him a just and effective ruler, but it does not seem to create humane empathic attributes where there were none. With Kay, on the other hand, it is unclear how much his education affects his character, for he seems to be much the same person, not kind like his brother, but not altogether unkind either, prone to pride and a cruel character, bearing the ambiguous nature of Malory's conflicted character. White sums him up as "not at all an unpleasant person really, but clever, quick, proud, passionate and ambitious" (34).

The Wart's position that Kay would improve if given the opportunity, a position that contains the seeds of his later utopian vision based on human malleability, is supported by Kay's heroic performance in the Robin Wood quest, but then undercut when Kay is proud and hostile toward Arthur upon becoming a knight and tries to claim drawing the sword in the stone as his own feat. By the end of the novel, when the Wart pulls the sword from the stone and becomes King Arthur, he emerges from his education with a strong belief in the inherent good in people.

The text's overall position on human nature, however, remains ambiguous, as it will throughout the series of novels.

4.2 *Queen of Air and Darkness*

The second novel, *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, was first published as the *The Witch in the Wood* in 1939, a vastly different book than the version that appears in *The Once and Future King*. This earlier novel, among other things, provided a more extensive portrayal of Morgause, which White heavily revised due to the criticism that he had based her too heavily on his own mother, Constance White. His friend and former tutor, Potts, wrote, "You hate [Morgause] too much to do any good with her, and if you re-write the book I don't see what you can do but cut out almost all of her" (White, *Letters to a Friend* 120). White followed Potts's advice, and, as Brewer notes, "The changes that White made to the character of Morgause constitute the most significant difference between the two versions" (*T. H. White's* 59).

In *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, White set up a stark contrast between, on the one hand, Arthur's utopian project to end the rule of Might makes Right and bring about social evolution, and, on the other hand, the brutal and unloving upbringing of the Orkney boys. These boys – Gawaine, Agravaine, Gareth, and Gaheris – are to later become important knights of the Round Table and, as Malory recounts, be instrumental in its demise. Even in their youth, at this early stage of the series, the boys pose a serious challenge to the educational ideals that form the foundation of Arthur's civilizational project. While Arthur's new order seeks to curb the violence and pride of its knights by "catch[ing] them young," (265) we can already see the character traits that will involve them directly in the fall of Camelot firmly established. By setting the action of this second novel in two major alternating theatres – in the south, where Arthur fights with the

Eleven Kings of the Gaelic Confederation and in the north, where the novel explores the dysfunctional relationship between Queen Morgause and her sons – White sets up the optimistic ideal of a liberal imperial utopia while simultaneously foreshadowing its demise.

It is in *The Queen of Air and Darkness* that Arthur settles on the ideals that are to inform his Round Table fellowship. White opens the Arthur plot in the aftermath of one of Arthur's battles against the "Gaels," where Merlyn continues the young king's education, attempting to steer him away from the pitfalls of chivalric hypermasculinity. White describes Arthur as possessing "an open face, with kind eyes and a reliable or faithful expression," the look of someone who "did not believe in original sin … He had never been unjustly treated, for one thing, so he was kind to other people" (225). His belief in the inherent goodness of people is central to the utopian dream whose foundations he will lay in this novel, for only by believing that human character can be reformed to embrace new ideals can he undertake the project of challenging the rampant abuse of power and the justification of might as moral. At this point in the narrative, White, through Merlyn, allows Arthur to maintain his unchallenged beliefs in the essential goodness or malleability of human nature.

What Merlyn does challenge, however, is Arthur's compromise, his subtle approval of the dominant ideas of heroic, chivalric masculinity, the ideas of the old world with its territorial ideology and aristocratic competition to the detriment of the common people. When Arthur refers to the recent battle as "splendid," his tutor angrily derides him. The young king digs his heels in defensively, and insists, "It was a jolly battle, and I won it myself, and it was fun" (227). His description of battle as "fun" marks a disturbing alignment with hypermasculine thinking, the kind of thinking from which his entire boyhood education was supposed to wean him. Merlyn nudges him away from this pitfall by asking him "how many of your kerns were killed"

to which Arthur embarrassingly replies, "I don't remember" (227). Merlyn rubs Arthur's face in

his just recently professed warlust, telling him, "The tally was more than seven hundred. They

were all kerns, of course. None of the knights were injured, except the one who broke his leg

falling off his horse" (227). Merlyn draws Arthur's attention to the ways in which he has

compromised his values to fit with the hegemonic masculinity of the Newboltian, Kiplingian

Norman knighthood. Like them, he has begun to treat war as a sort of game, in which the lives of

commoners are sacrificed to make the game more enjoyable, providing necessary fodder for the

knights, who, safely encased in armour, win glory through their chivalrous deeds by slaughtering

kerns and delivering non-fatal blows to one another. Once he has challenged Arthur's boyish

celebration of war, Merlyn pushes him to think about "the state of your country" (228), for if

Arthur merely carries on in the conventional mode that he now finds himself in, he will do

nothing to rectify the inhumanity and injustice of Uther's Britain. Merlyn enters into a long

tirade about the deceptive traps of chivalry and of the true state of war for the common people:

> What is all this chivalry, anyway? It simply means being rich enough to have a
>
> castle and a suit of armour, and then, when you have them, you make the Saxon
>
> people do what you like. The only risk you run is of getting a few bruises if you
>
> happen to come across another knight … It is this armour that does it. All the
>
> barons can slice the poor people about as much as they want, and it is a day's
>
> work to hurt each other, and the result is that the country is devastated. Might is
>
> Right, that's the motto. Bruce Sans Pitié is only an example of the general
>
> situation. Look at Lot and Nentres and Uriens and all that Gaelic crew, fighting
>
> against you for the Kingdom. Pulling swords out of stones is not a legal proof of
>
> paternity, I admit, but the kings of the Old Ones are not fighting you about that.

They have rebelled, although you are their feudal sovereign, simply because the throne is insecure. England's difficulty, we used to say, is Ireland's opportunity. This is their chance to pay off racial scores, and to have some blood-letting as sport, and to make a bit of money in ransoms. Their turbulence does not cost them anything themselves because they are dressed in armour - and you seem to enjoy it too. But look at the country. Look at the barns burnt, and dead men's legs sticking out of ponds, and horses with swelled bellies by the roadside, and mills falling down, and money buried, and nobody daring to walk abroad with gold or ornaments on their clothes. That is chivalry nowadays. That is the Uther Pendragon touch. And then you talk about a battle being fun. (229)

In this monologue, Merlyn reveals the evils of Arthur's world, the anarchy and division that will make Arthur's imperial conquest necessary. He also attacks the dominant masculine ideal embodied by the aristocracy who see war as a game for nationalist positioning and for the winning of personal renown. This ideal, which Merlyn derides as "chivalry," is to be replaced by a new kind of chivalry, a chivalry that Arthur is to develop over the course of his war against Lot. It is a chivalry far removed from the militarism of either White's Middle Ages or modern New Imperialism.

When Arthur establishes the rules for what will come to be his Round Table fellowship, rules that White bases directly on Malory's Pentecost Oath, he works through the problems of power and morality, the problems that he encountered as a boy and that he will continue to struggle with until the end of his life. The difficult position he finds himself in is that the ideal of a moral system not dependent on force is impossible in a world, as Mr. P warned, governed by force. He begins with the position, "I don't think things ought to be done because you are *able* to

do them. I think they should be done because you *ought* to do them" (253) and that "battles are

not fun when you come to think about them. I mean, people ought not to be killed, ought they? It

is better to be alive" (253). His opening statements sound childishly simple, but they lead to

difficult philosophical problems. For while Merlyn agrees that "battles are not fun" he still aids

Arthur in his battles against the Eleven Kings. White's Merlyn maintains that "wars are a

wickedness, perhaps the greatest wickedness of a wicked species" (237) while insisting that in

the cases where "the other man starts it ...then is the time when you might have a sort of duty to

stop him" (237). Merlyn's position on war cannot be classified as pacifistic, since he argues, in

the long tradition of just war thinking, that wars of self defense are morally acceptable and that,

in the case of a just war, fighting is more morally responsible than abstaining.

Merlyn's position poses problems for readings of White as straightforwardly anti-war,

especially if Merlyn is taken to be the author's mouthpiece. Andrew Hadfield warns against such

assumptions and argues that "Given the complicated state of the text, the long period of

composition and the frequent changes in purpose, it is often difficult to attribute an overall

design to the work" (209). Moreover, he contends, "The fact that White portrays Merlin as

changing his mind over his pacifism – just as White himself did – should alert us to a certain

conscious structure of debate and indeterminacy in the novel sequence, especially given its

laborious creation" (211-12). Building on this understanding of the work's indeterminacy and of

the distinctiveness between White and Merlyn, Hadfield reads the scene where Merlyn tells Kay

that he reminds him of Adolf Hitler as "extraordinarily scandalous (218). Kay, attempting to find

an exception to Merlyn's rule that the only good reason for fighting is "if the other man started

it" (237), argues that "a good reason for starting a war is simply to have a good reason" (273)

and proceeds to explain that if people are "too wicked or too stupid to accept his way, he might

have to force it on them, in their own interests, by the sword" (274). Merlyn is outraged by this

logic and directly compares Kay's reasoning to that of "an Austrian who invented a new way of

life and convinced himself that he was the chap to make it work. He tried to impose his

reformation by the sword, and plunged the civilized world into misery and chaos" (274). Merlyn

finishes this rebuke with the example of Jesus, who, unlike Hitler, "Made it clear that the

business of the philosopher was to make his ideas *available*, and *not* to impose them on people"

(274). Troublingly, Kay has the final word in this chapter: "'Arthur is fighting the present war,"

he said, "to impose his ideas on King Lot'" (274). Hadfield argues:

> As the passage continues it becomes clear that Kay has actually understood the
>
> import of Merlin's teachings far better than Merlin himself: Arthur is indeed more
>
> like Hitler than Jesus, despite Merlin's fondness for religious comparisons. One
>
> cannot escape from the need to use force in governing because systems of order
>
> do not appear from nowhere: in seeking to unite one may actually destroy, so that
>
> Merlin's assumption of a linear narrative progression of history towards greater
>
> reason, bigger "imagined communities," better government and so on is disrupted
>
> (as it is, in fact, by his own choice of the examples of Hitler and Jesus Christ).
>
> (218)

Hadfield's case is compelling, especially when we consider the many parallels White draws

between British imperialists and fascists throughout the work. Crane also supports this view,

arguing that "Arthur begins to sow the seeds of Fascism which White knows first motivated

Hitler and every other tyrant the world has known" (91). Elisabeth Brewer, on the other hand,

counters:

The impact of the passage which Dr. Hadfield describes as "extraordinarily scandalous" depends very much on how it is read. Arthur may not be much like Jesus, but his readiness to fight at this stage in his career to unify and settle his kingdom (or in Kay's words, having "discovered a new way of life" which he intends to promote by making might serve right) can hardly by any stretch of imagination be compared to Hitler's methods which included the Holocaust. Furthermore, Arthur's campaign at this point is in line with White's source-material, while it also relates to the actual course of English history. ("Some Comments" 132)

While White certainly does, through Merlyn and Kay, make the comparison between Arthur and Hitler explicit, I agree with Brewer in thinking we should not overstate that comparison. White's Arthur is not fascist, nor even a typical British imperialist, but rather, a utopian, idealized form of British Empire, creating what White represents as a desirable world in which to live, not at all like the fascist dystopia of the ant colony. The comparisons to Hitler serve as a warning, like the warning of Mr. P., that Arthur's utopian quest is only ever a slight deviation away from lurching into a fascist nightmare, a reality that ultimately strikes Camelot in Mordred's later rise to power.

The Battle of Bedegraine, between Arthur and the Gaelic Confederation, sees Arthur overcome his enemy's might by breaking with chivalric convention and bringing in the tactics of modern total war. The Eleven Kings are ready "to fight their sovereign in the Norman way – in the foxhunting way of Henry the Second and of his sons" (306), a war that White's narrator describes as "hedged with etiquette, just as foxhunting is hedged with it" (307). The great evil of this courteous, gentlemanly arrangement, as Merlyn observed earlier, is the casual disregard for the common people, who need to die to make the battle more "sporting"; they serve the

noblemen as "a background for their exploits" (306) and as "packs of hounds" (306). To institute

his idea of might in the service of right, Arthur has to abolish the might of these Eleven Kings,

and he does so by breaking all the chivalric conventions of the war game. He orders his men to

accept no ransoms, and has his knights target the enemy knights directly – rather than

slaughtering the common soldiers – until the lords are "ready to refrain from warfare, being

confronted with its reality" (308). This is perhaps the most distasteful aspect of Arthur's project,

the deadly serious violence necessary to impose a better moral system on others. White begins

his description of the battle with the statement, "Arthur began with an atrocity and continued

with other atrocities" (308). The king's armies attack by night, and attempt to slaughter the

unready noblemen, causing what they see as "an unchivalrous personal outrage" (309), all while

neglecting "the kerns themselves" (309). But White would not have us censure Arthur for how

he conducts the battle. He points out in the midst of his description that Arthur's war is just, for

"he was fighting in his own country, hundreds of miles within his own borders, against an

aggression which he had not provoked" (308). Furthermore, the "atrocities" he commits are only

atrocious in the eyes of the nobles who typically gain from warfare; his actions, seeking an end

to the war by threatening the lives of those perpetuating it, in fact are a mercy to the many people

typically slaughtered in battle. As Brewer notes, "The description of the tactics used by Arthur,

seemingly more in line with modern warfare than with medieval, are followed by a long account

of the ensuing battle which can only be described as zestful" ("Some Comments" 132). White's

"zest" while describing a battle that seeks to end battle, engages with the ideal of giving violent,

undesirable qualities a redemptive outlet at the narrative level. The thrilling charge of armoured

cavalry that he so eloquently describes is in part redeemed because it is violence used to put a

stop to violence. This logic of ending violence with violence is the basic assumption that allows

Arthur to build his more humane civilization, even as it continues the paradox introduced by Mr.

P.

Against the optimism of Arthur's plan to harness violence in the service of civilization,

White sets the pessimism represented by the Orkney plot, culminating in Morgause's seduction

of the young king and the incestuous conception of Mordred. While Arthur is lovingly tutored by

Merlyn and is given an Edenic homosocial setting in which to develop, the Orkney boys are

raised in a bleak, cruel world dominated by a smothering, unloving mother and are raised on

stories of violence and hatred. White raises the issue of their inadequate education almost as soon

as he introduces them:

> It was more as if she had brought them up - perhaps through indifference or
>
> through laziness or even through some kind of possessive cruelty - with an
>
> imperfect sense of right and wrong. It was as if they could never know when they
>
> were being good or when they were being bad. (217)

These boys, devoid of a clear moral compass and lacking Arthur's good upbringing, are the ideal

case study for the civilizational experiment forming in Camelot. If Arthur's civilizational idea is

right, then such boys can be steered towards better behaviour, their aggression harnessed by the

cause of making the world more just. Tragically, White foreshadows the failure of that vision

from the opening of this book, for the traits that will bring the Round Table to ruin are the traits

that the Orkney brothers already exhibit. Arthur's whole project is steeped in irony, the irony of

knowing that despite Arthur's good intentions and despite the progress that seems to be made,

the problems that existed from the beginning will be the problems that bring about the kingdom's

ruin. Agravaine's malice and willingness to murder to defend his mother's purity and Gawaine's

stubborn temper will be instrumental in bringing about the fall of Camelot. White significantly

departs from Malory in his characterization of the Orkney boys, especially Gareth, whose heroism and nobility in Malory he greatly diminishes – removing the Arthurian staple of Gareth's tale entirely – in order to portray the Orkney boys as a wild and untameable obstacle to Arthur's chivalry.

With their mother Morgause, White takes an ever greater deal of artistic liberty, transforming her from the flat, minimal character of *Le Morte Darthur* to a misogynistic symbol of the feminine threat to masculinity, a deadly, controlling motherly influence that wreaks havoc, both on her sons and on Arthur, bringing about the ultimate destruction of the kingdom. White builds on the interpretation of Victorian critics like Herbert Coleridge and Samuel Cheetham, who argued that Arthur's sin with Morgause and his eventual destruction by Mordred gives the *Morte* a tragic unity, and he moves away from the Tennysonian emphasis on Guenever's adultery. In a letter to Potts, White wrote that "Morgause (the sister) is really more important in the doom than Guenever is" (98), and he expressed his belief in the reading of the *Morte* as Hellenic tragedy, stating, "The real reason why Arthur came to a bad end was because he had slept with his sister. It is a perfectly Aristotelian tragedy and it was the offspring of this union who finally killed him" (98). To this Aristotelian reading, however, White adds a misogynistic, Freudian depiction of Morgause that places the blame for this tragedy on her. Scholars have long pointed out that White based his portrayal of Morgause on his own mother, and represents her in Freudian terms as the Oedipal mother, the consuming influence that the son attempts in vain to escape. Worthington argues that "in a Freudian context, Morgause, simultaneously the object of desire to her sons and also the threat of castration, fulfils the mother-role and subsumes the role of the father, thus subverting the Oedipal norm" (103). And Crane writes, "The point about Morgause (as about White's mother), however, is clear – things exist in the universe to love her

and for her to destroy. Her sons exist for this reason and so does Arthur. She becomes, for White, the symbol of uncontrollable, ideal-wrecking fate" (93).

The way Malory describes the affair between Arthur and Morgause does not explicitly blame her, nor make her a scheming seductress, but rather, with his typical use of polysyndeton, presents the whole affair as an accident of fate: "For she was a passing fair lady, therefore the king cast great love unto her, and desired to lie by her; so they were agreed, and he begat upon her Mordred, and she was his sister, on his mother's side, Igraine" (I.xix). In this one long sentence, Malory portrays the event more as the result of fortune than as the workings of one insidious actor. Nowhere does he make it seem like a sinister attempt by Morgause to seduce the young king; in fact, Arthur's desire is made clear, while hers is not referred to at all. And Tennyson, Malory's greatest adaptor until White, leaves out the incestuous conception of Mordred altogether, refusing to tarnish his hero with this tragic flaw.

White is largely without precedent then in the portrayal he provides of Morgause and the incestuous union that leads to the birth of Mordred. In White's hands she is a nearly maniacal version of a predatory, out of control femininity, seeking to control and destroy men. She first enters the narrative in the midst of callously boiling a cat alive to find the bone that will make her invisible, before tiring of the project and throwing the bones out anyway. And this callous cruelty continues, as, throughout the novel, White has her attempt to seduce the foreign knights Sir Grummore, King Pellinore, and Sir Palomides, all to no avail. Finally, she comes to Arthur in Carlion, with her four sons, as in Malory, but with the purpose of seducing the new king. Finding him asleep she drapes around him the Spancel, "a tape of human skin" (316). As White explains, "If he woke while you were doing this, he would be dead within the year. If he did not wake until the operation was over, he would be bound to fall in love with you" (317). Arthur wakes up

during the process, and though he does not die within the year, Mordred, who is later to kill him, is born nine months later. In trying to explain how Morgause seduced Arthur, White raises the possibility of the effective magic of the Spancel, but he also posits the Oedipal reading, "Perhaps it was because he had never known a mother of his own, so that the role of mother love, as she stood with her children behind her, took him between wind and water" (322). Arthur's sexual episode with Morgause is incestuous beyond the literal fact that they are half-siblings, and it becomes symbolic of the incestuous relationship of an Oedipal mother and her son. Twice his age, she is a mother figure to him. As the archetypal "devouring mother," she is the source of his undoing. As Crane points out, it is not merely by giving birth to Mordred that she destroys Arthur, but, in her role as mother, she destroys him through the poisoning of her other sons. He writes, "Her treatment (or mistreatment) of her four sons makes them persons who will all, in one way or another, take out their frustrations upon Arthur and Camelot" (95). Like Tennyson's Arthurian narrative, *The Once and Future King* traces the fall of Camelot to a toxic feminine intrusion that destroys the attempt to build an ideal, masculine community. Ultimately, White ends up reiterating elements of the problematic gender politics of New Imperialist medievalism, merely shifting the blame from the adulterous wife to the overbearing, toxic mother as the reason for Arthur's destruction. White also leaves out Malory's account of Arthur's failed attempt to kill Mordred at the end of Book I – though he does cite this event later in *The Candle in the Wind* – ending the novel with Arthur as Morgause's victim rather than as the perpetrator of a terrible atrocity.

4.3 *The Ill-Made Knight*

The third novel in White's tetralogy, *The Ill-Made Knight* is the longest and most complex in the series, spanning from the early stages of Arthur's reign, through the Grail quest, to the waning days of an aged Arthur's kingdom. The novel centres mostly on Lancelot and the other members of the love triangle, Guenever and Arthur. Unlike Tennyson, or even, to an extent, Malory, White does not cast Lancelot and Guenever's affair as the reason for the kingdom's downfall, but rather, continues to blame violence, rivalry, and greed. The ominous warning of the failed Grail quest is that, with the exception of a very small handful of knights, the Round Table's knights have failed to evolve beyond their "primitive" violent tendencies.

As with the other books, *The Ill-Made Knight* begins with the depiction of an important Arthurian character as a child. Unlike the Orkney boys, Lancelot does not have absent or cruel parents, but, unlike Arthur, he does not benefit from the loving, alternative tutoring of Merlyn. Rather, he is trained by his Uncle Dap in the knightly arts, with an obsessiveness that sees him become the greatest knight in the world. His youth spent under the harsh tutelage of Uncle Dap sees him subjected to abuse, an abuse he accepts to become a greater knight in the service of Arthur's ideals. Again, White, taking unique liberties with the Arthurian material, takes the gallant Sir Lancelot of Malory and Tennyson and renders him a tortured, sadomasochistic figure determined even as a boy to name himself "the Chevalier Mal Fet – the Ill-Made Knight" (329). For, as White points out, "So far as he could see – and he felt that there must be some reason for it somewhere – the boy's face was as ugly as a monster's in the King's menagerie. He looked like an African ape" (329). Driven by this recognition of his own ugliness, and of the cruelty deep within him, Lancelot devotes himself wholeheartedly to Arthur's new chivalric ideals,

training tirelessly for three years in the armoury until he has gained mastery of knightly combat. This dark and obsessive Lancelot flies in the face of the Victorian ideal, as White himself notes:

> Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites would have found it difficult to recognize this rather sullen and unsatisfactory child, with the ugly face, who did not disclose to anybody that he was living on dreams and prayers. They might have wondered what store of ferocity he had against himself, that could set him to break his own body so young. They might have wondered why he was so strange. (332)

White demonstrates a conscious choice to cast this chivalric paragon as a self-loathing, restless, and cruel person. This choice becomes all the more important because White dismisses the two other most talented knights in *Le Morte Darthur* – Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak – to the very margins of his narrative, thus placing the responsibility for ushering in Arthur's utopian dream almost entirely on the shoulders of this strange, ferocious knight.

Lancelot becomes the ultimate avatar of Arthur's new chivalric ideals, the harnessing of might for the cause of right. For while Arthur is too kindly disposed and good natured to really understand cruelty and his knights' love of might, Lancelot feels his own disposition towards wanton cruelty, and he intimately knows the original sin that Arthur does not believe in. As White explains:

> His Word was valuable to him not only because he was good, but also because he was bad. It is the bad people who need to have principles to restrain them. For one thing, he liked to hurt people. It was for the strange reason that he was cruel, that the poor fellow never killed a man who asked for mercy, or committed a cruel action which he could have prevented. (353)

Lancelot's awareness of his own sadism paradoxically makes him a surprisingly generous and merciful character, and he seems to embody the ideal of harnessed might that underpins Arthur's new chivalry. White's characterization is a marked departure from any previous source material, though his depiction of Lancelot's chivalry restraining his monstrosity bears resemblance to Andrew Lang's idea of the gentleman as a "savage" in "civilized" clothes. For White, it is the very depth of Lancelot's cruelty and enjoyment of inflicting pain on others that, when repressed and placed under the restraints of chivalry, make him the greatest of Arthur's knights, just as Haggard and Conan Doyle's gentlemen become "greater" by atavistically embracing "savage" masculinity.

White's Lancelot has spawned much debate amongst critics; Crane reads the contrast of Lancelot's ugliness and cruelty with his noble deeds as representing "an inconsistency or an incongruity in his character (and by extension in the human race)" (101). And Herschell Woodley Lott similarly suggests that "White very skillfully portrays Lancelot's face as misshapen 'as ugly as an African ape' in order to suggest the moral ugliness of the best of men" (25). C. M. Adderley, however, argues that Lancelot's cruelty is not supposed to show the frailty of human nature, but rather to set him up as the "perfect pupil" driven by "a sense of badness, rather than goodness" (62). What makes Lancelot different from other sadistic characters such as Agravaine, Adderley argues, is that he is "a sadist with a conscience" (62), and that "sensing himself to be evil, he is constantly striving to be good" (63). I agree with Adderley's reading of Lancelot as the ideal student of chivalry; driven by an acute awareness of his inadequacy, White's Lancelot seeks to master his inner cruelty through devotion to chivalry.

Arthur's intervention in the boy's life at a critical stage potentially alters the course of his life from meaningless violence, to violence in the service of creating a better order. But

Camelot's reliance on Lancelot's maniacal obsession with training and knighthood, an obsession that renders him the greatest knight in the world, has problematic consequences. Just as in the Battle of Bedegraine, Arthur must commit "atrocities" to eliminate the greater atrocity of the Norman aristocracy's mode of "courteous" warfare, so, in order to replace strength with justice, Arthur must rely on a figure so obsessed with strength and force that he sacrifices his youth to mastering arms. It is only through this master of combat that Arthur can outmuscle the petty barons and tyrants into accepting a rule of law based on justice. Lancelot's first chance to serve Arthur comes, as it does in *Le Morte Darthur*, during the Roman War, though White truncates his account of the war to a mere few pages, saying, "it need not concern us long" (350). The details he does provide are mostly lifted from Malory, such as the list of Lucius's allies and Lancelot's anger at being taken from Gunever, though White chooses to leave out the episode with the Giant of Mont St. Michel entirely, instead focusing on Arthur's "anti-chivalric" methods of waging war. He recounts how Arthur refuses to "regard it as a sporting or commercial enterprise" (351) and that the result of the war is that "the feudal convention of battle was broken for good" (352).

While Arthur's tactic of overpowering tyrants and replacing anarchy with justice works very well for a time, so that the standard of living in Arthur's Britain increases greatly, it fails to curb the love of violence that was originally the problem. As injustice disappears, the redemptive outlet for violence disappears with it, and Arthur is left with the problem of a highly competitive games culture in which the Knights of the Round Table are obsessed with their tilting and questing statistics and are becoming bitter and competitive with one another because of them. The main problem lies with the Orkney faction, foreshadowed in *The Queen of Air and Darkness* and again raised as a problem early in *The Ill-Made Knight.* When Lancelot first comes to court,

Arthur, blaming their mother Morgause, explains to him, "They don't get hold of the idea as I wanted them to do" (345), and he confesses "I am having difficulty in making them behave" (346). Though he acknowledges the difficulty in making the Orkney brothers cooperate with the Round Table ideals, Arthur does not despair entirely of making them eventually fall in line.

Later, however, when, instead of gradually accepting Arthur's vision, the Orkney faction continues to defy it, participating in a blood feud that sees them kill Sir Lamorak and their own mother, Arthur begins to doubt the veracity of his vision. Thinking aloud to Lancelot he explains:

> "This Round Table," said the older man slowly, "was a good thing when we thought of it. It was necessary to invent a way for the fighting men to express themselves without doing harm. I can't see how we could have done it otherwise than by starting a fashion, like children. To get them in, we had to have a gang, as kids have in schools. Then the gang had to swear a darksome oath that they would only fight for our ideas. You could call it civilization. What I meant by civilization when I invented it, was simply that people ought not to take advantage of weakness - not violate maidens, and rob widows, and kill a man when he was down. People ought to be civil. But it has turned into sportsmanship. Merlin always said that sportsmanship was the curse of the world, and so it is. Merlin used to call it Games-Mania. Everybody gossips and nags and hints and speculates about who unseated whom last, and who has rescued most virgins, and who is the best knight of the Table. I made it a Round Table to prevent that very thing, but it has not prevented it. The Orkney faction have got the craze worst. I suppose their sense of insecurity over their mother makes it necessary for them to

be sure of a safe place at the top of the list. They have to excel, to make up for

her." (381)

The definition of "civilization" according to White's Arthur clearly echoes the language of

Malory's Pentecost Oath and is synonymous with it. Arthur's disillusionment with this attempt to

create civilization presents a criticism of and departure from Malory's ideal. He later declares to

Lancelot, "The whole thing was a mistake … Right must be established by right: it can't be

established by Force Majeur" (450). The ideas of just war and of the acceptable use of violence,

which were seemingly unavoidable when Arthur's authority was still contested, now reveal

themselves to be unsustainable, incapable of breaking the cycle of violence. For while Arthur

does away with much of Norman chivalry, with all of the "fox-hunting" approach to battle, he is

unable to eradicate the basic attitude that sees combat as a kind of manly sport. His theory of

providing a constructive outlet for violence does not lessen the competitive, sportsman approach

which still celebrates war as fun. Now, rather than competing to see who kills the most kerns or

receives the most ransoms, the knights compete to be the best at performing quests in the service

of civilization, which leads to Arthur's influence spreading but also causes irreparable divisions

among the knights.

It is at this point that Arthur begins to reinvent the values of his kingdom in a series of

experiments that tries unsuccessfully to solve the problem of human evil and arrive at a true

utopia. This rapid evolution sees him take his world from an anarchical "Dark Age" in which

force is worshipped to a "modern" system of legal representation that seeks to do away with the

reliance on force altogether. In a lengthy description of the state of Arthur's England in

favourable comparison with the England he inherited, White shows the tremendous

modernization and evolution of Western civilization. From "the lawlessness and brutality which

had sickened Europe for centuries" (444) now emerges a civilized order where "in the law courts the judges were dispensing the King's new law, instead of the fierce law of Fort Mayne" (447). White compresses the entire narrative of progress that Kipling maps out in *Puck of Pook's Hill* into the span of Arthur's reign, and, like Kipling, he maps that progress on to the emergence of an "English" identity formed from Saxons and Normans. He adds, "The Saxons and Normans of Arthur's accession had begun to think of themselves as Englishmen" (447). But while Arthur's ideals have led England from its Dark Ages to the beginnings of modernity, the hypermasculine competitiveness remains, and he sets out on a series of more radical experiments to eradicate this social ill.

The first of these experiments is the disastrous quest for the Holy Grail, which features so prominently in *Le Morte Darthur*. In White's hands, this quest is presented rather differently, with a heavy focus on failure. Arthur conceives of the idea of curing his knights of their worldly obsession with might by "sending them to the pope," and, with Lancelot's input, he decides to send out his knights in search of the Holy Grail. White thus strips the tale of much of its supernatural and spiritual significance, telling readers that want the details of the supernatural vision that comes upon the Round Table, "You must seek them in Malory" (459). Since the quest in White's telling does not originate from a divine prompting, it becomes primarily political rather than spiritual, a utopian experiment to solve Camelot's social ills. But, like the ideal of Might in the service of Right, the "spiritual" ideal is also wrapped in failure.

In his depiction of the Grail Quest, White draws out the ominous warnings of Malory's narrative and makes them the central lesson of the quest. Recounted by knights – Lionel, Gawaine, Aglovale, and Lancelot – who all failed to achieve the grail because of their sinfulness, the episode confirms Arthur's fears that chivalry has eroded the virtue of his Round Table. All of

his knights, with the exception of the otherworldly Galahad, Bors, and Percivale, are too sinful to achieve the Grail and either perish on the quest or come back disillusioned and bitter with having being found out in their sin. Their jealousy and obsession with being better and worthier than others make them incapable of admiring the holy and innocent knights that do achieve the Grail. Rather, they scorn them and complain about their pretensions of being better than the rest. Even Lancelot, though he gets closer to the Grail than any of the others, is held back by his sins of pride, manslaughter, and adultery.

White does not immediately conclude *The Ill-Made Knight* with the Grail Quest, but rather, continues to explore the further unravelling of Arthur's court as it moves into a state of decadence. By rendering his Arthurian history as a move towards progress and a simultaneous regression into decadence White is again reinforcing a conventional British imperialist historiography. White's narrator describes the trajectory of Arthurian development:

> There had been the first feeling, a companionship of youth under which Arthur had launched his grand crusade – the second, of chivalrous rivalry growing staler every year in the greatest court of Europe, until it had nearly turned to feud and empty competition. Then the enthusiasm of the Grail had burned the bad gasses of the air into a short-lived beauty. Now the maturest or the saddest phase had come, in which enthusiasms had been used up for good, and only our famous seventh sense was left to be practiced. The court had 'knowledge of the world' now: it had the fruits of achievement, civilization, savoir-vivre, gossip, fashion, malice, and the broad mind of scandal. (504)

Though Arthur's kingdom is supposed to be progressing, replacing the brutal, violent system he inherited with a more civilized system of laws, it seems merely to be exchanging one kind of ill

for another. White now uses the word "civilization" pejoratively, as the heroes of Haggard's lost world romances would, though the eradication of barbarity and the establishment of civilization was the very aim of Arthur's entire project. Now that he has achieved a more stable society, Arthur longs for the "better" days before he achieved "civilization." As White's narrator notes, "Half the knights had been killed – the best half … The best knights had gone to perfection, leaving the worst to hold their sieges" (504). These "worst" knights, lacking the productive outlet that war and questing gave them, will begin to tear at the very fabric of civilization itself, rending the peace of Arthur's utopia.

4.4 *The Candle in the Wind*

In the final book, *The Candle in the Wind*, White's narrative reaches its darkest, most pessimistic point. The tragedy of Camelot in White's retelling lies not only in the sin and human evil that mars a utopian ideal, but also in Arthur's utopian ideal itself. Arthur realizes – and the text would seem to bear him out – that his civilization is like all others that "contain within themselves the germs of their own corruption" (456). Arthur's Camelot does not fail just because some of the knights resist it; it fails because it is built on what White presents as an inherently contradictory, impossible belief in human malleability and innate goodness. The problem of violence, which Arthur thought he could solve simply by yoking force to a "good cause," endures and is embedded in the utopian ideal itself, for it is only through force that Arthur can establish his civilization in the first place.

While the previous novels lacked a clear villain, Mordred now steps up to be the central antagonist of this final volume. An embodiment of fascism, Mordred unleashes an all-out assault on the "liberal civilization" of Camelot, an assault that is made lethally effective because he turns

the newly established system of laws against Arthur, forcing him to drop what Mordred sees as the veil of hypocrisy and to revert to the power of the sword. White describes a changed and politically charged Mordred who moves from being the "foppish man" (548) of the previous novel to "a Cause" (548). Mordred's politics are a muddled, medievalist blending of Irish nationalism, radical communism, and fascism with medieval ethnic and class tensions. He detests Arthur's system of law and justice as "*bourgeois* and obtuse" (548), and, in opposition to it, hearkens back to the "savagery and feral wit of the Pict" (548). White directly compares his cause to that of the Irish Republican Army, and makes him the inheritor of an ancient grievance between Gael and Gall. His co-conspirator, Agravaine, urges him to adapt that private quarrel to be more widely relevant, attaching it to a "national grievance" (549). He tells him to consider "this man John Ball, for instance, who believes in communism" (549), and also to tie his grievance to the nationalist enmities between Celts and Saxons, or Saxons and Normans. In the first of many obvious allusions to the Nazi party, Agravaine concludes, "For that matter, we could join them together and call it national communism" (549).

Mordred's fascists seize power through a seemingly legitimate process. By forcing Arthur to acknowledge publicly the affair between Lancelot and Guenever, they ensure that Arthur will be divorced from the chief source of his power (for they recognize that his newly formed system of laws still owes its existence to force). In the chaos born from this destabilization, the fascist army of Thrashers rise and, taking advantage of Arthur's liberal leniency, destroy the system that birthed them. Arthur's appeals for mercy are met with scorn, and the rejoinder "we do not want mercy … we want justice" (590). As his "bourgeois" system of laws and justice is turned against him, Arthur falls back on the "primitive" mode of seeking justice through violence. As Mordred and Agravaine set out to catch Lancelot with Guenever,

Arthur tells them, "As a private person, the only hope I now have left is that Lancelot will kill you both and all the witnesses – a feat which, I am proud to say, has never been beyond my Lancelot's power" (591). In this, Arthur falls back on the use of force to preserve order, and places his hope, not in his laws-based system now hijacked by fascists, but in Lancelot's swordsmanship. It is part of Mordred's plan that Arthur should be forced into such a bind. Whether he fully cooperates with Mordred, or embraces the violence that his civilization hypocritically ignores, he plays into the young fascist's hands.

In the ensuing episode, Lancelot almost completely fulfils Arthur's hope, killing all his assailants except for Mordred. While Arthur is forced to sentence Guenever to burn at the stake for adultery, he knows that Lancelot will come to save her. Here White diverges from Malory, where it is Gawain who places his hope in Lancelot's prowess, while Arthur is committed to punishing Guinevere and Lancelot. He tells Gawain, "If I may get Sir Launcelot, wit you well he shall have a shameful death" (XX.vii). In accordance with Malory, however, White constructs the narrative to make readers sympathize with Lancelot and Guenever, which unsettlingly implies a fundamental lack of social progress. If White ever believed in the possibility of progress as the result of a British imperial rule, he seems, in his final Arthurian novel, to doubt it fully. If, after all of the reforms and changes to make Arthur's Britain no longer reliant on might, justice is still dependent on whether or not Lancelot is strong enough to rescue the queen, then really how much has civilization evolved? Arthur's utopia is as reliant on force as ever for its survival; it is merely the fact that no one has been strong enough to challenge it that it can pretend to be somehow beyond force. It is this realization on the part of Mordred, this recognition that the thin veneer of "civilization" is propped up by the armed knight, that makes his position so strong and that ultimately allows him to bring his father down. When Lancelot

mistakenly kills Gawaine's unarmed brothers, Gareth and Gaheris, Arthur is forced to wage war on his captain, the embodiment of his military power.

White ends his series before the final, climactic battle between Arthur and Mordred, which, infamously, in *Le Morte Darthur*, sees father and son kill each other. Unlike Malory or Tennyson, White does not end his book with Arthur's death and departure to Avalon. Instead he focuses on Arthur's pre-battle reflections, in which he miserably considers the rise and fall of his kingdom. This scene is, of this book, and perhaps all the books combined, the most important for considering White's position on human nature and progress, though it should not be taken as the absolute final word. The broken king that White presents, grieving the loss of friends and facing what he knows to be his death, cannot be unproblematically held up as a reliable narrator when he is so clearly affected by his circumstances. Each statement he makes must be seen in light of his position as a grieving character and not necessarily be assumed to carry authorial approval. This broken Arthur questions the very bedrock of his moral outlook and is more troubled by the shaking of these beliefs than all the outward calamity he faces. White writes:

> Yet he could have breasted all these things in some way, if the central tenet of his heart had not been ravaged. Long ago, when his mind had been a nimble boy's called Wart – long ago he had been taught by an aged benevolence, wagging a white beard. He had been taught by Merlyn to believe that man was perfectible: that he was on the whole more decent than beastly: that good was worth trying: that there was no such thing as original sin. He had been forged as a weapon for the aid of man, on the assumption that men were good. He had been forged, by that deluded old teacher, into a sort of Pasteur or Curie or patient discover of insulin. The service for which he had been destined had been against Force, the

> mental illness of humanity. His Table, his idea of Chivalry, his Holy Grail, his
> devotion to Justice: these had been progressive steps in the effort for which he had
> been bred. He was like a scientist who had pursued the root of cancer all his life.
> Might – to have ended it – to have made men happier. But the whole structure
> depended on the first premise: that man was decent. (666)

The next several pages see Arthur run through a series of possible worldviews, each one progressively bleaker and more despairing than the one that preceded it. He first settles on a Christian view of human nature as fundamentally depraved, and considers that "if there was such a thing as original sin, if man was on the whole a villain, if the Bible was right in saying that the heart of men was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, then the purpose of his life had been a vain one" (667). If the Biblical view of a fundamentally wicked and deceitful heart makes Arthur's vision absolutely futile, his next thought is even bleaker: "Perhaps man was neither good nor bad, was only a machine in an insensate universe – his courage no more than a reflex to danger, like the automatic jump at the pin-prick" (667). But this train of thought is interrupted by an ellipsis, suggesting that this too is not to be taken as the final word.

Arthur's thoughts turn from human nature in general to ask the more focused question, "Why did men fight?" (667). Again, Arthur has no answers. In vain, he questions whether the root of war lies with the leaders or with the people, due to human possession and private ownership, as Lyo-Lyok argued, or due to fear. At last he gives up, realizing he is "too old and tired and miserable to think constructively" (671), declaring his attempts "to do nothing which was not just" (671) a failure. But White does not end on this declaration of failure. Rather, he ends with a symbol of hope, as the old Arthur passes on his utopian vision to a young Thomas Malory. Another example of White's anachronism, White's inclusion of a Malory who has yet to

write *Le Morte Darthur* signals his attempt to repurpose chivalric ideals for the future and to

rewrite the New Imperialist interweaving of chivalry and empire. In telling Malory of the

"King's idea," Arthur leaves behind his earlier blanket condemnation of chivalry and returns to

his fundamental belief in the possibility of human reform. Insisting that Malory stay out of the

ensuing battle so that he can be a "light-bringer" who will serve as "a kind of vessel to carry on

the idea" (674), White's Arthur anticipates a chivalric ideal that can survive in and bring light to

a post-war, rapidly declining British Empire. While chivalry, as I have explored throughout this

thesis, was tied to the hypermasculinity and ultranationalism of British New Imperialism through

the work of writers like Kipling, Haggard, and Conan Doyle, White attempts to unravel that

marriage of imperialism and chivalry. As the novel closes, Arthur looks forward to the post-war

ideal promised by the United Nations, which he imagines as a chivalric fellowship made up of

cooperative nations. He thinks: "There would be a day – there must be a day – when he would

come back to Gramarye with a new Round Table which had no corners, just as the world had

none – a table without boundaries between the nations who would sit to feast there" (676). White

uses this central feature of the Arthurian legend – that the king will return some day in the future

to reinstate an idealized golden age – to create a space for hope in an otherwise bleak narrative, a

hope based on a newly imagined Round Table of harmonious feasting nations.

  White ends his series with the Arthurian convention, the Latin epigraph, "*EXPLICIT

LIBER REGIS QUONDAM REGISQUE FUTURI*" followed by the book's final words "THE

BEGINNING." Like the inclusion of a young Malory, these final words highlight White's

attempts to break away from the chivalric conventions of his Victorian and Edwardian

predecessors. The chivalric idealism of the story that the fictionalized Malory of *The Candle in

the Wind* will go on to write promises to be free of the violent and xenophobic trappings of

British imperialist medievalism. While Malory was appropriated by New Imperialist Victorians to support their ideals of nationalism, militarism, and aggressive masculinity, White attempts, throughout the course of the novels that comprise *The Once and Future King*, to work through the complicated and problematic Arthurian tradition he inherited. While his novels do often reinforce many of the political assumptions and gender biases of his New Imperialist predecessors, White's Arthurian narrative aims to wrest chivalry from the clutches of aggressive British imperialism and to transform the conventions of Arthurian legend and Victorian medievalism, challenging the aggressive violence-loving masculine ethos of Kipling, Haggard, and Conan Doyle and proposing a chivalric ideal based on open borders and peace.

Conclusion

From academia to popular culture, entertainment to political rhetoric, the Middle Ages remain a constant source of fascination. While medievalism takes many varied forms and has historically been marshalled in the service of sometimes diametrically opposed political positions, my study has been limited to its intersection with imperialism and aggressive masculinity in the British Empire during the height of New Imperialism. This imperialist chivalric medievalism has survived beyond the waning of the British Empire, however, and continues to be felt to this day. We see this in much of the political rhetoric of the Brexiteers, with their ideals of returning to the glory days of the Britain of both Alfred the Great and Rudyard Kipling, exceptional and distinct from continental Europe. We see the persistence of the late-Victorian atavistic fantasy of embracing both the "primitive" and the medieval knight throughout the "manosphere," as many of the same fears of the "men's movement" at the turn of the twentieth century are voiced by the men's movements of the beginning of this century. Perhaps the greatest long-term effect of New Imperialist medievalism is the powerful idea that returning to medieval virtue can somehow remedy modern social "ills," however those ills are defined. The "revival" promoted by Kipling, Haggard, and Conan Doyle was a return to an imagined past that legitimizes the "heroic" hypermasculinity of white European men. And this patriarchal fantasy still holds great influence, especially in the ranks of the alt-right, where medieval Europe is rendered an icon of a united white Christendom, a bulwark against modern "evils" like immigration, globalism, multiculturalism, and feminism.

Throughout this thesis I have focused on this side of medievalism and chivalry, examining the dominance of a medievalist, masculine ideal that directly supported the expansionist aims of the British Empire. But there is more to medievalism and chivalry than hypermasculine celebrations of violence that serve the needs of expansionist, militaristic nations. While we must condemn the "chivalry" of New Imperialism, with all its unseemly ties to misogyny, racism, jingoism, and militarism, chivalry as a broader discourse is not quite so easily dismissed. Even in the mid-nineteenth century, Christian Socialists like Charles Kingsley were using medieval feudalism to critique systemic inequality and were characterizing charitable campaigns to alleviate poverty as "chivalrous" ventures. And when we attempt the difficult task of reading *Le Morte Darthur* without the extra layers of interpretation and adaptation, we find a complex and nuanced text to which the New Imperialist readings do not give full justice. Even with all of Malory's problematic representations of gender and violence, it is hard to find much fault in the chivalric oath of the Round Table:

> Never to do outrageousity nor murder, and always to flee treason; also, by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour, upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law, nor for no world's goods. (III.xv)

This oath provides Malory's knights with a moral framework, a chivalric ideal against which their actions may be judged. Gareth's noble character is demonstrated by his adherence to this code, while his brother Mordred, cruel and treasonous, manifests his villainy by violating this standard of knightly conduct. T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* shows us one way of

appropriating this oath in a modern context, challenging the hypermasculine model of New Imperialist writers like Haggard and Conan Doyle who revel in the violence and "glory" of battle. White radically reassesses the militarism of Victorian chivalry, attempting to form a chivalric code, stemming from Malory's Pentecost Oath, that seeks to end violence and that battles jingoism, ultranationalism, and fascism.

Ultimately, even with all of chivalry's baggage and long problematic history, I do not think that we ought to fully surrender it to the fascism of the far-right and "red-pill" men's movements. C. S. Lewis's famous wartime essay "The Necessity of Chivalry," makes a similar case to White's. Drawing on Malory's depiction of Lancelot as "the meekest man that ever ate in hall among ladies; and … the sternest knight to thy mortal foe" (XXI.xii), Lewis praises the "paradox" of chivalric virtue that strives to curb both cruelty and cowardice as "the one hope of the world" (14). He writes:

> The medieval ideal brought together two things which have no natural tendency to gravitate toward one another. It brought them together for that very reason. It taught humility and forbearance to the great warrior because everyone knew by experience how much he usually needed that lesson. It demanded valour of the urbane and modest man because everyone knew that he was as likely as not to be a milksop. (14)

Lewis's ideal, with its emphasis on restraint and its resistance to militarism, is a far cry from the idea of chivalry as hypermasculine brutality, an idea he characterizes as anti-chivalric, a "neo-heroic tradition" attempting to invoke "the pre-Christian ferocity of Achilles" (15). In this camp, Lewis explicitly places Kipling, writing that "in our own Kipling the heroic qualities of his favorite subalterns are dangerously removed from meekness and urbanity" (15). And certainly,

those among the ranks of the modern alt-right who habitually style themselves "templars," "crusaders," and a host of other medieval "heroes," possess even less of Lancelot's "meekness" and kindness than the characters of New Imperialist romance.

More recently, Jennifer Wollock, whose ideas I discuss in my introduction, insists, like White and Lewis, that chivalry as a behavioural ideal remains, not only relevant, but essential in our current day and age. Chivalry for Wollock need not be limited to the militarism and imperialism that laid claim to it in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries nor to the white supremacists who continue to appropriate it. Rather, she hopefully suggests, "The mantle of the knight-errant may have fallen on the human-rights activist and the environmentalist as it has been cast aside by the captain in the field" (5). In this sense, chivalry becomes a heroic mentality, a readiness to make sacrifices for a worthy cause. While for the New Imperialists that cause was the preservation and expansion of the British Empire, and for the alt-right it is the "defense" of "white civilization," chivalry need not be solely the domain of racist and misogynist groups. In this age of extreme polarization, where neo-fascists and white supremacists are emboldened to publicly proclaim their dangerous ideologies and attempt to lay claim to chivalry and the medieval past, the fight that lies ahead, for academics as a whole and for medievalists especially, against the encroachment of these parties into our disciplines in many ways requires the vigilance and courage of a "chivalry" that opposes the "outrageousity," "murder" and "cruelty" represented by white supremacism.

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Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

2014 – Present	**PhD,** English Literature, Western University. Thesis: *Malory, Chivalric Medievalism, and New Imperialist Masculinity* Supervisors: Alison Lee and M. J. Toswell
2013 – 2014	**Master of Arts,** English, Brock University
2009 – 2013	**Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours**, English and History, Brock University

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Beginning Sep. 2020	**Course Instructor** Redeemer University
2019 – Present	**Tutorial Leader** OCAD University
2014 – 2018	**Teaching Assistant** Western University
2013 – 2014	**Teaching Assistant** Brock University

HONOURS, SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND RESEARCH GRANTS

2016	**Doctoral Excellence Research Award,** Western University
2014	**Doctoral Fellowship,** Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
2014	**Graduate Research Scholarship,** Western University
2014	**Research Fellowship,** Brock University
2013	**Graduate Fellowship,** Brock University
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CONFERENCE PAPERS

2020   "History, Chivalry, and Utopia in T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*." Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, London, ON. May. (Postponed due to COVID-19).

2019   "Romance and Atavistic Medievalism in H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*." Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Vancouver, BC. May.

2018   "'And So Was England Born': Medieval History and Translatio Imperii in Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*." Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Regina, SK. May.

2016   "Just Cause and Sinful Conduct in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*'s Roman War." Paper presented at the 51st International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI. May.