

ELIZABETH ARCHIBALD and A.S.G. EDWARDS, eds. *A Companion to Malory*. Arthurian Studies XXXVII. Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 1996. Pp. xv, 262. ISBN: 0-85991-443-7 (hard), \$53. ISBN: 0-85991-520-4 (paper), \$29.

The essays in *A Companion to Malory* are intended, as its editors point out, to make 'Malory's achievement more accessible to modern readers' (p. xv). The book is divided into three parts: 'Malory in Context' (the book's background); 'The Art of the *Morte Darthur*' (critical essays); and 'Posterity' (the reception of Malory's book). A brief bibliography concludes the volume.

Carol Meale summarizes concisely (and well) the once volatile controversy over the book's unity and discusses the editorial procedures of Caxton and Vinaver. Richard Barber, after examining the development of ideals of chivalry, looks at their application in Malory's work. Elizabeth Edwards's discussion of the role of women in Malory's book notes particularly Guenevere's isolation from the Arthurian community. Felicity Riddy's 'Contextualizing *Le Morte Darthur*' presents a good survey of the earlier English Arthurian chronicle tradition and discusses its influence on Malory. Terence McCarthy's essay on Malory's sources also emphasizes Malory's indebtedness to English tradition and his techniques as an adapter. Jeremy Smith places Malory within the context of writers of English prose. P.J.C. Field gives a concise account of Malory's life and lists the documents that make up the Malory life-records.

Elizabeth Archibald presents an excellent introduction to Tales I and II, helping to clarify the often confusing muddle of Tale I, and she shows ways in which these tales prepare for later events in Malory's book. Similarly Barbara Nolan's account of the romance narratives of Lancelot and Gareth alerts the reader to the relevance of events in these tales (such as the friendship of Gareth and Lancelot) to the Arthurian tragedy. Helen Cooper does a good job of justifying Malory's inclusion of the *Tristram* and presents as an appendix an outline of the tale's often confusing structure. Jill Mann surveys Grail romances prior to Malory and discusses the themes of 'wholeness' and 'fragmentation' in Malory's story of the Grail and makes clearer ways in which the tale prepares for the tragic conclusion. C. David Benson presents a sensitive reading of the last two tales, noting particularly the importance of 'repentance, forgiveness, and salvation' as well as honor. A.S.G. Edwards' final essay on the 'reception' of Malory's book surveys early editions and the influence of Malory upon later writers.

Although the caliber of the essays is high, the book contains some questionable or erroneous statements. Carol Meale's essay should now be supplemented by Ingrid Tiekens-Boon van Ostade's recent *The Two Versions of Malory's 'Morte Darthur'* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), a book that probably appeared too late for Meale to consider. In arguing that Caxton's edition was derived directly from the Winchester manuscript, Tiekens-Boon van Ostade makes questionable the belief of Meale (and others) that in a number of instances 'the Caxton print clearly retains better readings' (11). McCarthy's statement that the Post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin* was written 'to provide a better link with the third branch of the [Vulgate] cycle, the *Prose Lancelot*' is incorrect (75); the *Suite* was written as part of another cycle (recently edited by

Fanni Bogdanow and translated in the fourth and fifth volumes of the *Lancelot-Graal*, gen. ed. Norris J. Lacy [New York: Garland, 1995, 1996]) that had a different, shorter account of Lancelot. Moreover, the events from the Vulgate *Lancelot* incorporated into Malory's Tale VII are not from a 'lost' version of the *Lancelot* (87) but are an adaptation of the *Lancelot's* account of Guenevere's abduction by Meleagant. Malory's having his characters speak in unison is not, as Smith implies, a peculiarly Germanic trait (102-3); it can be found in such French authors as the chroniclers Froissart, Geoffroi de Villehardouin and Jean de Joinville. Cooper's statement that Malory decided 'to bring the whole story of Lancelot and Elaine within the larger structure of the *Book of Sir Tristram*' (193) implies a more active role for Malory in this adaptation than is warranted: this story had been incorporated into a number of the *Prose Tristan* manuscripts, and that is probably where Malory found it. A.S.G. Edwards's statement that Malory's work became 'a text for the scholarly community, in the editions of Sommer (1889-91) and Vinaver (1929), and the latter's subsequent edition...in 1947' (243) reads as if Vinaver had produced an edition in 1929 and indicates the loss of a phrase such as 'the critical study by Vinaver (1929)' at some stage in the production of the book.

The flaws, however, are minor. The distinguished contributors' essays, both in their surveys of earlier work and in their presentations of new insights, will be valuable to students of Malory and will inspire further work on *Morte Darthur*. As one reads the essays, moreover, one is impressed by the extent to which Derek Brewer's work over the past forty years has altered the way we view Malory's achievement. The editors have quite appropriately dedicated the collection to him.

EDWARD DONALD KENNEDY
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill