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## ‘ME LYTE NAT THEREOF MAKE NO MENCION’: MALORY AND THE PLEASURE OF READING

### Abstract

Taking into account Wolfgang Iser’s “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach” this paper focuses on the ‘unwritten parts’ of Malory’s *Morte Darthur*, parts which generate the frustration of the reader’s expectations and make him / her “fill in the gaps left by the text itself.” As Malory’s principal interest lies in knighthood and kingship rather than in love, his ‘unwritten parts’ have to do with the private matters and spaces of his protagonists. The particular points at which Malory’s text produces frustration for the reader are those when long-lasting and intricate quests come to an end and the Round Table fellowship returns to Camelot. As a rule, such occasions are marked by lavish feasts, which Malory always describes in a similar way, as plenteous and joyful, full of cheerful voices and resounding laughter. His sentences run smoothly reinforcing the reader’s thoughts of a ‘continuation’ because, after weeks and months of perilous adventures, the reader expects to spend some time in Camelot and learn about its inhabitants’ ways, mutual relations and everyday activities. Malory, however, refuses to be more specific on that and constantly thwarts such expectations by introducing sudden twists and turns which bring his narration back to the familiar ground of knightly quests. As “no author worth his salt will ever attempt to set the whole picture before his reader’s eyes,” it will be argued that by refraining from giving ‘the whole picture’ Malory shows as the author particularly careful about

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activating his readers' imagination because "literary texts transform reading into a creative process that is far above mere perception of what is written".

**Key words:** Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, Wolfgang Iser, reading process, filling gaps

In his well-known essay "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" Wolfgang Iser claims that "in considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text" and that "the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the aesthetic to the realization accomplished by the reader" (Iser 1972: 279). The act of reading is here considered to be of crucial importance because "it causes the literary work to unfold its dynamic character" (Iser 1972: 280) as it sets in motion the reader's imagination whose task is to actively participate in the creation of meaning. The literary work itself never presents the reader with a complete picture, but rather calls for his or her involvement with what Iser calls the "unwritten" part of a text: "A literary text must [...] be conceived in such a way that it will engage the reader's imagination in the task of working things out for himself, for reading is only a pleasure when it is active and creative" (Iser 1972: 280). For Iser, reading is a process of anticipation and retrospection because "every sentence contains a preview of the next and forms a kind of viewfinder for what is to come; and this in turn changes the "preview" and so becomes a "viewfinder" for what has been read" (Iser 1972: 284). This process, however, never runs smoothly:

If one regards the sentence sequence as a continual flow, this implies that the anticipation aroused by one sentence will generally be realized by the next, and the frustration of one's expectations will arouse feelings of exasperation. And yet literary texts are full of unexpected twists and turns, and frustration of expectations. Even in the simplest story there is bound to be some kind of blockage, if only for the fact that no tale can ever be told in its entirety. Indeed it is only through inevitable omissions that a story will gain its dynamism. Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for

establishing connections – for filling in the gaps left by the text itself. (Iser 1972: 284–5)

When Lancelot is trapped in Queen Guinevere's chambers in the tragic eighth tale of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, the author refuses to specify what was going on between Arthur's best knight and his queen the moment Mordred, Aggravayne and their fellow conspirators expose the affair by shouting insults in front of the queen's door: "For, as the Freynshe booke seyth, the quene and Sir Launcelot were togydirs. And whether they were abed other at other maner of disportis, me lyste nat thereof make no mencion, for love that tyme was nat as love ys nowadayes".<sup>1</sup> At this crucial point in the work Malory is supposed to be precise, but he refuses to come anywhere near his principal source – *The Stanzaic Morte Arthur* – which unhesitatingly claims that Lancelot and Guinevere were "abed" (*The Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, lines 1806–7). Apart from Lancelot's confessions in the Grail quest, until this moment in the final tale of *Le Morte Darthur* not many occasions actually called for a precise definition of the nature of relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere, so Malory was either silent or at best ambiguous about it. And as everybody knows, the affair began after Arthur's victorious return to Britain from the Roman campaign, when mutual liking between Lancelot and Guinevere is noted for the first time in the opening lines of *Sir Launcelot du Lake*.

So this Sir Launcelot encesed so mervaylously in worship and honoure, therefore he is the fyrste knyght that the Freynsh booke makyth mencion of aftir Kynge Arthure com frome Rome. Wherefore Quene Gwenyvere had hym in grete favoure aboven all other knyghtis, and so he loved the quene agayne aboven all other ladyes dayes of his lyff, and for hir he dud many dedys of armys and saved her frome the fyre thorow his noble chevalry. (190.12–18)

It is generally acknowledged that Malory's principal interest lies in knighthood and kingship rather than in love (Kennedy 1992: 2; Field 1971: 86) but *Le Morte Darthur* is also a romance, or as Kevin S. Whetter calls it "tragic romance," whose "most important elements are the role and prominence of ladies; the role and prominence of love; and the role and

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by P. J. C. Field, 2 vols (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), 874.6–10. All subsequent citations are parenthetical to this edition, citing page and line.

prominence of adventure” (Whetter 2008: 64). While a myriad of ladies – famous as well as nameless – inhabit Malory’s world and adventure is at the core of his *Arthuriad*, love is a less prominent topic, although, somewhat paradoxically, it has a disastrous impact on the destiny of King Arthur’s realm. And it is not just love which is toned down – the same can be said of private matters and spaces of Malory’s protagonists. This of course is to be attributed to two simple and interrelated facts: first, a romance is not a novel: it deals with public rather than private life; and second, Malory’s time predates the rise of modern subjectivity and the notion of privacy as strictly divided from the public sphere. Modern subjectivity and the notion of privacy, writes Francis Barker in *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (1984: 11), do not appear before the birth of a bourgeois society in the seventeenth century:

The broad process of transition from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production (which, unlike the political transformation, cannot be dated with chronometric precision) and the rise of the modern state provide the general co-ordinates within which the reformulation of the subjectivity appropriate to them can be mapped”. Barker also points out (1984: 15) a crucial significance of “Shakespeare’s transitional and contradictory *oeuvre*”, which “has played a major part in remaking the late feudal world in the image of the bourgeois settlement that grew up inside it, and eventually brought it down (Barker 1984: 14–15).

Although subjectivity and privacy were articulated for the first time in the bourgeois society, avid readers of Malory cannot help wondering what was going on between Lancelot and Guinevere in her chambers, not just on “the day of destiny” but throughout Malory’s long and intricate work. Also, more generally, they tend to wonder what King Arthur’s knights do when they are neither on quests nor in his Camelot banqueting-hall, how King Arthur himself spends time when neither waging a war nor feasting, and how ladies act when they are not in typical settings – presiding over a tournament or desperately waiting to be saved from a tyrant by King Arthur’s knights’ noble chivalry. Malory of course does not provide clues to these questions. In a ground-breaking essay Cathy Hume discusses Malory’s narrative gaps from the point of view of cognitive narratology or psychonarratology and provides some important insights:

Cognitive narratology shows that readers routinely construct inferences and make mental representations of fictional people and worlds in order to understand narratives. This is an extension of the way we all understand real-life people and events, creating mental models of one another, and inferring people's motives and goals as well as interpreting and filling out the meaning of the words they say out loud (Hume 2022: 92).

"Cognitive research suggests," writes Hume (2022: 94), "that readers approach fictional characters and events in a very similar way to real-life people and events". She also claims (2022: 96) that "making inferences is central to reading. All stories have gaps that need to be filled, missing information that must be supplied by the reader if the story is to be understood". For Hume (2022: 101), gaps "are a crucial part of readers' experience of the text" and "readers are motivated to read on in pursuit of an explanation" .

My essay will focus on the "unwritten parts" of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, parts which generate the frustration of the reader's expectations and make him / her "fill in the gaps left by the text itself." The particular points at which Malory's text produces frustration for the reader are those when long-lasting and intricate quests come to an end and the Round Table fellowship returns to Camelot. As a rule, such occasions are marked by lavish feasts, which Malory always describes in a similar way, as plenteous and joyful, full of cheerful voices and resounding laughter. His sentences run smoothly, reinforcing the reader's thoughts of a "continuation" because, after weeks and months of perilous adventures, he or she expects to spend some time in Camelot and learn about its inhabitants' ways, mutual relations and everyday activities. Malory, however, refuses to be more specific on that and constantly thwarts such expectations by introducing sudden twists and turns which bring his narration back to the familiar ground of knightly quests. "Where we have expectations", writes Iser (1972: 289), "there too we have one of the most potent weapons in the writer's armory – illusion", and proceeds: "Without the formation of illusions, the unfamiliar world of the text would remain unfamiliar; through the illusions, the experience offered by the text becomes accessible to us, for it is only the illusion, on its different levels of consistency, that makes the experience 'readable'" (1972: 290). In her discussion of how modern-day readers fill the gaps in Malory, Hume writes (2022: 101):

For a fuller understanding of how readers experience the *Morte*, we would need to find out more about the gaps readers experience and the inferences they generate as they read. This could be approached through experimental investigations of present-day readers. At what points in the text do they try to fill gaps? What strategies do they use to do so – do these involve reference to other texts, the rest of the *Morte*, or wider life experiences? How much do these inferences vary, and do they seem satisfactory to readers? What remains truly mysterious and puzzling?

While reading Malory's text, one is constantly required to fill in different kinds of gaps. Although readers' expectations always get thwarted in the same situation – after a closure of a long quest marked by a feast – the gaps that need to be filled differ thematically from tale to tale. In *King Uther and King Arthur* and *King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius* they have to do with the beginnings of many threads of the story and the formation of various relations among characters, whereas in *Sir Launcelot du Lake*, *Sir Gareth of Orkney* and *Sir Tristram de Lyones* (The First and Second Book) they are about everyday life of Malory's chivalric society.<sup>2</sup> As events described in *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenivere* anticipate the final destruction of King Arthur's realm, quests marked by feasts are scarce and only far cries of the once happy days. In the sinister *Morte Arthur* both quests and feasts cease to exist.

As Malory's work starts to unfold, the reader feels drawn into the text and its dynamic course of events. Arthur is born within his parents' wedlock but raised in obscurity; after his father's death, he successfully pulls out the sword from the stone and is crowned king. This means that quests may begin and they do so in full force. However, the very first feast that King Arthur gives does not take place after a quest but rather after his coronation. Instead of the "grete love" Arthur expects from his vassals, he is faced with their disobedience and refusal to acknowledge him as their new king because they are unaware of his parentage. This awkward situation, notwithstanding Merlin's peacemaking efforts, leads to Arthur's first war which, after many arduous battles, ends in the cessation of hostilities. Arthur soon conceives two illegitimate sons – Borre and Mordred – and is united with his mother, Queen Igraine, which is a joyful occasion marked

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<sup>2</sup> *The Sancgreal* deals with celestial, rather than earthly, chivalry and will not be considered here.

by "a feste that lasted eyght dayes" (38.6–7). The feast, however, is soon left behind as Gryflet's quest begins, followed by a number of other incidents. When the reader is next brought to Camelot for a feast, Arthur is already married to Guinevere, but no sooner has the celebration started, than Merlin announces a new quest:

Than was thys feste made redy, and the kynge was wedded at Camelot unto Dame Gwenyvere in the chirche of Seynte Stephnys with grete solempnité. Than as every man was sette as hys degré asked, Merlyon wente to all the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table and bade hem sitte styll, "that none of you remeve, for ye shall se a straunge and a mervailous adventure. (81.12–17)

While the newlyweds and their guests are still at the table, "a mervailous adventure" begins the moment a white hart, a white brachet and thirty couples of hounds enter the hall and instigate a triple quest whose protagonists are Gawain, Tor and Pellinor. The quest clearly shows their knightly features, but the reader is left without a single detail concerning the bride and groom on their special day – how they felt about it, what they talked about, what were their plans and dreams. In the following episodes, after Arthur's success in the war with the five kings and narrow escape from death in the fight with Accolon, another triple quest starts off, turning the spotlight on Uwayne, Gawain and Marhalt. Just like the previous quest, this one also brings to light different kinds of knightly conduct; it closes *King Uther and King Arthur* too as the Round Table fellowship gathers in Camelot for the feast of Pentecost "at the twelve monthis ende" (142.23). Even though the second triple quest has lasted for a whole year, Malory neither remains long in Camelot nor provides details other than those concerning the knights' careers: he notes that Sir Marhalt and Sir Pelles have joined the Round Table fellowship and anticipates Marhalt's end in a future duel with Tristan.

The only feast in *King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius* opens the tale. It serves as a prelude to King Arthur's most successful warfare and provides a time frame for what follows: the Roman campaign takes place after the royal wedding and the arrival of Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristram to Camelot.

Peter Field rightfully claims that "Malory is not writing an ordinary romance. He is putting romance material into chronicle form" (Field 1971: 37). In Field's view, the form of chronicle explains Malory's terse prose style, devoid of what he calls "the pictorial element". He further claims

that “medieval romance is less descriptive than the average modern novel”, and that “the *Morte Darthur* in turn is less descriptive than most medieval prose romances” (Field 1971: 83). It is interesting to note that although Field’s *Romance and Chronicle* predates Iser’s study, Field also discusses such concepts as “expectations in the reader” and “filling in the causes and the details from our own imagination”. In Malory’s first two tales many expectations of his readers remain unfulfilled: they have not learned what Arthur’s foster childhood was like, what is the root of Morgan’s hostility towards her brother, how Arthur’s and Guinevere’s first meeting went, how and when Arthur’s friendship with Merlin began, how Arthur built Camelot and what it looked like (we know quite well, for example, what Bertilak’s court in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* looks like), to name just a few. These gaps have to do with the beginnings of so many things in Malory’s story and they strongly influence its continuations and endings, so, to paraphrase Peter Field, the reader’s own imagination supplies them. And they read on, just because they have not been given the whole story. If they were, in Iser’s words, “the result would be boredom which inevitably arises when everything is laid out cut and dried before us” (Iser 1972: 280).

Malory’s central *Tales* – *Sir Launcelot du Lake*, *Sir Gareth of Orkney* and *Sir Tristram de Lyones* – abound in quests which conventionally end when knights return to Camelot and King Arthur gives a feast to celebrate their brave deeds. But just like in the first two *Tales*, feasts in the central *Tales* are short intervals between two quests and even if they last longer than usual, they hardly ever offer insights into the courtly life outside the banqueting-hall. *Sir Launcelot du Lake* opens after a victorious Roman campaign, when “all the Knyghtys of the Rounde Table resorted unto the kynge and made many joustys and turnementes” (190.2–3), writes Malory, and turns his attention to Lancelot who “rested hym longe with play and game and than he thought hymself to preve in straunge adventures” (190.19–20). Malory of course does not specify how Lancelot spent a long period of rest, let alone how his fondness for the queen, unveiled early on in this tale, manifested itself. Lancelot’s long and intricate quest spreads throughout the tale and ends when he arrives in Camelot, two days before the feast of Pentecost. Everybody at court listens to the stories about his valorous deeds told by the knights who either met Lancelot and took part in some of his adventures, or were rescued by him. In the final lines the reader copes with the repetition and summarizing of events s/he has already been reading about, while the intricacies of daily life at court remain hidden from his/



her sight. The same applies to *Sir Gareth of Orkney*, the tale of Gawain's younger brother, who shows up disguised at King Arthur's Pentecost feast and, after serving in the Camelot kitchen for a year, goes on a long quest to rescue Lady Lionesse from a tyrant. Before Gareth's wedding feast which closes the tale, celebrating his love for Lady Lionesse and victory over the tyrant, Arthur holds a Pentecost feast to which come Gareth's defeated enemies with their retinues and the king grows amazed by the deeds of the knight whose true identity is yet unknown to him. The wedding feast itself is described in slightly greater detail, which in the case of Malory means just a sentence or two:

So than the kynge, quenys, pryncis, erlys, barouns, and many bolde knyghtes wente to mete; and well may ye wete that there was all manner of plenté and all maner revels and game, with all maner of mynstralsy that was used tho dayes. Also there was grete justys thre dayes, but the kynge wolde nat suffir Sir Gareth to juste, because of his new bryde; for, as the Freynsh boke seyth, that Dame Lyonesse desyred of the kynge that none that were wedded sholde juste at that feste. (287.11–18)

Malory's "habit of description in stock phrases," writes Field (1971: 85), "would seem to have been drawn not so much from the texts in front of him as from the combination of a chronicler's attitude to his story with the composition habits of spoken rather than written prose". ... "To some writers the physical realities which description conveys are an essential part of a story. Malory's book is very different" (Ibid). Field points to Chaucer, whose fabliaux are "masterly in their realisations of a concrete physical world" (Field 1971: 94).

The longest section of Malory's work, *Sir Tristram de Lyones*, is an array of quests rounded up by feasts. A geographically broader perspective than in the previous tales – as this one comprises both King Arthur's Logres and Tristram's Cornwall – makes it clear that feasts always lead to new quests; readers are also aware of what Barry Windeatt calls *Le Morte Darthur's* "marked disinclination to explore its characters' inner lives" (Windeatt 2021: 157) This section, however, offers an insight into the length of certain quests – for instance, an old knight has not seen his son Persedes for two years as Persedes was on a quest (406.10), and Lancelot swears upon "a boke" to go in search of Tristram even though the quest may last for a whole year (424.14–17).

What we learn of King Mark and la Beale Isode's wedding feast in Cornwall, taking place after Tristram's lengthy and intricate quest in which he and Isode fall in love, is no more than two sentences: "Than was there grete joustys and grete turnaynge, and many lordys and ladyes were at that feyste, and Sir Trystrames was moste praysed of all other. So thus dured the feste longe" (334.15–17). Right after the feast a new adventure begins as Isode's two waiting ladies attempt to have Bragwain killed by sending her to the forest. Another important occasion marked by a feast in this tale is Tristram's arrival in Camelot where he becomes a member of the Round Table fellowship: "And than Kynge Arthure made Sir Trystram a Knyght of the Rounde Table wyth grete nobeley and a feste as myght be thought" (453.18–19). But no sooner has he pointed out that Tristram took Sir Marhalt's seat at the Round Table, than Malory moves on with the story by using one of his favourite sentences: "So leve we Sir Trystram and turne we unto Kynge Marke" (453.28). Just like festive occasions, gloomy moments at King Arthur's court tend to be equally unaccounted for. After Tristram's reconciliation with King Mark in Camelot and their departure for Cornwall, Lancelot, Lamorak and Dinadan are reproachful of Arthur as King Mark is not to be trusted and they fear that Tristram's life is threatened: "So whanne Kynge Marke and Sire Tristram were departed from the courte there was made grete dole and sorowe for the departyng of Sir Tristram. Thenne the kynge and his knyghtes made no manere of joyes eyghte dayes after" (485.1–4). Of course, readers remain ignorant of how knights and ladies spend their time in Camelot if they make "no manere of joyes" for such a long time.

Strangely though, towards the end of *The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones*, Malory opens the doors of Camelot's private chambers and this proves to have disastrous consequences. Dame Elayne, with whom Lancelot has a son, Galahad, comes to Camelot for a great feast. In order to make sure Lancelot does not spend the night with Elayne, Queen Guinevere invites him to her chamber. For a reader, unaccustomed to scenes other than those in the Camelot feasting hall, this invitation comes as an outright disclosure of a whole world of secret designs and dangerous liaisons. Lancelot promises the queen to come, but soon gets played on by Dame Elayne's maid who cunningly tells him Queen Guinevere has sent for him and brings him right to Elayne's bed. But this is not all. Suspecting trouble, the queen orders that Dame Elayne be given a room next to hers, and late at night hears Lancelot talk in his sleep about how much he loves the queen. Almost

deranged with jealousy, Guinevere starts loudly coughing and so wakes up Lancelot who realizes he has been badly tricked. Rushing out of Elayne's chamber, he runs into Guinevere who fiercely rebukes him and banishes him from Camelot. Lancelot's unbearable pain turns into madness from which he will suffer for two years, before the Grail heals him.

Peter Field properly claims that Malory "is disinclined to be circumstantial at any time" and "shows us next to nothing of ... the details of daily life" (Field 1971: 89). This applies particularly well to the central tales which describe the peaceful and glorious period of Arthur's reign. In the time free from strife and campaigns, when the aims of knightly pursuits of adventure are achievement of fame, esteem and worship, the reader's expectations remain unrealized once again, as they have hoped to discover more about daily routine in Camelot – when knights and ladies get up, how often they attend mass, what is served for meals, what books they read, how else they amuse themselves, where they get provisions from, what the duties are of those knights who are representatives of local authorities, and many more. It is the task of a reader's imagination to supply them once again. But, on the other hand, Malory's way of writing is in absolute accord with Erich Auerbach's view:

All the numerous castles and palaces, the battles and adventures, of the courtly romances – especially of the Breton cycle – are things of fairyland: each time they appear before us as though sprung from the ground; their geographical relations to the known world, their sociological and economic foundations, remain unexplained (Auerbach 130).

The seventh tale, *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenivere*, only seemingly begins on a joyful note, as those who have survived the quest of the Sankgrail return to Camelot:

... than was there grete joy in the courte, and en especiall Kynge Arthure and Quene Gwenyvere made grete joy of the remenaunte that were com home. And passyng gladde was the kynge and the quene of Sir Launcelot and of Sir Bors for they had bene passsynge longe away in the queste of the Sankgreall. (790.5–9)

But things soon begin to change – Lancelot's visits to the queen become frequent and passionate as he abandons the Grail quest promises to refrain from sin and consequently makes his enemies in Camelot start gossiping.

Then, in order to divert their attention, he spends time in the company of other ladies, which of course infuriates the queen. When she invites Lancelot to her chambers to reproach him, the facticity and complexity of their relationship become clear. Lancelot does not deny his love for the queen, on the contrary. What he does is offer rational reasons for his behaviour – his failure in the Grail quest due to their affair, Camelot scandalmongers who observe them, and a fear that she might get into trouble if they are publicly exposed – but the queen refuses to listen to reason and banishes Lancelot from Camelot for a second time. Her weeping and insults, her jealousy and commanding attitude strike the reader as insights into the intricacies of the queen's character and, together with Lancelot's rationality, add up to a portrayal of a complicated and dangerous affair. A prelude to the fall of King Arthur's realm, the penultimate tale does not abound in feasts and celebrations. It does, however, end in a marriage, as Sir Lavayne marries Sir Urre's sister "with grete joy" (868.24), but Malory does not elaborate on that – he rather announces "The Moste Pyteuous Tale of the Morte Arthure saunz Guerdon" (869.14–15).

So, what are Malory's feasts to which readers turn for what Iser calls "continuations"? They are both closures of adventures and indications of new quests, not the chances to read or learn anything Malory does not want his readers to know or is not interested in himself. What he wants to say – he does say without hesitation: for instance, Tristan is found in bed with Sir Segwarydes' wife and later with Isode; Queen Morgawse is found naked in bed with Lamorak, but Lancelot is not found in bed with Guinevere, at least not until the seventh tale, in which a denial of their affair is no longer possible. And even then it happens far from Camelot, in Sir Mellyagaunte's castle, because Malory seems to have realized that disclosing Camelot's private spaces proves to be dangerous, to say the least. Every time he opens the door of the queen's chambers – towards the end of the fifth tale and early on in the seventh – adultery becomes manifest and Lancelot is banished from the court as a result of the queen's jealousy. Perhaps Malory leaves it to his readers to decide what Lancelot and Guinevere did when the conspirators caught them together because it is simply too embarrassing to acknowledge that adulterous lovemaking takes place in Camelot, the court which Muriel Whitaker (1984: 84) calls "the archetypal centre of chivalric milieu". The fact that Malory leaves it to his readers to fill in other kinds of gaps is a sign that he is careful about activating their imagination and that his is what Iser calls a "truly literary

text" (1972: 283). *Le Morte Darthur* is "a Structure of Majestick Frame", to use Alexander Pope's phrase (*The Rape of the Lock*, Canto III, 3), not just because King Arthur, his court and knights are unique, majestic, sublime, yet fragile and finite, but also because, in Iser's words, our "expectations are scarcely ever fulfilled" (Iser 1972: 283 ) and we read on nonetheless, as Hume points out (2022: 101), "in pursuit of an explanation".

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