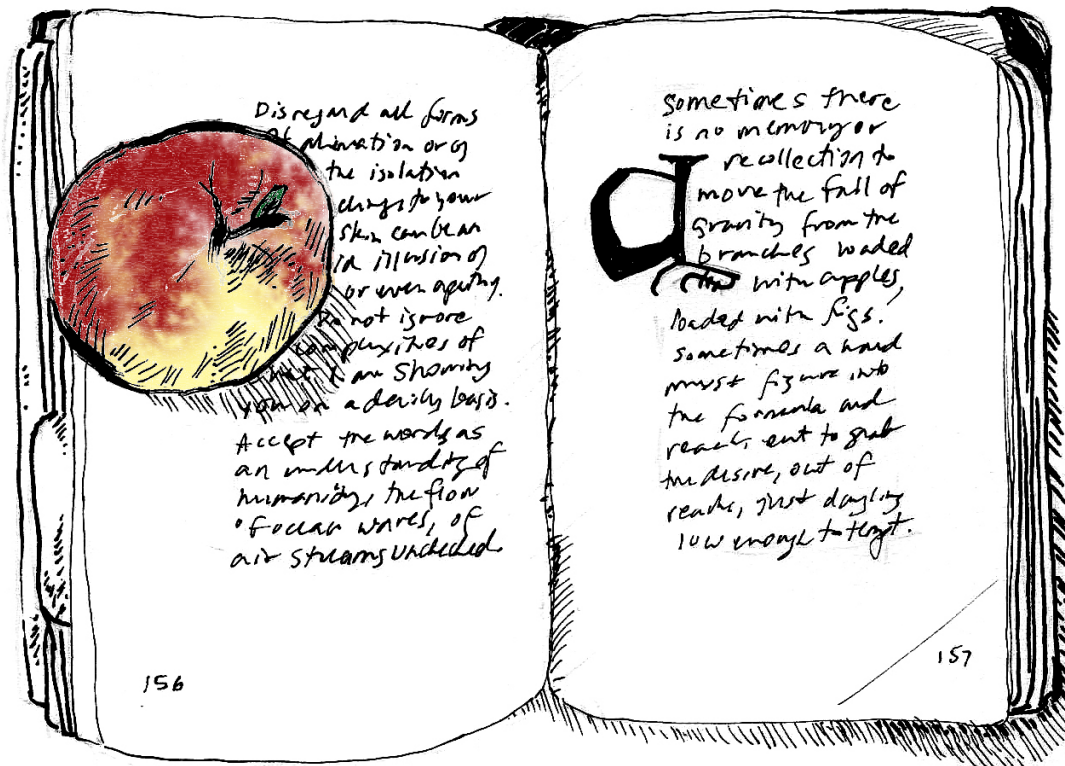


# Tales of King Arthur— part 3

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# *Sir Thomas Malory*

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**Jumping forward three hundred years, Thomas Malory began creating an elaborate detailed account of the fabled king.**

As with Marie de France and Geoffrey of Monmouth, scant biographical details exist, resulting in discussion and speculation of his true identity.

- traditionally it is believed he was once a member of Parliament, his full name and title being: Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revell
- the second most likely candidate is Thomas Malory of Papworth; the editors of *Longman* suggest “the latter had links to a rich collection of Arthurian books” (277).
- the work was drafted during the strife resulting from the Wars of the Roses when it is suggested Malory was imprisoned for an undisclosed crime
- originally titled *The Book of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* yet the publisher, William Caxton, changed the wording of the title and set it in French: *Le Morte D’Arthur*; it appeared in print by 1485

> visit: <http://faculty.goucher.edu/eng240/Parallel%20Lives.htm>

# *Sir Thomas Malory*

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**Malory based his stories on a large quantity of different sources.**

His material ranged from French, Welsh, German, and other European stories on the subject.

- Malory's collective resources shows how popular the story-cycle had become for all Europeans.
- John Matthews states: "Between the years 1200 and 1300 some of the most important Arthurian texts were composed in all of the major European languages" (xvii).

He also utilized the common English vernacular of the day: Late Middle English.

- for perspective, keep in mind that Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* was composed roughly a hundred years earlier at the end of the Thirteenth Century using what is termed Middle English
- what results therefore, Malory's writing sounds very close to what is considered Early Modern English

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Matthews, John. Ed. "Introduction." *Le Morte D'Arthur*. Sir Thomas Malory. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc. 2004. Print.

# *Sir Thomas Malory*

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**Malory's composition is considered one of the first English-based novels.**

Aside from its historical importance, Sir Malory's work stands out due to its approach of the subject and the diverse themes.

- an exploration of psychological development is shown for the characters
  - > does promote at times strong-willed female figures
  - > as well as examines the cultural definitions of a hero
- similarly to Marie de France, Sir Malory does examine the various types of love within the different tales presented: first infatuation, religious piety, loyalty to one's King, obsessive desire, devotion to marriage, friendship, lust
- the historical setting is England during the late Fifth Century, sometime during the early Anglo-Saxon period of English history

# *The Miracle of Galahad*

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**Today's reading comes from what is considered Book XVII of the Caxton edition, chapters xviii-xxiii.**

*The Longman* text follows the Eugene Vinaver publication discovered in 1974.

- see footnote 1 on page 279 for more information

Galahad, as a character, is a “late” development to the cycle of stories, appearing in various different French and English texts during the Thirteenth Century.

- he is represented as a pure knight with genuine spirituality and goals
- he performs various miracles throughout the course of his many adventures; more than one miracle occurs in this particular story alone
- he is the closest to a Christ-like symbol in the full sequence of events
- notice in “The Miracle of Galahad” the character’s celibacy is stressed—the third paragraph specifically points out that he is a virgin in rather poetic and elaborate metaphors

# *The Miracle of Galahad*

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## **Six miracles performed by Sir Galahad**

Title of story should be perhaps “The Miracles of Galahad”

- cures blindness of ancient King Mordrain
- purifies well
- puts out a perpetual fire in a crypt
- mends the broken sword
- heals a maimed knight
- cures a crippled man at the city of Sarras

Notice pattern number of three: Sir Galahad, Sir Pereval, and Sir Bors.

- After these three see the Holy Grail (Sankgreall) no other knight has been deemed worthy enough to experience the divine sight; the grail is removed back into heaven.

# The Miracle of Galahad

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## Sir Galahad is a contrast to his father Sir Lancelot.

Lancelot is an idealist, yet he cannot function with the purity of his son.

- Lancelot's greatest sin is his love for Guinevere, a married queen
- Galahad is an illegitimate son, a product of a liaison with Elaine of Corbenic, daughter of the Fisher King
- this results in another noted triad of importance

