Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at the battle of Bosworth and brought to an end the feudal anarchy during the Wars of Roses. It was 22 August 1485, just twenty-two days after Caxton’s publication of Le Morte Darthur. The political and the literary event, which then seemed quite irrelevant to each other, were to be twined into the seed of dispute among historians in the Tudor dynasty. Henry VII, weak in his hereditary right, realized the value of the popular Arthurian legend and put it to political use in order to secure his precarious throne: since his grandfather was Welsh, he proclaimed his inheritance of Arthur’s blood; and he christened his son Arthur at Winchester (English Camelot), responsive to Merlin’s prophecy about the return of Arthur. Henry VIII, furthermore, enacted the Act of Supremacy and set about expansionism on the ground that Arthur had been a world conqueror from Rome to Britain. Thus was the English crown staked upon the ‘historical’ Arthur, and the Arthurian literature was forcibly fused into the political tactics.

The manoeuvre of these Tudor kings raised the controversy as to whether King Arthur was merely a king in an imaginary world or was he a real hero who brought England glory with the knights of the Round Table. In this upsurge of dispute, a considerable number of chronicles and writings were successively brought out with a favourable or unfavourable stance on the historicity of King Arthur. This ‘battle’ of historians must have affected the reading of Malory’s Morte Darthur: the historical interest in Arthur, if it was carried too forward, might cause the romance to be equated with something like a history in its modern sense; and it might even weaken the fantastic enjoyment.

Malory suffered another prejudice on its matter: Roger Ascham, one-time tutor to Elizabeth, denounced the story in The Scholemaster, charging that ‘the whole pleasure of [the] booke standeth... in open manslaughter and bold bawdry.’ Such a downright contempt of Malory was not unreasonable from the literary criteria of the humanists, who called upon literature to be didactic as well as plausible.

In publishing Malory, Caxton, assuming an evasive attitude on the verisimilitude of Arthurian exploits, left its judgement up to the readers and instead, as if taking defensive measures against the neoclassical critics, emphasized the ethical utility and the diverting nature of the story:

Doo after the good and leue the euyl / and it shal brynge you to good fame and
renownee / And for to passe the tyme thys book shal be plesaunte to rede in / but
for to gyue fayth and byleue that al is trewe that is conteyned herin / ye be at your
lyberete / but al is wryton for our doctryne /

(Caxton’s Prologue, folio sig. 3r / 33-38)

These prefatory words may have done much against the forthcoming transvaluation of
the book from romance to history among the Tudor intellectuals, and may have
helped to initiate the readers into a proper, casual way of appreciating the romance.

While exposed to the moralistic censure, Malory, with a subtle difference in attitude
of readers towards it, enjoyed a large audience and went through six (to be more
precise, seven) editions from 1485 to 1634. These black-letter editions are printed in
folio except for East’s second printing in quarto; to put them chronologically, William
Caxton [1485: folio], Wynkyn de Worde [1498: folio], W. de Worde [1529: folio],
William Copland [1557: folio], Thomas East [c 1585: folio & quarto] and William
Stansby [1634: folio]. The last five editions are ultimately originated from Caxton’s
Malory, but the immediate relation between each text and its exemplar may be
indicated as follows:

Caxton [1485]
de Worde [1498]
de Worde [1529] ——— Copland [1557]
East [c 1585: folio & quarto]
Stansby [1634]

Each edition is deviated from its copy-text (s) and one can observe various kinds
of textual variants: punctuational, morphological, lexical and syntactic differences;
and some words or sentences are even added or deleted. The deviations are presuma-
bly due to the editor’s or his compositors’ stealthy or open hands. These editorial
practices may be attributed to the transition of literary tastes, to the change of
language, and, more dominantly, to the maturity of concept about ‘sentence’, ‘coher-
ce’ and ‘unity’, and to the demand for a more legible version, which naturally follows
the lowering and widening of audience caused by the introduction of printing.

Since de Worde’s second edition [1529] has occupied a vital position in the
genealogical table of Malory from Caxton to Stansby, scholarly interest has been
focussed on it and the other editions, especially de Worde [1498], have unduly remained
unexamined. If, however, one is chiefly interested in making clear the internal or
external influences on literary texts by the introduction of printing, de Worde’s first
edition will be the first to be investigated: Caxton is certainly the first printed version,
but it is conservative in the sense that it intentionally takes over scribes’ usage so that
it may resemble a medieval manuscript. Or, if one takes an interest in the transforma-
tion of the text, de Worde [1498] should be as worthy of research; because most of the
variants that H. O. Sommer points out in his comparative study between Caxton and
de Worde [1529]² come from the recastings made in de Worde's first edition, including,
of course, his famous interpolation in Chap. XII of Bk. XXI; and because further
rewritings, which may convey the shift of literary and linguistic circumstances, are
made during the period between his two editions.

The purpose of this study, which will be published in serial, is to collate Caxton and
de Worde [1498], and to give all kinds of variant readings except punctuational and
orthographic ones. The scope in this paper is Books XX and XXI.

Before commencing comparison, some preliminary sketch will be needed about each
edition. Caxton exists in two copies: one is in the Pierpont Morgan Library; and the
other in the John Rylands Library. The Pierpont copy is perfect throughout whereas
the Rylands copy wants eleven leaves, which have been supplied in facsimile by John
Harris. Besides a number of scattered minor variants between the two copies, E.
Vinaver finds them remarkably differed in signatures N 3, N 6, Y 3, and Y 6; and he
concludes that the Pierpont copy is a resetting.³ There are five substantive differences
in the sheet of N 3 • 6, and two in the sheet of Y 3 • 6. These variants naturally raise
the discussion as to which copy should be taken here to compare with de Worde.

Now let us put de Worde's readings by the side of these variants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig. N 3</th>
<th>Pierpont Caxton</th>
<th>Rylands Caxton</th>
<th>de Worde</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. N 3r/9-10</td>
<td>to take the suerd &amp; assaye at my com-</td>
<td>to take the suerd and at my com-</td>
<td>to take the swerde &amp; at my comaundement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>andment</td>
<td></td>
<td>(sig. ℡ 6v, l/1-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. N 3r/22-23</td>
<td>Thenne were there no moo that durst he . . .</td>
<td>Thenne were moo that durste he . . .</td>
<td>Thenne were there no moo that durst he . . . (sig. ℡ 6v, l/22-23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. N 3v/32</td>
<td>this is he</td>
<td>this he</td>
<td>This is he (sig. ℡ 1r, l/16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig. N 6</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. N 6r/19</td>
<td>at his table</td>
<td>at this table</td>
<td>at his table (sig. ™ 2v, l/37-38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. N 6v/8</td>
<td>of the streme</td>
<td>of the strene</td>
<td>of the streme (sig. ™ 2v, r/35-36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig. Y 3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Y 3r/19</td>
<td>a full fayr mayden good gentyl</td>
<td>a fulfayre mayden good and gentyl</td>
<td>a full fayre mayde. goode &amp; gentyll (sig. ™ 6r, r/8-9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sig. Y 6
2. Y 6r/19 there falleth there befalleth there befalleth

All these variants considered, we may conclude that de Worde uses a copy-leaf of the same setting as in the Rylands text both in the sheet of N 3.6 and in the sheet of Y 3.6. Therefore, in principle, I shall prefer in this study the perfect Pierpont copy as Caxton’s edition, except where the Rylands copy is obviously de Worde’s exemplar.

The only extant copy of de Worde’s edition of 1498 is now in the John Rylands Library. The correct collation of de Worde’s original edition [1498] should be as follows:

Signatures . 6; : 8; a–s in 8 and 6 alternately; t and v in 8; w–ξ in 6; χ–β in 8; ζ–ς in 6; ι–δ in 6; μ; Θ; U 6; A–E in 6 = 326 leaves

The Rylands copy has been reported to want eleven leaves by Sommer and Vinaver. But, according to my examination, it wants more eleven leaves (signatures . 1; . 4; . 5; . 6; r 7; ξ 5; θ 6; υ 4; b 3; B 4; E 6) and the sig. r 2, which Sommer and Vinaver mention as wanting, is preserved; but, instead, it is sig. r 1 that is really lost in the copy. Thus the missing leaves are exactly twenty-two altogether: signatures : 1; . 1; . 4; . 5; . 6; a 3; r 1; r 7; ξ 3; ξ 4; ξ 5; ξ 6; η 5; υ 3; υ 4; B 1; B 3; B 4; C 6; D 1; E 2 and E 6.

In the Rylands copy of de Worde [1498], the first and the second quire are reversely bound so that, unlike Caxton, the table of contents comes before the prologue, followed by the text: the ‘Tubula’ runs from sig. : 1 to : 8; the same ‘Prologus’ as Caxton’s, a part of the first quire, begins on sig. . 2 and finishes on sig. . 3; and the text runs from sig. a 1 to E 5.

De Worde has some more external departures from Caxton: unlike Caxton, the volume is printed in double columns, which, saving 106 leaves (432 leaves in the Pierpont copy of Caxton), enables a less expensive edition; woodcuts are used at the beginning of each book to attract readers’ attention and to give them a cue in hunting out a particular book; and, for readers’ convenience, the summary of contents of each chapter listed in the ‘Tabula’ is reproduced at the beginning of each chapter.
Textual Variants

Caxton

De Worde [1498]

Book XX

In May (sig. aa 6r/1)

- So in this season as in the monethe of May (aa 6r/7)
- and alle was long vpon two vnhappy knyghtes (aa 6r/10)
- for and there ryse warre and wrake betwyx syr launcelot and vs
  (aa 6r/34–35)
- and the best of vs all had ben ful cold at the herte rote (aa 6v/3–4)
- now is this Realme holy mescheued (aa 6v/22–23)
- And thenne sir Arthur asked hem what noyse they made (aa 6v/25–26)
- and I at al tymes youre true poure knyghte vnto my power
  (aa 8r/17–18)
- Truly sayd the Quene I wold and it myghte please god / that they wold take me and slee me
  (aa 8r/37–8v/1)
- and I shall lette open this dore (aa 8v/8–9)
- and soo there came strydyng a good knyghte a moche man and large
  (aa 8v/15–16)
- and syr Launcelot with helpe of the Quene and her ladyes was lyghtely armed
  (aa 8v/21–22)
- and that wyl I preue and make hit good vpon yow
  (aa 8v/36)
- he stode in amongst them (bb lr/7)

At the season of May (sig. A 4v, l/1)

in deleted (A 4v, l/11–12)
of two (A 4v, l/16)
wrath betwene (A 4v, r/13)
the deleted (A 4v, r/21)
the reame (A 5r, l/9)
them (A 5r, l/18)
to (A 6r, l/19)
that deleted (A 6r, r/9)
the dore (A 6r, r/26)
& a large (A 6r, r/38)
And thenne (A 6v, l/7)
And that I wol (A 6v, l/29)
amonge (A 6v, l/41)
and anone at the fyrst buffet he slewe
sir Agravayne and twelue of his
felawes after within a lytel whyle after
he layd hem cold to the erthe

( bb lr/7-10)

and soo there he lefte the quene/and
went vntyl his lodgyng

( bb lr/24-25)

Whan syre Bors sawe syr launcelot

( bb lr/26)

Ihesu mercy sayd syr Launcelot why
be ye all armed what meaneth this

( bb lr/27-29)

we alle . . . were soo dretched that
somme of vs lepte oute of oure beddes
naked

( bb lr/30-32)

that shold moche repente me

( bb 2v/34-35)

nere thre yere

( bb 3r/3)

the which was done by your elthers
deuyse

( bb 3r/3-4)

And thenne shalle ye brynge ageyne
the quene to the kynge with grete
worshyp

( bb 3r/9-10)

loke . . . how shamefully that fals
traitour kng marke slewe hym

( bb 3r/15-17)

With a groundyn glayue he threst hym
in behynde to the herte

( bb 3r/18-19)

They putte hem all in an enbusshement
in a woode

( bb 3r/28-29)

these preues & experyences caused
kyng Arthur to commaunde the quene
to the fyre

( bb 3v/22-24)

for many causes / One it is though it
were so that . . .

( bb 3v/27)

a lytyll whyle he had layed

( A 6v, r/1-2)

went to

( A 6v, r/26)

So whan

( A 6v, r/31)

why be ye all armed deleted

( A 6v, r/34-35)

so dremynge

( A 6v, r/37)

that sholde repente me moche

( B 2r, 1/12-13)

nygh

( B 2r, 1/23)

bothe auyses

( B 2r, 1/25)

vntyll

( B 2r, 1/32-33)

slewe that noble knyghte

( B 2r, r/2-3)

Wyth a sharp grounded gleuyue

( B 2r, r/5)

teym

( B 2r, r/22)

experyence

( B 2v, 1/31)

One is / though it were so that

( B 2v, 1/38)
• the quene is moche beholden vnto syr launcelot more than vnto ony other knyghte
  (bb 3v/31)
• for oftymes we doo many thynges that we wene it be for the best
  (bb 4r/1-2)
• And as for sir Launcelot sayd sir Gawayne I dare saye he wylle make hit good vpon ony knyghte lyuyng that
  (bb 4r/4-6)
• why saye ye soo sayd kyng Arthur to syre Gawayne
  (bb 4r/14)
• For soth ye haue no cause to loue sir Launcelot
  (bb 4r/15)

  Thenne came kyng Arthur with sire Gawayne with an hughe hoost
  (bb 7r/1-2)
• neyther he wold none of his good knyghtes to yssue oute
  (bb 7r/6-7)
• al is in vayne that ye make at this syege
  (bb 7r/12)
• for here wynne ye no worshyp but maulgre and dishonoure
  (bb 7r/12-13)
• Lancelot
  (bb 7r/16)
• I shalle mete the in myddes of the felde
  (bb 7r/16-17)
• my moost noble lord and kyng sayd sir launcelot
  (bb 7r/25-26)
• for ye wote wel with youre self wil I not stryue
  (bb 7r/26-27)
• But I was enforced to doo batail with hem
  (bb 7r/29)
• or els I muste haue suffred hem to haue slayne me
  (bb 7r/30-31)
• my lady Quene gueneuer is a true lady vnto your persone as ony is lyuyng vnto her lord
  (bb 7v/3-5)

  to ony
  (B 2v, r/2)
  it is for the best
  (B 2v, r/16)
  I dar sayne deleted
  (B 2v, r/20—22)
  Wherfore saye ye sayd kyng Arthur to syre Gawayne
  (B 2v, r/36—37)
  no grete cause
  (B 2v, r/38)
  [sig. B 3 and B 4 wanting in de Worde]
  & syr Gawayne
  (B 5r, 1/2)
  neyther he wolde suffre none
  (B 5r, 1/9)
  ye labour
  (B 5r, 1/21)
  but dishonour & maugre
  (B 5r, 1/22)
  syr Launcelot
  (B 5r, 1/26)
  in the myddes
  (B 5r, 1/27)
  my moste noble kyng
  (B 5r, r/2)
  wyte you well
  (B 5r, r/3—4)
  I woll not stryue
  (B 5r, r/9)
  with them
  (B 5r, r/10)
  them
  (B 5r, r/22—24)
• and that wylle I make good with my handes (bb 7v/5)
• and or I departed from her aduersary they consessid their vntrouthe (bb 7v/11-12)
• me semeth I had lost a grete parte of my worshyp in my knyghthode / and I had suffred my lady youre Quene to haue ben brente / and in so moche she shold haue ben brente for my sake (bb 7v/17-20)

But by Ihesu / and by the feyth that I owe to the hygh order of knyghthode / I shold with as a good wylle haue slayne my nueewe (bb 7v/38-8r/2)

And therfore wete thou wel I shalle make warre to the / and alle the whyle that I may lyue (bb 8r/6-7)

Wel wel sayd sir Gawayne (bb 8r/25)

they called to them syre Palomydes (bb 8v/1-2)

we wille . . . doo bataille with hem (bb 8v/8-9)

I requyre you . . . sythen that I am thus requyred . . . to ryde in to the felde / that neyder you my lord kynge Arthur nor you . . . come not in to the felde (bb 8v/16-19)

is this the kynges quarel (bb 8v/20)

eyther party mad hem redy (bb 8v/26)

syre Arthur (bb 8v/30)

sir Ector de marys and other more bare hym in to the Castel (cc lr/7-8)

syr Safyr ouerthrowe many knyghtes (cc lr/11-12)

they made hem / redy to doo bataille (cc lv/2)
• as brym as ony bore (cc lv/4) also brŷm  
• the despyte that syr Gawayn dyd hym that deleted  
  the other daye (cc lv/6–7)  
• with alle theire myghtes of their horses them  
  and hem self (cc lv/8–9)  
• they mette to gyder soo felonishly furyously (cc lv/9–10)  
• there was soo moche people slayne slayn on bothe partyes (cc lv/29)  
• And thenne for pyte syr launcelot wythdrew his knyghtes / and suffred 
  withhelde his knyghtes / and suffered 
  kynge Arthurs party for to withdraw 
  kyg Arthurs party also. And thenne 
  them ou syde / And thenne sir launcelots 
  party withdrew hem in to his Castel 
  partye wythdrewe hem in to his Castel 
  (cc lv/29–32)  
• and eyther partyes buryed the dede eyther party (cc lv/33)  
• Of this werre was noysed thorou al noyse (cc lv/36)  
  crystendome moost noble knighte (cc lv/38–2r/1)  
• ful fayne he world haue ben accorded Gladly he wolde accorde 
  with sir launcelot (cc 2r/11–12)  
• the quene shold not be spoken vnto / of reproued / of the kynge  
  the kynge / nor of none other (cc 2r/18–19)  
• the Bisshop broughte hym wyth him surraunce (cc 2r / 21–22)  
  [ie Lancelot] surraunce (C lr, r/21–22)  
• me semeth it was my parte me seme (cc 2r/28)  
• I wylle be . . . more gladder to brynge 
  more glad euer deleted (cc 2r/31–32)  
  her ageyne than euer I was of her 
  for me & myn to con (C lr, r/38–40)  
  takyng away (cc 2r/31–32)  
• With this I maye be sure to come 
  for me & myn to con (C lr, r/42)  
  sauf / and goo sauf (cc 2r/33–34)  
• It shal not nede yow . . . to drede soo 
  to drede you (C lv, 1/8–10)  
  moche (cc 2v/3–4)
wyte ye wel
popes worshyp & my poore honestee to wyte
yw distressyd
(C lv, 1/10-12)
yowe wel...it were not the popes
worshyp nor my poure honeste to wete
yw distressyd (cc 2v/4-6)
• ye shall ryde vnto the kynge afore
afere me (C lv, 1/22-23)
(cc 2v/12-13)
• my most redoubted kyng
most deleted (C lv, 1/29)
(cc 2v/17)
• syr Launcelot rode . . . in the castel
in to the castell (C lv, r/20)
(cc 2v/37-38)
• thenne was there many bold knyghte
many a bold
ther deleted
he had
he spak to the noble kynge Arthur ful
knystly, & lyke a man of grete
honour. (C lv, r/32-42)
(cc 3r/7-12)
i haue
(C 2r, 1/21-23)
• I had more cause to rescowe her
endured aynest (C 2r, 1/26-28)
(cc 3r/26)
• I myghte neuer haue endured fourten
themself (C 2r, r/3]
knyghtes (cc 3r/29-30)
syr deleted (C 2r, r/4)
• syr launcelot
yow deleted
haue doon you
(cc 3r/37)
• I and myn haue done yow ofte better
many deleted (C 2v, r/9-12)
seryiuse than ony other knyghtes have
done in many dyuerse places
(cc 3v/4-6)
• no maner of knyghte
no maner knyghte (C 2r, r/25)
(cc 3v/14)
• but euer I had a faueour vnto them
to (C 2r, r/31)
(cc 3v/17-18)
• and I sawe hym besy aboute to wynne
for to wynne (C 2r, r/35)
worship (cc 3v/20-21)
sire deleted (C 2v, 1/25)
• sire Gawayne (cc 4r/1)
tweyne of them (C 2v, 1/30)
• and two of them (cc 4r/4)
thou slewest (C 2v, 1/29-30)
• for thou hast slayne thre of my brethe-
tourly (cc 4r/3-4)
causeth (C 2r, r/2-3)
• but many causes causen me to be
sorouful (cc 4r/11-12)
• And at every ten myles ende I will founde & garmake an hows of religyon of what ordre that ye wyl assyenge me . . . to syng & to rede
  (cc 4r/25-27)
• and there nys none of al these relygyous places
  (cc 4r/31-32)
• I haue ryghte wel herd the speche
  (cc 4v/4-5)
• let the kynge doo as hit pleyseth hym
  (cc 4v/6)
• and therfor thou shalt goo sauf as thou camest
  (cc 4v/17-18)
• sayd syre Gawayne
  (cc 4v/23)
• thou hast ben bothe fals vnto myn vnkenl kyng arthur and to me bothe
  (cc 4v/25-26)
• and there with the teres felle on his chekes
  (cc 4v/29-30)
• And therfor wete thou wel sire Gawayne I may lyue vpon my landes as well as ony knyhghte that here is
  (cc 5r/9-12)
• I pray yow charge me not with treason
  (cc 5r/14)
• for and I were as orgulous sette as ye are / wete you wel I shold mete yow in myddes of the felde
  (cc 5r/19-20)
• Make thou no more langage
  (cc 5r/20-21)
• and I had wys of this shorte comynge / I wolde haue aduyed me twyes or that I had comen hyder
  (cc 5r/23-24)
• in heryng of the kynge and hem all
  (cc 5r/27-28)

and at every .x. myles ende / I wyl founde. & cause make a hous of Religyon / of what ordre ye woll assygne me . . . to syng & to rede
  (C 2v, r/25-28)
there is
  (C 2v, r/35)
ryghte deleted
  (C 3r, 1/5-6)
as it pleyseth
  (C 3r, 1/7-8)
sauf syr Launcelot
  (C 3r, 1/26)
sayd syre Gawayne deleted
  (C 3r, 1/34)
bothe deleted
  (C 3r, 1/37)
out of his chekes
  (C 3r, r/6)
maye lyue as well vpon
  that is here
  (C 3r, r/28-31)
I pray you & requyre you charge
  (C 3r, r/37)
orgulous & prowedly
  (C 3v, 1/4-7)
in the myddes of
  (C 3v, 1/7)
no more adoo
  (C 3v, 1/11-13)
this short answere
  (C 3v, 1/19)
• I bysche ye to praye for me / and saye me wel / yt ye be hard bestad by ony fals tonges / lyghtly my lady sende me word (cc 5r/29-31)
• and thanne sir Launcelot toke his leue (cc 5r/37-38)
• And thenne euer after he called it the dolorous gard (cc 5v/5-6)
• for a flemyd man departed neuer oute of a realme with noo worship ... I was flemed oute of this land (cc 5v/13-16)
• ther nys none of the good kny3tes (cc 5v/23)
• I wel vnderstande yow and as I can / thanke yow (cc 5v/30)
• by the noble felaushyp of the round table was Kynge Arthur up borne (cc 6r/3-4)
• the kynge and alle his realme was in quyete and reste (cc 6r/5)
• a grete parte ... was by cause of your noblesse (cc 6r/6)
• I thanke yow alle of youre good sayenge (cc 6r/8—9)
• we alle shalle here of hem (cc 6r/12—13)
• they ... payd alle that wold aske hem (cc 6r/17—18)
• and holy an honderd knyghtes ... made their auowes / they wold neuer leue hym (cc 6r/18—20)
• he and his kynred reioyced it alle (cc 6r/25)
• and soo whan he had stabled alle these countreyes (cc 6r/29—30)

& sende me worde yt ye be noyed wyth ony fals tonges / lyghtly my lady lete me haue knowledge (C 3v, 1/21—25)
And therwyth (C 3v, 1/33)
thenne euer deleted (C 3v, r/3)
banisshed man
banisshed (C 3v, r/15—20)
ther is (C 3v, r/31)
I thank you (C 4r, 1/1)
born up (C 4r, 1/20)
in quyete & in rest (C 4r, 1/22)
your grete noblesse (C 4r, 1/24)
I thank you of alle your good sayenge (C 4r, 1/28—30)
them (C 4r, 1/36)
them (C 4r, r/4)
that they wolde neuer departe from him (C 4r, r/4—8)
alle deleted (C 4r, r/17)
stablysshed (C 4r, r/23)
and there he [i.e. Lancelot] crowned syr Lyonel kynge of Fraunce / and sire Bors crowned hym kynge of al kynge Clandas landes and sir Ector de marys / that was sir launcelot yongest brother / he crowned hym kynge of Benwyk and kynge of alle Gyan that was sir launcelot owne land

(cc 6r/30-35)

& thus he departed  (cc 6r/34-6v/1)

he auaunced them of his blood / that was syr Blamor / he made hym duke of Lymosyn  
(cc 6v/2-3)

and syr Neroneus he made hym Erle of pardyak / and sire Plenorius he maade Erle of foyse . . . sir Bellangere le beuse he made erle of the laundes / . . . and syr Sadok he gaf the Erldom of Surlat  
(cc 6v/11-18)

and al thynge was made redy for their shyppyng  
(cc 6v/26-27)

we suffre hem thus to ryde  
(cc 7r/4-5)

suffre ye hem as longe as ye will  
(CC 7r/5)

lete vs kee our stronge walled Townes untyl they haue hongre & cold  
(cc 7r/8-10)

Alyaunts may take ensample  
(cc 7r/12)

lete vs . . . shrede hem doune  
(cc 7r/11)

they shall be by processe brynge vs alle to noughte whyles we thus in holes vs hyde  
(cc 7r/16-17)

a man myghte seke in seuen kynges landes  
(cc 7r/24)
and yet my lordes I vnderstande ben full bare / for to susteyne ony hoost a whyle / for the myghty warres that whylome made kyng Clandas vpon this countrey vpon my fader kyng Ban & on myn vnkell Kyng Bors

(cc 7r/31-34)

So sir laucelot sente forth a damoysell for

(cc 7r/37-38)

to leue his warrynge vpon his landes werre

(cc 7r/38-7v/1)

and ther mette her a gentyl knyghte syr Lucan gentyl deleted

(cc 7v/3-4)

lucan

(cc 7v/11)

alle the lordes were ful glad for to aduyse the kynge syr Lucan

(cc 7v/14-15)

I wylle doo as ye wil aduyse me as thou wolt

(cc 7v/19-20)

saye ye to sir launcelot that it is wast labour it was ydle labour

(cc 7v/27)

tell hym now it is to late / & saye that that syr Gawayne so sendyth

I sir Gawayn soo sende hym word

(cc 7v/30-31)

I shal neuer leue hym / tyl he haue tyll he hath slayne me

(slayne me / or I hym (cc 7v/32-33)

soo sir lucan broughte the damoysel to vnto

her palfroy

(cc 7v/34-35)

lets vs . . . matche hem in myddes of them

the felde (cc 8r/4-5)

as knyghtes loked oute the knyghtes (cc 8r/14)

they defyed hem oute of the Towne / them them

and bete hem from the walles (cc 8r/16-17)

And at that tyme he smote sire Bors And so he

doune (cc 8r/24)

syr Gawayn had suche grace that he syr Gawayn was so fyers. that

smote sir Lyonel (cc 8r/29-30)
And thus
and deleted
(C 5v, r/16–18)

[sig. C 6 and D 1 wanting in de Worde]

Book XXI

• And this sir Gawayne came every
day / and he fayled not / but that he
smote doune one knyghte or other
(cc 8r/32–33)

And so he was
(D 2r, 1/11–12)

• And this sir Gawayne came euery
and thus
day/and he fayled not/but that he
deleted (C 5v, r/16–18)

• And soo was he crowned at caunterburye
(dd 3r/6–7)

• And soo he made redy for the feest /
And a day prefyxt (dd 3r/10–11)

• And soo howe you wedde your
faders wyf (dd 3r/35–36)

• I shall curse you wyth book & belle
and candell (dd 3r/36–37)

• Do thou thy werst (dd 3r/37)

• Sir sayd the bysshop & wyt you wel I
shal not fere me to do that
(dd 3r/38–3v/1)

• where ye noyse where my lorde
Arthur is slayne / & that is not so
(dd 3v/2–3)

• there he was as preest Eremyte in a
chapel (dd 3v/10)

• she answerd hym shortelye (dd 3v/15)

• Lo ye al englyssh men see ye not what
a myschyef here was / for he that was
the moost kyng and knyght of the
world and moost loued the felyshyp of
noble knyghtes / and by hym they
were al vpholden / Now myght not this
englyssh men holde them contente
wyth hym (dd 3v/27–32)

• Alas thys is a grete defaute of vs
englysshe men (dd 3v/34)

• lo we alle Englysshe men. se what a
myschein
goodlypage

• And so he was
(D 2r, 1/11–12)

• And soo was he crowned at caunterburye
(dd 3r/6–7)

• And soo he made redy for the feest /
And a day prefyxt (dd 3r/10–11)

• And soo howe you wedde your
faders wyf (dd 3r/35–36)

• I shall curse you wyth book & belle
and candell (dd 3r/36–37)

• Do thou thy werst (dd 3r/37)

• Sir sayd the bysshop: I shal not

• where ye noyse where my lorde
Arthur is slayne / & that is not so
(dd 3v/2–3)

• there he was as preest Eremyte in a
chapel (dd 3v/10)

• she answerd hym shortelye (dd 3v/15)

• Lo ye al englyssh men see ye not what
a myschyef here was / for he that was
the moost kyng and knyght of the
world and moost loued the felyshyp of
noble knyghtes / and by hym they
were al vpholden / Now myght not this
englyssh men holde them contente
wyth hym (dd 3v/27–32)

• Alas thys is a grete defaute of vs
englysshe men (dd 3v/34)
Fer there may no thynge plese vs noo terme And soo faryd the people at that tyme they were better plesyd with sir Mordred than they were with kyng Arthur with a grete nauye of shyppes and galeyes and Carryks to lade vp the lande no maner of knyghtes maulgre sir mordreds and alle his power and thryes he there swouned And thenne whan he awaked / he sayd / allas sir Gawayne my systers sone the man in the world that I loued moost my deth day is come I fele wellmust dye And thenne whan paper & ynke was broughte / thenne Gawayn was set vp systers sone unto the noble kyng Arthur this same day For a of a more nobler man myghte I not be slayne and he hath lete croune kym kyng to sende sir Gawayne praid the kynge for to sende syr Gawayn yelded vp the spyryte within douer Castel and there yet alle men maye see the sculle of hym at that tyme. for they were with the kynge Arthur shyppes. galeys & carryks vpon no maner knyghte syr Mordred & and thyes there he sir Gawayne deleted I moste loued my dethes daye I fele that I must thenne deleted systers sone that same day For of a hymself to sende syerre Gawayne betoke hys soule in to the hondes of oure lorde within the castel of Douer yet vnto this daye / alle
And then the Kyng lete serche all the
townes for his knyghtes (dd 5r/19–20)

by the see syde westward toward
Salysbury (dd 5r/25)

they of Kente Southsex and Surrey /
Estsex and of Southfolke (dd 5r/31–32)

So the kyng semed veryly that there
came syr Gawayne vnto hym (dd 5v/14–15)

god hath gyuen hem (dd 5v/23)

and ye fyghte as to morne with syre
Mordred / as ye bothe haue assygned
(dd 5v/26–28)

for a moneth day (dd 5v/34)

the kyng . . . charged them wyghtly to
fetche his noble lorde (dd 6r/1–3)

the kyng tolde hem his auysyon
(dd 6r/4)

syr Lucan de butlere (dd 6r/7)

two bysshoppes wyth hem (dd 6r/8)

mordred was agreyed for to haue . . .
kente by Arthures dayes After alle
Englonde after the dayes of kyng
Arthur (dd 6r/14–16)

and they see ony swerde drawen look
ye come on fyersly (dd 6r/23–24)

I in noo wyse truse hym (dd 6r/25)

so bothe hoostes dressyd hem to gyders
(dd 6v/2)

And kyng Arthur . . . sayd allas thys
vnhappy day & so rode to his partye
(dd 6v/3–4)

For there was but rasshyng & rydyng
sewyng and strykynge (dd 6v/6–7)

And then the kynge serched al tounes
(D 3v, r/35)

to (D 4r, l/5)
of deleted (D 4r, l/17)

So the kyng semyd that . . . vnto hym
veryly (D 4r, r/3–5)

them (D 4r, r/18)

them (D 4r, r/20)

ye deleted (D 4r, r/23–25)

a moneths daye (D 4r, r/35)

lyghȝly (D 4v, l/3)

told to them (D 4v, l/6)

the butler (D 4v, l/10)

wyth them (D 4v, l/12)

by kyng Arthurs dayes. and after the
dayes of kyngge Arthur / to haue all
Englonde to his obeyssaunce. (D 4v, r/9–13)

& they sawe (D 5r, l/2)

I deleted (D 5r, l/5)

them (D 5r, l/26)

And so he rode (D 5r, l/28)

rydynge. foynynge & (D 5r, l/33)
• no moo on lyue but two knyghtes that
one was Syr Lucan de butlere & his
broder Syr Bedvere (dd 6v/19–21)
• Good lord remembre ye of your
nyghtes dreme (dd 6v/32–33)
• For here we ben thre on lyne / and
(dd 6v/36–37)
• on lyue (dd 6v/37–38)
• Tyde me deth betyde me lyf sayth the
kyng (dd 7r/1)
• syr bedwere (dd 7r/4)
• he ranne vntyl hym (dd 7r/7)
• And right so he smote his fader Arthur
wyth his swerde holden in bothe his
handes (dd 7r/12–13)
• syr Lucan de butlere (dd 7r/17–18)
• And syr Lucan de butlere and syr
Bedwere ofttymes heue hym vp
(dd 7r/17–18)
• what bytokenes that noyse in the felde
(dd 7r/23)
• myn hede werches soo (dd 7v/1)
• syr Lucan fyl in a sowne wyth the lyste
that the parte of his guttes fyl oute
(dd 7v/27–29)
• Now Ihesu haue mercy vpon hys soule
(dd 7v/7–8)
• goo with it to yonder water syde
(dd 7v/15)
• he behelde that noble swerde that the
pomel & the hafte was al of precyous
stones . . . yf I throwe this ryche
swerde in the water (dd 7v/26–29)
• Therefore goo thou lyghtelye ageyn
(dd 7v/35–36)
• but the waters wappe and wawes
wanne (dd 8r/5)
• thou . . . wold betraye me
(dd 8r/8–9)

alyue but two knyghtes.: That was
syr Lucan the butler & syr Bedwere his
brother
My good lord remembre well your
dreme thys nyghte
for here we ben thre a lyuetand
alyue
deth tyde me sayd
syr deleted
vnto
in deleted
de butlere deleted
heued hym vpp
what betokenyth
myn hede akyth
syr Lucan the knyte fell . . . that parte
of his guttes
on soule
vnto
swerde wherof & haft were al
in to the
ageyn deleted
water
woldest
...and thenne he threwe the swerde as farre in to the water as he myght

(dd 8r/16–17)

...and than vanysshed awaye (dd 8r/19)

...that water syde (dd 8r/24)

...emonge hem al was a quene

(dd 8r/26–27)

...Alas this wounde on your heed hath caught ouermoche colde

(dd 8r/33–34)

...I wyl in to the vale of auylyon to hele me of my greuous wounde

(dd 8v/2–3)

...but euer the quenes and ladyes wepte

(dd 8v/4–5)

...he sawe where laye an heremyte grouelyng on al foure there fast by a tombe was newe grauen

(dd 8v/13–15)

...bysshop of caunterburye that syr Mordred flemed

(dd 8v/16–17)

...here came a nombre of ladyes / and broughte hyder a deed cors / and prayed me to berye hym / and here they offeryd an hondred tapers and they gaf me an hondred besauntes

(dd 8v/20–23)

...Syr Lucan de butlere

(dd 8v/31)

...Thus of Arthur I fynde neuer more wryton in bookes that ben auctorysed nor more of the veray certente of his deth herde I neuer redde

(dd 8v/36–ee lr/1)

...thus was he ledde aweye in a shyppe wherein were thre quenes / that one was kyng Arthurs syster quene Morgan le fay

(ee lr/1–3)

...yet the heremyte knewe not in certayn that he was verayly the body of kyng Arthur

(ee lr/13–15)

...swerde in to the water as fër as he my3te

(D 6r, r/22–24)

...And so

(D 6r, r/27)

...that waters syde

(D 6r, r/35)

...them

(D 6r, r/39)

...taken

(D 6v, l/8)

...for to hele

(D 6v, l/19)

...euer more

(D 6v, l/22)

...was deleted

(D 6v, l/39)

...syr Mordred banysshyd

(D 6v, r/2)

...aambre of a ladyes. / whyche broughte a deed corps
tapers. and gaue me

(D 6v, r/9–13)

...syr Lucan the butlere

(D 6v, r/27)

...Thus of Arthur I fynde no more wryten in my copy. of the certente of his deth.

(D 6v, r/35–37)

...in a barge

(D 6v, r/37–40)

...quene deleted

(E lr, l/16)
thys tale syr Bedwer knyght of the made it playnly to be wryton
table rounde made it to be wryton

(ee lr/15–16)

Yet somme men say

(Som men yet say)

(ee lr/17)

& so they lyuyd in theyr prayers & And so they liued in prayer &
fastynges & qrete abstynence / and
than quene Gueneuer unterstood that
kny3tes syr Mordred & al the
remenaunte / Than the quene stale

(Than the quene stale)

(EEE lr/26–30)

Than was syr Launcelot wroth oute of
mesure and

(syr Launcelot very wrothe &)

(ee lv/9–10)

now me repenteth that euer he escaped

(I repête that)

(ee lv/11–12)

my handes

(ee lv/33–36)

for alle I fele by the doleful letter that
my lord syr Gawayn sente me / on
whos soule Ihesu haue mercy / that my
lord Arthur is ful harde bestadde

(wyte ye well)

(ee lv/13–15)

wyt you wel

(E lv, 1/17)

in an vnhappy houre was I borne that

I wretche sholde

(ee lv/22–23)

euer I shold haue that vnhappe to slee

fyrst deleted

(E lv, 1/11–14)

fyrst syr Gawayn syr Gaheris

(my lady deleted)

(ee lv/31)

syr Launcelot spyrred of men of douer

(syr Launcelot enquered)

(EEE lv, 1/35–36)

where was kyng Arthur become

(my lady deleted)

(ee lv/36–37)

the peple tolde hym that he was slayn

(EEE lv, 1/38)

(EEE lv/38)

al they . . . had as moche flesshe /

(ale as they myghte ete)

fyysh Wyn & aale / & every man &

(who come wolde)

woman had xii pens come who wold

(ee 2r/11–13)

he . . . prayed hem to praye(ee 2r/14)

(they)

(ee 2r/19–20)

& also there was a /M/ knyghtes / &

the whole sentence deleted

eche of hem offred a pounde

(E lv, r/21)

made it playnly to be wryton

made it playnly to be wryton

(EE lr/18–19)

Som men yet say

(Som men yet say)

(E lr, 1/24)

And so they liued in prayer &
there was come syr Galyhud / syr Galyhodyn / sir Blamour / syr Bleoberis (ee 3v/12—13)

than syr Launcelot took thabyte of preesthode of the bysshop (ee 3v/18—19)

they toke no regarde of no worldly rychesses / . . . in prayers & fastynges (ee 3v/22—24)

vtnto almysbury (ee 3v/28)

Launcelot (ee 3v/32)

ye made you redy (ee 3v/35—36)

in heryng of hem al (ee 4r/8—9)

an holy oryson (ee 4r/18)

syr Launcelot & his eyght felowes wente on foot from almysburye vnto glastynburye (ee 4r/19—20)

the heremyte that somtyme was bysshop of canterburye säge the masse (ee 4r/22—23)

syr Launcelot was the fyrst that offeryd / & than al his eyght felowes (ee 4r/24—25)

& after she was put in a webbe of leed & than in a coffyn of marbyl (ee 4r/27—28)

For whan I remembre of hir beaulte & of hir noblesse / that was bothe wyth hyr kyng & wyth hyr / So whan I sawe his corps & hir corps so lye togyders / truly myn herte wold not serue to susteyne my careful body (ee 4r/34—38)

for whan I remembre & calle to mynde her beate / bounte & noblesse / that was aswel wyth her kyng my lord Arthur. as wyth her. And also whanne I sawe the corses of that noble kinge & noble quene so lye togyder in that colde graue made of erthe / that somtyme were so hyely set in moste honourable places / truly myn hert wolde not serue to susteyne my wretchyd & careful body. (E 3v, 1/30—40)

[sig. E 2 wanting in de Worde]

.vi. yeres (E 3r, 1/15)
sir Blamour deleted (E 3r, 1/6—7)
of the bysshop deleted (E 3r, 1/17)

rychesse in prayer fastynge (E 3r, 1/24—27)
to (E 3r, 1/34)
syr Launcelot (E 3r, 1/41)
ye made ye redy (E 3r, 8/18)
them (E 3r, r/26)
an holy & deuowte oryson (E 3v, 1/2)

vntyll they came to Glastynbury (E 3v, 1/5—6)

that was somtyme bysshop (E 3v, 1/10)

And thenne offred all hys eyght (E 3v, 1/13—15)

And thenne & after in (E 3v, 1/18—19)
• they were both layed ful lowe that
tere were pereles that euer was lyuyng of
cristen people (ee 4v/1–2)

• this remembred of their kyndenes and
myn vnkyndenes sanke so to myn herte
that I my3t not susteyne my self
(see 4v/3–5)

• Thēne syr Launcelot neuer after ete
but lytel mete nor dranke tyl he was
dede (ee 4v/7–8)

• and lytel he dranke that he was waxen
by a kybbet shorter (ee 4v/10–11)

• euermore day & ny3t he prayed bnt
somtyyme he slombred a broken slepe /
euer he was lyeng grouelyng on the
tombe of kyng Arthur & quene
Gueneuer (ee 4v/12–14)

That they were bo[the] ayed full lowe
whyche were perles that euer were
lyuyngge (E 3v, r/1–3)
sanke and emprest so to my hert. that
all my strenge naturall fayled me. so
that I myghte not susteyne myselfe.
(E 3v, r/4–9)

mete. ne dranke. but contynuelly
morned vntyll he was deed.
(E 3v, r/15–18)

woxen thenne by (E 3v, r/23)

but nedefully as nature requyred
somtyyme he slombred a broken slepe.
And euer he was lyenge grouelynge: on
kynge Arthurs & quene Gweneuers
tombe. (E 3v, r/25–30)

O ye myghty & pompous lorde shynyng in the glory
transytory of thys vnstable lyf / as in regynyng euer
reames. grete & myghte countries. fortified wyth
stronge castels & tounes / edified with many a ryche
cite. Ye also ye fyers & myghty chyalers so valyaute
in auentourous dedes of armes: Behold beholde: se
how this myghty conquerour Arthur / whom in his
humayne lyf / all the worlde doubted / ye also this
noble quene Gueneuer / that som tyme sate in her
chare aourned wyth golde. perle & precious stones:
now lye ful lowe in obscure fosse or pytte couered
wyth cloddes of erth & clay C Beholde also this
myghty chapyon Laacelot / pyerles of knyghtode: se
now how he lyeth grouelynge on the colde mould.
now beynge so feble & faynt that somtyme was so
terrible: how & in what manere oughte ye to be so
desyrus of the mondayñ honour so daungerous.
Therfor me thynketh this present boke callid La mort
darthur is ryght necessary often to be radde. for in it
shal ye fynde the gracious kny3tly and vertuous
werre of moost noble knyghtes of the worlde / wherby
they gate praysyng contynuell. Also me semyth by the
oft redyng therof. ye shal gretly desyre tacustome
yourself in folowyng those gracous knyghtly dedes.
That is to saye / to drede god / & loue ryghtwisnes /
faythfully & courageously to serue your souerayne
prynce. And the more that god hath geuen you the
tryumfall honour / the meker ye oughte to be / euer
feryng the vnstablynnesse of this dysceyuable worlde./
And so I passe ouer / & torn agaynne to my matere.

(E 3v, r/34—4r, 1/36)

• ye shal be wel mended by the grace of
god
  (ee 4v/23)
• wyt you wel
  (ee 4v/24)
• he fyl vpon a grete laughter
  (ee 4v/37)
• they founde hym starke dede . . . the
  swettest sauour aboute hym that euer
  they felte
  (ee 5r/11—12)
• all the ix knyghtes
  (ee 5r/15)
• vij yere
  (ee 5r/27)
• he alyght & put his hors from hym
  (ee 5r/31—32)
• there he sawe men synge wepe
  (ee 5r/32—33)
• than wente syr Bors vnto syr Ector
  (ee 5r/33—34)
• whan he waked it were harde ony
  tonge to telle the doleful complayntes
  (ee 5r/37—38)
• kyng Costantyn wold haue had them
  wyth hym
  (ee 5v/27)
• Ihesu Cryst was quycke & deed
  (ee 5v/34)
• I praye you all lentyl men and lentyl
  wymmen that rede	heth this book
  (ee 6r/3—4)
• I am on lyue
  (ee 6r/6)
for this book was ended the ix yere of
the reygne of kyng edward the fourth
(see 6r/8–9)

for this translaçon of this boke was
fynysshed ix yere of the reygne of
kynge Edwarde the fourth
(E 5v, r/11–13)

Colophon

whyche book was reduced in to englysshe
by syr Thomas Malory knyght as afore
is sayd / and by me deuyded in to xxi
bookes chapytred and enprynted / and
fynysshed in thabbey westmestre the last
day of Juyl the yere of our lord / M /
CCCC / lxxxv / (ee 6r/17–21)

Whyche boke was reduce[d] in to .xxl.
bokes chapitred. & enprynt[ed] fyrst
by Wylliam Caxton / on wh[ose] soule
god haue mercy. And newel[y]
prynted. and chapitres of the sa[m]
brisshed at Westmestre by Wynk
[y de] Worde the yere of our lord.
.M. [CCCC] .lxxxviii. and ended the
.xxv [. . . .] Marche. the same yere.
(E5v, r/27–37)

Notes

4. All the citations from the Pierpont copy will be from the facsimile version of Caxton's Le Morte Darthur (London: Scholar Press, 1976).
5. All the citations from W. de Worde's edition of 1498 will be from the facsimile version of the John Rylands copy.

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