

***Sites of Arthur: Mythic quests for cultural identity and
value***

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For William Edmund Richardson and Thomas Charles Earl.

“Marvellous!”

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The approach of Phil Mogg, lead vocalist for *UFO*, had always appealed to me. As the guitarist Michael Schenker spent time self-indulgently writing to celestial spirits and saviours, Mogg would simply say:

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Acknowledgements: Part II

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Abstract

From the *Gododdin* to Gary Hughes, from Sir Thomas Malory to Bernard Cornwell, from Tintagel Castle to the Camelot Theme Park, the Arthurian myth has continued to exert a fascination and pull over the centuries. Different interpretations are appropriated by different cultures, subcultures and individuals as a marker of distinction, yet they find themselves tied to the dominant chivalric myth even when positioning themselves against this form of Arthur.

This thesis looks at the cultural-historical conditions that result in certain Arthurian texts being valued more highly than others, and argues that contrary to Barthes's assertion of 'The Death of the Author', Foucault's author function allows for an understanding as to why the Romance chivalric version of the myth as exemplified by Malory has come to be dominant.

By showing how Arthurian signifiers are 'floating signifiers' that allow meanings to be contested at any one time according to the taste-cultures concerned, this thesis looks at how the Arthurian myth is appropriated as a means of distinction for cultures, subcultures, and individuals. This contest over meanings sees different sections of society attempting to naturalise and value certain interpretations of the Arthurian myth as 'authentic' in order to legitimate their own taste-culture.

Drawing on Bourdieu's notions of Cultural and Symbolic Capital, and Fields of Production, it is possible to look at how the Arthurian myth is used to naturalise the position-taking strategies of both producers and consumers. Analysis consists not only of certain representative 'Sites of Arthur', but also of inter-texts surrounding these works, and audience research in relation to specific case studies. The thesis focuses not only on the response within the cultural fields themselves, but also at how Arthur is appropriated by those outside of the respective fields, and looks at the cultural contexts in which Arthur is sited.

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Introduction: Siting Arthur

March 3rd 1997. There was a time, not so long ago, when I could virtually quote verbatim every line of John Boorman's *Excalibur* (1981). Quite why this was so was difficult to explain. For some reason, its heavily stylized cinematography struck a chord with me, along with its dramatic use of Wagner and dry ice to achieve a powerful representation of the inevitable tragedy that was to follow. To like this film felt *right*.

August 14th 1999. My Mother has never liked flying, which meant that holidays either entailed an overlong coach journey across Europe, or we stayed in Britain. As soon as I was old enough I stopped going, but their choice of destination for this year intrigued me. I'd always liked ruins, the space they left for my imagination to drift allowed me to daydream of a society long gone, and wonder how we'd reached the point we had now. A visit to Glastonbury, with its famous Abbey, seemed a chance for me to escape the humdrum world of work and bills. Once there, it struck me as odd that so many shops in the town had an Arthurian theme. Also, as far as I could see, Arthur had very little relevance to the sites I was visiting anyway. Even stranger to me was the idea of Arthur's grave. How, after all, could a myth be buried?

May 31st 2001. My lunch hour is usually spent looking for information. Today, I'm eagerly anticipating a number of possible upcoming albums from the pen of Gary Hughes, singer for the rock band *Ten*. "Don't forget we have got the Arthurian concept album coming from Gary" is the message that flashes on to my screen from Tez Durrant, webmaster of the unofficial *Ten* website www.tenofthebest.com.

"Why Arthur?" I thought. It's not like tales of Arthur are uncommon. As I sat there mulling it over, it seemed an unusual choice for a musician who put great store in his individuality, and in a musical genre that values creativity.

Why Arthur indeed. As a result of this rather basic question, a number of slightly more complex questions started to build in my mind:

- Why did I have a particular impression of Arthur that came into my mind?

- Why did this impression of Arthur seem right to me, seem *natural*, and was there any wider context to my interpretation of Arthur, was it related to any one ‘dominant’ reading that had lodged in my mind?
- Why does the interpretation of Arthur differ from story to story and was there a reason why modern day authors would choose to re-tell a story that has been told countless times before, and will doubtlessly be told countless more times in the future?
- Why had this myth seemed to last for so long and why did Arthur still appear to hold cultural value, so long after his first appearance?
- Why was I, almost without realising, surrounded by Arthurian matter in my everyday life? This thought was to crystallise in my mind a while later as a van for *Avalon Cleaners* drove past me.
- What are the significations of Arthur in any particular cultural instance, and are these significations stable?
- Why wasn’t my interest (and eventual excitement) at the thought of Hughes’s new album matched by my friends? Conversely, why were there other people who shared my enthusiasm?

Armed with these questions, a PhD proposal began to take shape, and has slowly but surely developed into the thesis in front of you.

Siting This Thesis

This thesis is not restricted to an analysis of popular literature. Indeed, those expecting to find in-depth analyses of contemporary popular literary texts such as Marion Zimmer Bradley’s *Mists of Avalon* (1983) will be sorely disappointed. If Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott speak of various “texts of Bond” (1987: 19) where James Bond is “the signifier which floats between and connects” (*ibid*) these texts, here I look at ‘Sites of Arthur’. These are not purely physically located geographical sites (although on occasion this may well be part of their make-up), but are cultural sites also. In this sense, the cultural sites can be the Arthurian sites themselves, yet also the inter-textual material which attempts to construct a reading formation. Bennett and Woollacott conceive of a reading formation as consisting of:

The inter-textual relations which prevail in a particular context, thereby activating a given body of texts by ordering the relations between them in a specific way such that their reading is always-already cued in specific directions that are not given by those 'texts themselves' as entities, separable from such relations (1987: 64).

Although this thesis has a wide ranging scope, a decision was taken to focus on sites of Arthur that had in the main escaped significant analysis. As such, it was important for me to re-position myself relative to studies such as those by Alan and Barbara Lupack (1999), Peter H. Goodrich and Raymond H. Thompson (2003) and James Noble (1994) who have, albeit from a literary studies angle, looked at popular contemporary texts from the likes of Bradley, Stephen Lawhead, and Mary Stewart. In this respect, I site my own work by attempting to move beyond "the canon of highly valued [Arthurian] texts" (Couldry 2000a: 70), yet also make a challenge to the "apparent obviousness of treating the book, or play, or poem, as the basic unit of analysis" (*ibid*). This challenge is formed not only in terms of a philosophy of the text as sole site of meaning, but also sees me move away from high cultural textual sites, and the tendency to value the literary genre above other textual sites.

Moreover, it is worth noting that this dissertation cites many critical texts, and seeks to locate for itself a position within academia. Pierre Bourdieu cautions against a "naive citology" (1993: 139), which Derek Robbins reviews as "a device used by authors who are seeking to raise the status of their own perceptions by association with that already accorded to 'established' thinkers" (Robbins 1991: 2). Bourdieu warns against citing authors "to the point where they have become intimate adversaries determining his [in this instance the academic's] thinking and imposing on him both the shape and substance of conflict" (Bourdieu 1993: 139). Ironically, it is Bourdieu's own work on cultural fields that offers an explanation as to why it is necessary to cite previous academic sources.

Bourdieu's work on cultural fields looks at "the wider social and political consequences" (Couldry 2003a: 655) of the creation of cultural texts. A 'field of production' is one where there is a:

Network of objective relations between positions [that] subtends and orients the strategies which the occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to defend or improve their positions (i.e. their position-takings), strategies which depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations (Bourdieu 1993: 30).

Bourdieu analyses how each cultural field has its own individual markers of value and prestige (cf Couldry 2003a: 657). The academic study of culture is, to Bourdieu, a field where “intellectual renown constitutes the only kind of capital and profit” (1988: 74) specific to this particular field.

As such, to be aware of the rules of the academic game is not to engage in ‘naive citology’, nor to blindly accept the viewpoints and theories of one’s predecessors: “fields are, to a large extent... constituted precisely by struggles over these positions, which often take the form of a battle between established producers, institutions and styles, and heretical newcomers... [where] these *position-takings* by newcomers restructure and recreate the relevant sub-field and field” (Hesmondhalgh 2006: 215-216). Therefore, to cite previous critical texts is not a sign of naivety, but rather a sign that I occupy a position in the academic field equivalent to my status as a newcomer. It is not just me who is aware of this, but also my academic readers (cf Bourdieu 1988: 24). As such, it is necessary for me to take part in this “field of positions and... position-takings” (Bourdieu 1993: 34) to make space for my own critical interpretation of Arthur by modifying, and in some cases attempting to displace, the possible theoretical positions open to me (cf Bourdieu 1993: 32). As Matt Hills argues, “it is only by assessing the uses and limits of previous theories that we can begin to write our own cultural theory, applying but also refining established concepts” (2005: 114).

In seeking my own position, a brief look at the previous research into Arthurian matter shows a gap waiting to be filled. The likes of Stephen Knight (1983), Laurie Finke and Martin B. Schichtman (2004) and James Merriman (1973) have tried to explain the cultural-historical background to canonical Arthurian texts. Elizabeth Sklar and Donald L. Hoffman’s edited collection *King Arthur In Popular Culture* (2002) reviews contemporary interpretations of Arthur yet, with the honourable exception of Elizabeth Sklar’s opening essay, there is precious little analysis on offer,

tending more to reviews of the material available. Many of the essays in Sklar and Hoffman's collection show how academic analysis of popular Arthuriana faces "opposition from an academic canon suspicious of material too generally available" (Brottman 2005: xi). That attempts are made to contain sites of Arthur deemed appropriate for analysis is not surprising. As Will Brooker argues in his analysis of Batman, such "ambiguous... characters... lead directly to the perceived necessity on the part of the 'dominant' controllers of meaning to limit and direct the characters' signification at various key points in its history" (Brooker 2000: 10).

In citing work, it is important not to merely strive for a position within the field of Arthurian academia, but also to take note of work that can offer useful theoretical insights into an analysis of Arthur. An interdisciplinary approach has been important to ensure that I do not just rely on a literary studies perspective to Arthurian texts. This approach ensures that traditional barriers between academic disciplines are not re-affirmed and, as Tazim Jamal and Hyounggon Kim argue, "we need to decenter taken-for-granted understandings and find new ways to understand how people, places and pasts are envisioned, represented and sustained" (2005:77). In this respect, texts that look at cultural icons such as Cynthia Erb's *Tracking King Kong* (1998), Will Brooker's *Batman Unmasked* (2000), and particularly Bennett and Woollacott's *Bond and Beyond* (1987) have offered key insights. However, these texts focus on icons that can only trace their lineage back a comparatively few years. For these texts that hold popular currency their popular, commodified origins are still readily apparent. Whilst Brooker engagingly discusses the battle over queer readings of Batman, the dominant taste culture of academia attempts to prevent the popular valorisation of Arthur by re-iterating the cultural worth of certain key, canonical Arthurian texts.

In terms of British icons who have permeated culture to such a degree, only Robin Hood comes close to mirroring Arthur. Stephen Knight's *Robin Hood* closely parallels this study in terms of how he charts the trajectory of the eponymous character, looking at its rich mythical heritage and showing how the ancient story is still re-told with vigour today. Even in 2006, the BBC's new series *Robin Hood* will see the story repeated and re-appropriated within a contemporary popular medium.

Yet even with a story holding such historical eminence as Robin Hood, Knight writes how:

In terms of 'high culture', the English outlaw is almost invisible. While everyone has heard of Robin Hood, there is no authoritative literary source- very few people know what has actually been written about the hero; no Malory or Tennyson has appeared to provide a transcendental summary of the story at large (1994: 1).

Consequently, by analysing an icon with feet in both the high and popular cultural camps, I aim to confront cultural studies' own challenge to over-narrow definitions of culture that focus solely on legitimating particular canonical texts. This challenge often results in "over-broad definitions of culture as ordinary" (Hills 2005: 25).

As such, although I have mentioned how I wish to move away from a strategy that focuses solely on the book as a basis for analysis, it is necessary to explain why the Arthurian myth is anything but 'ordinary', and is used today as a signifier of difference by many diverse cultural sites. This thesis looks at 'ways of seeing' (Berger, J. 1972)¹ the Arthurian myth, and attempts to locate not only a dominant myth of Arthur, but counter-myths also. Many of the theoretical ideas encountered in this thesis recur throughout, and it is necessary for me to refer back and forth within the structure of the thesis itself to avoid repetition. This fluidity is somehow appropriate when dealing with the mythic signifier of Arthur, however.

The examples used are clearly only a few of the Arthurian sites that could be looked at. Tintagel, for example, was chosen as a site of analysis ahead of Glastonbury because of the similar approach to mine taken by Marion Bowman (1993) who interviewed tourists and service providers in Glastonbury to determine why people were drawn to this site of pilgrimage. Much as I shall demonstrate happens at Tintagel, Bowman concludes that "Glastonbury as a multivocal, multivalent site draws numerous pilgrims and tourists of different persuasions" (1993: 55). Due to this previous work on Glastonbury, yet with limited work on tourist response to Tintagel, a decision was made to focus solely on the latter so that a wide cross-section of Arthurian matter could be discussed. I believe the sites chosen are exemplars of the wide range of cultural Arthurian texts present in contemporary culture. Some, as has

already become clear, reflect my own taste culture. To pick Gary Hughes' Arthurian text as a site for analysis offered me an ease of access to that particular subculture. However Sarah Thornton argues, paraphrasing Bourdieu, that to limit oneself to either a subjective or objective approach means work becomes "too one-sided to describe adequately the social world" (1995: 106). By mapping not only sites with which I can identify, but also specific appropriations that do not resonate with my own taste-culture, I have been able to strike more of a balance. Consequently, ephemeral sites such as the blockbuster or theme park (which on a personal level would not be my chosen destination) have been dealt with meticulously, in order that I do not naturalise my own taste culture as 'authentic' in preference to others (cf Thornton 1995: 105).

The first two chapters of this thesis attempt to present a theoretical framework that offer an explanation as to why certain cultural sites of Arthur hold value. If "popular culture... can apparently be transformed into 'high' culture by a simple act of appropriation" (Brottman 2005: xiii), in these chapters I examine the cultural-historical conditions that led to the myth holding high-cultural value, and how this historical construction of value has been naturalised. The first chapter locates the dominant text as Malory's *Morte Darthur* and explains by way of an argument surrounding the theoretical concept of authorship why this might be so, whilst also refusing Barthes's over-bold proclamation of the 'Death of the Author'. The second chapter develops a theory of myth that explains why the cultural-historical construction of Malory's cultural value is naturalised to appear the way it has 'always been', looking particularly at how an academic subculture constructs itself as an 'invisible' taste culture that affects the representation and appropriation of Arthur. I coin the term *über-myth* to show how if a myth "can be regarded as representations of the world, for a given culture" (Brottman 2005: 39), then the *über-myth* is a representation of myth, for a given subculture.

It is at this stage that the reader might be expecting to see a methodology chapter. I have included no methodology chapter as such, but rather have included explanations for the methods used where relevant. Chapter three, for example, discusses the methods used to choose my focus groups for interview. Moreover, the theoretical approach discussed in the previous chapters inflects my analysis, and in its own way provides 'method'. To disrupt the argument by including a methodology chapter at

this juncture would, to my mind, be self-defeating. From chapter three, the thesis moves into empirical studies of ‘Sites of Arthur’, and builds on the theoretical framework I have developed in the opening chapters.

Moreover, although I discuss the work of Pierre Bourdieu in the opening chapters, and show how when discussing cultural value the work of Bourdieu is useful in demonstrating how “authorship is not the process of individuals creating texts, but a culturally activated function of texts that links them to a particular figure and system of knowledge named ‘the author’ via broader contextual circulation” (Mittell 2004: 15), it is from chapter three that Bourdieu’s theoretical position on culture becomes of particular relevance. His work on cultural fields shows how “the space of [cultural] positions is nothing other than the structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of external or specific profits” (Bourdieu 1993: 30). Chapter three looks at an academic subculture in operation on the online discussion list *Arthurnet*, and thus shows which properties of an Arthurian text are of relevance to this particular subculture. Meanwhile, this chapter also exposes the fact that an academic way of reading is not the only possible way to see the Arthurian myth. In the context of the film *King Arthur*, the affect that prior cultural competencies have on the space of cultural positions, and thus ways of reading the text, are discussed. In so doing, I show how counter-myths sometimes challenge the dominant myth, and show that what constitutes an ‘authentic’ presentation of Arthur can differ from taste-culture to taste-culture.

The next pair of chapters look at Sites of Arthur in the more traditional sense of the word, as contrasting geographical sites are analysed. Chapter four looks at the ‘Heritage’ site of Tintagel Castle, and introduces two more theoretical concepts in the form of the ancient function and the Arthur function, to explain how Arthur is appropriated in order to confer ‘authenticity’ on the site. Chapter five, meanwhile, provides a contrast by seeing how Arthur is appropriated in seemingly more ‘popular cultural’ geographical sites. I examine whether the appropriation of Arthur is indeed a meaningless act, as it appears at first glance, or whether the myth works to distort cultural processes at work within these sites.

This chapter also shows how my cultural positioning in this thesis is not restricted to that within the academic field. I have restricted my own analysis of gender in this thesis, in part due to the work on readings of gender in Arthurian texts by scholars such as Marilyn R. Farwell (1996: 147-156) and Adam Roberts (1998). Moreover, to focus too much on gender would be to run the risk of ignoring inequalities in other forms of capital. If a possible consequence of a focus on women's re-defined roles in contemporary society is that, as Bridget Fowler suggests, "we have become so mesmerized by stories of *women's* progress or its limits that we fail to notice the increasing polarization of class inequalities going on behind our backs" (2003: 482), then this thesis aims to focus on how cultural capital is still used to maintain difference within social groups. Indeed, "those who theorize 'individualization' often align themselves with some aspects of feminism, and detect in the process of individualization in the context of global capitalism... the demise of class" (Lovell 2004: 37). Therefore, to focus on gender in this thesis would be to run the risk of contradicting my work on cultural value and how, even allowing for difference within (sub)cultures, Arthur is activated as a signifier of cultural value within them. The threat of contradiction becomes more apparent if the argument is accepted that "because gender, and gender-hierarchies of domination occur at every level of the general social field, we cannot speak as readily of 'the dominated gender of the dominant class'. There is no sub-field of gender: of gender-domination, gender power" (Lovell 2004: 49). Therefore, to focus on gender would be to run the risk of ignoring the fact that "inequalities of power can neither be reduced to nor explained by gender differences alone" (Mottier 2002: 351).

Nevertheless, there are times within this thesis when I am required to reflexively "consider the bearing of... [my] own gender and class position to... [my] research subject" (Brooker 2000: 4). Chapter five in particular shows how gender is "embedded in everyday interaction" (Poggio 2006: 226), and my own gender is positioned by others in the context of this particular Arthurian site being studied. At the Camelot Theme Park, an unexpected consequence of my fieldwork showed how we "produce and reproduce our gendered lives as researcher... within our phenomenological experiences" (Pullen 2006: 281), and so it became necessary to discuss the results of my findings in this context. In this chapter, I discuss my gender positioning within the environment of the theme park, and argue that my position as

single white male is in contrast to the dominant culture of the park. When gender becomes an issue, it is dealt with in this thesis. However the reading formations activated by my respondents in interviews suggest that gender is not a regular or prominent theme that is evident in their discourses. As such, to focus too much on gender would be to give the subject too great a prominence in the context of this work.

The final section wraps up the thesis by looking at popular music, in particular focussing on Arthurian albums by Rick Wakeman and Gary Hughes respectively. This is the culmination of my work on Bourdieu, as I offer a critique of his field theory and analyse how the cultural fields to which both musicians belong impact on both the version of Arthur they choose to represent, and also how the albums were received, looking at the cultural moment of their release. In these analyses I discuss in greater detail the critique of Bourdieu raised in the first chapter, that Bourdieu's work is at times overly deterministic and does not take into account the instabilities that can occur *within* cultural fields themselves. These chapters show how cultural fields are not stable, and by charting the diachronic trajectory of these particular cultural fields, I show the changes that occur within them over time, and how this impacts on the version of the Arthurian myth which is both produced and consumed. These chapters show, perhaps more than any other, how the quest for cultural identity and value sees not only a battle over these particular Arthurian stories themselves, but also the ways in which the Arthurian myth in general is used to construct meaning. As I shall demonstrate, the strategies pursued depend on how reading formations are cued by differing taste cultures.

The following chapters show how Arthur is appropriated as a cultural signifier that can provide a means of distinction. However, the Arthurian signifier has enough fluidity that meanings are contested at any one time according to individual taste-cultures, and the battle over meanings is fought despite attempts being made to naturalise and value certain interpretations of Arthur as 'authentic'. Firstly however, before looking at popular sites of Arthur, I wish to situate the Arthurian tales in context, and discuss how the dominant myth comes to hold cultural value.

Section I: Theory

Chapter 1: Authorial Sites of Arthur: Questing for authorial value

The elements that go into making the Arthurian tales may well be, as Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley point out, “a set of unstable signs appropriated by differing cultural groups to advance differing ideological agendas” (1994: 4), yet these signs do not necessarily appear to be as free-floating as might be expected. Despite the myriad of Arthurian interpretations available to us², certain versions appear to hold more value and cultural stability than others. Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*³ in particular showcases the ‘traditional’ view of Arthur as a medieval chivalrous king accompanied and supported by his famous knights of the round table, including Lancelot, Galahad and Bedevere. *Le Morte Darthur*’s shadow has loomed large over other Arthurian tales since it was completed in 1469-70 (see Field 1998: 15 and Field 1999b: 1). PJC Field asserts that “Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* is probably the most influential of all Arthurian texts” (Field 1999a: 225), whilst Marylyn Parins says the text “has exerted a unique shaping influence on other literary works and on the popular consciousness” (1995: 1). Meanwhile, Stephen Knight suggests, “his work has dominated the legend in English” (1983: 105). John Boorman’s 1981 film *Excalibur* openly cites the fact that the story line is based on Thomas Malory’s work⁴ whilst other sites of Arthur, although clearly sourcing from a wide range of texts, still heavily utilise Malory. Texts ranging from Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* (1888) to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975)⁵ use the same medieval framework. Tennyson spoke elegiacally of the fact that “the vision of Arthur as I have drawn him... had come upon me when, little more than a boy, I first lighted upon Malory” (quoted in Tennyson, H 1897b: 128). James Gray backs up this authorial interpretation of the work, saying “a detailed understanding of Malory is the key to understanding the *Idylls*” (1980: 1-2).

Yet why should Malory’s Arthuriad be so culturally dominant? After all, Malory’s tale was by no means the first record of Arthur, his interpretation was completed as far chronologically from the first reference to Arthur as we are now from Malory’s time. The earliest surviving reference to Arthur is *Y Gododdin*, “which... may go back to the ninth century” (Lloyd-Morgan 1999: 2)⁶. Malory’s own tale was also heavily based on many of these earlier sources, as he used the *Alliterative Morte*

Arthure and the *Vulgate Arthuriad* as sources among others⁷. Why then, does Malory's text hold such a dominant position in the Arthurian myth?

Firstly, I intend to show that, contrary to Roland Barthes's assertion of the *Death of the Author* (1977), the author is merely sleeping, waiting to be awoken as a signifier of cultural value whenever required. After this, I sketch out the historical background to Malory's cultural dominance. Although it could be argued that this chapter does not take into account the historical and literary contexts in which Malory's work circulated⁸, that is not the intention of this chapter. Indeed, to attempt such an analysis would be to risk reifying Malory's position as 'creative genius'⁹. Rather, I aim to provide a theoretical argument that explains how *Le Morte Darthur*'s cultural status in the present day has been achieved not through its status as 'great literature' in comparison to rival Arthurian texts, but how a *specific* cultural history has enhanced his role as creative genius, thus allowing Michel Foucault's "author function" (1991: 107) to be activated as a signifier of Malory's cultural value.

1.1 The Once and Future Author: Roland Barthes and authorship

The problems with privileging the author are clear. The notions of the author's muse, his inspiration, and his intention are well ingrained in our society, as is the need to 'discover' the author's intention¹⁰. However, this approach presupposes the ability to 'decipher' the author's thoughts. This, of course, is impossible. Even if we are to look at biographies of the author and hear their words, there are often cases where the author has been unable to convey his intention on the page, and authors themselves have acknowledged the work produced and the readings given of it did not always result in what they themselves originally anticipated. For example Ian Fleming, when giving his opinion of Sean Connery being cast in the role of James Bond mused that he was "not quite the idea I had of Bond, but he would be if I wrote the books over again" (quoted in Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 57). To limit oneself solely to an authorial intention denies texts the ability to live without their authors, it closes off the possibility of other readings and suggests the certainty of one, 'correct' reading. It also suggests the romantic but ultimately false assumption of the author as able to rise above his peers, above his culture and society, and to be able to write dispassionately with no influence from the culture surrounding him.

The dominance of the author also fails to take into account the fact that each reader can read the text differently themselves. “There is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is externally written *here and now*” (Barthes 1977: 145). Each reader, at each different point in time, approaches each text with their own cultural background and thus, to close off meanings by privileging the author is impractical. It can be said that “to give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing” (Barthes 1977: 147).

Foucault writes of similar issues, and introduces the concept of the ‘author function’: “The author provides the basis for explaining not only the presence of certain events in a work, but also their transformations, distortions, and diverse modifications” (Foucault 1991a: 111). The author function enables the audience to group texts together, to act as a sign of value, to act as a means of allowing the audience to know what to expect and also as a way of signifying distinction with regards to cultural ownership of texts. In this way, the author function acts as a signifier of quality. For example, it is a signifier that a text by Shakespeare will be worthwhile the reader investing time to appreciate it, and the basic content of the text will thus be positioned according to audience expectation. Our quest for knowledge of the author is a quest to explain certain manifestations in the text and its construction.

Barthes’s rhetoric in *The Death of the Author* is particularly antagonistic as he speaks of how:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture (Barthes 1977: 146).

The text is not created by a unique and creative talent, rather it is a system of signs within language that make meaning. Moreover, even the author himself is constructed by these self-same signs: “identity may be given to us by language, but like identity language both mediates and is mediated by social contexts and individual vectors of identification” (Kritzman 2003: 150).

That is, the text is language, it is a system of signs and the author is merely the agent in putting these signs on to the paper. “The act of writing... may be shaped not only by the writer’s conscious purposes but also by... the social and psychological processes of mediation involved” (Chandler 1995: 12). It is the responsibility of the reader to interpret these signs, to ‘disentangle’ them. This opens up a multiplicity of readings for the text.

It can be seen in relation to the Arthurian myth how each different interpretation does indeed present its own ‘tissue of quotations’ and is ‘difficult to grasp’, each representation of the tales bringing a unique combination of cultural flows to the (round) table. Witness the *Mabinogion*’s echoing of the oral tradition in its great lists of names¹¹ and contrast it to *First Knight*’s use of language, along the lines of traditional Hollywood thrillers, where lines like “nobody move - or Arthur dies!” (Zucker: 1994) or a fearsomely contemporary, “I can tell when a woman wants me. I can see it in her eyes” (*ibid*) live alongside the chivalric influence of the Malory interpretation.

And yet, despite the appealing nature of Barthes’ argument, despite the fact that moving the focus to writing itself does indeed open up the text for innumerable readings, there are a number of flaws in this argument. To kill off the author, Barthes needs to create an image of the author in the extreme. Although it is clear that the author has been pre-eminent (too pre-eminent many would say), it is doubtful that the author has ever been as dominant as Barthes has made him. Barthes has created an “Author-God” but maybe, as Burke comments, “Barthes himself, in seeking to dethrone the author, is led to an apotheosis of authorship that vastly outpaces anything to be found in the critical history he takes arms against” (1998: 27).

Barthes himself, in denying the existence of the author, ironically only manages to enhance his own cultural position as an author. “The critic also writes, is also an author, is also implicated in the very structures of authority about which he or she writes” (Biriotti 1993: 13). The fact that the author still held a prominent role in assigning cultural value to a work was shown when “in the so-called age of the ‘death of the author,’ this group of theorists [including Barthes], ironically... gave French

studies a certain cachet” (Kritzman 2003: 146, see also Ffrench 2004: 292). Therefore, Barthes’ denial of the author is nothing more than a political act to position himself in opposition to traditional criticism, thus risking “a danger that radical literary criticism will simply create a canon of acceptable texts, merely reversing old value judgements, rather than questioning their fundamental assumptions” (Belsey 2002a: 95). By removing the author in its entirety, there is the possibility that texts such as Malory will become unjustly sidelined, whereas perhaps it is equally important to analyse how this text is positioned within culture and debates over value as much as any other Arthurian form. “Without the author to demand the resolution of contradictory textual lines into an intended unity, the critic is free to reconstitute the text according to his own terms” (Pease 1995: 272), and these terms can result in the exclusion of specific readings and the foundation of the Critic-God in place of the Author-God.

Therefore, if we are not to exclude the author, it is important to see why the author should come to a position of holding value in the first place. It is clear that, although Barthes’ notion of empowering the reader holds true, and thus allows for an entirely merited and seemingly infinite number of readings of the text, it is unnecessary that as a consequence, the notion of the author has to be removed in its entirety. I shall now analyse the cultural-historical origins of authorship, and how this process coincides with Malory’s production in order to create and enhance Malory’s own cult of authorship. In order to do this it is necessary to “foreground the material and contextual conditions in which the meaning [of authorship] is produced and consumed” (Cazzato 1995: 34, see also Docherty 1993: 57).

1.2 Sir Thomas Malory and Authorial Cultural Construction

Barthes argues that the author is “a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual” (Barthes 1977: 142-143). The advent of print would be a key stage in the development of the author. Andrew Murphy argues that “the point of initiation of concepts of authorship tied to the isolable individual” is linked to print (2000a: 2). I shall now look at how the dawn of printing impacts on the cultural value of Malory’s authorship.

Malory's authorial weight is enhanced by virtue of being one of the first texts printed by Joseph Caxton. I shall show how this enables Malory's text to carry yet more cultural power, and thrusts Malory's own cult of authorship to the fore. Elizabeth Eisenstein sums up well the significance of printing on the cult of the author:

The wish to see one's work in print... is different from the desire to pen lines that could never get fixed in a permanent form, might be lost forever, altered by copying, or- if truly memorable- be carried by oral transmission and assigned ultimately to 'anon'. Until it became possible to distinguish between... writing a book and copying one; until books could be classified by something other than incipits; how could the modern games of books and authors be played? (1979: 121)

Eisenstein's arguments have recently been taken to task by a number of scholars. David McKitterick argues that Eisenstein's "arguments on the subject [of standardisation] were weakened by the fallacy of failing to distinguish between our modern understandings and those that were of importance to contemporaries" (2003: 99), whilst Joseph A. Dane contends that "certain vagaries of ordinary printing history, say, fixity, standardization, and perfect trust in the written word, do not apply" (2003: 18) in the early days of printing.

As with any invention, it is impossible to say that the advent of the printing press resulted in an immediate shift in cultural perspective. Both the time building up to the invention, and the years afterwards would reveal a gradual change in people's perception of the written word. Scribal culture had been becoming more uniform for a number of years. Eisenstein herself acknowledges that "book production... moved out of scriptoria three centuries *before* the advent of print" (1979: 12) as teams of scribes were employed to copy books in a disciplined atmosphere, in many ways along the lines of a human printing press. However, this still did not have the effect of totally eliminating the scribal tendency for error, not even to the extent of early print. It was also a brief flowering, and this system had "declined a full century before the first presses arrived" (Eisenstein 1979: 14). Scribal culture was a mix between both print culture and previous oral culture as the system of manuscript production meant that "insofar as dictation governed copying in scriptoria and literary compositions were 'published' by being read aloud, even 'book' learning was governed by reliance on

the spoken word- producing a hybrid half-oral, half-literate culture that has no precise counterpart today” (Eisenstein 1979: 11).

Although Andrew Murphy argues that “print... arrests the mobile text, securing it in a static moment” (2000b: 199, see also Anderson 1991: 44), whilst it also “eradicate[s] potentially disruptive forms of difference” (Hadfield 2000: 109), early print culture did not result in the uniform, easy to read texts such as those that exist today. “The stability of the final published text depended on a visual sleight of hand in which most of the slippery manufacture was concealed” (McKitterick 2003: 118) as scribes, mimicking the early printed typeface, would make corrections to manuscripts where printing mistakes had been made. However, “although early printing methods made it impossible to issue the kind of ‘standard’ editions with which modern scholars are familiar, they represented a great leap forward nonetheless” (Eisenstein 1979: 80). Regardless of these inconsistencies, McKitterick accepts there was still “the greater measure of standardisation in the printed book [and it] was, certainly, appreciated” (2003: 100). Indeed, the very fact there was a need to make perfect post-scribal culture and conceal these changes shows that the desire to fix and present print as stable was present from the start.

Johns claims that fixity is not to be found in the actual text itself, but that “it is recognized and acted upon by people” (Johns 1998: 19). If print culture is not a monolithic act, as Eisenstein represents it, but “becomes a *result* of manifold representations, practices and conflicts” (Johns 1998: 20), then print culture as a cultural act that fixed the text in readers’ perceptions is still an appropriate model. Moreover, even if “what exists is not print culture at all but rather the modern scholar’s invocation of print culture” (Dane 2003: 10), this does not alter the fact that Malory’s cultural-historical genesis affects how he and his text come to be received as the dominant text in the present day.

It is clear that although it would be dangerous to overestimate the effects of print, it nonetheless contributed heavily to cultural change. Walter Ong contrasts oral and print culture by noting how “in an oral culture knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it would be lost” (2002: 24). This was no longer necessary in print culture, and as such Malory’s text could acquire an aura of originality, and thus

appear as an 'origin' of the Arthurian tales in a way that would not be afforded to previous orally based texts. The notion of print as an important stage in the transition from oral to literary culture is thus apparent. Print continued and hastened the cultural change already enacted by the advent of writing. Ong claims it "both reinforces and transforms the effects of writing on thought and expression" (2002: 117).

Moreover, a number of scholars continue to link print culture with the growth of authorship and a sense of distinction in taste. Andrew Hadfield suggests that the renaissance canon was established by what was discovered or in fashion at the end of the fifteenth and start of the sixteenth centuries (2000: 108). If so, then Malory was fortunate to be one of the first texts printed in Britain in 1485. Indeed, "by 1500, one may say with some assurance that the age of scribes had ended and the age of printers had begun" (Eisenstein 1979: 167). Marshall McLuhan in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* concurs with this temporal viewpoint, linking the rise of the author to the advent of printing, and noting how this resulted in the "visual man of the sixteenth century [who] is impelled to separate level from level, and function from function, in a process of specialist exclusion" (1962: 111).

A ready difference between a scribal and print culture would be the increased emphasis based on the importance of originality:

Manuscript culture had taken intertextuality for granted. Still tied to the commonplace tradition of the old oral world, it deliberately created texts out of other texts, borrowing, adapting, sharing the common, originally oral, formulas and themes, even though it worked them up into fresh literary forms impossible without writing. Print culture of itself has a different mind-set. It tends to feel a work as 'closed', set off from other works, a unit in itself. Print culture gave birth to the romantic notions of 'originality' and 'creativity', which set apart an individual work from other works even more, seeing its origins and meaning as independent of outside influence, at least ideally (Ong 2002: 133).

This would have the effect of positioning Malory's text as the first 'original' Arthurian work. No matter that he used French and English sources, the advent of print would give Malory's text the advantage of the notion of 'originality'. This then would result in Malory's text being seen more readily as the 'original' source for the Arthurian myth. Malory can be seen as 'closing' the historical Warlord Arthurian

tradition and the associations that went with this, and thus it would become far easier to refer to Malory as the authoritative version as he 'begins' the second stage of the tales, that of the Romance chivalric Arthur.

In this form of closure, print would also have the affect of heightening the role of Malory as an 'Author-God', as "the printed text is supposed to represent the words of an author in definitive or 'final' form. For print is comfortable only with finality" (Ong 2002: 132). Thus Malory's text would be seen as final, authoritative, whereas the previous texts associated with oral and scribal culture could not be seen in this way as corruption of the text was commonplace and accepted. The capitalist nature of printing, where printing resulted for the first time in texts being produced in the hope of attracting a casual purchaser rather than being specifically commissioned by a nobleman, resulted in the notion of the author being further strengthened by the necessity of commerce. Eisenstein tells of how:

Printing forced legal definition of what belonged in the public domain. A literary 'common' became subject to 'enclosure movements' and possessive individualism began to characterize the attitude of writers to their work. The terms plagiarism and copyright did not exist for the minstrel. It was only after printing that they began to hold significance for the author (1979: 120).

As such, Malory's work could be identified more readily with Malory the man. The work would become 'his' rather than be assigned anonymously. Consequently, the work could become identified more readily with the 'author function' and Malory's name could start to become a signifier of quality.

1.3 The Editorial Role of Caxton in Malory's Cultural Construction

Indeed, the role of Malory as author appears to be something that Caxton as editor paid great attention to, and recognised the value of enhancing. There is nothing to suggest that Malory's text was particularly well-known before Caxton printed it. Blake makes the provocative comment that "it is quite likely that the work [*Le Morte Darthur*] would have remained largely unknown if Caxton had not printed it" (Blake, N.F. 1991: 201). Compare the fact that there is just one manuscript copy of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* that survived, from the 15th century (Krishna 1976: 1),

whilst this text was only first published in 1847 (1976: 12). This would have the effect of denying a readership in the intervening years the opportunity to read and become aware of the text. However in contrast, in addition to the sole surviving manuscript copy of Malory (the Winchester manuscript discovered in 1934), there are two copies of Caxton's first edition. A further copy is available of Wynken de Worde's first reprint of 1498, whilst still more copies exist of his 1529 edition and other versions printed thereafter (Vinaver 1967: cxxvii-cxxxi). This demonstrates that the power of survival of the text, and thus awareness of it for future generations, was greatly enhanced. Its cultural spread around the country would be far greater and awareness of the text was constant from the time that Caxton printed it. This would be important for Malory's author function as texts can be seen "as receptacles to house an author's remains and perpetuate his memory" (Maguire 2000: 135). Indeed, Thomas Jefferson both lamented the loss of texts and celebrated the benefits of printing as he queried, "how many of the previous works of antiquity were lost where they existed only in manuscript? Has there ever been one lost since the art of printing has rendered it practicable to multiply and disperse copies?" (quoted in Eisenstein 1979: 115)

In attempting to get the widest possible audience for the *Morte Darthur*, Caxton also uses his dedication and prologue to aim the book squarely at as wide an audience as possible. Important as a chief function of such 'paratexts' as Gerard Genette calls them, is to "make known an *intention* or *interpretation*" (Genette 1997: 11). Caxton's first intention is to call attention to his proposed readership. No specific person is named, instead we merely hear how he directs the text "unto all noble princes, lords, and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen" (Malory 1969a: 6). The range of Caxton's dedication varies from royalty through to the commoner. Caxton ensures that in this way the text is marked as being able to be interpreted by all aspects of society, thus opening it up to a potentially larger readership.

The very fact that Caxton chooses to include a prologue is significant. As Blake mentions:

Not all Caxton's editions have a prologue or epilogue... From this it seems likely that a prologue or epilogue was included when a text was less well known or where it might be in competition with another text such as the first edition. The inclusion of a prologue or epilogue was designed, in part

at least, to introduce a new text or new edition to the potential purchasers to encourage them to buy it (Blake, N.F. 1991: 11).

That Caxton would need to market the book to its potential readers is clear as printing became “consumer-oriented, since the individual copies of a work represent a much smaller investment of time” (Ong 2002: 122-123).

Early printers were “venture capitalists, publishers, literary agents, typesetters, marketers, distributors, and retailers” (Rhodes and Sawday 2000: 8) all in one and Caxton’s prologue can in many ways be seen as his advertising tool. In the prologue, Caxton tells of a story as to how:

Many noble and divers gentlemen of this realm of England camen and demanded me, many and oftymes, wherefore that I have not do made and imprint the noble history of the Sangrail, and of the most renowned Christian king, first and chief of the three best Christian and worthy, King Arthur, which ought most to be remembered among us English men tofore all other Christian kings (Malory 1969a: 3).

In this passage, Caxton has suggested that in printing the text he is merely responding to demand, and he is appealing to a noble, literate culture.

Meanwhile, the prologue also makes an “invitation to an interpretive reading” (Genette 1997: 170). Caxton attempts to close off certain aspects of Malory’s text, and emphasises those readings that will appeal to his contemporary audience. The technique chosen by the prologue is to glide over those unsavoury elements present in the text, whilst lingering on those which may be of more benefit to the reading Caxton desires to present:

Syntactic mystification conceals underlying interests in which the reader is dislocated. Contradictions and discrepancies are camouflaged. The reader is effectively persuaded to pay attention to some issues and lose sight of others; to subscribe to a set of ideological assumptions, without growing aware of the net or its implications (Steppat 2000: 88).

Although Caxton realises that the text contains a number of themes and readings, such as, “noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship,

cowardice, murder, hate, virtue and sin” (Malory 1969a: 6), he ensures that he privileges the positive readings by placing them first in the list. He then further emphasises his intentions by instructing the reader to “do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown” (*ibid*). In this way, Caxton is trying to ensure that the reader will glide over the aspects of the text that are less palatable, and instead concentrate on the consoling, positive, and *moral* aspects (cf Hanks 2005: 30, Crofts 2005: 51-52, Genette 1997: 197). It is important in this prologue that he further emphasises the positive attributes by saying later how he has printed in this book, “any noble acts, feats of arms and chivalry, prowess, hardiness, humanity, love, courtesy and very gentleness” (Malory 1969a: 6). Now Caxton ignores the negative elements of murder, hate and sin entirely. These have been suppressed as they are not valid for Caxton’s purpose. The reader is finally given the impression that the text consists solely of positive virtues; Caxton has sought to close off alternative readings before the text is even begun.

Yet it was not only by Caxton’s positioning of the text in the prologue that he tried to contain the possible readings of Malory’s text. By adding chapter headings and removing explicits, Caxton created the impression of unity within the text (See Finke and Shichtman 2004: 170). After ending Book VI by informing us that “here followeth the tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney that was called Beaumains by Sir Kay,” (1969a: 230), the subsequent chapter names “obviously send... the reader back to a previous encounter with the character” (Genette 1997: 294). The nickname of Beaumains is used in the chapter titles with no need for explanation for readers now familiar with the background¹². Contrast this to Vinaver who, on editing the Winchester manuscript, argued that “the *raison d’etre* of these romances is precisely that which has been consistently denied them: the distinctive character of each one... what we have before us is a series of works forming a vast and varied panorama of incident and character” (Vinaver 1967: xli). This argument has been challenged by Field who suggests “that the break implied by explicits is not complete” (1999a: 231). Field goes on to demonstrate that those explicits in the third, fifth and seventh tales not only look back to the previous tale, but look forward to the forthcoming story. Yet he also acknowledges that “there is no doubt that an explicit implied some kind of ending” (Field 1999a: 230). These explicits are removed by Caxton and this would

also have the effect of unifying the text as “their absence could easily cause the text to be mistaken... for one continuous narrative” (Genette 1997: 297).

It was not mere structural editing that Caxton took part in, he also changed the language quite substantially in Book V, that of “the conqueste of Lucius th’emperour” (Malory 1967: cxlvii). I will argue in this section that the change in language enhances the perceived ‘uniqueness’ and ‘originality’ of Malory’s text. Malory used a number of sources for his work, both French and English. The aforementioned changes with regards to book V took the text further away from the source. Previously, Malory’s text followed quite closely its source, the alliterative poem *Morte Arthure*. I have reproduced a passage in full from each version below¹³:

Caxton

Thenne ansuerd kynge Aguysshe of Scotland Syr ye oughte of ryght to be aboue al other kynges for unto yow is none lyke ne pareylle in Crystendome of knyghthode ne of dygnyte and I counceylle you neuer to obeye the Romayns for whan they regned on us they destressyd oure elders and putte this land to grete extorcions and taylles wherfore I make here myn auowe to auenge me on them and for to strengthe youre quarel I shall furnyssh xx M good men of warre and wage them on my costes whiche shal awayte on yow with my self whan it shal please yow and the kyng of lytel Bretayne graunted hym to the same xxx M (Malory 1967: 188-189).

Winchester

Than answerde kynge Angwysschaunce unto Arthure: ‘Sir, thou oughte to be aboven all othir Crysten kynges for of knyghthode and of noble counceyle that is allway in the. And Scotlonde had never scathe syne ye were crowned kynge, and whan the Romaynes raynede uppon us they raunsomed oure elders and raffte us of oure lyves. Therefore I make myne avow unto mylde Mary and unto Jesu Cryste that I shall be avenged uppon the Romayns, and to farther thy fyght I shall brynge the ferce men of armys, fully twenty thousand of tyred men. I shall yeff hem my wages for to go and warre on the Romaynes and to destroy hem, and all shall be within two ayges to go where the lykes.’

Than the kyng oif Lytyll Brytayne sayde unto kynge Arthure, ‘Sir answer thes alyauntes and gyff them their answeere, and I shall somen my peple and thirty thousand men shall ye have at my costis and wages (Malory 1967: 188-189).

Alliterative Morte Arthure

Than answerde Kyng Aungers to Arthure hym seluyn,
 "Thou aughte to be ouerlynge ouer all other kynges,
 For wyseste and worthyeste and wyghteste of hamndes,
 The knyghtlyeste or counsaile that ever coron bare,
 I dare saye for Scottlande that we schalle lympe:
 When the Romaynes regnede thay raunsound oure eldyrs,
 And rade in their ryotte refte us oure gudes.
 And I shall make myn avowe deuotly to Criste,
 And to the haly vernacle, vertius and boble,
 Of this grett velany I shall be vengede ones,
 On zone(?) venemus men, wyth valiant knyghtes!
 I sall the forthire of defence fosteride ynewe,
 Fifty thousand men, wuthin two eldes,
 Of my wage for to wende whare so the lykes,
 To fyghte with thy faamen, that us unfair ledes!"

Thane the burelyche Beryn of Bretayne the Lyttyll
 Counsayles Sir Arthure, and of him besekys
 To ansuere the alycynes wyth austeren wordes,
 To entyce the Emperour to take ouer the mounttes,
 He said, "I make myn avowe verreilly to Cryste
 And to the haly vernacle that voide shall I neuere,
 For radnesse of na Romaine that regnes in erthe,
 Bot ay be redye in araye and at areste founden.
 No more dowtte the dynte of there derfe wapyns,
 Than the dewe that es danke when that it doun falles:
 Ne no more schoune fore the swape of theirre scharpe suerddes,
 Then for the faireste flour that on the folde grows!
 I sall to batell the brynge of brenyede knyghtes
 Thyrtty thousande be tale, thryflye in arms,
 Within a monette daye into whatte marche
 That thou wyll sothelye assygne, when they selfe lykes"
 (Anon 1976: 48-49).

Although Malory reduces the original work and modifies it heavily, he still retains a certain level of the brusque, oral alliterative language of his source in lines such as "whan the Romaynes raynede uppon us they raunsomed oure elders and raffte us of oure lyves" (Malory 1967: 188). Caxton's reworking reduces the poetic alliterative structure to a far more prosaic form, no longer intended for oral transmission (cf

Finke and Shichtman 2004: 172). Take for example the Caxton-edited phrase “the Romayns for whan they regned on us they destressydoure elders and putte this land to grete extorcions and taylles,” which reduces the oral, alliterative nature of the Winchester MS to a mere echo of its former style. This occurs throughout Book V as Caxton further contemporised the language, with the result that if we substitute Caxton’s re-working for that of the Winchester MS, we find the text further devolved from its original source than that in the earlier Manuscript version (cf. Roland 2005: 68). Indeed, in the collection of essays entitled *Malory’s Originality* the editors state that “fruitful consideration of such matters as Malory’s thematic purposes, the relationship of structure to theme, the comparative evaluation of the text against its sources... *becomes far more easily manageable* [with the Winchester MS]... than was the case with earlier editions” (Lumiansky 1964: 3, my emphasis).

Thus it can be seen that Caxton’s editing had the effect of distancing Malory’s text from its sources, distancing it from oral culture, and making it seem more original as it would no longer “suffer from an inauthenticity of presentation” (Stewart 1991: 7). The consequence of this would be to re-enforce Malory’s ‘genius’, and this could be cited all the more readily as the use of his sources would become more blurred with Caxton’s editing. Maguire argues that the act of editing involves the editor mourning the death of the author, yet consequently in his acts of bringing the words to the page, he ends up creating a textual image of the author mourned. “Recovery is signalled by paradox: grieving and celebrating, looking back while planning forward, remembering and forgetting” (2000: 150). That is, the editor creates and closes off meanings of authorship as required, meaning the author function can be used as a signifier of cultural value. If for many writers “printing was too impersonal, too public, too fixed” (McKenzie 2002: 247), then printing shows a shift away from authorial intent, and its replacement with a construction of authorial value.

Indeed, Eugene Vinaver goes so far as to suggest that the text should not be credited to Malory, but to Caxton. He claims that “Caxton’s rendering is not only a drastic abridgement but a new work, and to reprint it as some publishers still do under Malory’s name is at best misleading” (Vinaver 1967: xxx). Although an extreme view, this still shows how Caxton was wise enough to realise the power of the author function in the acceptance of a text, and his changes served to emphasise the author

function and close down readings in its favour. Therefore, I have shown how the historical genesis of printing coincided with Malory's production, and thus elevated and supported his author function. Moreover, I have also demonstrated how Caxton's editing of the manuscript enhanced this effect. Caxton's prologue has as its most important function, "to provide the author's interpretation of the text or, if you prefer, the statement of intent" (Genette 1997: 221). Although Laurie Finke and Martin B. Shichtman make an accurate observation that Vinaver's research meant he viewed the Winchester MS "as a closer reflection of Malory's artistic intentions" (2004: 160, see also 168), their summary does not take into account how by highlighting the quality of the work and an interpretive reading, Caxton paradoxically ends up highlighting the authorial role.

This point is further developed by Blake, who tells how, "although Caxton modernised Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* he made no reference to any change in the language in the prologue or epilogue, presumably because he felt the name of 'Syr Thomas Malory, knyght' was sufficient to guarantee the acceptance of the book by his customers" (Blake, N.F. 1976: 175). Moreover, the desire to discover the 'real' Malory continues to the present day. The most commonly held candidate is Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, Warwickshire, who was associated with the Earl of Warwick, 'Kingmaker' in his day (Field 1999b). However, if this was the 'correct' Thomas Malory, the author function would only work to its full effect if the details of this 'knight prisoner' were suppressed. This Malory was variously convicted of rape, assault and cattle rustling among other crimes and this is clearly not the traditional impression one would get of a man capable of writing a courtly and chivalric romance:

These revelations [about Malory's life] created a quandary for some scholars- how to resolve this brawling rapist with the author of the *Morte Darthur*- and the amended life story produced three approaches. One was that the *Morte Darthur* was not really very moral after all... A second, and more popular, rationale was that the charges were probably trumped up, a result of Malory being on the wrong side during the Wars of the Roses. A third response... was to reject the flawed Warwickshire candidate and to propose a Yorkshire Thomas Malory in his stead (Parins 1995: 36, see Matthews (1966) for an attempt to prove the Yorkshire candidate was the 'real' Malory).

These arguments demonstrate well how the author function has guided our reading of the text. If the character of the author cannot be seen to be in harmony with that of his text he must be replaced, apologies must be made for him, or different readings of the text must result from our revised expectations.

Furthermore, the importance of the author function is seen with regards to Malory himself. Field tells how:

Although it was the *Morte Darthur* that made Malory famous, he may also have written another Arthurian romance. *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*... There are notable similarities between the two works in language, the handling of narrative, and authorial comment. The similarities are strongest at the end of the poem, where its author reveals that he is in prison and prays for his release in terms strongly reminiscent of those Malory uses at the end of various sections of the *Morte Darthur* (Field 1999a: 227).

If this is the case, initially it seems surprising that the text is not as well known as *Le Morte Darthur*. However Field castigates the text, saying that “even if *The Wedding* is by Malory, it is an achievement of a much lower order than the *Morte Darthur*: the versification, for instance, is little better than doggerel” (Field 1999a: 227). However, we can see that parallels can be drawn with others of Malory’s tales within *Le Morte Darthur* itself. The tale of *Tristram* often gets severely criticised on qualitative grounds. McCarthy says of the *Tristram* romance:

Malory tries to fit too much in. The tale as a whole seems far too long... and though by now we are growing accustomed to a leisurely, almost purposeless narrative line, there are, we feel, limits... We have a greater feeling of inconsequence to the extent that the knight who is, in theory, holding the narrative together is something of an excuse himself (McCarthy 1991: 27).

There are further evaluative judgements about the tale, showing its inferior quality to certain other of the romances, as McCarthy continues by saying, “everyone agrees that Books VII and VIII are the finest of Malory’s tales” (McCarthy 1991: 43). It could well be argued that the lack of fame attributed to *The Wedding*... is due to the uncertainty about whether it is Malory’s work or not. Without the author function at work, without the valorising device of Malory’s name, and the associations and expectations of quality this brings with it, the romance is left to drift in anonymity,

irrespective of its literary merits or otherwise. Meanwhile texts that are of equally dubious literary merit, such as the tale of Sir Tristram, are valorised by virtue of association with Malory as Author-God.

In this section I have examined the historical cultural conditions that have enabled Malory's author function to work and enable his text to reach a dominant cultural position. However, if we are to show that we are not in the age of the Death of the Author, it is important to demonstrate that Malory's authorial value still holds true today. In many ways, Malory can be seen as an embodiment within Arthuriana of the time when we "began to recount the lives of authors rather than heroes" (Foucault 1991a: 101). Malory's text becomes the version by which all other versions are analysed, the 'founder of discursivity', as Foucault would put it (1991: 114), with regard to the Arthurian tales. It is Malory's version in relation to which all modern versions are positioned and Malory is one of that elite group of authors who:

Are unique in that they are not just authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts... they made possible not only a certain number of analogies, but also... a certain number of differences. They have created a possibility for something other than their discourse, yet something belonging to what they founded... [they] made possible a certain number of divergences (Foucault 1991a: 114).

In order to look at how Malory still acts as a signifier of cultural value, I shall look at a series of texts seemingly far removed from the high-culture Romance form of Malory and will analyse the popular historical fiction that constitutes Bernard Cornwell's *Warlord Chronicles* trilogy of Arthurian tales¹⁴. If indeed a text can be seen as a tissue of quotations, Cornwell's novels show that it is nonetheless impossible to move away from the concept of the author as certain influences can be discerned more easily than others. "Language," after all, "is a field of social forces which shape us to our roots, and it is an academicist delusion to see the literary work as an arena of infinite possibility which escapes it" (Eagleton 1996: 76). As Burke sums up neatly:

Nietzsche never read Kierkegaard, and it would doubtless be possible to read him as though he had, but immeasurably stronger intertextual currents open up between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche,

Nietzsche and Heidegger, precisely because there is influence, succession, recession and revision, withal, an act of strong reading between their work (Burke 1998: 173).

This trilogy sees Cornwell re-write the role of the author within his own work and the texts appear to “struggle with a major precursor” (Bloom 1975: 11). As the texts progress, it becomes clear that it is the status of Malory as Author-God that Cornwell attempts to resist. Yet as I shall demonstrate, it is not that Cornwell wishes to proclaim the Death of the Author, merely that if “literature and popular fiction exist in a constant state of mutual repulsion or repudiation” (Gelder 2004: 11) then Cornwell finds his popular fiction version of Arthur needing to clear a space for itself and so “promotes itself by trying to discredit High Class literature” (Collins 1989: 56).

1.4 Cornwell’s Intertextual Positioning

The strategies Cornwell takes in order to re-position the author revolve around the cultural positioning of literary texts. As “literature... ties its authors innately to notions of creativity” (Gelder 2004: 14), it is this notion that comes under attack by Cornwell. Consequently, such phrases as “poets were ever fools... otherwise why would they be poets?” (Cornwell 1996: 221) are used in order to diminish the role of the high-cultural concept of the author. Meanwhile, an implicit attack is also made on the ‘traditional’ Romance form of the tales as a contrast is set up between Derfel, the authorial voice in the text, and his Patron Igraine: “No doubt the battle will be filled with *romance* once she and Dafydd *maul* my story” (Cornwell 1998: 282, my emphasis). The ‘pure’ story is that which features an Arthur removed from the romance tradition as this tradition, it is argued, involves mutilating an otherwise accurate and ‘truthful’ telling of the narrative.

Particular vitriol is reserved for the character of Lancelot. In Cornwell’s version, Lancelot is depicted contrary to the ‘traditional’ portrayal of the character, which sees him as a flawed knight but undoubtedly Arthur’s Champion, “for in all tournaments and jousts and deeds of arms, both for life and death, he passed all other knights” (Malory 1969a: 194¹⁵). Instead we are told “that high reputation was made by song and none of it, so far as I knew, with a sword” (Cornwell 1997: 10). In Cornwell’s conception of authorial power, he acknowledges the power in writing to make

reputations, yet in this case it is a flawed and untrustworthy power. We are told that great deeds are recounted about Lancelot “because Lancelot’s poets wrote the songs... poets always lie” (Cornwell 1997: 238). Although “these intertexts indicate an attempt to deny the importance of literary trappings... [they] still insist on displaying a thorough knowledge of what must be rejected” (Collins 1989: 56) and Cornwell shows this here by indicating an awareness of how Lancelot has been characterised previously, before positing his own distinctive characterisation. Moreover, Cornwell’s Galahad further denigrates the role of poetry in creating such a fantastical and untrue character, and considers it a sin to encourage such ways of writing. Lancelot’s sins are listed as adultery, vanity, and poetry: “He encourages his poets, he collects mirrors and he visits Guinevere’s Sea Palace” (Cornwell 1997: 310). The lie of Malory is that which positions Lancelot as great knight, and consequently doubt must therefore be cast on the role of the author as creative genius. Cornwell’s Arthur bemoans the fact that “lies are the things we use to build our reputations” (Cornwell 1997: 406). For years, it seems, it is the lie of the Author-God that has built Malory’s reputation, and the lie of the author-as-authority is how this version of Arthur comes to be pre-eminent.

And yet Cornwell finds himself in a double-bind; he wishes to kill off the perception of Malory as Author-God, yet to kill the author off in entirety runs the risk of “inhibit[ing]... discussions of *any* writing identity” (Miller 1993: 21, my emphasis), therefore meaning that Cornwell’s own work is denied the opportunity to acquire new cultural value. It is, after all, not only the older tellings that rely on the author function and activate it for reasons of cultural value. In an effort to position a mooted television mini-series on the myth (yet to come to fruition), Steven Spielberg is cited as the authenticator of expectation, despite the fact that his role is confined to producer (Milner 2002: 13, see also chapter 2, page 43). People arguably more important in the creative chain, the writer and director, merit only a superfluous mention. To kill off the author denies “authorship precisely to those who had only recently been empowered to claim it” (Biriotti 1993: 6) and consequently Cornwell’s text “tries to dissolve the [popular fiction- literature] hierarchy by denying... [Malory’s authorial] validity and offering its own as the only genuine alternative” (Collins 1989: 57). Cornwell, despite his efforts, cannot avoid acknowledging the dominant association of great writing with aesthetic beauty. By attempting to move

beyond the dominant Romance Arthur, Cornwell is unable to deny that this form of writing holds power in certain cultural circumstances (cf Collins 1989: 39). Ban's capital Ynys Trebes may have been "famous for its poets" (Cornwell 1996: 75) but a consequence of this is that the town "was said to be more beautiful than Rome itself" (*ibid*). The link to poetry and writing as an aesthetic function is made clear here.

The importance that the traditional form of Arthur holds is shown as Ban makes the dark proclamation that "if the city falls, so will civilization... My library... is that thread. Lose it, gentlemen, and we stay in eternal darkness" (Cornwell 1996: 270). The library is the monolith of high culture, a chance for those with the ability to discern this culture to enlighten themselves. By valorising the library, "the world is transformed into a literary phenomenon, a realm where reading and writing are the essential occupations" (Collins 1989: 52). As a consequence, to make space for the 'true' and authentic version of Arthur as told in Cornwell's texts, it is necessary for the library to be destroyed, holding as it does "a few good things... but not much" (Cornwell 1996: 288). Before reaching Cornwell's proto-version of Arthur, it is necessary to destroy or displace those tales that have gone before.

Having achieved this feat, Cornwell then needs to place his own aesthetic template and cult upon the figure of the author. In much the same way as Barthes, it is necessary for him to "on the one hand disperse the subject, on the other, fragment the text, and repackage it for another mode of circulation and reception" (Miller 1993: 29). Yet somewhat unlike Barthes, dispersing the subject means returning the author in a different form. Cornwell draws attention to his own authorial craft and his text's "own compositional procedures" (Lodge 1992: 206) as he has his narrator Derfel showcase his own authorial skill: "I could have written that truth, of course, but the bards showed me how to shape a tale so that the listeners are kept waiting for the part they want to hear... It is a small sin, this tale-shaping" (Cornwell 1996: 114). The skill of the writer is placed above truth and *this* tale shaping is valued above any *other* tale shaping. Ultimately, the author has control over the text and nobody else, as shown in Derfel's stark rebuke to Igraine that "I am the storyteller, not you" (Cornwell 1996: 421). Highlighting Derfel's authorial craft shows a desire for the novel to be read as a product of a great authorial tradition, yet not of *the* great authorial tradition in which Malory is dominant (cf Collins 1989: 50).

If a text is indeed a tissue of quotations as Barthes claims, then this does not have to mean the end of the author. After all, “if the author is the site of a collision between language, culture, class, history, *episteme*, there is still every reason to assume that the resultant subject should be constructed in each case differently, the psyche forged being irreducible to any one of those forces in particular” (Burke 1998: 174). The author can still be unique, the author can have his own individual set of cultural flows acting on and through him. That they act on him is beyond dispute, what is important is that only he will be positioned within his own unique combination of flows. Terry Eagleton argues that “Michel Foucault never set out to deny the reality of authorship, simply to insist that it was best grasped as a legal, political and historical category rather than as some transcendental source of meaning” (Eagleton 1993: 42). Therefore, it is important not to deprive the author of his existence in entirety, rather it is preferable to decentre him. “In order to deprive the subject of the role of originator, we should less negate its existence than analyse the subject as a function of discourse” (Cazzato 1995: 33).

In this respect, the work of Pierre Bourdieu is important. In his work, the author is restored and on occasion is referred to as possessing “magic efficacy” (Bourdieu 1996: 290, see also Bourdieu 1993: 169). However, Bourdieu does not embark on an internal process of criticism, where the text is the sole unit of analysis, and the aim is to discern the author’s skill. Rather, it is a cultural construction of authorship, that seeks to elevate the author as a marker of distinction. As Bourdieu says:

We can only be sure of some chance of participating in the author’s subjective intention... provided we complete the long work of objectification necessary to reconstruct the universe of positions within which he was situated and where what he wanted to do was defined (Bourdieu 1996: 88).

Bourdieu’s work on cultural fields serves to acknowledge a distinction between art for art’s sake and commercial art. This distinction can be seen in operation if we compare the reception of the works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Richard Blackmore respectively. Tennyson’s son, Hallam mused that he “fear[ed] his book is *far too good to be popular*” (1897a: 51, my emphasis), whilst Tennyson spoke well of his own poetry “from no vanity but *from a pure feeling of artistic pleasure*” (1897a: 153, my

emphasis). This is in stark contrast to Richard Blackmore, whose “true design is profit or gain, in order to acquire which ‘tis necessary to procure applause by administering pleasure to the reader” (Pope 1979: 46¹⁶).

Cornwell himself draws attention to how certain styles are used as a marker of distinction. “Soon the only people who can understand the intricacies of the harmony... are other skilled craftsmen, and so you become ever more clever in an effort to impress your fellow poets, but you forget that no one outside the craft has the first notion what you’re doing” (Cornwell 1998: 176). What Cornwell in effect is describing is Bourdieu’s ‘field of restricted production’, which Bourdieu sets up in contrast to the field of large-scale production (Bourdieu 1993: 115). In the restricted field, the writers “have and want no other audience than their competitors” (Bourdieu 1993: 83). These authors disavow economic profits in favour of cultural capital, the acquisition of which gives them the competence to discern the texts of the restricted field¹⁷.

However, although Bourdieu’s categorisation of fields of production is certainly effective in showing how the value of texts can be culturally constructed, what Bourdieu does not fully take into account is how texts can have a number of meanings that can be activated as required by different social groups. His work, despite being almost wilfully ambiguous (cf Brubaker 1993: 217), is overly deterministic on occasion. Flaubert’s authorial trajectory has an air of inevitability about it, as Bourdieu talks of how authors “find themselves *pushed* towards literary professions” (Bourdieu 1996: 55, my emphasis). Bourdieu does not take into account diachronic changes in the field’s position and when analysing Flaubert he takes synchronic slices of time rather than looking at the diachronic development of the field¹⁸. Bourdieu’s analyses accurately chart Flaubert’s position in the field at a specific historical junction, but do not demonstrate clearly the instabilities within the field itself and the developments and shifts which may occur. Although “the *generative formula* which is the basis of his [Flaubert’s] own novelistic creation” (Bourdieu 1996: 28-29, my emphasis) is an important element to analyse, it is wise to remember that the same author can be valued in different ways at different times (cf Lash 1993: 210). Derek Robbins sums up Bourdieu’s position well:

The structural portrait of society that is required by Bourdieu does not explain the particularity of authors- how such or such an author 'came to be what he is' but rather lays out the range of social, aesthetic and political positions available to writers at any time (2000: 76, see also Calhoun 1993: 65-67).

Although initially striking a mark for distinction, Guinevere's comments in Cornwell's *Excalibur* are enlightening. "I would have you be vulgar with the vulgar, and clever with the clever... and both, mark you, at the same time" (Cornwell 1998: 176). It is not the author alone who constructs 'vulgar' or 'clever' meaning, this is also something formed by the reader. Bourdieu focuses too much "on reproduction rather than social change" (Lash 1993: 205) within the fields, and forgets that meaning can change over time depending on the historical, cultural and institutional contexts at any one period (cf Klinger 1994: 157). That a previous reading of Malory's text illustrates how it can be read as a coarse, violent and brutal work is demonstrated by the famous response of Roger Ascham, who commented in 1570, "the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open man slaughter, and bold bawdrye: In which booke those be counted the noblest knightes, that do kill most men without any quarell and commit fowlest adulteries by sutlest shifts" (quoted in Parins 1995: 56-57). Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the need for a refinement of Bourdieu's theory that takes into account "the chemistry between authorial intention, *developments in the field*, and canon formation in motivating meanings... through *several stages of critical evolution*" (Klinger 1994: 31, my emphasis).

Despite the potential for disruption, I have demonstrated that the author remains in present day society to be used as a signifier of cultural value. A return to an authorless time is devalued by Cornwell for instance, as certain versions "could *just* be legend... for it happened too long ago for memory to be accurate" (Cornwell 1998: 98, my emphasis). This newly authored version is positioned above those unauthored tales of legend and so carries greater authority.

Therefore, we can conclude that the author is de-centred certainly, but lives on. Perhaps it is better instead to think of the author as "a functional and ideological figure which throws new light over the functioning of literary discourse, and

disciplines the indiscriminate and dangerous proliferation of meaning” (Cazzato 1995: 33/34). For all Barthes’ rhetoric, it appears that his polemic has merely resulted in a desire for the death of the author, rather than the actual act itself (cf Gass 1997: 265), and it is possible that “the question of the author tends to vary from reading to reading, author to author. There are greater and lesser degrees of authorial inscription, certain authors occupy vastly more significant positions than others in the history of influence” (Burke 1998: 184). Perhaps indeed, as Foucault writes, “it is time to study discourses not only in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations, but according to their modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorisation, attribution and appropriation of discourses vary within each culture and are modified within each” (1991a: 117)¹⁹.

I have consciously avoided referring to Arthur as myth until this point, but if any subject matter seems ideally suited to the idea of a signifier over which meanings are contested, it is that of myth. Myth has an ability to shift both temporally and spatially, to open up spaces within its readings in order to appeal to the widest possible audience, in its willingness for certain readings to be closed down by one group, yet opened up in different ways by other readers. Many people attempt to ‘possess’ the Arthurian myth; some fail, whilst some succeed to a certain degree. To proclaim ‘the death of the author’ is to do a disservice to the wide ranging abilities of the Arthurian myth to shift according to expectation and cultural context.

Consequently, the re-establishment of the author allows us to see why certain Arthurian texts’ cultural value is constructed around discourses of authorship²⁰. The establishment of the author function shows it is possible “to seek out the process of production of the text: the organization of voices which constitute it... [yet] the strategies by which it smoothes over the incoherences and contradictions of the ideology inscribed in it” (Belsey 2002a: 130) are not always apparent or clear. In the next chapter, I further develop a theory of Arthur as myth to show how representation of the Arthurian myth is itself a mythic construct, and how myth turns the history of Arthur’s cultural construction into nature.

Chapter 2: Mythical Sites of Arthur: Questing for subcultural mythic value

Diana Spencer writes of the myth of Alexander, that “just by writing and reading the name ‘Alexander the Great’ we are invoking a weighty burden of cultural baggage” (2002: xiii). As we have seen with regards to the author function, it is clear something similar applies to the Arthurian tales, as the author is invoked as a signifier of cultural value as and when required. However it is not always clear that this activation of cultural value is an ideological construction, and often it appears as the way ‘things have always been’. In order to understand how myth and ideology work in constructing the ‘myth’ of Arthur, the work of Roland Barthes is an appropriate starting point, especially as Barthes sets himself up as the arch interpreter of myth (cf Bannet 1989: 54). As I demonstrated in the previous chapter how the Author-God is a cultural construction, to be invoked when required for cultural value, so in this chapter I shall show how myth too is a signifier of cultural value and how it “transforms history into nature” (Barthes 2000: 129). This will allow us to see how the cultural baggage surrounding the myth of Arthur is distorted so as not to appear to be a cultural construction. Instead, ideological constructions of myth offer a representation of myth, and naturalise this representation so as to suggest myth has always been perceived in this way²¹.

I shall demonstrate how academic arguments about the value of myth serve not to elucidate what myth actually *is*, but rather to naturalise the status of academics as those cultural arbiters able to establish valid and authentic definitions of myth. “The discourse of... myth is simultaneously a discourse of identity” (Friedman 1992: 194), and so it is important to “question the purported objectivity and disinterestedness of the investigator, for, in engaging in a process of demystification, one becomes implicated in a process of potentially mythifying the myth in return” (Godard 1991: 10). This will involve a critique of Barthes and also more conservative myth-critics, in order to see how their ability to define myth corresponds to how they attempt to fight for academic power and thus for the authority to give these definitions and determine the ‘reality’ of myth (cf Bourdieu 1988: xviii).

Barthes's theories are particularly useful as it appears that among myth criticism, many critics (including Barthes himself) fall into the trap of not being able to distance themselves from myth as well as they would wish. A modified version of Barthes's theories can be useful to analyse how this might be, and how myth criticism itself runs the risk of being "distorted" (Barthes 2000: 122). I shall demonstrate how discussions about myth, by their very nature, engage in a mythical act themselves in that they can often naturalise an idea of myth as something totalising. This in itself involves treating academics as a subculture in their own right, and showing how the academic community mythically constructs itself as cultural curators of the Arthurian Canon.

To treat academia as a subculture may come as a shock to some aware of 'traditional' academic theory that has treated subcultures as "typically populated by 'outsiders', 'perverts' and/ or radicals" (Thornton 1997: 5). This, however, is mainly because "in the process of portraying social groups, scholars inevitably construct them" (Thornton 1997: 5). From their self-constructed position as cultural arbiters of taste, there has been a "narrowness of focusing" (Jenks 2005: 123) in much of the work on subcultures, that tends to look at specific groups generally opposed to academia (see also Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004: 9). A consequence of this approach is that attention is drawn away from analysing academics themselves as a specific subculture their own right. Although David Chaney is aware of this often artificial distinction made by academic theory on subcultures (2004: 36), he is wrong to suggest that subcultural theory is no longer valid. Rather, it is better to think of a modification of subcultural theory that allows it to become more inclusive.

There is no reason why subcultures should fit so specifically into this category of the 'other', as there are occasions when subcultures may not "threaten established values [so much] as reproduce them" (Martin, P. 2004: 31). Subcultures signal "the presence of difference" (Hebdige 1988a: 3) between varying groups, and are "focussed around certain activities, values, certain uses of material artefacts, territorial spaces etc. which significantly differentiate them from the wider culture" (Clarke et. al 1997: 100). This becomes apparent in academia which focuses on "discourses of expertise set out to distance... [academics] from 'what everybody knows'" (Murdock 1994: 112), and thus create distinction for themselves²². Moreover, Stanley Fish demonstrates how academia works as an "interpretive community" (1980: 14) where academics can and

do work in a subculture. Indeed, much as “literature... is the product of a way of reading, of a community agreement about what will count as literature, which leads the members of the community to pay a certain kind of attention and thereby to *create* literature” (Fish 1980: 97), so the same can be said to apply to myth. “The academic representation of the truth becomes the criterion for evaluating other people’s construction of reality” (Friedman 1992: 194), which results in the danger that “our own academized discourse is just as mythical as is theirs” (Friedman 1992: 197). So we shall see that myth is not a universal term, but rather is a term appropriated by each subculture in kind according to the subculture’s *habitus*²³ and dispositions.

Relatively few people have linked myth to subcultural theory. Marc Manganaro suggests that, “myth criticism tended to extract myths from cultural contexts and to canonize literary works for their success in articulating pan-human values and aspirations” (1998: 155). Often, “myth critics focus on our psychological quest for meaning but tend to ignore the way meaning is always privileged and historicized” (Martin, J. 1995: 10). I aim to show how the conferring of a ‘sacred’ status on certain versions of the Arthurian myth is nothing more than a position-taking strategy by members of the academic community. “Myths may not legitimate political power as directly as ideologies, but in the manner of Pierre Bourdieu’s *doxa* they can be seen as naturalizing and universalising a particular social structure, rendering any alternative to it unthinkable” (Eagleton 1991: 188). Barthes comments how “myth is a *value*, truth is no guarantee for it” (Barthes 2000: 123).

This overarching myth that affects the way subcultures perceive and write about myth, I shall call the *über-myth*. It is this *über-myth* that needs to be unmasked if we are to see how myth operates and why certain values of myth are privileged above others. This in itself will help to show myth criticism as falling under the spell of the *über-myth*, as I will demonstrate that what is considered myth by many is in fact literature distorted to appear as myth. The *über-myth* is a mythical system that naturalises a subculture’s strategy of privileging their own definition of myth as ‘authentic’. This mythic construction of literature allows for the cultural value of canonical literature to be naturalised and privileged in academics’ eyes, and so serves to stabilise their status as privileged recognisers of truth. As Barthes himself says, “a voluntary acceptance of myth can in fact define the whole of our traditional

Literature. According to our norms, this Literature is an undoubted mythical system” (2000: 134).

2.1 The Once and Future Myth: Roland Barthes and the über-myth

Barthes’s argument hinges on his assertion that myth “transforms history into nature” (Barthes 2000: 129, see also Bennington and Young 1987: 2-3, Csapo 2005: 278). A myth “is a type of speech defined by its intention... much more than by its literal sense... its intention is somehow frozen, purified, eternalized, *made absent* by this literal sense” (Barthes 2000: 124). Because of this “frozen speech” (Barthes 2000: 125) myth appears to look permanent or “innocent” (*ibid*) as Barthes would have it (2000: 129-130), and thus the cultural construction of myth passes by unnoticed. Barthes suggests that although myth is “a mode of signification” (2000: 109) and communicates a message, most people are unaware they are receiving that message. According to Barthes, myth works to ensure that most people are given the impression that myth’s message is as the world has always been, and that the message conveyed is merely reflecting the world as it is, and is not utilised in any insidious way.

However, Barthes works to uncover the fact that myth is a semiological system that is used to distort language (2000: 122) in such a way that dominant acts of the bourgeoisie, instead of being considered as systems to maintain their power, are instead distorted to appear as natural, and as effects that other classes should aspire to. Barthes uses the example that:

The big wedding of the bourgeoisie, which originates in a class ritual... can bear no relation to the economic status of the lower middle-class: but through the press, the news, and literature, it slowly becomes the very norm as dreamed, though not actually lived, of the petit-bourgeois couple (2000: 141).

Indeed, as Michael Moriarty puts it, “the consumption of bourgeois representations outside the bourgeoisie produces an illusion of class as non-existent, and thus fosters the role of the bourgeoisie as a class” (1991: 28, see also Schöpflin 1997: 25). Myth is perceived as being used as a message that, by appearing natural and innocent, is political in itself in maintaining the dominant position of the bourgeoisie²⁴.

However, when Barthes makes sweeping statements such as myth is that which, “goes without saying” (2000: 143), then he himself is engaging in a certain domination. He is assuming that people unquestioningly consume myths, with only the mythologist able to see through the act. Therefore, Barthes has proven his theory in the most ironic way possible. In his discussion of myth and his choice of language Barthes once again, much as with his efforts to proclaim the Death of the Author (see chapter 1, page 15), has fallen prey to maintaining a certain system of power himself. As Catherine Belsey comments, “even in the process of analysing it [myth], we are simply taking up another position in culture” (2002b: 26). Subtle clues are found at the beginning of *Mythologies*, where it appears Barthes is talking to a subculture rather than the world as a whole. He explains how originally, he “used the word ‘myth’ in its traditional sense” (Barthes 2000: 11), but never goes so far as to explain what this traditional sense *is!* (Lavers 1982: 105) He assumes that his readership have prior knowledge which will enable them to decipher the ‘traditional’ mythic code, which is only possible if they belong to the same academic subculture as Barthes. This in itself demonstrates that Barthes himself is not as aware of the operations of myth as he needs to be. His view of myth sets up himself (and academics in general) as elitist and more knowledgeable than many other sections of society and Barthes is “as a Gnostic clinging to his secret illumination amid a world ruled by the Prince of Darkness” (Von Hendy 2002: 293). Barthes suggests that “when a myth reaches the entire community, it is from the latter that the mythologist must become estranged if he wants to liberate the myth” (Barthes 2000: 157), thereby creating a distinction between himself as academic, and mainstream culture as a whole.

Barthes has fallen prey to the über-myth, as his position as academic has become naturalised in his own writing, as “the *language* used by the mythologist himself risks falling victim to the very myth it is attempting to dispel” (Leak 1994: 57, see also Lombardo 1989: 58). Susan Sontag demonstrates how the über-myth can pass by unnoticed as she uses as praise the fact that “throughout his work Barthes projects himself into his subject” (Sontag 1989: xxxii)²⁵. This is an example of how Barthes’s style, method and theory was “soon to become the shared property of a certain intelligentsia, and today seem quite self-evident” (Calvet 1994: 126). The response to Calvet’s work itself demonstrates the naturalisation of Barthes’s position, as “simply

to mention the word biography in relation to Barthes is a heresy” (Stafford 1997: 14), and Calvet’s biography was subject to a “spate of harsh criticism” (Stafford 1997: 15, and 1998: 73).

‘Myth today’ could perhaps be seen as “a (*grande*) *mythologie* in its own right” (Ungar 1984: 25), and indeed the whole theory “is itself balanced precariously atop an unexploded myth: the myth of object-language, or denotation as a natural state of language” (Leak 1994: 70). That is, the language chosen by Barthes immediately serves to maintain a position of power, and his theories “retain a meaning only if one believes that denotation is the ‘truth of language’” (Leak 1994: 70, see also Stafford 1998: 79), and therefore asserts a certain academic pedagogy as truth. This ‘truth’ itself, however, is nothing more than an image, and a distorted image at that. This is because “the myth does not... operate directly on the real, but on signs: its language is a metalanguage... if this is so, then the mythologist, producing language out of existing metalanguage, is one stage further removed from reality” (Moriarty 1991: 29). Whilst Barthes’s assertion that myth distorts reality has a tempting appeal, by trying to unmask myth in this way he has fallen prey to myth’s pervasiveness and the fact that myth can give speech “a natural and eternal justification... a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact” (2000: 143). Barthes has managed to utilise myth in a way that disguises his own writing as something detached and of more value than alternative readings, as he does not take into account the value of readings from subcultures other than his own²⁶. “Modern mythology,” after all, “constantly blurs the edges between what is real and what is artificial” (Thody 1977: 44).

The top-down version of myth as propounded by Barthes has undoubted problems when we consider how it is applied within Barthes’s own writing. According to Barthes, “the *consumer* or ‘reader’ of myths accepts unreflectively the ambiguous signification” (Von Hendy 2002: 292). He proposes that most people consume myth innocently and unquestioningly, and do not see myth “as a semiological system, but as an inductive one,” instead they see myth as “a kind of causal process” (2000: 131). By suggesting this however, Barthes is suggesting that the distorted message is inflexible, and has but one way of being received (apart from that received by the detached omniscient, omnipotent mythologist such as Barthes himself of course!)

There are some flaws in this hypothesis. Barthes's method overlooks "the complex interrelations among different systems and sub-systems within the culture" (Gertz 1987: 37). Lavers points out that:

Semiological signs do not have just one meaning... because semiological signs are the products of multiple causality, they can be viewed from an almost infinite number of points of view, they can lend themselves to *multiple* motivations (1982: 112).

Therefore myth can be appropriated not just by the dominant ideology, but by sub-cultures too. Barthes discounts "the essential factor of human agency" (Himmelstein 1994: 8, see also Lavers 1982: 106), that however constrained by myth and social formations, will still exist. For myth to work its effects, "there must be at least some degree of congruence between official myths and popular collective memories" (Fulbrook 1997: 74). For myth to have resonance and relevance, it requires a certain willing acceptance by the relevant subcultures. Rather than being unwilling victims as Barthes suggests, maybe it is possible for subcultures to be often *willing* victims. Barthes's totalising view must be moderated somewhat to take this into account.

An example of this rather naïve top-down view of myth can be seen in Barthes's discussion of 'Myth on the Left'. Notwithstanding his indecision as to whether Myth on the Left is either impossible (2000: 146) or inessential (2000: 147), Barthes's view towards the subject is dismissive in the extreme. Yet if we take into account human agency within myth, then Myth on the Left can be seen in a different light, such as in relation to the view held by Georges Sorel. Myth to Sorel, "exists as an image or enabling fiction which will unify the proletariat, organize their political consciousness and inspire them to heroic action" (Eagleton 1991: 186). According to Sorel, myths can be activated and appropriated by those not in the dominant social group for their own ends. Myths "depend upon a state of war in which men voluntarily participate and which finds expression in well-defined myths" (Sorel 1999: 208). Whilst it may be a little extreme to think of myth as a 'war' between subcultures, the analogy holds. Nonetheless, where Barthes is correct is that despite certain versions of myth's efforts to break away from the dominant form, they are always tied to a cultural value where myths have to work in tandem, or in tension with the dominant version²⁷.

Although Sorel suggests that “myths... will take their substance from... popular accounts” (1999: 286), this is not always true as what is popular can often be revalued through time. Even when re-appropriating a high romance form, myth will in consequence naturalise and legitimate the social order and high cultural validity in certain tellings, that then dissolve back into popular consciousness, demonstrating that “all that is *not* bourgeois is obliged to *borrow* from the bourgeoisie” (Barthes 2000: 139). However, as opposed to Barthes’ suggestion that people are unwilling victims of myth, Sorel suggests that different social groups may in fact succumb *willingly* to myth. In this respect, it appears that myth is not ideological but, rather, is hegemonic in its nature. The idea of social groups yielding willingly to myth brings to mind Gramsci’s idea of consent. Gramsci talks of:

The ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production (1971: 12).

In this respect, it appears that myth is hegemonic. The dominant romance form of the Arthurian myth can indeed be re-appropriated by certain groups, and the very fact that these subcultures position themselves against this version of the myth is arguably due to the “intellectual and moral leadership” (Gramsci 1971: 57) of the dominant group, and their success in persuading these subcultures that the Romance form of the Arthurian myth has sufficient status to warrant it being reacted against. Hegemony sees dominant groups attempting to control the *idea* of the Arthurian myth (cf Jones, S. 2006: 43), resulting in the Malorean romance form being seen as ‘authentic’. In this respect, myth follows closely the idea of hegemony as “it makes concessions to rising groups and classes, but in doing so positions them in relations of dependency and, perhaps one might say, *latent* challenge to the governing power bloc” (Rojek 2007: 94). Following this, it is possible for the dominant myth of Arthur to have a number of relationships with resistant forms of myth, while still retaining its strength.

Theories of hegemony relate to Sorel’s concept of myth in other ways, too. Although Gramsci was aware that society’s construction “is not a simple matter of domination

on the one hand and subordination or resistance on the other” (Jones, S. 2006: 3), many scholars appropriating Gramsci’s theories have used the idea of hegemony as a tool to celebrate popular culture, seeing such texts “as offering spaces of resistance” (Bennett, A 2005: 25, see also Grossberg 2006: 8-11) to the dominant social order. This again tallies with Sorel’s account of myth, where he sees that in certain circumstances, “myths... are almost pure; they allow us to understand the activity, the sentiments and the ideas of the masses” (Sorel 1999: 28). Once again it appears that, rather than being purely ideological in its nature, myth is hegemonic. Both allow for an understanding of popular forms of culture, rather than restricting analysis to high cultural sites.

However, this very co-option of Gramsci’s theories by later academics shows some of the problems in linking myth too closely to hegemony. Steve Jones discusses how “Gramsci’s use of the term changes both over time and in relation to the subject matter” (2006: 45), while Chris Rojek splits the meaning of hegemony into six different sections, and argues that this slippage in meaning “arguably hinder[s] its [hegemony’s] analytic value” (2003: 114). He then goes on to suggest that “this fecundity of meaning makes the concept [of hegemony] hard to read or apply” (2003: 115).

Moreover, much as myth is not linked in entirety to ideology, as Barthes would have it, there are problems with categorising myth as hegemonic. Said acknowledges that there are occasions when there is little consent in how discussions are set up, but the “historical facts of domination” (Said 1995: 6) allow certain groups to speak of myth whilst silencing marginalised subcultures. Rather than giving consent, there are occasions when the imposition of the dominant view of myth is naturalised. This is contrary to a hegemonic position, where “a truly hegemonic group or class really must make large parts of its subcultures’ worldview its own” (Jones, S. 2006: 45). As Terry Threadgold argues, it is not simply the case that “power *necessarily* produces its own resistances or that it produces knowledges and discourses that are *invariably* productive” (1997: 69). To discern how myths operate, they cannot be simplified to purely looking at how resistance works. David Hesmondhalgh (2006: 229), for example, argues that traditional hegemonic analyses neglect too readily the field of restricted production.

To avoid over-simplistic readings of resistance, it is necessary to analyse the restricted field of the academic Arthurian subculture, to see how it relates to and impacts on the other (sub)cultural fields discussed in this thesis (cf Stabile 2000: 49). As we shall see, “each field has properties and a logic specific to itself” (Stabile 2000: 50) and there are areas of convergence at times, not simply resistance. Although hegemony still involves the wish to “shape the collective imagination of an identifiable [group]” (Turner-Vorbeck 2003: 14), different subcultures do not have one singular set of rules that can be applied to all subcultures in entirety, whilst each subculture also has a very different relationship to the field of power. As Carole A. Stabile comments, theorizing hegemony often “does not account for external shifts, correspondences and dissonances in other fields, nor for the historicity and materiality of the fields themselves” (2000: 47). As I shall demonstrate in chapter 7, much as “institutions do not automatically speak with one voice” (Jones, S. 2006: 78), so the same applies to subcultures. There are times when there are not only conflicts with the dominant field of power, but conflicts *within* the subcultural field itself. Although “hegemony works... by convincing people there is no alternative” (Johnson et al 2004: 91), *what* there is no alternative *to* can be naturalised differently by each subculture in turn and, for that matter, each individual within the subculture itself. It is wise to remember that “hegemony is always provisional” (Rojek 2007: 106).

Therefore, it is clear that a modification of Barthes must take into account the way myth can be employed, not just by dominant cultures, but by subcultures also, and “must... account for both lucidity and blindness” (Lavers 1982: 107) in how myth is used. John Tulloch offers a more sensitive model, as he proposes a “distinction... between those ‘dominant myths’ which are accepted by enough people to seem transparently ‘true’ (or ‘common sense’) and ‘counter-myths’ embedded, as Fiske says, in subcultures within our society” (1990: 7).

As we saw in the previous chapter (see page 12), in the case of the Arthurian myth there is little challenge in contemporary culture to Malory and the Romance form as the ‘dominant myth’ This acceptance of the Romance form as such, means that “the less our dominant myths are publicly challenged by counter-myths, the more ‘natural’ they appear” (Tulloch 1990: 7). Tulloch’s theory integrates elements of hegemonic

theory, as it caters for human agency and the capacity to appropriate the myth by other subcultures. However, it also allows for the fact that “similar class structures allow for different class formations and representations” (Artz 2003: 14). Each subculture is organised differently and so, each subculture’s relation to the dominant myth is in itself different, depending on which forms of subcultural capital are appropriated. As Sarah Thornton argues, “subcultural capital is the linchpin of an alternative hierarchy” (1995: 105) and this allows for a more subtle, complex understanding of how subcultures interrelate, not merely with the dominant field of power, but also with each other.

Moreover, Tulloch allows for an appreciation of how the dominant myth has been naturalised as such, in contrast to a purely hegemonic theory of myth which would suggest that subcultures are aware of their ties and dependency with regards to the dominant myth (cf Rojek 1995: 22). As I shall demonstrate later (see page 56), although the core values of the dominant myth change, this is often not an open and transparent process, but is naturalised in such a way so as to serve the actions of those seeking to re-appropriate the myth, regardless of their cultural status. Even when being resisted, these counter-myths are often still tied to the Romance form of the Arthurian tales. Although this appears to be a negotiated positioning of myth, it does not take into account the fact that the dominant Malorean version of the Arthurian myth is still naturalised as such, and it is an extreme position to suggest that those subcultures that re-appropriate the myth are always aware of its status as dominant myth, even though on occasion they may be. Even when resisting the dominant myth, it is not as clear as to simply suggest the dominant form is accepted as such by other groups owing to a process of persuasion and acceptance. Rather, myth has worked to naturalise the form in which it presents itself, to authenticate itself as ‘valid’ and ‘authentic’. The dominant form of the Arthurian myth is not as such because of consent. Rather, its ideological functions have been naturalised so as to *appear* as consent.

Indeed, although academics have almost naturalised their own impartiality, “there is no way of preventing the critic from being, for better or worse.... the shaper of cultural tradition” (Frye 1990a: 4). Moreover, the Arthurian academic subculture discussed does not fit into Stuart Hall’s ideal of an academic group of organic

intellectuals, working to “assist in the class, gender, ethnic and other political struggles of the day” (Hartley 1996: 235)²⁸. This group instead fits better Gramsci’s idea of the ‘traditional’ intellectuals, who gain their authority through a construction of their own objective impartiality and maintain “a political-intellectual supremacy” (Gramsci 1971: 18) in the Arthurian academic field. This group, moreover, appear to “retain a certain nostalgia for an accumulation of all the forms of domination and all the forms of excellence” (Bourdieu 1988: 114). This particular collection of academics is, indeed, a conservative subculture resistant to change. Academics’ readings in themselves serve to position myth in a certain light, and serve to influence how myth is perceived, as the makeup of society is a “cluster of overlapping subcultures” (Gelder 1997: 148, see also Hebdige 1988b: 212).

However, it is important to note that often this ‘shaping of tradition’ occurs only within the subculture of academia itself, as myth criticism itself could be “assumed to create a ‘school’ or community within the critical institution” (Bordwell 1989: 23). This will often result in those in the academic community reading myth in a way where “the meaning is prior to the data which will always have the same pre-read shape” (Fish 1980: 270). Even those such as Barthes, who come from a more radical position, find that “any attempt to move beyond criticism as it is presently constituted... [find themselves] part of the system of questioning that criticism and its institutions have developed” (Culler 1987: 97). Thus it is apparent that academic (and also, it must be remembered, non-academic) subcultures will come to myth with certain preconceptions and predispositions. In order to analyse how myth works, it is important that the standing of oppositional subcultures is not artificially raised at the expense of these more conservative subcultures. Rather, it is necessary to think of each (sub)culture as acquiring their own forms of symbolic and cultural capital, and thus their own construction of myth.

If certain groups are predisposed to certain meanings, it could be argued that an attempt to define a mythic paradigm is a futile task, as I myself will be unable to be completely impartial and will remain constrained by my background or position within the interpretive community (see Fish 1980: 11, and also Frow 1995: 132). Even academia as a whole can not be seen as one great homogenous mass (see Chandler 1995: 191). No grouping, after all, “is a unified entity in which all the

members share the same ideas and motivations... these sorts of groupings are themselves the sites of conflicts, disputes, negotiations and so on” (Martin, P. 2004: 26). Many different definitions of myth exist in different academic fields: from literary studies to religion; politics; philosophy; and psychoanalysis²⁹. Ultimately, it would be wise to remember that any definition arrived at here can only be my ‘best fit’, and that my “own chosen emphasis is only one of many” (Coupe 1997: 6). In order to arrive at a reading of myth, it will prove necessary for me to borrow from many fields in order to achieve the desired result, yet also to critique the strengths and failings apparent in certain interpretations of myth. In this way, I shall adopt a position-taking strategy that sees me struggle for consecration in the academic field yet, in so doing, my struggle for position and consequent attempt to revalue the academic hierarchy will see me give a voice in future chapters to subcultural über-myths other than that of academia, so ensuring my position is not naturalised as ‘authentic’ at the expense of others.

Unlike Barthes, although I recognise the importance of analysing an academic ‘high cultural’ reading of the Arthurian myth, I am not seeking to naturalise a position extolling the academic as superior cultural critic: “the researcher is bound to integrate into his model of reality used instead of setting himself up as arbiter or as impartial observer” (Bourdieu 1988: 17). However, it is wise to remember that I will to a certain extent be held in place by these shackles created by my position, and I shall undoubtedly face similar issues to Barthes in that when critiquing myth, it is eternally difficult for the mythologist, “to demonstrate *their* objectivity in the face of *its* (myth’s) ubiquity” (Von Hendy 2002: 292). Indeed, it is necessary for me to acknowledge my own position within the academic subcultural field. My own adaptation of myth is nothing more than a position-taking strategy, dependent on my own position within the academic field (cf Bourdieu 1996: 206). “It is not that reflection is impossible” (Fish 1999: 106), but that it will always be “an activity *within* a practice and therefore finally not distanced from that practice’s normative assumptions or... an activity grounded in its own normative assumptions and therefore one whose operations will reveal more about itself than about any practice viewed through its lens” (Fish 1999: 106). It is only by “acknowledging my place within this institution... [that I can] hope to draw on my sense of the conventions while gaining empathy with other participants’ actions” (Bordwell 1989: xii/xiii). Let

us now see how the über-myth works to naturalise a position of academic as critic, as the cultural position of Arthurian academics is naturalised by their mythic construction of myth. I shall go on to show how certain versions of Arthur, in particular Malory, are mythically constructed within academic discourse, and shall demonstrate that it is not just the cultural-historical background to Malory's author function that contributes to *Le Morte Darthur* holding value.

2.2 Sir Thomas Malory and Mythical Cultural Construction

James Merriman's *The Flower of Kings* was the first book to attempt to deal with the 'black hole' of Arthurian myth (see Knight 1983: 149). Merriman found that during the period between 1485 and 1835, despite falling into relative disuse compared to the present day, "for the better part of that time, it [the myth] exercised a continuing fascination over men of the most diverse talents" (1973: 3). Merriman's explanation as to why these works are not well known or used today focussed on the fact that they were not as mythically strong as that of, for example, Malory. Merriman argues it is the structure of the Romance story that gives it its mythic strength, that the characters within and the actions that take place in the story of the Romance myth are "integral parts of the whole" (1973: 28). The tales do not just focus on Arthur himself, and it is "the failure to appreciate the fixed nature of the essential Arthurian story," that gives "the explanation for the relative unsuccess of efforts to rouse Arthur from his long sleep in Avalon during most of the next three-and-a-half centuries" (1973: 29). However, Roger Simpson acknowledges that Dryden in particular had an "enduring popularity" (1990: 150) until well into the 19th century whereas Malory, whose work exercises a dominance over other versions of the Arthurian myth, did not carry that popularity through the period mentioned.

It is not necessarily the case that these versions of Arthur lack mythic strength, rather that Merriman is using the über-myth to construct an ideal of what constitutes mythic strength to him. Merriman falls into the trap of prefixing his argument with emotive statements that make it clear where his value judgements lie. Sweeping statements such as the fact that many of the works he looks at "cannot be described as 'good' or even 'important' in all but the most relative terms" (1973: ix), are juxtaposed with criticisms of work such as Dryden, which is valued as "a decline from the glorious

hero of romance” (1973: 139). Such phrases as “the Arthurian story that *counts*- the story found in the romances” (1973: 25, my emphasis) further demonstrate Merriman’s positioning with regards to the Arthurian texts (see Knight 1983: 150).

This value judgement is an appearance of the über-myth in Merriman’s work, as the language used to justify Malory as being the more mythical text is made to appear as a truly impartial, detached judgement. However, this is a distortion that is naturalised to such an extent it is barely noticeable. Closer inspection reveals that alternative discourses are at play. Dryden is downgraded to trite popularism by Merriman: “The result was a commercial product whose direct modern heir is the Broadway musical, a form which then as now assembles insignificant drama, music, dance, and spectacle into a highly saleable and meretricious fantasy” (1973: 64). Perhaps, as we shall see, myth is working in a different way, to ‘naturalise’ a literary form that in certain sections of culture, is perceived to be ‘better’, where there is a cultural “belief in the value of the work” (Bourdieu 1993: 37)³⁰. Barthes discusses this and its relationship to myth when he states how, “conversely, the *rules* in classical poetry constituted an accepted myth, the conspicuous arbitrariness of which amounted to perfection of a kind” (Barthes 2000: 134). Nonetheless, it is clear that this view holds a certain sway among particular groups, namely academics (see Knight 2003: 150). Field states how the *Morte Darthur* “became an English literary classic in the sixteenth century and re-established itself as one in the nineteenth” (1999a: 227, see also Dixon-Kennedy 1995: 179, 194).

For Malory to hold mythic strength, presentation of the text as a ‘literary classic’ is important for a myth which “remains primarily a literary tradition” (Nastali 1999: 5). As such, myth is required to intermingle with literature and the two must work in tandem rather than opposition. However, an example of the über-mythic construction of this mythic definition can be seen by the fact that although Merriman argues for the mythic strength of Malory, his view of the text is not the sole representation of Malory that is possible. Indeed, other mythmakers might argue that in its content, the *Morte Darthur* is actually mythically weaker than certain other forms of the Arthurian myth due to its status as a ‘literary classic.’ Lévi-Strauss suggests that myth is a ‘purer’ form of language than literature, that literature is “constructed on weaker oppositions than those found in myths” (Lévi-Strauss 1978: 128). Andrew Von Hendy

summarises Lévi-Strauss's position effectively, arguing that "story for story's sake is the polar contrary to the ideal aspiration of myth to escape narrative altogether, and a shift to 'literary creation' is the last indignity for noble preliterate narrative, a fate worse than death" (Von Hendy 2002: 246). Meanwhile, Northrop Frye comments on how literature uses myth's ability to mediate elements, yet argues that literature in itself loses certain 'purities' of myth (1990a: 118). By claiming literature as a more complicated form than myth, Frye also suggests that literature loses much of myth's purity, its naturalness, and its ability to relate to people. Therefore a myth that comes from a 'literary tradition' would lose some of its mythic strength according to Frye's reading.

Further counter-arguments to the status of Malory come from Frank Kermode, who puts forward an argument that would suggest that for Malory to be mythically strong would be at odds with its status as 'great literature'. He argues, "fictions can *degenerate* into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive" (Kermode 1967: 39 my emphasis). Yet Kermode makes a curious statement, in that he considers the relationship between myth and fiction to be one where:

Myth... is a sequence of radically unchangeable gestures. Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the needs of sense-making change. Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent (Kermode 1967: 39).

However, it can be argued that this effect is reversed, that specific fictions become the agents of stability, owing to the cultural formation of the ideals of inspiration and the canon. A way of "forging an imagined community... [is] the creation of a canonical literature" (Smith, A. 1999: 166). Academics and others forge their own community around an über-mythic construction of the Arthurian myth, as "these communities... construct objects of value (let us say 'canons') which can only be properly valued within the respective community of the object's production" (Guillory 1993: 277).

However, myths have an undeniable malleability (see Ruthven 1976: 47), as can be seen by the variety of Arthurs that are in existence. Whilst it is true that myths offer a permanence, as is seen with the dominance of a chivalric Arthur rooted in 12th century romance and enhanced by Malory, I argue this is not due to the mythical

element inside of the text, rather it is the mythical *construction* outside of the text. Indeed, it is the state of permanence granted a work by its status as great literature, and thus having “deferred, lasting success” (Bourdieu 1993: 82), that gives it this dominant identity. Fiction is not the agent of change, but rather that of stability in how we “receive this particular myth *today*” (Barthes 2000: 129).

The fact we perceive myth as ‘myth’ rather than an alternative form such as ‘literature’ is due to the naturalising effect of the über-myth taking hold. This is why, on many occasions, it is necessary for the literary creation of a text to become dissolved. Despite not always appearing to be a ‘literary classic’ (I shall demonstrate in chapter four how visitors to Tintagel are aware of the dominant myth, but not its source), the ‘noble narrative’ of Malory’s text is constructed by giving an ideal of a ‘story for story’s sake,’ in order that the aesthetic beauty of the work is privileged (cf Bourdieu 1993: 199). This cultural value of Malory originates from nothing more than a cultural construction of a ‘natural genius’ and the value inherent in writing ‘story for story’s sake’ (Frye 1990a: 64) that the über-myth has distorted in order to make it appear as if it has always been.

As shall become clear in interviews with subcultures and individuals throughout this thesis (in particular chapter four), it seems that many people are aware of Arthur’s links with the Round Table, chivalry and the love triangle between Arthur, Launcelot and Guinevere, yet less are aware of the Romance version of the myth’s foundations in French courtly romance and, later, Malory and Tennyson. In this respect, it is clear that Lévi Strauss may have a point. It is true that there are occasions where “myths cannot be perceived to be inventions” (Wilson 1997: 183). People are aware of the high noble myth without having the cultural capital to be aware of the origins of this form, and this may be why the myth holds popular value. It is due to the cultural value of these ‘stories for stories sake’ that their strength dominates other, preliterate versions. The distortion of these texts through the lens of being a great literary work has conspired to enhance their status as myth. However, always aware of the danger of being perceived as elitist by certain social strata, it is on occasion necessary for them to appear naturalised as a ‘noble preliterate narrative’ and when required, these texts must dissolve back into that status. Myth is showing its malleability in terms of how it presents itself, not in terms of its content, but rather its form (Barthes 2000:

109). The dominant myth and form of its construction has been so naturalised that even in more popular forms:

To be the expression of a *myth*, the telling of a given narrative... needs to be perceived as being adequately faithful to the most important facts *and* the correct interpretation of a story which a social group already accepts and comes to accept as true. It will carry authority when communicated in an appropriate way, by an appropriate teller or set of tellers, in an appropriate historical, social, and ideological context (Flood 2002a: 43-44).

The dominant romance form of the Arthurian myth has been naturalised, but the appropriate context is formed by the myth's position within each social group in which it appears. Therefore, the appropriate method of communication for the myth often needs to be different, depending on the category and standing of the group in which it is used. Although myths often "*purport to be sacred*" (Manganaro 1998: 68, my emphasis), as we have seen with regards to the cult of authorship (see chapter one, page 35), what this sacredness *is* can often be malleable in itself.

Therefore, it is clear that it is important to look at myth's sacred nature in more open terms, widening the definition of what is 'sacred'. In this respect, I am not thinking of a 'sacred narrative' in the religious sense (see Eliade 1996)³¹. However, if we think of how "the Critical adjective *sacred* distinguishes myth from other forms of narrative" (Dundes 1984: 1, see also Leeming 2003: 8), then we see a possible alternative reading of a 'sacred' narrative as a narrative that carries cultural value and works as a mark of distinction. Leeming demonstrates how the rhetoric surrounding myth as a sacred narrative can be appropriated by an academic pedagogy, as he didactically states how "myths... are not only worth teaching but are essential to our education" (Leeming 1992: 3), and so are perceived to have a high, and 'worthwhile' value. Here, we see an insidious naturalisation of myth that requires popular forms of myth to be marginalised by an academic discourse.

In this way, an academic, elitist definition of myth has been linked to a natural, inevitable origination in the form of high cultural texts. Despite myth's populist origins, it has been appropriated by other sectors of society over time and the 'reality' of its ideal as a civilising force is proven to be nothing more than a shimmering

illusion; its value has been naturalised. The key element when thinking of the sacred nature of myth is to consider that myths have the cultural status of sacred truth in their groups (Flood 2002b: 176, see also Bourdieu 1988: 74). Other groups, including academics, may not believe a story to have a sacred status, but what matters is how the sacred nature is constructed *within* groups themselves. Myth is used, by academics and also by other communities, to establish boundaries both within their own community, and also to provide an element of distinction from other communities. Much as “what will, at any time, be recognized as literature is a function of a communal decision as to what will count as literature” (Fish 1980: 10), so the same applies to myth. Malory’s ‘sacred’ status within academia is a communal decision.

It can be argued that the über-myth acts in aiding this communal judgment that the ‘purest’ form of the Arthur myth comes from a select band of literary texts. James P. Carley talks of “the canonization of Malory by literary historians” (1996: 34), whilst Norris Lacy discusses how for a great deal of time there was a concentration of academic effort on a select band of texts, but then argues that today “many Arthurian scholars have broadened their focus and ceased to think of medieval Arthurian literature as consisting, to stretch a point only slightly, of a few great masterpieces” (Lacy 1996a: viii, see also Nastali and Boardman 2004: xii-xiii). In this respect, it appears that Lacy is celebrating the diversity of Arthurian literature available, and celebrating the impartial nature of academics. However, his language in the piece suggests that even if other texts are indeed analysed by academics, this only serves to enhance the status of the core texts within the canon. We hear how, “even if study demonstrates that a work is minor or flawed, our understanding of the genre, the literary tradition, or even *the masterpieces themselves* is *enhanced* by the expansion of the canon” (Lacy 1996a: viii/ix, my emphasis). According to Lacy’s presentation, there *is* no expansion of the canon, merely the use of ‘minor’ works to enhance the status of the ‘masterpieces’. His own cynicism about the potential expansion of the canon shines through as he protests that “it is not a purely negative phenomenon” (Lacy 1996a: viii). That is, although not ‘purely’ a negative phenomenon, it is clear that Lacy thinks in the main it is! In a moment of reflection, Lacy acknowledges that “whereas there may be no subject matter that is more international than Arthurian studies, we seem in some ways to have become more and more insular in our scholarship on the subject” (2002b: 9).

That there is a naturalised position that sees an elite band of Arthurian texts being considered worthy of study can be confirmed in many other analyses of Arthur. We hear such comments as how “an English course on Arthur *must focus* on Malory” (Turville-Petre 1986: 106, my emphasis), and how “the Arthurian chronicles after Geoffrey, Wace and Layamon have been ignored by historians as being worthless, and by scholars of literature as having little merit... These later chronicles were *nevertheless* quite popular” (Kennedy 2002a: xviii, my emphasis). This thereby shows the distinction between academic and popular values (cf Bourdieu 1993: 51). Moreover, we hear how “the power of Malory’s narrative... has often been *justly* praised” (Kennedy 2002b: 165, my emphasis)³². Meanwhile, of later work there appear comments such as that from Derek Pearsall, who argues that “Arthurian stories are... appropriated to the crassest Hollywood sentimentalities” (Pearsall 2003: 161), and that there are “already *too many* television adaptations” (Pearsall 2003: 163, my emphasis).

The only way myth can be accepted is to be canonised and for the cultural processes of its development to be naturalised, for it to appear as a representation of ‘myth’ suitable for an academic subcultural ideology. Northrop Frye suggests a reason as to why we should be looking at the value perceived in certain literary texts, as he demonstrates how he views literature as not at all homogenous:

What we call classics are works of literature that show an ability to communicate with other ages over the widest barriers of time, space, and language. This ability depends on the conclusion of some element of insight into the human situation that escapes from the limits of ideology (1990b: 119).

This is a deeply problematic statement, as it is clear that even in the most valued Arthurian works, an ideology can still be present. Stephen Knight effectively demonstrates this with a number of the ‘classic’ texts. Of Tennyson he says that, “when he worried about authority he meant the authority of the power elite, among whom he was increasingly accepted” (Knight 1983: 173), while of Malory he explains that “these breaches of order were... widely known in the fifteenth century as real disturbances of the aristocratic peace” (Knight 1983: 115, see also Radulescu 2003: 4-

7 and 113-146). Here, Frye himself shows the über-mythic power of texts, he shows how certain ideologies are already privileged over and above others, and are so accepted that they appear natural. Marina Warner extends this principle, as she tells of how myth:

Pretends to present the matter as it is and always must be... But, contrary to this understanding, myths aren't writ in stone, they're not fixed, but often, telling the story of the same figures- of Medea or of dinosaurs- change dramatically in both content and meaning. Myths offer a lens which can be used to see human identity in its social and cultural context- they can lock us up in stock reactions, bigotry and fear, but they're not immutable... Myths convey *values* and expectations which are always evolving, in the process of being formed, but- and this is fortunate- never set so hard they cannot be changed again, and newly told stories can be more helpful than repeating old ones (1994: 13-14, my emphasis).

Here, ultimately, is the heart of Malory's strength in the way the *Morte Darthur* successfully disguises elements applying to fiction, and presents them as myth. Being myth, its reception and meaning can constantly shift, yet the literary underpinnings of this myth allow a permanence, and an impression of this permanence, that ensures the über-mythic effect can be rooted in something secure, in something that gives the impression of 'always having been.'

Myth, then, can be seen as a dialogical system, where, "opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code" (Jameson 1981: 84). The shared code of Arthur is tied to the dominant romance version, but this is able to be utilised by other groups, as the dominant formulations of Arthur "are reappropriated and polemically modified" (Jameson 1981: 84).

It is due to the malleability of myth that the fiction of Malory derives its strength, as the dominant elements of society will utilise Malory to assert that permanence, despite other texts trying to break into the axis. However, as this reception of Malory has been by no means consistent, as we saw in the previous chapter (see also Nastali and Boardman 2004: xii), this permanence is given only by a distorted language to make it appear so. Although it can be argued that dominant myths hold certain core values that do not change and thus protect them from threatening counter myths (Tulloch 1990: 7), how the myth is received is limited to a certain time frame meaning

that core values can change, only subtly and almost unnoticed (cf. Spencer 2002: 205). This allows us to see how, despite being the main shaping force within the myth, Malory has been constantly revalued through time depending on the needs and the actions of those seeking to appropriate the myth, and the value given to the Romance version of the myth.

It is clear that myth needs to give the impression of permanence for it to still carry weight today. Fredric Jameson offers an explanation as to why that might be:

We never really confront a text immediately, in all its freshness, as a thing-in-itself. Rather, texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or- if the text is brand-new, through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive traditions (Jameson 1981: 9, see also Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 145, and Bennett 1987: 72).

That is, previous interpretations of Arthur will carry weight, we cannot help but bring these interpretations into the present day. Indeed, “our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and appropriate it” (Jameson 1981: 9-10). In this respect, it is hardly surprising that the Romance form of the myth would survive as a strong form, endorsed as it is by influential sections of society. “When an act of communication provokes a response in public opinion, the definitive version will take place not only within the ambit of the book, but in that of the society that reads it” (Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 68).

However, as touched on previously, there are many different interpretations of Arthur, ranging from the Celtic Warrior Lord, through the Chivalric romance king, to even the Romano-British King in Jerry Bruckheimer’s recent *King Arthur* (2004). In future chapters, we shall see how other texts acquire ‘sacred’ status within their subcultural groups, where the über-myth works to enable particular texts to be valued as the ‘real’ myths of Arthur³³. What matters is whether the version of the myth is *perceived* to be sacred, and is believed in, by members of the specific communities to which they are aimed (see Smith, M. 2000: 2). Myths “speak to us of entire ways of life and canonize patterns of organization of society that regulate behavior, ensuring a continuity of values and beliefs” (Himmelstein 1994: 62, see also May 1993: 45). For example, in

the case of Gary Hughes's rock opera, *The Once and Future King* (2003), to members of the community for which the work is aimed, this creation (as we shall see in chapter seven) holds a status and a value far beyond that which is granted works of a similar status by alternative groups, such as academics.

However, is it possible to suggest that *all* these renderings are equally valid and sedimented? Warner certainly appears to suggest so, as she mentions how "every telling of a myth is a part of that myth: there is no ur-version, no authentic prototype, no true account" (Warner 1994: 8). This is indeed the case, in that we cannot find a 'true' 'historical' account of Arthur (see Merriman 1973: 25), but it does not take into account the fact that on occasion we *construct* an ur-version culturally. Merriman himself engages in the process with his discussion of certain Arthurian texts and their relative values. In fact Warner herself appears to confirm this, as she writes of the Greek myth of Medea that "Euripides's tragedy, written in the fifth century BC, introduced Medea the child-killer and has made this side of her much more familiar than other texts" (1994: 7)³⁴. That is, culturally, although by no means the 'original', the 'first', it is what we *perceive* to be the 'authentic' account. Authenticity can only ever be a cultural construction itself, as shall be developed more fully in chapter four on Tintagel: "'Authenticity', or 'Sincerity'... is only possible- and effective- in the case of a perfect, immediate harmony between the expectations inscribed in the position occupied and the dispositions of the occupant" (Bourdieu 1996: 164).

Indeed, the cultural construction of an ur-version, or master- narrative, is an entirely predictable cultural occurrence, despite our best efforts to fight against this:

If interpretation in terms of expressive causality or of allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation, this is because such master narratives have inscribed themselves in texts as well as in our thinking about them; such allegorical narrative signifieds are a persistent dimension of literary and cultural texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality (Jameson 1981: 34).

That is, in order for us to be able to root things in the 'real' or the 'historical', some 'reality' needs to exist. Nonetheless, to think of myth as having an 'ur-version' might take away some of the power of myth to shift, be malleable, and be appropriated by

subcultures. Limiting myth to an ur-version means the subtlety in Tulloch's argument is lost.

Difference is important within myth, yet also there is a need for myth to be malleable enough so that its difference is not an alien, incomprehensible difference:

Mythic forms of communication... clearly demarcated the more or less sacred times from the secular ordinariness of everyday life. This is so despite, or even because of, their more or less intensely marked difference from everyday life. But they were also part of the everyday because they generated the forms of culture which could then be seen to be incorporated through more practical or mundane attitudes and behaviours into the daily round (Silverstone 1994: 167).

Here we see why even when valued as 'sacred' texts within their own subcultures, popular forms of the Arthurian myth need to be positioned against the high Romance Malorean form of the myth as a form of distinction. After all, "myths of identity are equally myths of alterity, or significant otherness, for to state identity is also to speak of difference" (Overing 1997: 16). Therefore, to state a popular identity, the difference from Malory must be asserted. Yet it is not quite as simple as this, because Malory holds a strength and a dominance that other forms do not have, it is necessary to assert a certain debt to Malory as well. "It... [is] impossible for later writers not to be absorbed into, and forced into a reaction against, his [Malory's] account of things when they came to retell the Arthurian story (Pearsall 2003: 84³⁵). Because "myths are usually expressive of specific political visions that distinguish the relative worth of an array of modes of power" (Overing 1997: 16), it is also necessary to tie in versions of Arthur with Malory, to assert difference only within a framework of the dominant myth.

This use of Malory is seen clearly in TH White's *Once and Future King*, where the authority invested in Malory is used by White in order for his own tale to gain authenticity. Malory is introduced as a character in his own right at the end of the book, as the 'official chronicler' endorsed by Arthur. This has the effect of raising Malory as the true and authoritative version of the Arthurian tales and consequently by drawing on this source, White's own message gains authority. Yet it is not merely Malory's text itself that White used. We have already encountered Roger Ascham's

famous clam that Malory was full of nothing more than, “open manslaughter and bold bawdry” (White 1994: 563), yet this is used ingeniously by White not as criticism, but to raise Malory’s standing, that the bold bawdery of among other things Tristram’s affair with King Mark’s wife Isolde is projected as the cause for the Round Tale’s demise³⁶. As such, White not only manages to inject a contemporary ideal of morals, of a nuclear family of husband wife and children, but also manages to turn a criticism of Malory into a deliberate intention by the author. This enables what was seen as a criticism to become Malory’s genius as a writer, and thus serves to artificially, yet insidiously, raise his author function. As such, to use him as a source becomes eminently appropriate.

Meanwhile, each of Rosalind Miles’s *Guenevere* books begins with a heavily abridged synopsis of Malory’s epic to set the scene, and the back cover hints at a book entirely different to that suggested by such phrases as, “Lancelot never fumbled, he seemed to know the way with buttons and bows” (Miles 1999: 539). We are told instead of the author as an acclaimed historian, and the book’s content consisting of Guenevere ruling a truly ancient kingdom. As such, the use of Malory lends a certain historical authority to the novel, enabling it to be seen as something a little more than a disposable novel, but a ‘real’ account.

Although Schöpflin suggests that “those who do not share in the myth are by definition excluded” (1997: 20), the reality is more subtle. It is not the content of the myth, or the myth itself that excludes others, but rather the value conferred on that particular interpretation of the myth that excludes other communities. The myth itself can be revalued, but if not with the right ‘meaning’ to rival groups, then the myth loses its mythic status to those groups. This does not mean, however, that mythic status is lost to *all* groups, and even by creating a difference these revaluings of myth can serve to enhance and re-enforce the ‘original’, or the ‘authentic’ version as the *genuinely* mythical.

This ‘elite’ version of myth is however a culturally constructed version, that by the language chosen is made to appear as natural. “Myth-making lies in the consciousness, affirmative as well as tragic, of living in a human world which, in so

far as it must embody value, can have no ultimate grounding” (Bell 1998: 2) other than that given it by language. The reason for this ‘reality’ is that “the self-conscious, modern use of myth focusses on awareness of living as conviction, which is the only way it can be lived, a world of values which cannot be grounded in anything beyond itself” (*ibid*). It is clear that “the cultural expression of a myth... may appropriate archetypal imagery, consciously or unconsciously, for rhetorical means- that is, to further the ends of a particular person or group of people or to advise a general course of action” (Hocker Rushing 1995: 95-96), and as such certain versions of the myth are only sacred to certain groups. This is why versions of the myth are only sacred to certain elements because of the constant struggle between those seeking to appropriate the myth: “a ruling class ideology will explore various strategies of the legitimation of its own power position, while an oppositional culture or ideology will, often in covert and disguised strategies, seek to contest and to undermine the dominant ‘value system’” (Jameson 1981: 84).

Therefore, we have seen that the über-myth is a myth about myth itself, it is a myth utilised in order for subcultures to console themselves that they have a mastery over myth, and the ability to define what myth actually *is*. However, it must be pointed out that the über-myth can be used, not just by the subculture of academia, but other subcultures too. “No myth can exist in the same form throughout all systems of a culture of a given period... [and] they will be articulated differently in the different systems” (Gertz 1987: 38). Their values may be different to that of academia, and their definitions of how myth works may also be different, but ultimately the same principle will apply, in that they will reassure themselves that they, and they alone have the authentic definition of myth, naturalised through the über-myth:

The function of myth is not to deliver ‘metaphysical truth’, because its content is irrational and untrue. Its efficacy is that it provides a necessary sticking plaster for the social structure. It serves as a symbolic statement about the social order, and as such it reinforces social cohesion and functional unity by presenting and justifying the traditional order. Mythic discourse reminds a community of its own identity through the public process of specifying and defining for that community its distinctive social norms. Whether or not people believe in the irrational content of myth is irrelevant, for the symbols of myth have metaphoric value and serve a crucial social function in maintaining the given social order (Overing 1997: 7).

However, it is not an entire cultural structure, but a series of subcultural structures that interrelate with one another, and the myth can be revalued if the respective groups choose this as a strategy. As such, although at any one cultural moment a particular interpretation of the myth will appear as 'authentic', the representation of the myth is only fixed in this way to the subcultures involved in this construction. Indeed, the Arthurian myth is required to be a fluid signifier, shifting according to the needs of the community appropriating it at any cultural moment. Moreover, for the high romance version to maintain its status, often it will need to be reinterpreted in order to be naturalised as 'authentic'. After all, "we do not know anything until we have recognized it, that is, placed it into a context of what we already know, rearranging the familiar until the unfamiliar is fitted into it" (Frye 1990b: 152).

Therefore, I have shown how "mythic and symbolic discourses can thus be employed to assert legitimacy and strengthen authority" (Schöpflin 1997: 27, see also Flood 2002b: 180, and Bourdieu 1993: 46) and how this allows subcultures to privilege their own concept of myth above other versions of myth, and allows them to naturalise their own myth as the 'real'. Having theorised how the über-myth works, in the next chapter I shall undertake a practical study of its effects upon academia, and look at the operations of the Arthurian academic mailing list, *Arthurnet*. As these issues are complex and require analysis in great detail, the next section is devoted to this case study in its entirety.

Section II:

Film

Chapter 3: Online and Filmic Sites of Arthur: Caught in the (Arthur)net

This chapter is devoted to a practical examination of an academic subculture in operation, as occurring in the online community of *Arthurnet*. This is an academic discussion list, positioned as such by way of it being sponsored by the journal *Arthuriana*, and furthered by offering a basic reading list on the mailing list's home page³⁷. *Arthurnet* takes its place in the numerous discussion lists filling the web, leading the internet to be not a homogenous mass, but rather a "loose collection" (Healy 1997: 65) of subcultures (see also Rheingold 1998) of which *Arthurnet* is one. How this subculture works is not to be taken in isolation from society as a whole. The internet is not some virtual simulacrum of real life but rather "is only one of the ways in which the same people may interact. It is not a separate reality. People bring to their online interactions... [cultural] baggage" (Wellman and Gulia 1999: 170). On an academic mailing list, people's "offline connections with others" (Wellman and Gulia 1999: 170) become especially relevant, with the contributors to the list also attending conferences and contributing to the journal that sponsors the discussion list. Indeed, the editorial board of *Arthuriana* consists of many of the more regular contributors to *Arthurnet*, such as Judy Shoaf the *Arthurnet* moderator; Kevin Harty; and Norris Lacy. In this chapter I shall look at a case study of the film *King Arthur* to show how the über-myth works to legitimate and naturalise academic discourses around Arthur before looking at alternative readings of the film to show how different interpretations can be reached depending on prior Arthurian textual knowledge, and the cultural competencies of the viewer. Firstly however, it is important to look at how the academic mailing list is constructed in order to see how this particular academic subculture functions.

Christine Hine states that "arguing over whether online social formations map directly on to those that occur either ideally or actually in offline settings may be a distraction from the study of whatever develops online in its own terms" (2000: 19), yet the offline interaction between members of the discussion list impacts upon what develops online also, and becomes especially important for the social construction of *Arthurnet* and a "sense of itself as a community" (Agre 1998: 81). The ability of posters to construct an identity from scratch has been noted in other groups situated on the web (cf Markham 1998: 35). This is in part possible because of the ability to

hide one's identity on the internet (Danet 1998: 129), but is not seen in this instance. Rather, what is important is the prior cultural capital that the academics bring to the list from their offline identities, and this is necessary for the list formation and its operation. It is wrong to say that "people who are communicating with each other online care less about formalities or titles" (Markham 1998: 57). Indeed, Annette Markham herself acknowledges this is not always the case. In communication with those possessing higher cultural capital than herself, she makes more effort to impress and finds herself feeling "exposed and vulnerable" (1998: 57) because of her own feelings of inferiority. Rather, in *Arthurnet* we need to think of "the influence that particular individuals can have in shaping their communities" (Baym 2000: 200). This is also important as the writer's identity "plays an important role in judging the veracity of an article" (Donath 1999: 30) to those within the group. After all, it "is not to your advantage... [to remain anonymous] if in the real world you hold some authority" (Donath 1999: 40).

This means that even prior to discussion on Arthurian subjects taking place, people seek to position themselves in relation to those who hold a consecrated position on the list. John Doherty is quick to inform us about the fact he was taught by PJC Field, and by doing so shows himself as a member of the academic community who is "disposed to enter the cycle of simple production, based on recognition of the 'old' by the 'young'- homage, celebration etc" (Bourdieu 1993: 57). He therefore attempts to enter the field under the rules already in place, hoping that in return he will receive "recognition of the 'young' by the 'old'" (*ibid*), so allowing him to strive for a consecrated position within the field. This enables him to reach a position where his own words carry some authority as a result of his association with PJC Field. Field is referred to as a "true Malory scholar" (16/3/94).

Furthermore, people's relative positions in the field and depending on their need to recognise the legitimacy of various academics, or wish to compete for that cultural legitimacy themselves, are demonstrated by the forms of address used at any one time. Witness the contrast between the modes of address that Antonio Furtado, one of the many scholars who post on *Arthurnet* (and himself author of numerous journal articles for *Arthuriana*), uses at any one time. When Norris Lacy's academic authority is required, then we hear how Furtado is "very pleased to see Professor Lacy's

comments on my course!” (31/8/04) By addressing him as ‘Professor’, and therefore adding his title, Furtado is signalling “a relatively formal and deferential relationship” (Gee 2005: 12) between himself and the more senior academic in which Furtado feels the need, owing to his relatively low status within the academic community compared to Lacy, to appropriate Lacy’s authority for his own end.

However, when Furtado later wishes to take issue with Lacy’s comment, then Furtado becomes less deferential and uses Lacy’s first name instead of the ‘official’ academic title. This change of address is used in order to move Lacy away from the ‘official’ discourse of academia, and more into that of a “lifeworld discourse” (Fairclough 1995: 165). When the academic authority that comes with Norris Lacy’s position in the field is no longer required, then Lacy becomes simply ‘Norris,’ enabling Furtado to challenge Lacy’s authority on a more equal footing. We see how this is especially important when attempting to argue against Lacy’s position:

May I take the liberty to also stress the word "ring". Perhaps Norris has clearly formulated in his mind (and may have spelled out, elsewhere) a list of properties whose presence would characterize a work as Arthurian. But his use of the word "ring" suggests a second possibility: that he sees the notion as purely intuitive, something to be "felt", rather than verified to satisfy some previous formal definition (28/6/05).

Nonetheless this exchange merely serves to entrench Furtado’s lower position within the field compared to Lacy, as “inferiority is signalled by a suppression of meanings of the self, and expansion of meanings of the other” (Hodge and Kress 1988: 44). Even though Furtado intends to argue against Lacy he still feels the need, rather than putting forward his own arguments in contradiction, to highlight Lacy’s possible intentions and to suggest these might have been covered elsewhere. It is Furtado’s sense of inferiority and awareness of his own lower position within the field that leads him to suggest that it is not Lacy’s omission. Rather, the possibility is offered that Furtado himself does not have the academic capital to have read or understood Lacy’s arguments in sufficient depth.

The modes of address other posters use for Norris Lacy are also significant in seeing how the academic field in *Arthurnet* is constructed. Those who hold a consecrated position such as the moderator of the list, Judy Shoaf, are able to merely call Lacy ‘Norris’ without reference to his academic title, because they do not need to show

deference or make use of his academic authority. This aids the people with most cultural capital within the field to “maintain desirable social climates” (Baym 1998: 62), and also enables them to signify their own dominant position. Furthermore, use of an academic title “implies an orientation to the public domain,” whereas use of the first name entails “the private domain... individual private existence” (Hodge and Kress 1988: 48). By use of the more informal modes of address amongst themselves, the consecrated group of academics naturalise the barriers to attaining a consecrated position, putting obstacles in place to limit entry into the higher reaches of the field. In order to uphold this position, it is important for the consecrated academics to maintain “power over the mechanisms of reproduction... which... is based on control, through co-option of access to the university body, on durable relations of production and dependency, between the head and his clients” (Bourdieu 1988: 105). This use of barriers therefore serves to ensure the list remains in a form and structure which maintains legitimate forms of academic study and discussion of Arthur, according to their norms.

Occasionally rebellion will surface in discussion about popular cultural elements of the Arthurian myth. Ostensibly, discussion of popular culture is not prohibited by the list, and indeed the homepage has a listing for Paul Gadzikowski’s *King Arthur in Time and Space*, an online comic strip based on the legend³⁸. However, it becomes clear that popular culture holds a lower positioning within the debates raging on *Arthurnet*. Even those claiming to stand up for popular culture implicitly assign it a lower value to the ‘serious’ matter of Arthuriana as they suggest the worth of popular culture is to provide a bridge to the more valid texts:

For medieval studies to survive in this age of diminished funding and ‘dumbing down’ across the educational spectrum, we must find some way of justifying what we do to non-specialists. We must include them in our discussions rather than excluding them; we have to listen to them rather than preaching at them. Only in this way can we hope to attract new minds, new blood... eventually new medievalists. Only in this way can we maintain our positions in colleges and universities (Maud McInerney 15/5/96).

Indeed, even when members of the list speak favourably of popular literature and films that they like, they feel the need to underscore this by talking of them under the thread name of ‘guilty pleasures’ (10/1/00), thereby showing there is a definite

preconception about what are considered valid Arthurian texts for academics to discuss, consequently defining the others as having a low status (cf Morley 1993: 161). This also serves the purpose of naturalising the academic community on *Arthurnet* as an 'authentic' subculture in their own eyes, as the circular process of interpretation allows them to confirm their own reproduction of academic values as valid and 'correct' (cf chapter two, pp. 38-39).

3.1 Academic Language As a Barrier To Entry

The subjects discussed on the mailing list are ostensibly open to all manner of discussion, on an infinite variety of subjects relating to Arthur, yet a purpose is served by members of the list seeking to control and naturalise which subjects are considered as valid for debate. Steven G. Jones argues that "the ability to create, maintain, control space... links us to notions of power and necessarily to issues of authority, dominance, submission, rebellion and cooperation" (1998: 20). Early in the list's existence there is an effort made to claim for the list its own space as to what is valid to discuss. Jim Farrow begins by warning about the degeneration of the cultural value of Arthur by asking, "isn't Medieval Studies what Arthur is supposed to be about, or is the whole network degenerating into just another neo-psychological and self-perpetuating ring of recycled analysis of warmed up fictional rehashes of legendary stereotypes of mythical archetypes?" (13/5/96)

The language used here is remarkably dense and complex. Indeed, it appears almost to be wilfully so. Patricia Nelson Limerick argues the reason for such difficult academic language is twofold. Firstly, it sets the academic as distinct and with higher symbolic capital. The language used works as a barrier to entry that appears perfectly natural, meaning that if the language cannot be understood "the problem is that you are an unsophisticated and untrained reader. If you were smarter, you would understand me" (1998: 199). Moreover, "difficult prose can act as a kind of protective camouflage... no-one can attack your position, say you are wrong or even raise questions about the accuracy of what you have said, if they cannot *tell* what you have said" (1998: 202). The aim in using this language is for Farrow to stifle debate about the direction of Medieval Studies. The question becomes rhetorical as the only people skilled in the competencies to respond to Farrow's statement are fellow medieval

scholars, who have no interest in attacking 'one of their own'. However, Farrow's approach is far more subtle than that of Paul Gans, whose tirade against what he sees to be subjects unfit for both academic and a mailing list discussion is worth quoting in detail:

A mailing list, especially a *MODERATED* mailing list, is for serious discussion. It is for folks who want to learn something about Arthur and for folks who already know something about Arthur to meet and talk about ARTHURIAN issues, not the latest Mel Gibson movie or the latest science-fiction epic.

I'm tired of folks posting messages in which they brag about how little reading they have done, in which they speak of their annoyance at scholars who dare to disagree with them. I'm annoyed at ignorance being paraded as wisdom because somebody went to a re-enactment and now considers themselves an expert. I'm tired of folks who think Malory was the first person to write down any Arthurian stories. And I'm tired of folks who think that reading serious book [sic] on Arthur would compromise their integrity.

There is a playground called alt.legend.king-arthur (or something related) which *might* be suitable for this sort of thing. Go there and play and let the grown-ups alone.

The number of distinguished Arthurian scholars who have DISAPPEARED from this reading list should give pause to those of you who claim to want to learn something. You don't know who has gone? You don't know the names of eminent Arthurian scholars? Of course you don't. You are too busy showing off your ignorance.

When I got back from Kalamazoo I had the misfortune to see e-mail after e-mail involving Star Wars, Charles Fort, Babylon-5, Dr. Who, and Shane, just for starters. A few more and you folks can have what was once a stellar mailing list for yourselves (14/5/96).

The 'serious' and culturally valid notion of what is fit for discussion is set up in contrast to the supposedly frivolous nature of popular culture. Movies are not even classified as Arthurian, rather they are lumped into a homogenous mass where they follow the same pattern as any Hollywood epic. In so doing, such discussion naturalises such films as lacking value, and is complicit "in the establishment of the 'invisibility' of... ideological structures, however banal they might at first appear" (King, G. 2000: 12).

A valid academic approach to Arthur is set out in contrast, which suggests an academic culture that is validated owing to the length of time required to be spent in attaining the relevant qualifications for “initiation” (Bourdieu 1988: 105) into this academic subculture. In contrast, the frivolous and unimportant nature of popular culture is emphasised by debasing popular cultural pleasures “that are too immediately accessible and so discredited as ‘childish’” (Bourdieu 1984: 486). By setting himself up as a serious academic in opposition to “you folks,” it is clear that Gans is attempting to close off entry to the group and distance himself from these frivolous pursuits. Moreover, he makes an effort to group himself with other academics by inferring that all self-respecting Arthurian academics know and accept who are the experts in the field. Not to know is to supposedly display “ignorance” and therefore warrant exclusion from the group. By writing this as though the structures of Arthurian academia are obvious, Gans is able to use the über-myth to make the dominant position taken by the group appear perfectly natural, and therefore reaffirm the “specifically academic ideal” (Bourdieu 1988: 37) that is distant from the popular and economic fields in which Arthurian popular culture is assumed to operate³⁹.

We see how “the co-mingling of ranks (the amateur and the professional, the undergraduate and the tenured) inevitably produces status anxiety” (Millard 1997: 148). This status anxiety results in members of the list such as Paul Gans resorting to distinctly non-academic language, such as flaming, to make their point. Millard defines flaming as “personal verbal violence” (1997: 145), and argues that the rhetorical style is considered “a transgression of the norms of debate, a form of cheating” (1997: 145). He argues that academic online discussion is often likely to descend into this way of communicating, because “the immediacy of response typical of online exchanges does not lend itself to dispassionate, considered scholarship, nor does the alphanumeric ephemerality of an online persona” (1997: 147-148). However, as we have seen, the academics on *Arthurnet* mediate any distinction between an offline and online persona. As the academics’ offline capital is brought to the list, the consequence is that offline relationships impact on the structure of the online list. It is also arguable whether on a discussion list there is an “immediacy of response.” If “by contrast with oral speech, writing is completely artificial... [and] does not inevitably well up out of the unconscious” (Ong 2002: 81), then the temporal delay caused by “the process of putting spoken language into writing” (Ong 2002: 81) allows time for

reflection before hitting the 'send' button, lending itself more clearly to an 'academic' way of writing.

Accordingly, it becomes apparent that this distinctly non-academic way of writing is not a hasty response, but is a deliberate über-mythic act used by certain academics to naturalise their own dominant position. As such, the fact that this occurs in an online discussion group is irrelevant, and it is better not to consider the medium in which the subjects are being debated. According to Dave Healy, "the Internet... promotes uniformity more than diversity, homogeneity more than heterogeneity" (1997: 62). Rather than focussing on the online nature of this naturalising process, it is the *method* of attack on those discussing popular culture that serves to naturalise popular culture's lower standing:

Many language communities have two distinct languages, one of which is labelled 'high', and is identified with high-status speakers on public occasions, the other 'low' for the converse. Corresponding to 'high' languages in such communities, there is normally 'high' culture, with the same social meaning and function as the high language, and usually mediated through the 'high' language (Hodge and Kress 1988: 87, see also Davis, H.H. 1985: 57).

This mirroring of language and culture is clearly demonstrated here. The attack made on 'non academic' pop culture, and the perceived lack of etymological skills displayed by those who discuss such subjects means the academics move to defend their academic position and what is considered by them to be academically valid discourse. To do this, they naturalise popular culture's lower standing by speaking in a language that has a lower value to them than the culturally reified academic discourse. As for Paul Gans, he offers no argument about the merits or otherwise of popular culture, stating that those interested in it should, "let the grown-ups alone" to their more serious and culturally acceptable discussions. It can be said (mirroring Bourdieu) that the lowest of those academics researching culturally valued elements of the Arthurian myth see themselves as superior to the highest of those interested in popular culture (Bourdieu 1993: 62).

Thus using non academic language serves to naturalise those discussing popular culture as academically inferior. The change in form of address *to* the audience serves

to emphasise the implication of the difference in cultural capital *of* the audience (cf Thurlow and Jaworski 2006: 156) and therefore serves to naturalise the study of popular culture as an illegitimate act for academia. Consequently the implication is that the people talking about it are unable to understand academic discourse, thus situating popular culture as non academic and reifying the canon in the process (cf chapter two, pp. 55-56). Indeed, it seems this strategy confirms the fact that “writing environments [are] places where discourse is all powerful and linguistic negotiation is the only real weapon” (Kolko and Reid 1998: 215).

This hypothesis is further confirmed by the response I met when I posted on the list myself, in an attempt to convey my theories on the academic field⁴⁰. I was met not by an academic argument in return, but a simple statement from a respected scholar that “I know this is a very popular notion, but I think it’s balony” (Norm Hinton 28/1/04). Linking a “popular notion” to the slang term “balony” serves to position Hinton away from the popular and towards the elite. The use of slang serves to enforce his opinion that such approaches are indeed nonsense, and not worthy of his time, even in using formal language to respond. In this respect, the “received and respected wisdom” (Bourdieu 1988: 102) that members of this community are comfortable with, is “academically ratified and endorsed, and thus worthy of being taught and learnt” (Bourdieu 1988: 102) by being placed in opposition to the ‘fashionable’, popular and populist theories of Bourdieu. Flaming is not “depersonalisation” (Millard 1997: 146), but rather a way for academics to affirm their personal identities and set up the boundaries of what is considered ‘academic’. People’s legitimacy to speak about Arthur is challenged in this way (cf Hine 2000: 128) and this is a fine example of how “many statements made on newsgroups are oriented towards promoting their own authenticity at the expense of competing accounts” (Hine 2000: 134). This approach therefore maintains valid topics for discussion, and shows how “members of a culture orient their interaction and the ways in which they use cultural resources, especially language, to achieve and validate cultural meanings” (Baym 1998: 50). It is important to discredit the identity of those dealing in popular culture, in order to reduce the value of popular culture as a threat to the established canon, as “assessing the reliability of information and the trustworthiness of a confidant, identity is essential. And care of one’s own identity, one’s reputation, is fundamental to the formation of community” (Donath 1999: 30).

Thus, popular culture is dismissed immediately. No coherent argument against the 'popular' is put forward. It is not true to say that "online academic writing as a genre is conducive to anxiety, wrath and vendetta" (Millard 1997: 147). Although this is the case for such subjects as popular culture within the medium of *Arthurnet*, when two academics with established capital discuss a subject that is considered academically 'acceptable', then the tone and technique used to debate the subject changes significantly. Even in disagreement, the language used serves to elevate the subject and naturalise it as one worthy for discussion. Linda Malcor and Chris Gwynn, in debating the etymological background to the name Arthur, refer to numerous sources on both sides to provide evidence for their arguments, whilst also providing a detailed academic argument for their respective positions⁴¹. This provides a contrast to the automatic dismissal of popular culture. However this use of language to elevate the subject matter, whilst undoubtedly a product of the two correspondents' relative positions in the academic field, also shows further evidence of the "benign dictatorship" (Kollock and Smith 1999: 5) of the list moderator, who confesses of one exchange: "I edited this a little, to get rid of some of the exchanges which consist (on both sides) of saying: How ridiculous you are!" (6/9/01). In this way, we see the centralising of power within the list. What appears to be a natural elevation of the subject matter by the protagonists is also in fact being controlled by those who have been granted "power of cultural consecration" (Bourdieu 1993: 135) by the established academic figures. This is in order to maintain their "interest in stopping the clock, eternalizing the present stage" (Bourdieu 1993: 60) of academia.

Thus we see that the über-myth has naturalised the forms in which Arthur can be debated by this particular academic subculture. The mythic construction of the list serves to naturalise 'sacred' canonical Arthurian texts as holding value, as opposed to the 'popular'. This reifying of the canon developed further within the list upon release of the blockbuster film *King Arthur* in 2004. I shall now look at the response to this film in order to show in more detail how this über-mythic shaping of 'subculturally valid' academic discussion works in this particular instance and shall demonstrate that, despite an attempt by the film's producers to allow space for a hybridity of genres, "in public discourses, audiences [in this instance an Arthurian academic

audience] still struggle over the definitions of genres and seek to police the boundaries between them” (Jancovich 2000: 23).

3.2 Just Another Blockbuster? Revaluing the Myth of History in *King Arthur*'s inter-textual positioning

Discussion about *King Arthur* was a very popular topic on *Arthurnet*, generating 81 posts exclusively about the film between 12-19 July 2004, compared with an average over the 3 weeks after 23 August 2004 (when discussion on the film was halted) of 66 posts per week, these covering all Arthurian subject matter. The discussion of the film often spent much time ridiculing its historical veracity and pointing out its anachronisms. Nancy K. Baym would argue that this demonstrates an ideal example of how people draw on “a common language... common ways of speaking, and a good deal of shared understandings,” as the use of the internet is “always nested in the... cultures of which its participants are members” (Baym 1998: 40). It is interesting that the general trend in discussion naturalised an academic positioning which gave the film relatively low cultural value compared to dominant romance texts and tended to compare *King Arthur*'s interpretation of the myth unfavourably. Indeed, the discussion of *King Arthur* demonstrated aptly what Sarah Mayo discusses in relation to Shakespeare, that there is “a precarious intersection of the... text as it is deployed through the educational system... as a bearer of high cultural significance, and of the... entertainment industry in the form of the Hollywood blockbuster” (2003: 295).

It is important to remember, however, that the film itself was not aimed at an audience with high Arthurian cultural capital, but was a mainstream blockbuster movie released in the summer of 2004 (a usual time for blockbusters to be released, see Keller 1999: 140 and Hills forthcoming). Consequently, it is wise to remember that “generic cinema... [describes] a system constructed around the assembly of interchangeable component parts” (Maltby 1999: 24). Contrary to the opinion of Steve Neale, who argues that with the exception of films such as *Gladiator* (2000), “the prestige tradition [in Blockbusters] has been swept aside, and with it... the epic western and war film, the ancient-world epic... the literary adaptation” (2003: 53), the summers of 2004 and 2005 were filled with a glut of lavishly produced epics that focussed on the historical elements of great myths. Films such as *Troy* (2004), *Alexander* (2004) and

Kingdom of Heaven (2005) followed a similar approach to *King Arthur* in presenting down-to-earth versions of myths and legends, with the human element foregrounded at the expense of the magical. In this respect, *King Arthur* followed blockbuster theory in using inter-textual strategies over and beyond its Arthurian subject matter that focussed on the film differentiating itself from others by having a “higher budget [and] more exciting story” (Wyatt 1994: 94) than its competition.

Within this context, the producers’ aim was to target a mainstream audience and “infrequent cinemagoers” (Austin 2002: 117) beyond a core audience for specialist Arthurian texts⁴². In this respect, Arthur would make a good subject for such a movie as the “pre-sold literary properties” (Austin 2002: 117) of Arthuriana would enable interest in the film to be sparked initially without need for a huge advertising budget, as “such textual accretions guarantee... a high public awareness” (Austin 2002: 119). With the strength of the Arthurian myth behind the film, this meant it was not necessary for the producers to use “star power... [as a] way through which a project might develop a broader marketability” (Wyatt 1994: 10). Consequently Clive Owen, an actor with relatively little commercial pulling power, especially in America, was cast in the title role. However despite the positive attributions of the Arthurian myth, Thomas Austin suggests that for such films with prior textual existences, “production, marketing and reception contexts... [are] complicated by the sedimentation of previous incarnations” (2002: 118). Therefore, the pre-publicity for *King Arthur* made an effort to consciously position itself as historical in order to find space for itself away from the dominant Romance texts (cf Aronstein 2005: 192), enabling a popular re-interpretation of the Arthurian myth rather than being restricted by the high cultural Romance form. The interviews and publicity conducted by the producers, utilising phrases such as “the untold true story that inspired the legend” (see Figure 3.1), were in fact a position-taking strategy. Although Susan Aronstein claims that “*King Arthur* is about the dismantling of myth” (2005: 206), this is not necessarily the case. It is important to see this inter-textual positioning as a counter-mythical act (cf chapter two, page 46-47), mediating the opposition between the high cultural form of the dominant myth and the popular cultural form of the blockbuster.

In order for this to work, the producer Jerry Bruckheimer attempted in interviews to reposition Malory, and therefore the Romance form of the myth, as historical rather

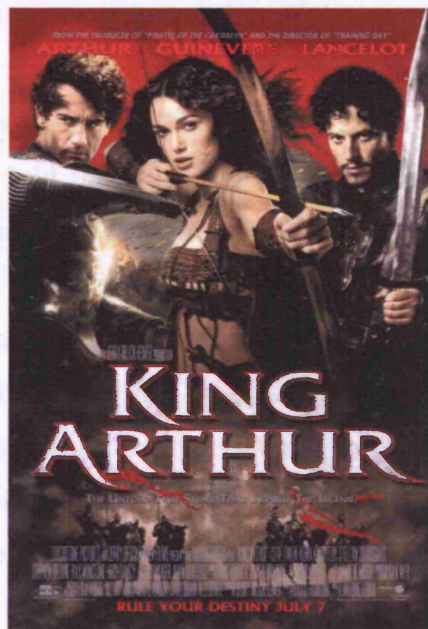
than mythical in order to naturalise the cultural re-positioning of the film. Bruckheimer made the radical claim that “we’re taking what Malory researched- that was the real King Arthur, who was a Roman, his name was Arturios”⁴³. This allowed the cultural capital inherent within the Arthurian tales to be reclaimed in order for the myth to apply to a more mainstream audience.

Jerry Bruckheimer’s reputation is that of a “specialist... in the noisy action blockbuster” (King, G. 2000: 99, see also Bather 2004: 39)⁴⁴. Moreover, the director Antoine Fuqua’s background was in directing music videos for the likes of Prince and Stevie Wonder, and with film credits such as the Police action thriller *Training Day* (2001). These names acted as “insurance- almost a brand name” (Wyatt and Vlesmas 1999: 34) for the type of film that would be released. Indeed, the publicity poster highlighted Jerry Bruckheimer’s role, placing at its top that it was “from the Producer of *Pirates of the Caribbean*” (See Figure 3.1). Unusually for a film, Bruckheimer was the creative figure which most press interviews focused on. This flies in the face of conventional auteur theory that tends to highlight the directorial vision⁴⁵, yet focussing on Bruckheimer also serves a purpose, to highlight the celebration of excess and expense, and the “active pursuit of expensive projects” (Baker and Faulkner 1991: 288) that comes with the blockbuster.

King Arthur undeniably followed usual blockbuster practice in utilising “promotional and other extra-textual discourses... including trailers, adverts and reviews... [in order to] establish [a] discursive framework... within which viewers are encouraged to place” (King, G. 2000: 7-8) the film. The re-positioning of the film as historical was used partly because “the film business... has a stake in exploiting difference, insofar as its products can be successfully targeted at distinct niche markets” (Austin 2002: 27). This also ensured that Arthur became naturalised in a form that valued “the realist aesthetic that has long been endemic to mainstream narrative cinema” (Keller 1999: 147), as opposed to the Romance literary form. Indeed, promoted as the story that inspired the legend, we see a suggestion that *King Arthur* is even ‘bigger’ than the myth itself. “The magnitude of the blockbuster [is used] to reinforce the magnitude of History and therefore the rock-solid reality of... [the director’s] version of events” (Keller 1999: 146), resulting in the viewer being presented with the ‘real’ Arthur, distinct from other versions and bigger and better than all Arthurs that have gone

before. Moreover, the process also works in reverse, as by expecting a story bigger than myth itself, the audience is cued to expect a film “sold to a large extent on the basis of spectacular attraction” (King, G. 2000: 42). The poster, with the main protagonists (Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot) posing in dramatic war stances, whilst beneath this is an evocative shot of the knights dramatically shrouded in mist and fog, as the fort looms behind them, serves to enhance this reading (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Publicity Poster for *King Arthur*



Moreover, by presenting the film as historical and by showcasing the director’s expert recreation of the past, we see how the film attempts to put in place the conditions that enable the audience to “float with ease through an experience without any attendant historical anxiety” (Keller 1999: 148). The attempt to naturalise the solidity of History (cf Krämer 1999: 119) is furthered by the beginning of the film, which specifically positions *King Arthur* against the Romance texts. The opening caption tells us that “Historians agree that the classical fifteenth century tale of King Arthur and his knights rose from a real hero who lived a thousand years earlier” (Fuqua 2004). To remove any doubt whatsoever, an appeal is made to “recent archaeological evidence” to back up this claim, whilst the film begins by giving us a precise date for when the events took place, that of 452AD. Moreover, the claim to historicity is furthered by adding genuine historical characters such as Pelagius⁴⁶. By presenting the film as historical, this allows the film to naturalise itself as undemanding entertainment. Facts

and figures used are 'real' and actual, with no space for uncertainty and doubt. This is in contrast to the potential disruption and anxiety that may occur to the audience by utilising the free flowing, uncertain, and constantly shifting form of myth.

Further reasons for the necessity of positioning the film as historical rather than mythical are seen when, according to Thomas R. Lindlof et. al, those who work within a mythical or legendary setting "are not constrained by... plausibility" (1998: 225). This struggles to fit with a blockbuster that is attempting to show off the huge cost involved in creating an expert recreation of the past. At a reputed total cost of \$90m (Nathan 2004a: 6) much was made of the 'authentic' Roman barn that was a real barn rather than mere stage set. The ideas of research and craftsmanship were emphasised, as we were told that "the English company that constructed the new Globe Theatre in London [were contracted] to source authentic materials" (Coyle 2003: 8). If it were not possible to stress the idea of historical reproduction, the opportunity would be denied the production team to distinguish the quality of *King Arthur* when compared with other films. This is especially important as "a peek into a time past- presumably an accurate and exacting presentation of the past given the budget- augments the dramatic representation, increasing the potential audience and heightening popular interest for the film" (Wyatt and Vlesmas 1999: 37).

Moreover, for a popular film audience, there have been many efforts in the past to present the high romance form of the myth which have often met with failure, owing to the difficulties of combining the popular cultural form of the blockbuster with the high cultural form of the myth. Although "such textual accretions guaranteed a high public awareness" (Austin 2002: 119) for Arthur, reviews for *First Knight* that compared the film to an "unintentional Arthurian comedy" (Tookey 1995: 44) would result in this form of the myth becoming 'debased' in a cinematic form, and the "impact of the central character" (Austin 2002: 119) would potentially be eroded. Therefore, in order to sidestep this loss of value, one possible counter-mythic technique is to foreground history and the 'real' rather than Romance and myth.

However for *King Arthur* to try to woo many different audiences within and beyond the mainstream, it was necessary for the film's producers to make an appeal to the cultural authority of Malory in order to provide a certain cultural validity for their

own text. Canonical references are “aimed at attracting critical approval and a ‘sophisticated’ upscale audience influenced by reviewers” (Austin 2002: 51). The film seeks to offer “a package of diverse textual elements, each appealing to one or more audience groupings” (Austin 2002: 47) to maximise revenue. As was shown earlier, Bruckheimer moved to contest the high cultural validity of Malory. However this challenge, along with that consequently made to the dominant Arthurian myth in general, has had an effect on how the film has been received within academia. The academic response to *King Arthur* on *Arthurnet* will now be analysed in order to show how the subculture constructs its identity in opposition to the counter-mythic challenge posed by the film, and allows the community to establish their own criteria for determining the ‘truth’ of myth (cf chapter two, page 39) as that which is valid and appropriate.

3.3 Where’s the Romance Gone From Our Lives? An *Arthurnet* über-mythic reading of *King Arthur*

Approaches to the reception of the film show certain similarities and differences both within the journal *Arthuriana* and on the associated discussion list. Initially it seems that both journal and list give an impression of academic impartiality. The journal in particular attempts to present the arguments for and against the film. This features the ‘Sarmatian Theory’, which suggests that “the core of the Arthurian and Holy Grail legends derives originally from a region known in antiquity as Scythia” (Littleton and Malcor 1994: 3). By considering that “such strong parallels are too obvious to ignore” (2004a: 112), John Matthews sets out the academic provenance for the film. By also discussing how the film’s aim was “to create the most accurate portrayal of the Arthurian period ever attempted” (2004a: 114), it initially appears that the journal takes an impartial standpoint, as it gives a voice to the film’s inter-textual strategy. This strategy’s primary objective is to shift the film away from the dominant Romance form of the myth. The film attempts to:

Break free from the originating textual conditions of... [its] existence to achieve a semi-independent existence, functioning as an established point of cultural reference that is capable of working- or producing meanings- even for those who are not directly familiar with the original texts in which they first made their appearance (Bennett and Woolcott 1987: 14).

The impression of impartiality given by the journal is further enhanced by the next article being an interview with the scriptwriter, David Franzoni. Here, when dealing with a potential audience who bring with them a great knowledge of the Arthurian texts, Franzoni is unable to claim that the history of Arthur is fixed, as this puts him under threat from those who already hold great cultural capital with regards to their knowledge of Arthur. Therefore, Franzoni seeks to claim for the film a certain academic validity, whilst also attempting to counter criticism from academia by attempting to displace what is academically acceptable and introducing a new legitimate academic position (Bourdieu 1993: 109). The subversion of the Arthurian academic norms will not succeed unless “the shifting of that limit” is linked to academia, this allowing for “a monopoly in legitimate transgression between the sacred and the profane” (Bourdieu 1993: 102). Franzoni’s technique is to attempt to show that, rather than merely reproducing what has gone before, a more appropriate position for the academic field is for it to challenge conventional norms and expectations. For the academic audience that holds most symbolic capital, an attempt is made to present a different, more open form of history in contrast to the safe, reassuring form presented for the mainstream audience:

On one side are historians, who in my view are protectors of things that they don’t necessarily understand any longer. Then there are scholars for whom history is never a dead thing. Every time they go back to the sources, they’re not afraid to look at them and see things that may contradict some of the things they thought before. For these kinds of scholars taking a new approach to Arthur has never been a problem (Matthews 2004b: 118-119).

By suggesting that academics taking a fixed position to History and Arthur do not understand the true nature of the myth, Franzoni is pre-empting criticism about the film, and enacting a battle over who has the right to criticise the text, and whose criticisms hold cultural value and validity. The film becomes “a site of struggle for ownership” (Hunt 2003: 190). As there is the risk of the academic community “lay[ing] claim to having special access to, and hence dominion over, specific texts owing to their supposedly superior knowledge of them” (Hunt 2003: 186), Franzoni makes an effort to demonstrate that this ‘superior knowledge’ is in fact a lack of understanding.

This, then, provides a supposed sense of balance to the reviews in *Arthuriana*. However, the counter-mythical act that the film enacts is an effort to naturally position *King Arthur* in its own space as something unique and original within the Arthurian myth, away from the dominant Romance tradition. This provides potential for disruption within an academic community that, as we saw in the previous chapter, generally values the dominant Romance texts such as Malory above others, and in the main disregards a historical tradition. Initially however, it seems that the journal deals with the film in a balanced fashion. Of the 2 reviews, Alan Lupack's appears to be generally in favour of the film, although with caveats: "though the film gives us neither the truth about Arthur nor a reinterpretation of the story popularized in medieval romance, it is entertaining and has several virtues" (2004: 125). The review also compares what has been changed in the film, pointing out that the story has also been updated "in the works produced by Chretien and Malory and Tennyson and White and many others" (2004: 124).

In this way, it appears that there is a similarity in how both the academic journal and discussion group portray *King Arthur*, as there are also people generally positive about the film in the group. For example, Bonnie Wheeler (editor of *Arthuriana*) is very forceful in her defence of the film, stating how "I saw KING ARTHUR tonight. I think it is just terrific" (12/07/04).

However, the film's counter-mythical positioning as historical offers an opportunity for academics to assert their cultural capital and distinction over other groups by pointing out the anachronisms within the text. Indeed, even Wheeler herself anticipates this issue, when she says how she doesn't "really care what the movie got 'wrong' from any purportedly historical tradition" (12/07/04). This merely serves to acknowledge that there are flaws, and in its own way serves to position her as a member of that self same community by being aware of the potential for criticism⁴⁷. This is leapt on further by other members of the community, who seize on the opportunity to display their own capital. Dennis Clark says of the "puerile monstrosity," that "since the producers and others involved in concocting this thing cannot seem to relent from public declarations of its historicity, let's judge it first on those grounds." What follows is a sardonic, sarcastic dismissal of the various

historical anachronisms within the film. He sneers at:

More 'facts' of history revealed here for the first time... to Arthur's horror, the pious son informs him that Pelagius has actually been executed at Rome as a heretic, and Arthur realises he has been fighting for the wrong side all along! This will come as a great relief to the thousands of Pelagian scholars out there, I am sure, to have finally revealed that Pelagius did not die in Egypt nor Palestine as they had so foolishly thought, but was whacked by Il Papa himself, right in the bosom of Holy Mother Church (12/7/04).

Therefore, this group of academics have positioned themselves against other cultural groups and have fought for the cultural authority to give opinions that are taken as having more validity than those made by other groups, as they already know the 'authentic' texts. The debate naturalised the film as a text of little worth in Arthurian discussion (despite the amount of debate devoted to it!) and contrasted significantly with how the film was received in groups with less Arthurian capital. Elements that to academics were worthy of criticism (Mark Oxbrow complains that "the script for KA just stank - plot holes the size of loch ness, ill formed characters, terrible pacing, crap editing and deeply stupid events throughout" (16/8/04)) are elements that work best for other groups.

To analyse the contrasts between academic readings of the film and other readings, I set up a number of focus groups in order to see how their responses either mirrored, or differed from these academic interpretations. Although we shall return to these groups in more detail later (see page 87), it is important to note that a group of working class people from Bedworth, a mining town in Warwickshire, found that elements such as the dialogue, rather than resulting in 'ill formed characters' in actual fact enabled them to relate to the characters more:

BE: So the- so these regional accents. Can you err- can you sort of tell me what it was, that you did like about it, why...?

Julian: ...I think it was more the actual language that was used, like he was saying that he was hung like a baby holding an Apple and like you see, he was going to go for a piss- it was more like the language obviously, but the accent- you know, used with the accent.

BE: So what did that do for you?

...

Julian: It got me interested to be honest. Because the first sort of, 15 minutes of the movie I was sitting there thinking, I'm not too sure about this and then tha-that sort of broke the ice and then, put me back into it.

Cornel: With me, I thought it was just treating me like I am, a moviegoer. It's doing it in the simple way of saying 'I'm going for a piss' so you know what he's doing, it's not going (*affects upper-class accent*) 'Oh I'm going to the little hole over there, and empty my bladder,' (*laughter*) It's just easy, you weren't questioning what he was doing, you were just knew he was going for a piss. Sorted!

However, owing to the way the *Arthurnet* mailing list is constructed, voices such as these are not able to be heard. Silence in itself “is a transparent signifier of exclusion from a relationship and lack of power” (Hodge and Kress 1988: 45). Therefore those without academic capital, and thus on the margins of the group due to having no relevant symbolic power themselves, are consequently unable to be heard in such a situation.

Equally interesting as to how the debate on the list was constructed was not the discussion itself, but rather how it was brought to a shattering halt. Despite debate being vigorous Norris Lacy put forward a “modest proposal” that discussion on the film and the Sarmatian theory should stop. In this appeal, Lacy appears at first glance to be appealing to a wide ranging audience. He states how he has “recently heard privately from 6-8 people- a couple of casual Arthurian enthusiasts, the others *accomplished scholars*- who have expressed this view” (23/08/04, my emphasis) that discussion on the film and theory has been too long lived. However, this seeming appeal to all groups on *Arthurnet* in actual fact serves to mark academics as a distinct group in their own right. They are the ‘accomplished scholars’ in opposition to the others. What is significant, however, is the effect that Norris Lacy’s request has on the group. Owing to his standing within the academic field⁴⁸, a subject that up until that stage has been discussed frequently and vociferously (thereby showing that it is a subject that the group as a whole wishes to engage with) suddenly stops. Although discussion appears to stop because of general consensus, it merely naturalises the fact that it is more to do with the academic authority held by Lacy, that results in him being able to control the direction of discussion on the list. Although Markham claims that “the content of the message gets more attention than the person attached to the

message” (1998: 57), in actual fact the reverse applies here. Although the discussion list may appear at first glance to be open to all comers, there are still hierarchies present within it (cf Jones, S.G. 1998: 27).

It is important to remember that “the generative mechanism of a group’s structure lies in the recursive interplay between structure and interaction” (Baym 1998: 50), meaning that Lacy’s ‘modest proposal’ works in shaping the direction of the list due to his consecrated position in the field. Judith S. Donath claims that “reputation is enhanced by contributing remarks of the type admired by the group. To the writer seeking to be better known, a clearly recognisable display of identity is especially important” (Donath 1999: 31).

It is not true to suggest that total control over who joins the list is exerted by the moderators (cf Kollok and Smith 1999: 5) but rather, that its construction as an academic list naturalises the barriers to entry in itself. It is not that the moderator Judy Shoaf (also on the editorial board of *Arthuriana*) explicitly wields a “monopoly power” (Kollok and Smith 1999: 5) over the list, but rather that her position in the field and also as moderator means her interventions carry weight. By holding a consecrated position in the field, this means she has conferred on her the status of “privileged interpreter” (Bourdieu 1993: 135). Therefore, her readings of Linda Malcor’s response to Norris Lacy’s ‘modest proposal’ to cease discussion on both the film and the ‘Sarmatian Question’ as one in favour of such a suggestion, that “apparently it would even be a relief to the Sarmatian faction!” (23/8/04) closes down the readings of such a suggestion. This intervention means that list members are not invited to make their own judgement of Malcor’s response which could be understood differently to that interpretation put on it by the moderator. Sentences such as the following seem to be suggesting that Malcor is in fact anything but in favour of the topic being restricted as Shoaf suggests, but rather is protesting vociferously *against* such an act. Malcor argues:

I’m not about to suggests (sic) that all notices of upcoming television shows, conferences and calls for papers, publications, discussions about aspects of Arthurian literature that don't interest me, etc., be banned from the *Arthurnet*. If one topic is banned, then it could be proposed that others be banned, and then we wind up with a huge debate about where you draw the censorship line for

various topics (12/08/04).

However, as an opposing illegitimate theory within Arthurian academia on the whole, which seeks to challenge the legitimate forms of Arthurian debate, Malcor is positioned on the margins of the field (cf Bourdieu 1993: 131), so proving the conservative nature of this academic subculture (cf chapter two, page 38). Moreover, the mailing list is not a body living apart from academia in the offline world, but lives in tandem with this cultural field and follows external trends in the development of Arthurian Studies. This means that if the external conditions in the academic field outside of *Arthurnet* are not favourable, then those who attempt to join *Arthurnet* “but bring with them dispositions and position-takings which clash with the prevailing norms of production and the expectations of the field” (Bourdieu 1993: 57), are unable to break into the dominant core group. This will remain the case until there is “the help of external changes” (*ibid*), in the way Arthur is studied. Until the Sarmatian Theory is able to move to a legitimate position within Arthurian academia, Malcor’s views will not be accorded the same status as those of Norris Lacy, and therefore she runs the risk of other members of the field according Shoaf a privileged position and, “confirming the accuracy of... [her] decipherment” (Bourdieu 1993: 135).

Therefore, it is clear that “both consciously and unconsciously, many newsgroups have, in fact, established authority” (Connery 1997: 171), and in this case I have shown that this authority goes further than discussion being “regulated by the controlling author or text” (*ibid*). Although there is no single author or text in this instance, it would be wrong to suggest that discussion is open to all things Arthur. Although to an extent this is true, when it comes to the academic field it is clear that the field is restricted. I have shown how academic approaches such as philology are naturalised as the ‘correct’ approach to take, whereas in actual fact this is a position-taking strategy of certain academics in order to struggle for a consecrated position within the field of Arthurian studies. Having attained that position, it is in the interests of those academics to emphasise the cultural capital (such as difficulty in understanding the theory) of such an approach. Therefore, although *Arthurnet* appears at first glance to be a message board for all, barriers are insidiously put up to maintain hierarchies in the offline world. Although Baym raises worries that “in an increasingly fragmented offline world, online groups substitute for ‘real’ (i.e.

geographically local) community” (Baym 1998: 36), this is not the case with *Arthurnet*. This list serves to augment the offline academic community, both by providing a forum for members to struggle for position within the field, and indeed also working as a tool for organising a ‘real’ community by posting calls for conference papers, for example, allowing the structures of the field both online and offline to interact with one another.

3.4 Focussing In On the Subject: Counter-mythic readings of *King Arthur*

However, despite the academics’ über-mythic construction suggesting otherwise, it is important to reveal alternative readings of the film that can be made. As I touched on briefly earlier, I set up three focus groups which were taken from different social strata in order to elicit a wide range of responses to the film. These groups consisted of a group from Bedworth as detailed previously; a group of magistrates; and a group of computer programmers. Magistrates are clearly associated with authority (cf Thompson 1981: 198), and their role is that of “moral agent” (King, M. 1978: 212), placing them in a different taste culture to those from the mining town of Bedworth. The constitution of this group saw its members either unemployed or working in manual jobs, with most of the group’s education finishing at 16. The computer programmers meanwhile, fitted somewhere in between these groups, mirroring Bourdieu’s classification of taste-cultures in that these people “receive not only wages or salaries but also, in some cases, non-commercial profits” (1984: 123). Although high on economic capital, their education had not left them bereft of cultural capital either⁴⁹.

Although Lisa A. Barnett and Michael Patrick Allen argue that blockbusters “appeal to a large and relatively undifferentiated audience” (2000: 150), in reality it is impossible to deal with the audience for *King Arthur* as one homogenous mass. Rather, I expected to find that each subculture’s version of the über-myth would be different, and that there would be “variations in cultural competencies and practices which operate across, and so subordinate, these identity groupings” (Austin 2002: 20). Moreover, readings of the film would depend on holding competencies that may be different to those possessed by the Arthurian academics on *Arthurnet*, but could be just as complex (cf Blewitt 1993: 369).

Cultural competency is where “the meaning of the text will be constructed differently according to the discourses, knowledge, prejudices [and] resistances brought to bear on the text by the reader” (Morley 1992: 87). This means that depending on cultural background, different skills are acquired by each person that affect the reading of the text. Without specific cultural competences in place that will enable readers of the film to activate particular reading formations set up by the text, certain members of the audience will be excluded from activating possible meanings of the text (cf Lewis 1991: 60). Moreover, it is those areas in which people’s cultural competencies lie that can affect their reading of the film. Of the group of computer programmers I interviewed, many were keen to criticise the accuracy of the film, yet this was often informed by their work background. This was confirmed when they discussed the film as spectacle. In the context of a blockbuster, this is “frequently characterized by... spectacular production values” (Roberts, G. 2003: 157-158) and the reality of the film boiled down, not to its historical accuracy, but its visual accuracy:

Rob: ...well it was a salute wasn't it? Like a...

Steve: ...but it was, it was very very, it looked to me like real arrows being filmed...

Duncan: ...well it was symbolic wasn't it...?

Steve: ...unlike the Wall and the armour that was...

James: ...rubbish...

Steve: ...the wall was *so* false. For all that money you'd think they could've got the graphics right...

James: ...just tacked in the middle...

Steve: ...spoilt the battle

Here we see how the computer programmers bring their own specific expertise to the film. Their grounding in knowledge of IT “rather than the generic framing or ‘common sense’ discourse... organized... [their] response to the text” (Tulloch and

Jenkins 1995: 73-74). The accuracy of the computer graphics is discussed, which in a blockbuster are expected to be of the highest quality. The irony in this case is that the image that they focussed on for criticism, Arthur's fort, was not in fact Computer Generated at all, but rather was a 'proper' set built in Ireland! Indeed, according to the *Western Mail*, this was rendered "all the more impressive for its lack of dependence on CGI" (Driscoll 2004: 9). Their cultivated dispositions which come with their occupation and therefore their expertise in the IT industry are revealed in the way they view the film (Bourdieu 1984: 13). In seeking to demonstrate their expertise, the group activate a reading of the film that focuses on the generic expectation of the spectacular attraction of the blockbuster being "driven by specific developments in special effects technologies- principally the adaptation and extension of 3-D computer generation techniques" (King, G. 2003: 120).

Within the group of Magistrates that were interviewed, I found Osbert to be another who brought with him prior cultural competences. A former Cavalryman in the army, he focussed on what he knew with regards to the present day, and also offered a venomous criticism of the authenticity or otherwise of the battle scenes. He complained that:

From a Cavalry point of view, the actual scenes were actually, *awful*. Because you never, in- it's not normal, when you attack somebody off a horse t-to go at them forwards, because you break your arm. You always attack them like that, it's always a backhanded stroke... But the scenes where the cavalry were actually- you know, the horses, there were only seven of them weren't there, actually went *through* the Saxons, I mean that was very good, that sort of err, tremendous force, which is what cavalry does.

Although intending to cast doubt on the film's historical authenticity, Osbert's point of reference is to present-day fighting techniques. Although the fighting in the film is reviewed in a negative way by Osbert, by relating the past to the present Osbert himself is engaging with the film and creating a mythical discourse of cavalry techniques, where the fighting technique used by the modern day British Army is naturalised as obvious, and treated as the one used throughout history. The discursive strategy employed by Osbert here, indeed, incorporates his class interests and value he places in maintaining a particular social order (cf Lewis 1991: 190). However, Osbert is very selective about what he relates to the present. Other elements of the film that

do not fit well with his idea of how the social order should be in the present are glossed over, as when the conversation turns to Guinevere's role as warrior within the film:

Osbert: ... Women's libbists talking isn't it?

Violet: D-don't you think that perhaps they *were* fierce then?

Osbert: No, no, they weren't.

In contrast to Osbert's view Judy Shoaf and Linda Malcor, both with more cultural capital in the subject than Osbert, are happy to discuss Celtic women's involvement in the battles (7/7/04). Instead of a discussion rooted in historical accuracy or otherwise, we see here Osbert's idea of a traditional past, which is a disposition arrived at in part due to his class and cultural politics⁵⁰. In this respect, it is clear that there is not always one form of power that "is always the most central power relation at stake in every social situation" (Moi 1999: 289). It seems that Bourdieu underestimates the fact that power relations such as age and gender can have as much, or more, influence on group dynamics as class and education. Although Osbert is challenged (by a woman) it is assumed that he (as male) holds a dominant position within this group⁵¹. This follows a more 'traditional' viewpoint, where "women 'waited' on men, were 'domineered' by men... Men were the 'bosses' and the 'masters'" (Pilcher 1998: 117). However, showing that there is no fixed and stable hierarchy between these forms of power (cf Moi 1999: 289), the younger age of the Bedworth focus group meant they followed the pattern expected of a younger age group, that tends to "include approval of role reversal, the advocacy of equality... and a disdain of continuing inequalities" (Pilcher 1998: 130). Therefore, they accept the strength of Guinevere more readily:

Tara: ...it said 'I can defend myself, I'm not just like a Chick, can't look after myself...'

Jess: ...yeah, she was like...

Tara: ...Girl Power type thing...

Cornel: ...she wasn't a damsel in distress...

However, as Fiske argues when talking about how groups' cultural competence works when viewing television, their cultural competence "involves the bringing of *both textual* and social experience to bear upon the program at the moment of reading." (Fiske 1989: 19, my emphasis). In the case of *King Arthur*, the textual experience of the audience is particularly important, as in order to maximise its popularity many potential ways into the text are left open by the producers. However, this chapter shows how the film's reading is determined in the most part according to whether the audience has most competence in Arthurian texts, cinematic knowledge, or history. "Intertextuality directs readers beyond the text itself, referring them to the exterior texts that it invokes and uses" (Gwenllian-Jones 2003: 186) and here, the film "invites readers to bring their own cultural knowledge to bear upon the text to decode its various meanings" (Gwenllian-Jones 2003: 186).

The extent to which each respondent had an interest in Arthur, and prior knowledge of Arthur, informed and illustrated how they responded to the film, and consequently its claim to historical accuracy in their eyes. As a rule, those with most prior knowledge of Arthur were more willing to condemn the film, whilst those with little prior knowledge or interest in Arthur were less likely to take issue with perceived failings within the film and would view it more positively. However, what was also interesting was how the focus groups dealt with the various factions. In focus groups in which the majority of people had no prior disposition to Arthur, those who had prior knowledge or greater cultural capital found themselves marginalized. The "agenda for discussion" (Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 70) differed depending on how the group was constituted.

In the group from Bedworth the result was that, as a minority, the person with prior knowledge of Arthur fell into the background and found himself saying very little. His educational capital, in the context of this group, was worth very little during the course of discussion. However, a different outcome happened with the computer programmers. Duncan appeared to take a dominant position within the group, being the first to speak, and he linked the aesthetic quality of the film to its historical accuracy. Opening the discussion, Duncan's first comment was that "we need to differentiate between the history and the film itself," showing that he appreciated that

the film did not necessarily tally with historical accuracy. However, how successful this historical approach was would determine whether “the film was either good or bad as a film.” What followed from Duncan was criticism of the film because it did not fit into his sphere of reference as to what an Arthurian film should be. This impression was furthered by the emotive language he used as we were told how “the *whole* time I was affronted by the Ro- by the-the timing of it, because it was all Roman Roman Roman, and I was going, ‘What?!?’” Duncan takes offence that something that has such a high value as the Arthurian myth can be reduced to such a form, and this tallies with his prior knowledge of Arthur which comes from Malory, referred to by Duncan as “a famous work.”

However, despite being allowed to take a leading role in discussion of the myth owing to his greater knowledge of it (cf Brunsdon 1989: 153), his colleagues’ attitude to Duncan’s prior reading on the subject was ultimately one of amusement and ridicule. Josemedee laughed that Duncan has “been cheating by reading books!” when he attempts to convey his knowledge of the medieval romance. Duncan is finally silenced on this matter as the other members of the group joke and create an atmosphere that demonstrates their lack of respect for the literary form:

James: ...he doesn’t read books...!

BE: ...aren’t IT people allowed to read books?

James: Only online ones!

Rob: The question would be, would Arthur be considered a good role model for you Duncan?
(*laughter and ridicule*)

Although Duncan may have a higher ranking in the general social hierarchy of cultural legitimacy, the group as a whole shows a taste more in keeping with technical matters, rather than literary activities. Throughout the discussion the group of computer programmers in the main attach a lack of significance to the Arthurian element of the story, and the ease by which they got distracted from the subject was frequently noticeable. They showed themselves far more at ease with discussing technical issues:

Rob: ...I expect from our youth we would have seen such films...

Steve: ...you've got a new watch, haven't you...? (*laughter*)

James: Do you want to see my new watch?

Steve: Yeah I do.

BE: It's alright for you, I've got to transcribe this!

Darren: Swiss watch...

Duncan's greater level of cultural capital in the subject when compared to the other members of his group marks him out as different. The others seek to assert their taste against him. When Duncan argues that knowledge of Tennyson is "common knowledge" Darren responds that it most definitely is "not around this table!"

Other members of the group also took issue with the historicity of the film. Steve, for example, thought about how "throughout the film, I kept being bugged by things that didn't fit into what I knew about, or thought I knew about [the Arthurian myth]." However, unlike Duncan, because his prior knowledge of Arthur is more limited, he was less concerned with the story digressing from its source material as he had no prior concerns over the film's relation or otherwise to an ur-source (cf chapter two, pp. 59-60), he "just let it go and enjoyed the film for what it was really." This means that although Steve still links *King Arthur* to its role as an Arthurian film, and his reading of the film cannot be independent from this issue, he is more favourably disposed to it as a film in itself. Thus, in the same sentence Steve is able to praise the film in itself, while raising questions about its authenticity in relation to Arthur. "Oh it was brilliant, but it's got nothing to do with Arthur has it? I mean, Arthurian legend, frozen river, I don't think so!" This opinion was reinforced by Josemedee, who reflected on the fact that, "i-it's important to give you something different, so it's not the same as any other film ever made, but y-you've still got to have that comfort factor of things you recognise."

Steve mused on elements that he felt were required within an Arthurian film, considering that “you’d feel hard done by if none of that [Arthurian elements] appeared wouldn’t you? Because you’re going there to see a film about the Arthurian legends, so you know what you know about it.” This prior knowledge was not tied specifically to a culturally valued ur-source such as Malory, allowing for the counter-myth as portrayed in the film to hold more value (cf chapter two, page 46-47). Indeed, although Duncan displayed his knowledge about Malory to the group, much of the criticism of the historicity of the film came about not because of any prior Arthurian knowledge, but because of the film’s framing at the start. As a result of these claims to authenticity from the film, historical accuracy matters to the group “when you put up that banner at the front.” Interestingly, the group respond to this opening by treating it not as a historical claim, but as a failure on the film’s part to convince them that it warranted the attention of a ‘sacred’ narrative, an ur-source within the myth:

Darren: I lost all belief in the film!

Duncan: W-well I wouldn’t say I wouldn’t care, b-but I wouldn’t, if you like, let it spoil my enjoyment of it.

BE: Right.

Beatrice: I just- if you put something like that up at the start and it actually *makes* you think there’s some truth in it, it makes you want to believe and, you know.

It appears that this group see historicism as raising the value of the myth to a level of truth, as opposed to the low value of fantasy, which for this group fits better with the commercial form of the blockbuster (fantasy films being seen as “mass-produced daydreams” (Donald 1989: 4)). As a result, a schism ruptures between their concept of historicism and their expectations of what a ‘film’ should be and what they expect out of the filmic experience:

Steve: Um, I think a film asks you to suspend disbelief...

...

James: ...a-a film has to have some sort of entertainment factor.

Steve: Yeah. If-if it's something like *Horizon* or what- a documentary on TV, it's presented as being factual- it may not be, but in principle. N-at n-no time during that film, was I persuaded that this actually happened...

James: ...mmm hmmm...

Steve: ...I-I didn't feel that I was persuaded.

James: N-nobody would go to see a truly factual documentary film, you know

Their cultural construct of documentary as historically accurate fits better with a claim to history, as “public reception of the documentary still turns on an unproblematised acceptance of cinematic mimesis” (Winston 1995: 6, see also Rosen 1993: 83). Here, documentary takes the place of the real, whereas film should concentrate on fiction: “documentary offers access to a shared historical construct. Instead of *a* world, we are offered access to *the* world” (Nichols 1991: 109). As a result of this, the film's claims to authority (which already clash with their prior knowledge of Arthur) are rendered less believable by the form it is presented in, and the attempt to historicise Arthur does not appear to be a natural fit within the expectation of a fictional account that goes with ‘a film’. “At the heart of documentary is less a *story* and its imaginary world than an *argument* about the historical world” (Nichols 1991: 111). The only way this group find to enjoy the film is to push aside any discomfort they feel about the claim to history, and any grander claims it may have. Steve voices his doubts, and how he overrode them to accept the film as the blockbuster it was presented as: “I thought ‘what's that all about? Oh never mind, it's all bollocks’ (*laughter*). You do! It didn't fit in with what I knew about it so- so you switch that- you switch that worrying bit off in your head and enjoy the film.” With their greater cultural capital, and greater competence in Arthuriana, *Arthurnet's* academics feel a need to contest the film's historicity. For Steve, with a lesser knowledge of Arthur, although uncomfortable with the historicity in the film he chooses to negotiate with it.

The tension created by the film's historical claims was also a problem for other viewers. As with Steve, those who have less cultural capital in relation to the myth itself find themselves being more tolerant of the film. Delfina, whilst informing her group that she was, “not a great expert on Arthur” (and so, feeling the need to



apologise for her own lack of cultural capital in a group of magistrates generally well endowed with it) was less interested in the historical accuracy or otherwise than other members of the group. By accepting the film as a story rather than history, she is more tolerant of those elements that do not appear 'real':

I thought it was quite a good balance between the myth and reality of war. I th- I thought that was, you know, the myth things kept coming in- you know, where did they suddenly get all those great catapults on top of the hill from- you know, who built all those, and where did they have them stored? (*Laughs*) and that's the thing- so the-the myth things came in quite often, that we couldn't explain, and it wasn't reason.

Indeed, by accepting a prior knowledge of Arthur as myth rather than history, yet without having enough cultural capital in order to be confident of having a great knowledge of the dominant myth of Arthur, Delfina does not link the myth explicitly to an ur-source, and consequently accepts anachronisms more readily.

However, other viewers' prior conceptions and expectations of a filmic experience affected how they interpreted *King Arthur*. For many, it was impossible to avoid comparisons with an "ur-source, an ideal template to which the film ought to live up to" (Barker and Brooks 1998: 7). Maja complained about the differences between the film and her knowledge of Arthur, and this affected greatly how she viewed the film, finding it difficult to watch: "I-I thought it was a ch-challenge to watch it because of the preconceived ideas that we all have." This means that, "In the end it was *just* an action movie" (my emphasis) with little to distinguish it, as opposed to a preferred film, which "*should* have been different [from films such as *Lord of the Rings*] because of what we think about Arthur." The disappointment that Maja articulates is because this Arthur differs so greatly from the dominant myth with which she is familiar. This consequently means that the anachronisms "throw... you back out of- back out of the story and, an-an-and makes you think, this is not any more than a story." As with others, the lack of the promised authenticity disappoints Maja, yet in this instance the disappointment is not just in the film itself, but its representation of Arthur. Arthur as myth should be "more than a story," and this film disappoints in its superficial presentation:

Maja Well our expectations of, a film about Arthur, would have been more noble, and more chivalry, and... that's how we...

Delfina: ...Yeah...

Maja ... That's how we perceived it (*murmurs of agreement from the group*)... it was sort of irritating you found, you wanted to stand up and put it right.

So moved is Maja by the changes made to the myth by *King Arthur* from that which she is familiar, that she wants to correct the film makers. Indeed, the magistrates show that their prior relationship to Arthur, and the idea of previous stories with a higher cultural value, is far more significant in their reading of the film than for the computer programmers, and preceding ur-versions are naturalised. To Delfina, Excalibur is compared to “the original sword [which] came out of the water,” whilst Ronald refers to “*the story*” in relation to the Romance version. Meanwhile, Osbert tells how “what we've been *spoilt with* is the fiction from the 15th century, which is put on, you know, this *chivalrous gloss*.”

Many of the participants in the group of magistrates found themselves relating back to a high cultural text in some way, shape or form, and this affects their reading of the film. When I asked Osbert why he read Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur* before watching the film, the answer given was simply, “because he wrote *Morte D'Arthur*.” There was no explanation as to why Tennyson should be chosen, it was taken for granted that the text would be the logical choice to read. Moreover, Osbert reflects on the fact that, “obviously, it was a 15th century impression that we were given, wasn't it,” whereas this is not obvious at all to people with less cultural capital. That this is perceived to be ‘obvious’ is because Osbert has developed “the competence of the ‘connoisseur’, an unconscious mastery of the instruments of appropriation” (Bourdieu 1984: 66) that comes from his social position in society, that has meant “repeated contact with cultural works and cultured people” (*ibid*). Indeed, although there are many who are in agreement that the film compares unfavourably to the dominant version of the myth, others show a lack of interest in the subject. James struggles to keep his interest, “Sorry, it doesn't bother me in my day-to-day work! I'm sorry!” This indifference to a Romance Arthur came across particularly strongly in the Computer Programmers' attitudes to Duncan. As the only one who had read up in

great detail, he was the one who found himself 'affronted' by the film, in contrast to others such as Beatrice, who found the film to be of interest in its own right, "People get all kind of highbrow about it, it's just a- it's a really good thriller! And I think this-this film's a really good thriller." Despite standing up for the film, Beatrice serves merely to enhance the dominant structures in place, finding that when she has to justify her liking of thrillers, this enjoyment "can only be asserted negatively, by the refusal of other tastes" (Bourdieu 1984: 56).

It is not just the programmers who seek an opportunity to display their expertise, as this also happens with the magistrates. The magistrates designate early in discussion the most suitable person to discuss the historicity of the film, Osbert cutting himself off in mid flow of an answer about the Romans, to defer to Ronald. There is "a process of delegation, in which the representative receives from the group the power of creating the group" (Bourdieu 1991: 248), and as he is acknowledged as the group's historical expert, no challenge is made to him even if his assessment of the film's authenticity or otherwise goes against what they previously considered to be true:

Ronald: ...Germans, Germans, yeah the Germans did actually serve on the- on Hadrian's Wall, so that would be...

Violet: ...they weren't our own homebred heroes then?

Ronald: No I'm afraid they actually came from Germany, or- yes, yeah.

Violet: Never, and I thought they were...

Osbert: No.

Violet: Hand reared in the UK.

Ronald: Well no. it was a good way that, it was divide and rule policy, you never used locals to defend an area. You know, you brought outsiders in and they were best suited to keeping an area under control.

Osbert: Yeah, like we did in Cyprus, the old Greece and Turkish Cypriots

Prior cultural knowledge is also brought to the film by the Bedworth group, yet this time the effect this has is vastly different to the other groups. Their knowledge is that of mainstream films, which means their point of reference is not the Arthurian texts with high cultural value as with the magistrates, but rather other Hollywood blockbusters. Wade expresses his taste, and shows his disposition to similar films such as *King Arthur*. “I do like the sort of Epic type movies, and you’ve suddenly got like, what *Troy*, *Alexander the Great*, *King Arthur*, all these coming at once.” Unlike the other two groups, the majority of the Bedworth group had heard of the producer Jerry Bruckheimer, and compared *King Arthur* to his previous work. This means that for Tara, the film “was different to what I expected, ‘cause like I says, um, with the (sic) Jerry Bruck- um, the producer, I expected it to be more like Action thing.” This is in great contrast with the other groups, who reduce it to, “an action movie, but it was thin.”

However without knowledge of the dominant myth as exemplified by Malory and Tennyson, alternative inter-texts such as other blockbusters or the career of the director can also be brought into operation as not only markers of cultural authority for individuals within the group, but also to frame discussion of *King Arthur* in ways not previously considered.

In the Bedworth group, the individuals do not even refer to high-cultural inter-texts in their frames of reference. Cornel for example, focuses on the director, Antoine Fuqua, as *auteur*. Alexandra Keller argues that as the blockbuster is now “more discernable” (1999: 134) as a genre, so it is that focussing on the director as *auteur* becomes a more acceptable strategy. Cornel suggests that Fuqua “does do very interesting things with his stories, and, look at *Training Day*, a very good film. He does some interesting things with his actors, he gets things out of them that they’ve not seen done before.” This construction, handing cultural authority to the director, rather than the Arthurian texts or academics, means that the film’s attempt to claim meaning is listened to far more intently than by the other groups. Wade “knew there’d been a few historians questioning the accuracy but then the film makers had also said, well, if we’re basing it on a myth, you can play around with that myth.” Indeed, because Cornel’s cultural background is that of a film fan, his prior reading on the subject is motivated by filmic, rather than Arthurian interest. Cornel “was reading about it 3 months ago!

(*chuckles*) Because I like the director as well,” and so this respondent has no problem with granting the director authority.

Moreover, there is an active rejection of taste formers that carry weight with other groups: “A critic can only influence his readers in so far as they extend to him this power because they are structurally attuned to him in their view of the social world, their tastes and their whole habitus” (Bourdieu 1993: 96). Whereas in the main the computer programmers, for example, had little interest in the film or subject matter, Wade’s desire to look favourably on the film results in him not reading reviews, in order not to colour his own impression: “cause it gives um, especially if it gets bad reviews, which I do believe this has had a f- a couple at least, erm,m I dunno, it can sometimes make me think eugh, put me off it a bit... So if it’s a film I do *really* wanna see, then I won’t.” Despite clearly being aware of the reviews in order to know that a number of them were critical, Wade’s actions in refusing to read these comments serves to demonstrate how he rejects an Arthurian reading formation⁵² in favour of activating elements of the publicity that were more in tune with his tastes.

The film knowledge this group brings to the table rather than Arthurian knowledge results in the changes to the dominant Arthurian tales being viewed not as a sign of the film’s Hollywoodisation and simplification of the myth, but rather as markers of the film’s difference from other blockbusters:

Wade: The thing is, you’ve had films before of, you know, just the myth.

Cornel: I don’t think I’d have sat down and enjoyed it as much if it was the old...

Jess: ...if it was like a remake...

Cornel: ...the same old stuff.

Noel: We’ve all seen enough Hollywood remakes in the last ten years.

Instead of being *just* an action movie as other groups perceived it, here it is the myth that becomes devalued to *just* the myth as opposed to this particular film, which is marked as distinct and interesting as a result. Instead of sensitively using high cultural

sources, films that follow the Romance tradition are devalued to generic Hollywood fare. Whereas academics bemoan the lack of fidelity to the Arthurian tradition, although absences are noted by the Bedworth group, “the trouble is if they’d have gone too much on the triangle love thing it, it might have sort of been too much typical Hollywood.”

Indeed, to this group myth is not seen as something sacred to be protected. Instead, a low status of myth is naturalised to fit with the group’s sphere of reference:

Cornel: I believe that myths, because, there was no entertainment, there was nothing better than- I believe myths have just come from stories that they’ve heard about people they- it’s like rumours, you get rumours now don’t you?

Noel: We’re after entertainment!

In this way, by discussing myth as entertainment, the group naturalise any difficulties in making the Arthurian myth as a blockbuster, as unlike other groups they are not looking to find difficulty in this process. Works of legitimate culture such as the high cultural Arthurian texts are rejected as pretentious in favour of “the extraordinary *realism* of the working classes” (Bourdieu 1984: 381) which this group is more comfortable with. Acting “down to earth” allowed the film to bring “the human aspect,” into the film. Whilst for the magistrates, “a lot of the language did jar,” for the Bedworth group the language allows them to relate to the film far more, Cornel considering that, “I don’t know, because I’ve never been in that situation- but in a situation like that, there is somebody who’s trying to calm things down by being a joker or- because you get it in reality, something happens, there’s a joker.” Complexity is frowned upon as this is not within their taste, and all they desire is “something easy for a cinema goer to just sit there and listen to.”

Perceived realism is valued here rather than affectation, and so the language used in the film is seen as something they can relate to, in contrast to more ‘difficult’ language, such as that used in high cultural texts. Cornel is asserting his dispositions towards a taste where “every image [should] fulfil a function” (Bourdieu 1984: 41). Over complexity in this instance serves no purpose than to make the high Romance

form of the myth incomprehensible to Cornel, who does not have a developed cultural competence in the subject. He is far more comfortable when he reduces “the things of art to the things of life” (Bourdieu 1984: 44). Cornel thus loses interest when the language moves out of what he is familiar with, and “tend[s] to get bored when they’re going like ‘forth’.” Indeed, for this group, the accents naturalise the film as an authentic version of Arthur, Wade offering the opinion that, “I’m sure they had accents back then, so, it is probably more realistic.” In contrast to the realism and simplicity of Ray Winstone, who is praised for saying “‘I’m going for a piss!’ rather than ‘I’m going to the toilet,’” the High Cultural “posh” accent of Keira Knightley is ridiculed. Cornel remarks “Not putting her down, but she sounds like that!” To have such an accent is seen as something distant from their understanding, and is seen as “all la-de-da.” By reacting against a high aesthetic, where the accent used by Knightley positions her against his own taste-culture and displays a “linguistic ease (Bourdieu 1984: 255) exclusive to the dominant culture, Cornel finds himself drawn towards elements of the text which fit his own culture and capital, and away from the “dispositions and manners seen as characteristic of the bourgeoisie” (Bourdieu 1984: 382).

The favourable leaning towards the realism of the film and its difference from the generic Hollywood blockbuster that this group refers to also means that, unlike the computer programmers who assume due to its status as blockbuster, that CGI is used even where it was not, this group is favourably disposed to the filmmaker’s craft. Julian comments how he has prior expectations as to the composition of a blockbuster, saying he will “always expect everything to be CGI, and I hate it. And so, looking at a straightforward movie- I mean maybe a few arrows, and the ice and all that, a bit of CGI, but it wasn’t based on that, so it was pure.” The film’s higher cultural status among blockbusters comes out particularly strongly in description of the film as “pure” as opposed to the commercial, commodified lowbrow reception from the other groups.

Other groups find themselves mirroring taste-formers to a far greater extent, considering the film to be a bowdlerised version of Arthur, in contrast to the ‘purity’ discussed here. As opposed to the praise for the script that came from the Bedworth group, Josemedee complained that “There was an awful lot of fighting and shooting,

and axing and what have you, w-without a- a great deal of story behind it really...” A similar criticism to the plot happened with the magistrates, who criticised the film for not being “that entertaining in terms of its content. There wasn’t a lot of content in there.” In contrast to these views, Jess in the Bedworth group suggested the film was, “more about human feeling as well isn’t it, as well as all the battles.”

The criticism of the film stemmed from its perceived Hollywoodisation in this form. If viewers have competence in Arthur prior to viewing the film, the reading formation they enact is that of knowing:

He [in this case Arthur] will have been Hollywood-ised, made ‘fit’ for film, blockbuster, general audiences. So, going in to see the film requires of them a conscious choice: to go in making demands, but almost expecting to be disappointed... The trouble is, they almost know too much” (Barker and Brooks 1998: 163).

Stellan Skarsgård (who played Cerdic in the film) was referred to as “that American bloke,” by James and Rob in the group of computer programmers, whilst the magistrates also reserved criticism for the “American accents” of the Saxons. As their expectations of a blockbuster were that it would be Americanised⁵³, then even the Swedish actor was lumped in as American. With a more favourable disposition towards the film, Cornel focussed on Skarsgård’s acting ability rather than any perceived Americanisation, wanting him to:

Be more evil, because he’s a great actor... I’d have just liked to have seen him like, destroying villages like he said he was gonna do, because he’s a good actor... he’s a very good actor and... he was good, don’t get me wrong, but I’d have liked to have seen him actually killing people and being sinister.

Moreover, the desire for more violence is in stark contrast to the other groups. Cornel and Wade demonstrate that their tastes are for “more readily accessible, easier to assimilate” films, in active contrast to the tastes of other groups, who are more readily aligned with “professional critics [who] gravitate toward more challenging artworks of higher complexity” (Holbrook 1999: 148).

Interestingly, although this particular group showed a tendency to activate reading formations surrounding the stars of the film⁵⁴, this exchange also showed how the film differed from conventional expectations of Blockbuster reception, as Clive Owen was not mentioned by any of the groups. In this respect, these focus groups differed from film theory that argues that publicity material “draw[s] on general notions of type and the spectator’s past experiences of the star” (King, B. 2003: 47). Although the publicity poster (see Figure 3.1) for the movie clearly features Clive Owen in a prominent role, and although efforts were made in interviews to create a staged presentation of his persona (see Nathan 2004b: 73, cf Rojek 2001: 11), the emphasis on interviews acted in a way contrary to the popular notion of the star as celebrity. Instead Bruckheimer emphasises the strength of the myth, and the strength of his own adaptation of the story, as opposed to the role of the star. He argues that “if we’d had a big star I think that would have detracted from the authenticity- people would just see the star” (Lawrence 2004: 72). Indeed, this reading formation appeared to have an affect as discourses circulating around the notion of Owen as star and/or celebrity were not taken up by any of the groups.

Indeed, although Owen is a well respected actor, his celebrity is not strong enough to come anything other than second to the strength of the Arthurian myth (cf Gwenllian-Jones 2000: 10). Although Gwenllian-Jones argues that it is television series rather than movies that allow audiences to develop “imaginative bonds with characters” (2000: 11) the strength of the Arthurian myth, with its sedimented history and its status within British culture, meant the focus groups were more likely to ‘bond’ with the character rather than the actor playing him. Consequently the group of magistrates in particular showed how “the... [audience position] necessarily encompasses both extratextual knowledge and (textual) arguments over ‘performance’” (Hills 2003: 77)⁵⁵.

In this instance, the character of Arthur was used by certain groups to position themselves and their culture in opposition to the film, as British culture was hailed as more sensitive and subtle than that of American commodification. Maja lamented that “in *British* folklore, then he was something *special*, and in that film he didn’t come across as anything special at all.” British culture is valued for its age and longevity. Their awareness of prior Arthurian texts enabled them to be aware of the great length

of time that the character of Arthur has held a place in British culture, which is “the surest indication... of the quality” (Bourdieu 1984: 281) of that culture. With the film being very obviously a contemporary production, this sets American culture in opposition to that of the British, as being superficial and without depth. Maja looks with distaste on this culture, and is dismissive of ‘that film’. The computer programmers meanwhile, noted how Arthur had been used purely as a marketing tool for American audiences:

Rob: They could have called it *The Route of the Saxons* couldn't you...?

Steve: ...no, it got the punters in by *saying* Arthur...

James and Beatrice: ...Yeah...

Steve: ...who's going to go and watch *The Route of the Saxons*...?

Duncan: ...nobody, that wouldn't be Arthur- that's the point I was trying to make.

James: I-it doesn't look very cool in the States, unless it's got something that people already know about.

As opposed to British audiences, who are assumed to be able to review the film on its merits or otherwise, the computer programmers have the impression that Arthur is used merely for branding, where Arthur is invoked merely for the naming of the film, and the instant awareness that generates (cf Sklar 2002: 10). The commodified nature of the film is emphasised when Osbert discusses how, “if it's a successful film, and i-it does good box office, then there could be a sequel, and because he's just got married, at the end of this film, you know, the- his reign could now be, you know, much happier, and we could have another- another Arthur the Second!” Their imagined difference to a ‘mainstream’ audience is highlighted as Ronald comments how the target market for the film was not a more discerning one such as his group, but rather “it was appealing to what they, in many ways, what they call the Universal Audience. Ummm... and, it wasn't appealing to a, necessarily, a predominantly *British* audience.” Britain, once again, is valued more highly. By reducing the film to an American version rather than one that would appeal to themselves, these groups also manage to console their worries about the film's anachronisms by accepting it as

not endorsed by their culture, and so not authentic. As Jonathan Jones laments in *The Guardian*, “Britain’s national myth has suffered its own catastrophe, as Arthur and his knights saw their home Camelot washed away... by a river of pseudo-historical garbage in the film *King Arthur*” (2004: 14).

The desire to reclaim the myth for themselves is developed further when the magistrates discuss the location of the film. This is an element in which they lack knowledge, and are unable to criticise the film’s accuracy or otherwise, but provides them with an opportunity to highlight the landscape, which was one of “the stars of the show” according to Delfina:

BE: How about the fact that they came from Sarmatia in the film? (*Osbert laughs*)

Violet: Interesting, I thought. I didn’t know they came from Sarmatia (*Delfina laughs*)

Ronald: It’s not a place I’ve ever heard of before actually. It, err, challenged my geography of err...

Delfina: ... Come on, where is it?

Maja:... Challenged yours and mine both (*murmurs of agreement*)

...

Delfina: ... Do we know where it was actually filmed?

Garfield: Well it was obviously Ireland from the...

...

Osbert: Well it looked like the Dingle peninsular didn’t it? ... It did look very much like Northumberland, those big rolling sort of, fells...

As this is an element in the film they are unable to criticise as being inauthentic, they revert instead to highlighting the beauty of *Britain’s* landscape and *Britain’s* geography, and therefore go some way to re-claiming *Britain’s* myth from the film, that threatens to Americanise it.

So we see that interpretation of *King Arthur* is by no means unified. Indeed, people's response was mediated by their familiarity with prior texts, and this is clearly "a determination that must be taken into account in assessing their relationship to and mode of reading" (Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 54) the film. However, although prior familiarity with other texts proved to be important in informing the readings given, *which* texts were drawn on depended on each person's respective cultural competencies. As such, the über-myth worked to naturalise a group's position in authenticating texts 'sacred' to them, but this position differed depending on whether the Romance form of the myth, other blockbusters, or the historical positioning of the film were invoked as inter-texts by the respondents. The social positioning and amount of cultural capital possessed by each person with regards to Arthur, had a massive effect on whether the film was buried or praised.

Clearly, the authenticity of the Arthurian myth was important to some groups, and this extended to discussion of the authenticity of the landscape in which the myth was set. Evidently, the authenticity or otherwise of place plays an important role in the Arthurian myth and the cultural construction of the landscape is shown to have an important role in positioning an Arthurian text, and allows versions of the myth to be claimed as 'real'. Indeed, the appropriation of 'authentic' Arthurian place extends beyond the places featured in the film, to the 'actual' geographical places themselves. How different sites appropriate the Arthurian Myth is the subject of the next section, which develops the idea of a 'legitimate' British landscape of Arthur, in the case of Tintagel castle, Cornwall, before looking at the 'unofficial' and illegitimate site of Camelot Theme Park in Chorley, Lancashire and a site of 'everyday' Arthuriana- that of the housing estate.

Section III: Place

Chapter 4: Heritage Sites of Arthur: “It’s English Heritage isn’t it!”⁵⁶

We have seen in previous chapters how the author function works as a signifier of cultural value, and how the über-myth serves to naturalise discourses of cultural identity and value so as to make versions of the Arthurian myth appear both ‘authentic’ and ‘sacred’ to the subcultures concerned and act as a marker of distinction.

However, although focussing on Malory up until this stage, it is necessary to problematise the concept of the author function to show how the author is not the only signifier of cultural value and classification that can be extrapolated and appropriated in relation to the Arthurian myth. If, as I have argued, the myth can be articulated differently within different taste-cultures (see chapter two, pp. 61-63), so it is clear that different strategies will be used by different cultures in order to confer ‘sacredness’ and ‘authenticity’ on their versions of the myth. As mentioned in the first chapter, the Arthurian tales do not originate with Malory. In fact, the Arthurian stories rise from:

A time when the texts that we today call ‘literary’ (narratives, stories, epics, tragedies, comedies) were accepted, put into circulation, and valorised without any question about the identity of the author; their anonymity caused no difficulties since their ancientness, whether real or imagined, was regarded as a sufficient guarantee of their status (Foucault 1991a: 109).

Therefore it is not always possible, or even desirable to refer merely to authors of the tales. There are times when alternative textual meanings may be required to be activated other than that of the author (see Easthope 2002: 137). Foucault talks of previous stabilising factors before the author, and of how the need to give a text authority was previously fulfilled by the received wisdom of age. To venerate the past is to venerate “a traditional reputation of a thing over its actual and discernable nature” (Hutton 2003: 27). Therefore, in the same way that the author function can be used as a sign of value, so “values that organize the representation of the past” (de Certeau 1988: 7) in the present often connote a lasting prestige for that which has survived. Consequently, we see how to “pass into history” is to move “into the eternal

present of consecrated *culture*” (Bourdieu 1996: 156). By virtue of cultural texts holding resonance for such long periods of time, they are able to be used to confer value on other texts as required.

Through the ages the power of tradition that comes with the Arthurian tales has been appropriated for political gain. The past, after all, is a “vehicle for the distribution and use of power” (Munslow 1997: 13). It was not insignificant that Arthur was the subject chosen by William Dyce for his frescoes in the House of Commons Royal Robing Room (see Brooks and Bryden 1999: 252-254) as linking political dynasties to Arthur has been common practice. JF Kennedy’s presidency piggy-backed on the idea of ‘Camelot’ to signify the regime’s hopes and aspirations (see Rojek 2004: 49 and Kobler 1993: 107) and Tintagel Castle has been linked to Arthur by a reading of Geoffrey of Monmouth that suggests he named the place as Arthur’s Birthplace in his *History of the Kings of Britain* (Thomas, C. 1993: 15). It is probably for that very reason that the castle was built by Richard, Earl of Cornwall (c. 1230-1240), possibly to capitalise on the popularity of Geoffrey’s book and lend authority to his own power (see Creighton 2002: 72). The castle proved to be unsuitable as a dwelling however, and did not protect any area of significance, so was soon neglected and lapsed into decay (cf Thomas, C. 1993: 15). Nonetheless for these rulers, however briefly, appropriation of Arthur, the ancient king of the Britons, allowed for “an ideological legitimation... [they themselves] sorely lacked” (Finke and Shichtman 2004: 18).

As such, there are times when the author function is not the only device used as part of a social ideological need to close down meaning and Foucault might equally have written of the ‘ancient function’ when analysing the author’s cultural-historical construction as authority (cf Baker, S. 1995: 426). When talking of the ‘ancient function’, I am not talking merely of this “ingenious manipulation of language to create a past that would ease the anxieties of a powerful ruling class,” as Finke and Shichtman (2004: 69) put it. Rather, there are times when the cultural authority of the text itself is valorised in relation to its age, when a text can “become part of history, in the eternal present of *culture*, where schools and tendencies that were totally incompatible ‘in their time’ can peacefully coexist because they have been canonized, academicized and neutralized” (Bourdieu 1993: 106). The ancient function can be seen as a function whose effects mirror that of the author function, where the

ancientness of the text is used not merely to physically date the work but also goes to show how the text has been transformed, distorted, and modified (cf Foucault 1991a: 111) in order to create the *impression* of ancientness and permanence, regardless of the text's true age and material conditions of production.

With the ancient function, we see how there is a “conscious or unconscious transformation of the past into an artefact of maximum significance and utility to the present” (Hutton 2003: 21). By writing of the past, this act of writing “tends to ‘de-chronologize’ the historical ‘thread’ and to restore, if only as a reminiscence or a nostalgia, a complex, parametric, non-linear time whose deep space recalls the mythic time of the ancient cosmogonies” (Barthes 1986: 130). That is, the *specific* past is not important, it is the *effect* this pastness has on discourses of value which is significant. It is the *representation* of the past as authoritative which is more important to the ancient function than the *actual* time that has passed between past and present.

Therefore, the history of a text, or even the mere fact that a text has a history at all (regardless of what this history *is*) can afford it a cultural value over and above its aesthetic ‘merits’ or otherwise (cf Renfrew 1986: 159). This can be activated as a signifier of cultural value, as and when required. Clearly, “the denial of an absolute authorial centre implies not the necessary absence of the author, but the redistribution of authorial subjectivity within a textual *mise en scene* which it does not command entirely” (Burke 1998: 184). I am suggesting here that there are times when the ancient function will hold a stronger position within the Arthurian ‘textual *mise-en-scene*’ than the author function, where “the material attributes [of the text, i.e. its age]... are generally treated as though they were clues to the arch-criterion [of the text's value], the supposed origin of the piece and its place in the history of the [myth]” (Spooner 1986: 200).

It is to a practical use of the ancient function that I now wish to turn. Although so far I have restricted my analysis to literary and filmic texts, there is no reason why the effects of these functions should be restricted to such textual forms. Indeed, the geographical sites associated with Arthur prove to be rich pickings for analysis⁵⁷. It is readily apparent that there is a need not merely to look at the physical site itself, but instead to draw a distinction between place and space, where place can refer “to

discrete if ‘elastic’ areas in which settings for the constitution of social relations are located and with which people can identify” (Agnew 1993: 263). It is clear that a place is constructed by not merely the location, but by the social constructs that make the space function in the way it does. It is wise to remember that “location or position is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of place, even if it is a very common condition” (Relph 1976: 29). Much as extra-textual factors such as the über-myth and the author function work to naturalise Malory’s cultural status, so elements other than the physical landscape itself go into making place (cf DeLyser 1999: 626), and it is this blending and clashing of cultural elements at Arthurian geographical sites that I shall now look at, firstly with particular reference to the ancient function in order to show how places are “interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood and imagined” (Gieryn 2000: 465)⁵⁸.

Sites that utilise the ancient function include *King Arthur’s Labyrinth*, a series of underground caves at Machynlleth, near Aberystwyth in mid Wales, which presents waxwork scenes from the *Mabinogion*. It makes a certain claim to cultural value as it markets itself as a place where you can “learn about the *original* legends of King Arthur, the wizard Merlin, Avalon and much more” (Symonds: n.p. 2003, my emphasis). We are invited to disregard any previous Arthurian perceptions we might have and refer to the ‘original’ stories; “what is certain is that the *earliest* of these ‘Arthurs’ are to be found in the Welsh tales known as the *Mabinogion*.” (Symonds 2003; see Earl forthcoming⁵⁹). In this way, the Labyrinth appropriates the cultural value of the old texts, the labyrinth’s status “must attribute to its grounding force an authority which in turn makes this very power credible” (de Certeau 1988: 6-7). Glastonbury, that most famous of Arthurian sites⁶⁰ uses the power of age to enhance the strength of Arthur as ‘mythic’, consequently positioning the site as “so ancient that only legend can record its origin” (McIlwan 1999: n.p.). In this sense, the age of the site “serve[s] as a concrete, public record of the existing categories and principles” (McCracken 1988: 131) of the site itself, which ensures that the myth’s longstanding link with Glastonbury is highlighted. The passing of time, moreover, enables this link to be naturalised as ‘authentic’.

However, in order to show in more detail how these pleas to cultural authority are both made and received at an Arthurian heritage site, I wish now to concentrate on

Tintagel, which I visited on the week of 12th July 2003. I shall demonstrate how the ancient function is used to authenticate the castle as a site of cultural value and distinction, and shall demonstrate how the castle's ancientness is authenticated by virtue of its proximity to Tintagel village. Tintagel exemplifies how landscapes are constructed "through a braiding together of the material, social and symbolic" (Lorimer 2001: 93) and in this instance, it shall become clear that both sites of castle and village do not stand in isolation from one another, but work in tension and depend upon one another to make meaning.

On 13th and 14th July I interviewed 46 randomly selected visitors to the castle, to find out (as expressed in the most basic terms) 'why they were there,' especially important as "a legitimate criticism of the existing literature in the sociology of tourism is that it is light on empirical examples which enable the reader to evaluate the power of the theoretical analysis" (Rojek 1997: 62). I have used pseudonyms in all cases and the interviews were semi-structured in form, as my aim was to allow the visitors to express their feelings about their visit in their own words as much as possible. Of course, 'their own words' will never be entirely possible, as this approach "assumes that cultural activities can be adequately accounted for in terms of language and 'discourse' when by its very nature, asking the visitor to put into words their experience will disrupt this experience" (Hills 2002: 66). Nonetheless, it is clear that by interpreting tourists' justifications and understandings of their visit to Tintagel, it is possible to interpret how signifiers of cultural distinction work in naturalising the presentation of the site as 'authentic'. This chapter will aim to address "the lack of research on exactly how history and heritage are in fact remembered by people, how people's popular memories... are initially stimulated, enthused, and then organised into a potential documentation of remembrance" (Rojek and Urry 1997: 13). Firstly, however, it is necessary to sketch out briefly the background to Tintagel as a heritage tourism site.

Tintagel's popular resonance to the Arthurian myth is shown in the number of people visiting; estimates suggest that 600,000 people visit Tintagel as a whole during the year, and of those 200,000 will pay to visit the physical castle ruins⁶¹. Nonetheless, it is important to note that although those paying to visit the castle are only a third of the total visitors, Rob Orton, curator of the castle, argued that "if we didn't have the

castle, I don't know how many visitors Tintagel would get, but it would be very, very small" (interview). Although Orton has a vested interest in privileging his own site (the castle) above others in the village, he is still correct in that the castle is the most recognisable symbol of Tintagel, appearing on virtually every single postcard available in the village (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). From my observations, it was clear that many people would be happy to view the castle remains, even if from a distance. It was also possible to go down to the caves without paying, and the steep incline to reach the castle would be a deterrent for many.

Tintagel is not a homogenous place, but can be divided roughly into two distinct sections. There is Tintagel castle, and Tintagel village. The village of Tintagel's association with Arthur does not stretch as far back as that of the castle. Originally called Trevenna, the villagers took advantage of the updating of the postal system, and changed the name of their village to Tintagel in 1900 to capitalise on the potential tourist benefits. As the notion of the 'tourist' became prevalent in Victorian times (cf Urry 1995: 130), and the railway system opened up transportation to classes hitherto denied the opportunity to travel, so Tintagel became a favourite destination for holidaymakers (cf Hale 2001a: 160), coinciding with the renaissance in appeal of the Arthurian myth, headed by Tennyson. In addition to the name change of the village, another significant factor was the opening of *King Arthur's Castle Hotel* (Now the *Camelot Castle Hotel*) by William Taylor in 1899, who hoped that this would become the prestige terminus for the London and South Western Railway. This was despite the fact that the railway line finished in Camelford, some eight miles away!⁶²

It is my aim to show how the castle has an advantage over the village in that it can harness signifiers of perceived ancientness to maintain distinction from the village. Although John Robb claims that "neither [the castle nor the village] has any superior claim to authenticity" (1998: 587) I shall argue that by use of, among other devices, the ancient function, the castle does in fact make a claim to an authenticity that the village is positioned as lacking. Tintagel is an Arthurian site that demonstrates how "places are about relationships, about the placings of materials and the system of difference that they perform" (Urry 2005: 24, see also Rojek and Urry 1997: 12).

Figure 4.1: Postcard purchased from Tintagel Village on visit. Note the round table taking centre stage, with three of the four pictures relating to the castle.



Figure 4.2: Postcard purchased from Tintagel Village on visit. *King Arthur's Tintagel*, with photographs devoted exclusively to the castle.



4.1 An ‘Authentic’ Ancientness: Tintagel and the construction of authenticity

The perceived distinction between castle and village is remarked upon by James Noble, who considers the castle to be, “the one spot in the whole village where fact and fiction seem not to have become conflated” (2002: 38). In this respect, it appears that the castle follows John Urry’s definition of a site that is predominantly the object of the romantic gaze. It has a history, and is apparently authentic. The village, meanwhile, is mainly modern in construction and is predominantly inauthentic (1990: 194). The more modern buildings that populate the village clearly have no recourse to ancientness in themselves as a means of authority, unlike the castle. As Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel put it, there are occasions when “the value of old things [is] demonstrated by the sole fact that they have been preserved, and is not the antiquity of the things preserved sufficient to justify their preservation?” (1991: 48)

This perceived authority given by the ancient function was remarked upon by those visiting the castle. It was noticeable that a number of people fitted a similar demographic, that allows a picture of the ‘typical’ visitor to Tintagel to be drawn. As Sarah Thornton says, “accents can offer some indication” (1995: 91) to a person’s social background and at Tintagel they mostly spoke with a middle-class received pronunciation accent. Although Thornton argues that people sometimes adopt other accents according to their situation, an RP accent tallied with their place of residence, which was generally in suburbs of moderately sized market towns⁶³. The typical resident in such areas is a middle-class nuclear family (cf Taylor 2003: 158), where a suburb is “an idealized place” (Taylor 2003: 159) for the family to reside and relax⁶⁴. Moreover, 38 out of 46 visitors interviewed (82.6%) were aged 40 or above. These figures point to a typical visitor to Tintagel as being affluent and educated. Sixty seven year old Mildred highlighted the contrast between the castle and village, saying “this is lovely, so this makes up for cheap and tacky shops.” Most people visiting the castle were keen to dismiss the village entirely. The only reason they had come to Tintagel was to see the castle, and they had no interest in the commercial element of the village. The ruins were seen as natural, as opposed to the simulation and pastiche found in the village. The distinction between the village and the castle enables a construction of authenticity to be made by the visitors, and serves to highlight that the

way “places are imagined is fundamental to the cultural construction of social difference and otherness” (Lilley 2001: 22). Postmodernist critics would argue that authenticity has disappeared (see Rojek 1995: 9) and indeed, the castle by being distinguished from the village, “creates the emotional illusion of authenticity” (Mestrovic 1997: 83), as opposed to an actual ‘authenticity’ in terms of the castle being physically constructed in Arthurian times. Despite this, the castle is *culturally* constructed as ‘authentic’ by the visitors, and the notion of authenticity is one that is *experienced*.

Moreover, this construction of authenticity is important to visitors for maintaining the cultural value of the site. Indeed, Golomb suggests that “authenticity defines itself as lacking any definition” (1995: 12) and as such, authenticity can only ever be a concept naturalised by the subcultures or individuals involved. In some instances, “mass-produced kitsch can and often does produce spontaneous emotions in children that deserve to be called authentic” (Mestrovic 1997: 83) and it is how the visitors make Tintagel authentic by their own cultural construction of the site in relation to the village that makes the site authentic, rather than any high cultural validity inherent in the site itself. Authenticity can only ever be a relative construction (cf MacCannell 1999: 91-107) and thus it is important not to debate whether the site is authentic or otherwise, but rather to consider “how the discourse practices of heritage tourism... can themselves deploy or invoke notions of authenticity” (Coupland, Garrett and Bishop 2005: 199).

The authenticity of the castle is based on nothing more than an image itself, that of a reading of Geoffrey’s manuscript that suggests Tintagel as the birthplace of Arthur, and the continuation of this link by later authors. In practice however, Tintagel’s connection with the literary myth of Arthur (see chapter two, pp. 51-53) is not tied to this one specific text, meaning that the site cannot rely merely on the author function in order to construct and appropriate value. The interviewees’ awareness of Arthur was vague, and very few people mentioned any specific authors or tales. However, without focussing on the human agency involved in the authorship of the Arthurian texts, this had the effect of naturalising the connection of Tintagel with Arthur. As Chris Rojek points out, “mythic events are dragged on to the physical landscape and

the physical landscape is then reinterpreted in terms of the mythic events” (Rojek 1997: 54).

Despite being constructed by Geoffrey, and popularised by Tennyson, the castle is seen as an ‘authentic’ connection as time has resulted in the author being decentred, with a consequent dominance of the ancient function over the author function in this particular reading. The historical context of the castle’s construction has evaporated and “over time the enduring element is alienated from both the agency and the sense of its creation, and with the displacement it loses the taint of imitation and assumes the purity of nature” (Smith, J. 1993: 80). Therefore, as the castle is older than the buildings in the village, the castle itself has lost the feeling of imitation associated with the sites in the village by virtue of its relative ancientness. Thus, the ancient function works to construct an ‘authentic’ site, and although people are aware of the simulation of the site, Tintagel becomes viewed as *the* site of Arthur’s birth. The historical Arthur can be filtered through the chivalric interpretation to produce a site of distinction, and visits are instigated by a general awareness of the power and history of the myth, but without any clear knowledge of any specific texts tied to it (cf Davidhazi 1998: 174).

This naturalised authority that comes with the (albeit decentred) appropriation of the old texts becomes apparent as other sites are also used to accentuate the authenticity of Tintagel, relative to them. Ted, visiting Cornwall for a week’s holiday, contrasted the ‘sacred’ site of Tintagel with other Arthurian ‘sites’. Although the Arthurian myth was seen as a key element in constructing meaning, Tintagel itself was authenticated by Geoffrey linking the site to the myth. As such, the ancient function naturalised this connection, and textual authority allowed an authenticity to this visitor that was denied to Machynlleth. “You’ve got to have the tales or you haven’t got a... I went to some tunnels in Wales that they said was King Arthur’s... but that was just in some old slate mines... this is where it happened!” Whilst the distinction between Tintagel and the Mid Waleian site may not be immediately clear in that both seek to impose über-mythic notions about Arthur on to the site that can then be experienced through the landscape (cf DeLyser 1999: 603), Ted was keen to authenticate his own visit, and thus display his own cultural capital, by focussing exclusively on ‘authentic’ sites (cf Rodman 1996: 118). As Tintagel has some notion of an ‘Arthurian past’ to it, even if

this 'past' is a cultural construction rather than 'reality', the faded knowledge of a 'historical' Arthur allows the 'romance' Arthur to appear more authentic in this instance as there is the "formal *re-presentation* of historical content" (Munslow 1997: 25) at the site.

Twenty eight of the people I interviewed were happy to admit that the Arthurian tales had played some part in their reason to visit. For those who visited the site because of Arthur, they were all aware that the site is a simulation. They were keen to tell me that the Arthurian myth was either fictional or they did not believe in its 'reality'. Thirty seven year old Roland's response was representative as he said how the tales were "not much close to the truth, but this is supposed to be the place of his birth." Mirroring Nick Couldry's visit to the Granada Studios tour of the *Coronation Street* set (2000: 69), it is clear that Tintagel's 'power of place' rests not on a general history, but on a fictional myth that is communally owned by the visitors (cf chapter two, pp. 51-53). The loss of a specific author to the Arthurian literary texts serves to highlight this element, as there are times when respondents' dispositions lead them to "give a greater importance to the... [cultural site] which carries the least trace of its genesis" (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991: 64). The ancient function is used to highlight the fact that this site has an authenticity by virtue of it being the 'original' site of the myth (cf Coupland, Garrett and Bishop 2005: 204), and English Heritage's marketing serves to enhance this impression, by informing the visitor that Tintagel is the place where, "a legend was born"⁶⁵. Readings are closed down to position Tintagel as the 'original' Arthurian site, where the myth can be seen to begin, and therefore Tintagel has significance in the mythical narrative (cf Couldry 2003b: 76) as the 'originating' site of the myth itself.

Constructions of the site as 'original' are aided not merely by how the site is written about in the promotional literature, but by how the physical remains are presented also. To further affirm the 'sacred' authenticity of the site (cf chapter two, pp. 54-55), it was important to the visitors that the castle was seen as a ruin:

BE: Is the castle what you expected?

Nassar: Yeah well I hoped that it would be a ruin. It would be *really* a rip off if it were totally restored.

BE: Why is that important?

Nassar: Because it's closer to being realistic. Even in the tales you have to work back through the tales to imagine what it was like, so if the buildings weren't like that so you also had to make the leap, then it wouldn't even be *close* to being realistic.

The authenticity the site has is enhanced by the fact that the castle is a ruin and has not been 'artificially' reconstructed (cf DeLyser 1999: 603). This is enough to confer the 'authentic' impression of age, of a time from long ago, despite the fact that the castle was built in the 1200s (long after Arthur's supposed birth). Technical proof of the site's age is not required to confer value on it but rather, the cultural value attributed to it by virtue of its age depends on use of the ancient function for the visitors to collectively verify its cultural value (cf Appadurai 1986: 46). Ollie contrasted the authenticity of Tintagel with Stonehenge, where he was disappointed that they had moved some of the stones. He articulated how 're-creation' of the site was culturally valued below that of its 'originality': "at the end of the day in a lot of cases, the change is only what somebody else *thinks* it would have been. Who's to say whether he's right or wrong?"

Nonetheless, even the suggested absence of physical remains is a cultural construction (cf DeLyser 1999: 614), as one sign within the castle gives the information that "only massive buttressing prevents the remains of the great hall from falling into the sea." Sixty three year old Deirdre mentioned the need for there to be an impression of an aged ruined building on site, saying that it was sometimes necessary to maintain the character of the place inauthentically: "when things are falling down, then fair enough! If there's a method to stop the cliff completely from being washed away." It is clear that although people want the space to construct their own über-myth with regards to Arthur, they need a certain physical 'reality' of a castle on the site to give the impression of an aged structure and therefore emphasise the authentic nature of the site. "Monuments depend... on the existence of a gap between the real and the symbolic. The loss they set out to erase by preserving a memory... is also the condition of their existence as objects in culture" (Belsey 2005: 69-70) and in

preserving the ruins Tintagel alludes to the fact it is a ruin, and therefore offers the site's presentation as that of present-absence. Roland Barthes discusses how the cultural value of relics is constructed, and the process is similar to that which occurs at Tintagel castle: "Secularized, the relic no longer has anything sacred about it, except that quality attached to the enigma of what has been, is no more, and yet offers itself as a present sign of a dead thing" (Barthes 1986: 139-140). Tintagel's present-absence of ruins is proof to the visitors of the 'authentic' process of decay caused by time, and aids visitors in perceiving the site as the 'original' site of Arthur.

The fact that the 'true' age of the site is insignificant is seen in the case of one visitor who told her child, "don't climb on the walls because they're really old and you'll break them down even more... you won't be able to conceive of 9000 years" (fieldnotes). The actual age of the site is unimportant, merely the fact that the impression of age is conferred on the site and "the *given* [of the crumbling walls] must be transformed into a *construct* of building representations with past materials, of being situated finally, on this frontier of the present where, simultaneously, a past must be made from tradition" (de Certeau 1988: 6). The reverence paid by visitors to the ruined buildings suggests that the walls are seen as something pure and in harmony with the 'natural' landscape, not being of man-made construction. This view is echoed by those who query "I wonder how they got the stones up there?" (fieldnotes) The site itself is seen as something of wonder where its unnatural construction becomes an entirely natural occurrence and appears in harmony with its environment owing to its age. The maximising of the walls' age by claiming they are 9000 years old shows it is important to maintain their mythic, almost timeless construction, as a reduction in the distance of time between production of the site and its consumption by visitors threatens its authenticity (cf Spooner 1986: 222).

The presentation of absence is not restricted to the ruins, but the signs erected around the site also. The understated approach to signs was almost universally praised. There were but three people who wanted more signing. Those who were at Tintagel for reasons other than Arthur were equally pleased that they could enjoy the site without being overwhelmed by information about the myth itself. Nonetheless, very few people were making a repeat visit to the site. Of those who had, Esmerelda stated that, "there's a lot more structure to the place now, than there used to be. I seem to

remember... that when I came before you just kind of wandered and there wasn't any signs telling you what this was." Although English Heritage do indeed organise the site, they are not perceived to be doing so. This impression is enhanced when comparing other tourist sites in the vicinity. In *King Arthur's Great Halls* for example, you have to wait until the attendant lets you into the first room, where you are treated to an extremely controlled 'show' narrated by Robert Powell. The room is plunged into darkness, the paintings are illuminated in a pre-ordained order, and the visitor is only given the Chivalric interpretation of the myth. Compared to this, Tintagel appears far less structured. Devon's Cadbury Castle (one of the many sites that has claims to be Camelot) by contrast has no signs whatsoever, it is even harder to find the site, and there is no entrance fee to the site, or gift shop to buy souvenirs. Therefore it is a far less commercial site than Tintagel, but the enduring perception of a commercial village enables the (relatively) non-commercial, unstructured perception of the site to take place. Whether or not "any notion of escape from the existing social order is illusory" (Cohen and Taylor 1992: 7), it is still an escape that is experienced by the visitor.

Ted mentions how the absence of substantial ruins is able to empower the visitor: "I've seen some ones [castles] that are all decked out, and ones that are ruins, and the ones that are ruins are better... 'cause you can picture things, they're not there to... you can say with this one... you've got to sort of make it up, whereas with the furniture and all that there, it's already done." Visiting the site increases people's cultural capital in terms of the place itself, and the opportunity to discern the 'reality' behind the stories. By visiting the site, people were able to recount a personal testimony, and this "genre of testimony works as a *genre* to produce authority by making a story of experience recognizable as truth" (Moon 2005: 572). Consequently, this authority of testimony gave them greater cultural capital than if they were restricted to merely reading the literary texts. Good taste is related to expert knowledge of Arthur, and by visiting the 'original' site, the site itself serves to act as a marker of distinction over and above Arthurian literary texts in themselves (cf Appadurai 1986: 45). Visiting the place and maintaining its distinction is a way for people to reaffirm cultural difference when generic images associated with the myth are accessible to everybody. This gain in cultural capital is backed up by the perceived authenticity of the site itself.

In this section, I have shown that much as “clearly the economy of the village relies heavily on its association with the medieval legend of King Arthur and does everything it can to promote that connection” (Noble 2002: 37), so the visitors to the castle *need* the village’s commercial nature in return so as to maintain the castle’s veneer of authenticity in binary opposition. Matt Hills observes that “the production of sacredness... depends precisely upon the everyday and proximate form of the ‘profane’ world” (2002: 128), and this is precisely what happens at Tintagel. As such, the fact that the village is seen as “totally tawdry, and it isn’t cultural at all” by Iris allows the castle to be seen as cultural, relative to the village. Postmodernism’s “stance towards cultural tradition is one of irreverent pastiche, and its contrived depthlessness undermines all metaphysical solemnities, sometimes by a brutal aesthetics of squalor and shock” (Harvey 1989: 7). These ‘brutal aesthetics’ serve to merely enhance the alternative view of the castle itself. By looking with horror on the low-cultural village, visitors to the castle are able to reaffirm the importance of visiting a place where meaning is paramount. By choosing to visit the ‘authentic’ castle, Iris’s identity is constructed by this signal of her taste (cf Doorne and Ateljevic 2005: 176).

There is a depthlessness to the village and its products, as elements of Arthur have been mixed together seemingly randomly and we see, “the sensationalism of... spectacle” (Harvey 1989: 54). This contrasts with the castle, where meaning and depth are seen as part of the attraction. Much as “Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to believe that the rest is real” (Baudrillard 1983: 25), the superficiality of the village allows visitors to temporarily suspend their disbelief in the mythical origins of Arthur. Chris Rojek notes that “literary landscapes and, for that matter, heritage sites, do not preserve the past, they represent it... authenticity and originality are, above all, matters of technique. The staging, design and the context of the preserved object become crucial in establishing its ‘reality’ for us” (1993: 160). It is ultimately the staging of the castle, next to the extremely commercial village that establishes its ‘reality’.

Rob Shields argues that for Niagara, “the loss of... ‘aura’... may be traced to Niagara’s increasingly accessible location, the clash of opposed advertising images and tourist

reports of Niagara which combined to carnivalise it and to impose many different interpretations on it” (1991: 133). Tintagel as a whole offers similar elements of advertising and commercialism as Niagara, yet the surrounding presence of advertising and commercialism serves to *enhance* the aura of the castle by providing an opposition. Tintagel may very well be the “simulated generation of differences” (Baudrillard 1983: 4), but this is a difference needed and constructed by the visitors as they battle to maintain cultural distinctions. Rojek splits modern life into Modernity 1 and Modernity 2, and suggests “there are indeed contradictory forces in modernity which simultaneously pull in the direction of greater unity and greater disunity, more standardization and more diversity, further centralization and further decentralization” (1995: 101). At Tintagel we see the struggle between these contradictions in full swing, where the ancient power of the dominant Arthurian myth is used in an attempt to assert the values of difference and authenticity.

However, this is not to say that the village does not seek to appropriate the Arthurian myth itself. The previous chapter (page 104) discussed briefly the idea of the figure of Arthur holding cultural value. In the next section I shall put forward an analysis of Tintagel village to show how by activating meanings and images surrounding the figure of Arthur, as opposed to his cultural-historical formation, it seems apparent that in addition to the Author and ancient functions, so we also have an ‘Arthur function’ where Arthur fulfils the role of being “the bearer of different meanings at different points in time, in different contexts and for different audiences” (Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 18). The Arthur function’s strength is derived from “his [Arthur’s] ability to co-ordinate- that is, to connect and serve as a condensed expression for- a series of ideological and cultural concerns” (*ibid*)- the ‘popular hero’ that is King Arthur. Here, “the figure to which a text is made to point and which serves as a support for its meaning is not one which is outside and precedes it (the author) but one which is simultaneously outside and within it” (Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 233). Arthur can be both subject of the text, and structuring principle for the text, as prior expectations are fashioned for the text by virtue of its specifically Arthurian content.

4.2 The Arthur Function: Alternative appropriations of value

The ‘inauthentic’ Tintagel village, with no recourse to the power that comes from age, seeks cultural authority from different sources, and whilst not appropriating the ancient function also eschews use of the author function, possibly because popular texts sometimes appear to sit uncomfortably with the romantic notion of the author (cf Gelder 2005: 14-15). Fortunately, the Arthurian tales are fluid and find themselves able to live without the cultural value given to them by the notion of the Author-God. For all the efforts to close off meaning by use of the author and ancient functions, it is now necessary to briefly look at how Arthur can feature as a cultural icon who, although Once and Future King, the King who rises in different forms in the hour of greatest textual need, still has heroic characteristics that resonate throughout each and every interpretation of Arthur (cf Brooker 2000: 39-41). Whilst a celebrity may move in and out of the public gaze as fashions change, the cultural icon is marked by the continuation of their status over time (Turner 2004: 95). We saw with regards to *King Arthur* how characters sometimes attempt to break free from their textual existence (cf chapter three, pp. 78-80), giving an insight into how Arthur has “transcended the bounds... [of the texts] which produced him, becoming recognizable and meaningful even to people” (Erb 1998: 14) who have never read the high cultural texts.

Arthur can survive as a popular hero due to “cultural embedding. The key images invoked... are productive only because they require minimal decoding” (Sklar 2002: 21)⁶⁶. That interviewees had a basic understanding of the Arthurian myth was shown by the frequency with which respondents told of their understanding of Arthur in generic terms, where there was a vague impression of the round table, the sword in the stone, and chivalric knights, or the “well-recognized and understood core of signs and images” (Robb 1998: 584) that surround the myth⁶⁷. Although it is the case that often in the medieval stories Arthur is by no means the central character (see Wheeler 2002: 126), the stories “are most firmly associated with the romance world of knights who act out and thereby render practical the civilizing laws of a single, heroic founder” (McConnell 1979: 105). As a floating signifier, there are always sufficient appropriations of Arthur to cater for all taste-cultures. Thus it can be argued that ‘moments of Arthur’ ensue (cf Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 22-43). This then, allows for Arthur, as a cultural icon, to be a “culturally resonant unit... that convey[s]

a set of 'original' meanings and images. Because... [icons] represent content as form... they also provide a surface on which struggles over meanings can be waged" (Baty 1995: 59). We may think of the text as holding 'Arthurity' (cf Tucker 1991: 705), as Arthur becomes a cultural hero. This is important because although "the power of heroic figures is inherently mythic, we also yearn for them to have a human presence. Obsessed with our own identity, or our quest for it, we need figures of myth to have some biographic standing" (Knight 2003: xii)⁶⁸.

Unlike the film *King Arthur* (cf chapter three, pp. 76-78), the village does not try to explicitly reposition the dominant myth of Malory's text. Rather it is the iconographic value of the Arthurian characters in themselves that comes into play and is appropriated (cf Cooke and McLean 2001: 111). Ultimately, although not attributed to Malory's text itself, it is Malory's chivalric Arthur that has risen to a status as dominant 'moment of Arthur' (cf Baty 1995: 14). The village is a place where Arthur breaks free of the cultural-historical terms of his creation, and consists of many shops with an Arthurian theme. It is possible to visit the *King Arthur Bookshop*, *Merlin's Gifts* or *The King Arthur's Arms* pub, for example. These all trade on the Arthurian connection, dedifferentiating (Rojek 1995: 118) the old romance Arthurian themes with modern commercial souvenirs. Consequently, it is possible to buy an *Excalibur* burger in *The King Arthur's Arms*, or a jacket potato named after one of the romance figures in the myth. It is significant that the higher in price the fillings get, the closer to the 'perfect knight' the names become. Kay as the mere Seneschal is last, Lancelot and Tristram, with their infidelities that threaten to disrupt the social order, feature in the middle, whilst Galahad as the 'perfect knight' is top (apart from the King himself), thus reflecting a moral hierarchy of social values which asserts a commitment to a familial life.

The Arthur function appears to complement the romance texts "by means of a seeming mimesis whilst in actual fact organising their consumption in particular ways" (Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 233). Furthermore the commodification of Arthur is seen, as the cultural value of the knights and their moral actions is converted to commercial value. As such, by using the cultural value of the names, the higher price for certain fillings is naturalised as a marker of 'quality'.

Merlin's Gifts meanwhile, sells 'Merlin's Medieval Mustard'. The container is designed to simulate a home made product, with a label printed to resemble handwriting⁶⁹. The Arthur function is used in the village in a way that speaks "to both the culturally-encoded aspirations and the fundamental human needs of its audience" (Sklar 2002: 21) and capitalises on the significations of the characters of the myth to transform their cultural potency into commercial value. Tintagel shows how "the same text' may be differently organised for consumption in different regions of textual distribution" (Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 235).

Having demonstrated how the Arthur function is appropriated at Tintagel village, I now wish to complicate my analysis to show how it would be erroneous to suggest that the Arthur function can only be activated at the expense of the ancient function. An analysis of Tintagel would be too simplistic if it were to suggest that the castle merely relies on the ancient function to activate and über-mythically naturalise meanings whilst the village counter-mythically challenges with the Arthur function. The three functions discussed (ancient, Arthur and author) all work to both close and open meanings, according to context and according to their dominance at different stages of the tales, at different cultural moments. Consequently, the functions do not work in isolation from one another, but are always in tension; more than one function can be activated in a cultural site at any one time. Nonetheless, despite the multitude of functions being appropriated by any one site, "polyphony does not guarantee that readers will recognize the plurality of voices: a convention of reading in quest of statements, messages, the author's knowledge, can lead readers to select and privilege one of the voices of the text, one of its narratives" (Belsey 2002a: 129). This means there are times when any one of the functions may be activated by readers as a signifier of cultural value and be used in order for them to show their distinction.

The Arthur function is also employed by the castle on occasion, albeit the 'moment of Arthur' employed is not so obviously commodified as that in the village. The castle's use of the Arthur function shows how the figure of Arthur emerges "as a site around which very different values may be articulated" (Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 283). In this instance, the castle uses the Arthur function to naturalise the commercial processes in action at the site. Despite the cultural value endowed on the castle by the ancient function, Tintagel castle is still a commercial site. It is necessary to pay an

entrance fee and English Heritage run a gift shop, encouraging the purchase of souvenir T-shirts and books, along much the same lines as the products sold in the village shops. The English Heritage guidebook also helpfully marks the position of the shop on both the map of the village and of the castle printed on the rear. English Heritage also depends on the commercial revenue accrued from the site. As one of English Heritage's few profitable sites, the money made from Tintagel cross-subsidises their loss making sites and the Arthur function helps to naturalise the commercial activities at the castle. A simple fact of the castle's association with Arthur means that "the difference with this site is that it's a more famous one, so we have more readily, well people know about it, it doesn't need quite the same marketing" (Rob Orton interview).

It is not that English Heritage do not choose to engage in as much commercial activity as many other sites, it is that they do not *need* to, as the Arthur function enables the site to "sustain visibility" (Erb 1998: 34) owing to the inter-textual relations ever present between the figure of Arthur and the castle. Rob Orton confirmed that over the years he had worked at the site, the emphasis had changed from "policing the place and the visitors... [to] welcoming them and giving them a good day out" (cf Craik 1997: 123). The change in emphasis is seen clearly by the sign that welcomes you to the visitor's centre. "Welcome to Britain's Biggest Theme Park... English Heritage. It's mine," it says. Calling the properties of English Heritage "Britain's biggest theme park," moves away from the aim of preserving the historical building, and suggests sites that provide entertainment for a family day out, rather than the statement in their December 2000 document *The Power of Place*, which argues that "the historic environment is an incomparable source of information"⁷⁰. The last statement, "English Heritage- it's mine," encourages people to take possession of the environment, and therefore the myth, themselves. The myth naturalises the work put in by English Heritage to present the site (cf Urry 1995: 131), as now the connection between Arthur and the castle is seen as natural, as 'obvious'. Another visitor, Mimi, told me how "every time you talk to someone about Tintagel, they mention King Arthur, it's just part of it you know." In this instance, Mimi frames her actions by associating herself with a collective discourse, where she presents her experience as shared by society as a whole (cf Van Dijk 1998). This is despite the fact that this connection is a cultural construct now maintained by advertising, the village shops

with their conspicuous Arthurian theming, and various texts that present Tintagel as being linked to Arthur.

Owing to the higher cultural status of the castle as opposed to the village, the Arthur function is used in this instance as a marker of distinction from the commercial village. Choosing to visit the castle as opposed to the village “is like choosing the right shop, marked with all the signs of ‘quality’ and guaranteeing no ‘unpleasant surprises’ or ‘lapses of taste’” (Bourdieu 1984: 270). It is clear that it was considered important to maintain the Arthurian element as the main draw for visitors⁷¹. This is partly because “central to tourist consumption then is to look individually or collectively upon aspects of landscape or townscape which are distinctive, which signify an experience which contrasts with everyday experience” (Urry 1990: 132). Closing down meanings in their advertising is especially important for maintaining this site as a viable tourist site, Tintagel being the place where “the bounds of heaven and earth are lost” (Tennyson 1983: 31) merely serves to emphasise that the site can become an escape from the industrial age, to a time of colour when Arthur would be “from spur to plume a star of tournament” (Tennyson 1983: 298).

Even when visiting the castle for the scenery (and subsequently ignoring the aspects of the Arthurian myth) the fact that Tintagel is still seen as distinctive and contrasting with the everyday is important to the visitors. The experience gained by visiting the site consists of a “*shared* framework of significance underlying people’s visits... this framework may be shared by those bored and those fascinated” by the location (Couldry 2000b: 72). Although Phil and Lucinda, a couple from a small country town on the south coast, had come for the castle, “it [Arthur] was an identifying factor because I knew there was a link before we got here.” However, on arrival and without that identification with the tales, I was told how Tintagel was considered to be representative of British culture, yet “if it wasn’t for the position it’s in, it wouldn’t be much to get excited about.” Even in the case of Mike, who was not interested in the tales, he was keen to tell me that, “the Arthur part does make it more unique.” Gary, who was here because, “I like castles,” nonetheless identified Tintagel as a place where “you can imagine the impenetrable fortress, and that can be quite romanticised as well.” When Arthur is not a reason for a visit, the romantic positioning of the castle that comes with the figure of Arthur still provides an element of distinction (cf

Kneafsey 2001: 123). This is important because “as geographical movement became democratised so extensive distinctions of taste were established between different *places*. Where one travelled to became of considerable significance” (Urry 1995: 130). As such, maintaining the distinction of the castle at Tintagel becomes paramount.

Rob Orton is happy to accept that the site’s history is presented through Arthur and an Arthur figure (interview). It fits Baudrillard’s view that “the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth- it is the truth which conceals that there is none” (1983: 1). Tintagel castle follows the process of “substituting signs of the real for the sign itself” (1983: 4), and offers the “simulated generation of difference” (*ibid*). It is the Arthurian myth that generates the difference at Tintagel from other sites, and this is born out by the visitors’ responses; “it’s definitely King Arthur, it would be. It would be. You ask people about Tintagel, they say King Arthur. It would *have* to be the legend of King Arthur that would do it” said Darryl, on being asked what made the site unique. His assertive language represented the site’s connection to the myth as ‘real’ and ‘actual’ (cf Fairclough 2003: n.p.). Strip away Arthur and the site merely becomes a rock and some falling down walls to many as the myth provides an element of distinction that otherwise threatens not to be there. The ‘truth’ of the sites is not important as they offer “the *illusion* or fantasy of otherness, or difference and counterpoint to the everyday” (Craik 1997: 114, my emphasis). By empowering the visitor to construct their own image of Arthur, this serves to naturalise the authenticity of the site. When Arthur is not a valid presence at Tintagel, as in the case of Mo, Tintagel becomes “very quaint, but it’s... you know, a Cornish town isn’t it!” In this instance, without an Arthur function Tintagel threatens to become generic.

4.3 The Continuing Presence of the Author Function

In order to highlight that the author function is not the only signifier of cultural value, I have ignored it within this chapter until this stage. However, having shown that both the Arthur and ancient functions can work in tension with one another within Tintagel castle, I shall now demonstrate that even at the castle, we are not onlookers at the wake of the author function, as this is also invoked by English Heritage. Having shown how the author function is employed at Tintagel castle, I shall then show how

the three functions work with and against one another in order to privilege meanings for particular visitors, depending on their cultural competencies (cf chapter three, pp. 88-89). Tourist sites are visited because of some prior anticipation about the experience that will be enjoyed upon arrival, and “such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze” (Urry 1990: 3). Although the visitors to Tintagel are aware of the fictional nature of the Arthurian myth, the textual elements (be they film, literature or something else) are necessary to construct their anticipation. Catherine Belsey argues that “unlike history, legend draws attention to its own textuality” (2000: 106) and without this textual link, the castle threatens to become an indeterminate image, indistinguishable until arrival, therefore detracting from the anticipation.

From English Heritage’s viewpoint, the aim is to strike a balance between upholding the actual historical environment of the castle, and maintaining the historical environment of the tales associated with the castle. Rob Orton considered that it was, “just as important” for them to be custodians of the literary background as well as the historical background. The emphasis in their publicity leaflet is on Tintagel as the ‘legendary birthplace of Arthur,’ providing a suitably ambiguous phrase. Rob Orton suggested this was a key phrase, as it allowed people to put the accent either on the history of the place, or the myth itself, depending on which people wished. He acknowledged that in the talk given in the castle on the first day I visited, “there’ll be quite a lot of the actual history on that talk; there’ll be an awful lot of legend.”

The author function is used liberally within the English Heritage guidebook and Tennyson in particular is cited readily. The first 17 pages of the guide are on the site itself, but the remaining 27 are about the Arthurian myth, with particular reference to canonical texts and, consequently, the author function. We hear how the *Morte Darthur* is “the last of the *great* medieval re-tellings of the Arthurian legend” (1999: 37, my emphasis), whilst Malory is raised in standing in contrast to his predecessors as we are told how “Malory overcame the numerous short-comings and inconsistencies of his sources, and set down a truly noble tale” (*ibid*). Tennyson meanwhile is mentioned as the person who, “really brought King Arthur back to life” (1999: 39). Nationhood and *English* (British) Heritage are privileged. We hear how

“the Arthurian legends are one of Britain’s greatest contributions to European literature,” (1999: 21) whilst upon their discussion of the Grail motif and Lancelot, no mention is made of the fact that these elements were introduced earlier by figures such as Wolfram von Eschenbach (a German) and Chretien de Troyes (a Frenchman) respectively. This serves to elevate the Arthurian myth above the mundane ‘bricks and mortar’ element of the site. Utilising Tennyson also serves to create a certain ambience, as the castle is being “manipulated emotionally” (Mestrovic 1997: 83) to enhance the site’s high cultural standing and aura. This is also important in maintaining Tintagel’s commercial power as:

Part of what people buy is in effect a particular social composition of other customers... it is this which creates the ‘ambience’... The satisfaction is derived not from the individual act of consumption but from the fact that all sorts of other people are also consumers of the service and these people are deemed appropriate to the particular consumption in question (Urry 1995: 131).

The high cultural leaning towards Malory and Tennyson allows the site to appear ‘legitimate’. It is this high cultural Arthur that creates an ‘ambience’ expected by some visitors and so offers an indication of the “legitimate way of appropriating” (Bourdieu 1984: 270) the site. The connection with Arthur is important, even if people are not there *because* of Arthur.

If the literary background to the site is maintained, this allows English Heritage itself to present the site as more ‘natural’ and serves to stimulate emotions in the visitors (cf Mestrovic 1997: 111). It became clear that, in addition to those visiting the site for the ‘history’ or for the ‘scenery’, those visiting for the connection to Arthur also had a pre-conceived idea of Arthur. This would be mainly either the chivalric, medieval courtly king or a dark age warrior battle lord. For these visitors, their impression of Arthur never changed on visiting the site, it was merely enhanced. Whatever the signs said would not change these people’s perceptions, as these had already been closed down by their prior textual encounters with Arthur. If “popular texts affirm norms and proprieties which we adopt, with whatever anxiety, or repudiate” (Belsey 2000: 108), then here the ‘norms’ of the dominant myth of Arthur are adopted with little question, and the author function works in tandem with the Arthur function in order to ensure the latter’s cultural authority in this instance.

Urry paints a picture of a passive visitor to heritage sites, mindlessly taking in the information presented without question, where:

Visitors see an array of artefacts, including buildings... and they then have to imagine the patterns of life that have emerged around these seen objects. This is an artificial history in which various kinds of *social* experiences are in effect ignored or trivialised, such as the relations of war, exploitation, hunger, disease, the law and so on (1990: 102).

In the case of Tintagel, this does not take into account the fact that people's awareness of the myth is not gleaned from the site itself but from prior encounters with the myth's cultural resonance. Whilst the majority of visitors had an idealised view of Arthur in their mind where these brutalised elements are indeed often glossed over, this is due to prior knowledge of the myth rather than any presentation on site. Those with the dominant chivalric interpretation tended to glide over the negative issues, focusing on a nostalgic, utopian ideal kingdom. However, Ollie (who had already read Stephen Lawhead's more brutal Arthurian adaptation⁷²) was less prone to ignore or trivialise the mundane features. Here, Arthur was perceived as being "a bit of a nasty sod on the quiet."

As mentioned earlier, the signing at the castle is not particularly obtrusive and this is partly because it is unnecessary to explain what the site *is*⁷³. No handsets are offered, unlike at many other English Heritage properties. The signing is deliberately left open to interpretation, and often refers to "a Dark Age Cornish King," therefore referring to Arthur if the reader wishes to make that judgement, but allowing for a pure historical bent should that be your inclination also. This open-ness is also seen in the following sign:

The history of Tintagel spans nearly 2000 years *and is still shrouded in mystery*. What is known provides little basis for the Arthurian legend. However, when the mists come swirling through Merlin's cave it is easy to see how the myth has survived to this day (my emphasis).

In other words, the visitor's interpretation is privileged as much as the 'official' interpretation, and English Heritage allow for a belief in any version of the site visitors wish. By gratifying the visitors in their own empowerment, the site enables

the visitor to believe their own impression of the site is of a higher and more authentic cultural standing than other visitors. This dovetails nicely with the slogan, “English Heritage- It’s mine.” By using the phrase ‘still shrouded in mystery’ English Heritage are using abstracted emotions to maintain the aura and distinction of the site (Mestrovic 1997: 83). Stjepan Mestrovic suggests that this ‘postemotionalism’ is used by the culture industry in a “neo-Orwellian manner” (1997: 26). The presentation of the site, where English Heritage keep their signing open to elements of history, myth and mystery, results in a centrally licensed empowerment of the visitor’s own interpretation. Although they are guided by the presentation of *absence*, they are guided nonetheless. The evocative nature of signs telling of swirling mists and the lack of a physical presentation on site serves to further highlight the ability of the visitor to take possession of England’s Heritage, as aided by English Heritage themselves. This then serves to root the past in the present, and thus maintain the site’s distinction.

The construction of the site’s meanings by visitors was by no means consistent, and many people were opposed to a reading of the ‘mystery’ of the site as mythical, preferring to focus on the aesthetic of the romantic gaze, as provoked by images of ‘the swirling mists.’ These people were in the minority, but nonetheless the aesthetic of the gaze proved to be a significant feature in many people’s impression of the site, even if Arthur was their primary reason for coming. Those who were there solely for the scenery were concerned with the pure aesthetic of the place, where the ‘romantic gaze’ was used as a cultural distinction (cf Urry 1990: 80-81). They tended to be less able to offer an explanation as to why they were there, and it was merely because they “like the view” (Gordon). To them, it was important to position their taste by viewing the Arthurian myth negatively. Arthur reduces the ‘art’ of the scenery, “to the things of life” (Bourdieu 1984: 44). Therefore to revert to the pure aesthetic, Arthur must be nullified and the scenery privileged. Arthur is viewed negatively against the ‘reality’ of the sites as, “I don’t believe all that, it’s all myth isn’t it” (Jemima). Here these visitors demonstrate their belief that the aesthetic of the landscape can only be appreciated by those imbued with the cultural competency to do so (cf chapter three, pp. 88-89) and Arthur obstructs that understanding. Therefore to Jemima, although the emotional construct presented by English Heritage is valid, English Heritage creating

an emotional impact around Arthur that emphasises the mystery of the site is unimportant and this is seen as a type of 'barbaric' taste.

This space for interpretation is especially important as it allows a multiple number of über-mythic Arthurs to be brought to the site by visitors. "Even the illusion of closure and stability [brought by a dominant über-myth] is happily renounced" (Joyrich 1993: 81). Visitors are not restricted by a dominant interpretation as presented by English Heritage, but are able to bring their own über-myth into action also. This allows the visitor to be, "empowered to revel in the pleasure of speculation without subjecting... [themselves] to the frustration provoked by an actual lack" (*ibid*). Instead, the visitors "have created an eternal and unlimited myth in which fixed conclusions cease to matter" (*ibid*). English Heritage's presentation on site has resulted in visitors taking possession of their own heritage in the form of the myth, and working it to their own ends.

This 'taking possession' of heritage by the visitors went further than a passive consumption of the site, where visitors gazed upon what was on offer to them. One of the ways in which the myth was appropriated by visitors was via a discourse of 'making the tales real'. Gordon said how "it's just nice to see something which is connected to this legend. Something you can touch... It has some connection to the real world by this ruin, yeah." Although knowing the myth to be fantastical, some visitors still wanted to make it 'real'. Couldry states of the Granada Studios tour that *Coronation Street* is "associated not with social reality now, but with the past: whether a personal past... or, more starkly, a social past that is lost" (Couldry 2000b: 73) and although to a certain extent this is true at Tintagel, it is important to note that Tintagel is used in an effort to claim a fantastical past for the present.

As a heritage site, Tintagel "encourages us to cross a boundary between present and past, between one historical moment and another, into a vanished epoch" (Belsey 2000: 104), and the reality of the site is needed in order to present the myth as *more* than fiction. Titania mused how after visiting, "I think to me, it's just more special really because I know how beautiful it is." The site is *more* panoramic and spectacular than they expected, therefore aiding the authenticity of the place as a tourist site, which serves to reaffirm the myth, and reaffirms the possibility of rooting it in reality,

as the fantastical becomes commonplace. Tintagel is therefore used as a material form for affirming the reality of the myth. Visiting the castle enables the visitors to organise “movements around space, helps us to experience constructed features of the environment as real, and thereby reproduces the symbolic authority at stake” (Couldry 2003b: 29). As the tourists are visiting for the purposes of working the myth to their own ends, the element of ‘making it real’ becomes crucial, and it is this strategy that I now wish to discuss.

The idealised, chivalric Arthur is thus an ideal form to claim as ‘real’, as it offers the suggestion of a better life and a better Britain than the ‘true’ history. People’s response to a society dominated by conditions of change and flux means they nostalgically idealise the past, so satiating their longing for stability and security (cf Rojek 1995: 118). “As tourists we see objects constituted as signs... a pretty English village can be read as representing the continuation and traditions of England from the Middle Ages to the present day” (Urry 1990: 117) and here, Tintagel works in rooting visitors’ identity in a stable ‘reality’. It is both the site, detached from civilization, and the myth itself which provides this continuity. The reality constructed is only a vague reality, allowing visitors to impose their own constructions on top. Rooting the myth in the real at the site enables visitors to have hope that such a utopian society ‘could’ happen. To further define this point, a number of people mentioned the importance of being able to “put your hand on the stones and go back in time” (Larry). The physical manifestation of the stones and the castle aided people in making the myth more ‘real’ and in this way the age of the site adds to the heritage of the literature, and authenticates the validity of its production. Suddenly the literature is not seen as an artificial production, but an entirely natural consequence aided by the historicity of the castle. Norman said how “it’s a bit boring when you’ve got just the straight, ‘yes, this is what happened.’... it’s nice to have that break from reality whereas there’s still that possibility that it’s true.”

Too much knowledge of the ‘true’ history of the site would destroy the mystique in which Norman had emotional investment. This is because to get back to the reality would undermine the symbolic status of the Arthur function as holding a set of idealised cultural values. If Arthur were presented in the context of history, then he would become merely another indistinct historical figure and undermine the idealised

social construction. This social construction, of course, serves to reinforce the fact that leaders are there by right. Arthur, as the rightful king of England, is seen to have perfect morals, and is let down by his faith in his subjects:

Tatiana: I think there's a lot of bad in society, and I think that's why we romanticise about the good. I mean, people refer to 'the good old days' anyway, you know, the fact that he was...

Milicent: ... well he was a good king, but perhaps... a bit of a bad judge of character wasn't he?

Tatiana: Yeah.

Milicent: Guinevere, and Sir Lancelot.

...

Tatiana: Well that's it. He's trying to protect everything, and manage everything, and cope... but no I think really that there's a lot of bad today, and you think, you look at all the good characters throughout the... yeah well that's it, you need to think about good things rather than the bad.

At Tintagel, Arthur is confirmed as special, and this is not wanted to be undermined by hard facts of reality. To create the site's identity, visitors draw on the Arthur function and use this not only to characterise this particular site (cf Papen 2005: 79) but their own social identity. By marking off the myth as unusual and special, their use of the über-myth, which sees them construct their own version of the Arthurian tales as 'authentic', allows them to reaffirm their own sense of distinction.

An example of how there may be use of the über-myth to naturalise an iconographic representation of Arthur that is not restricted to the dominant romance form is seen in the case of Ollie, who had visited the site after reading the Stephen Lawhead novels. Ollie was more interested in the, "more down to earth," 'reality', where "the King was probably the hardest one around, rather than the goody two-shoes." His quest for self-realisation is presented differently as the myth was viewed as a cautionary tale:

I think in history you see mistakes that have been made. You think well actually, maybe if they hadn't done things that way... you know, looking back at something like Arthur, erm, in many ways the battles that were here were world wars for their time... a lot of the cynics have said the same thing about the Gulf War just gone. America wanted oil, so let's kick Saddam out. Hey, you

know! At the end of the day, every war that's ever been fought has probably been about the same routine... Greed.

Nonetheless, Tintagel was seen as:

A beachfront property...! Just standing there and looking out and seeing it, and thinking to yourself well actually, you can envision the idea of what's going on you know, you can... it's all right saying that they lived in a room 10 foot by 10 foot, but unless you see a room that is 10 foot by 10 foot, you don't realise what size it *is*... suddenly it's in your face and you think 'bloody hell! There was twelve of them living in a room this big!

This cramped, claustrophobic, barbaric Arthur operates in marked contrast to the idealist Arthur. However, this mundane view of life is seen in the extraordinary setting, where "the views up there are stunning." Even when the interpretation activated by the visitors is of a more barbaric Arthur, there is still a positive affirmation of the past. Ollie was able to distinguish a positive impression of community, of people living together and co-operating for the common good. The phrase 'beachfront property' suggests a site of fun and enjoyment, rather than the hardship remarked on in living in the cramped conditions, it also suggests these cramped conditions are merely the product of a group holiday. Therefore, this is where the two worlds of myth and reality are connected, enabling people to lose themselves in the myth and escape the realities of everyday life, whilst allowing themselves to be consoled in the escape of an ideal past, present and future. Visiting Tintagel becomes a 'special' time spent away from ordinary life; it is the visitors' own time in the myth and its heritage, and this is merely reinforced by the geographical location.

'Making Real' can also involve "mobility through an internal landscape which is sculptured by personal experience and cultural influences as well as a journey through space" (Rojek 1997: 53). This 'memory' is able to be organised because the castle provides a 'framework' in which memories can be closed down and reproduced. This is much along the lines of Hayden's *Power of Place*, which discusses, "the power of ordinary landscapes to nurture citizens public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory" (1995: 9). Myrtle followed many others in explaining how the myth allowed her to understand the fact that it was "coming back to where

our history started... It puts us in perspective, in context really.” However, she then said how you also “look at your own children, and your grandchildren, and you can see it going in the opposite direction.” The myth allows a circularity where people’s own past can be related to the present, and placed in context with the myth itself. The castle is a ‘metaphor of memory’, which, “connect[s] the intangible with the material, either [to] convey notions of fixidity and stability or... highlight process and transformation” (Hallam and Hockey2001: 27). In this instance, both stability and transformation are highlighted as the continuity of the gene line is brought to mind by the lasting nature of the myth, but the instability and flux of people mirrors the constantly shifting nature of the myth.

The castle allowed visitors to recall elements of their own life as they placed their recollection of the tales in context. Many people mentioned how they read the tales in childhood, so there was a connection to the purer, more innocent time of childhood. Jessie demonstrated this element when she propounded her reasons for visiting were because, “I came here when I was a little girl, because my dad likes the King Arthur stories.” This also suggests a link with a consoling idealised family unit, where people are not alone. Once again the potential for a fragmented social order where traditional familial units break down is negotiated to that of something more consoling and reassuring. Much as Coronation Street was found to have “a temporal depth, connected not just with the programme’s history, but with... [visitor’s] own lives,” (Couldry 2000b: 76) so the same applies to the Arthurian myth, as the textual history becomes tied into personal histories. This is particularly seen in the case of Elspeth, who recalled how she came by her copy of the *Morte Darthur* and in telling her story, showed how the castle’s “materiality feeds memory, to construct a sense of the absent person which is relevant to the survivor’s present situation” (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 85):

It’s rather romantic actually, I had a very ill lady, she’s in her late 90s, she was the only daughter of the curator of [a] Museum... And she had a boyfriend called Leo, and her father warned him off, and he actually went to South Africa... he bought her the *Morte Darthur*, which of course is the romance of all time, he bought her the *Morte Darthur*... and said “I’ll be back.” And never was! Never come back! And she... I thought it was such an honour that when I started working here, she gave me that book, because she knew I’d look after it, and appreciate where it was coming from. So

I've got this wonderful connotation with the *Morte Darthur* and this wonderful lady and, you know, I had to read it.

It is not only Malory's text, but the castle itself that is used to reconstruct Elspeth's memory of her friend. As Dydia DeLyser puts it, "the power of the visual for the viewer of... [the] landscape is its ability to translate an external phenomenon... and link it to internal experience" (1999: 608). The physical site of the castle and its associations firstly work in recalling Elspeth's memory of her copy of Malory. This object then works in rooting the personal associations layered within the text in the present. Thus, "memory is... relocated in the present via an embodied experience of 'sensory stasis' that seems to arrest the passage of time and collapse the temporal interval between now and then" (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 84).

The presence of the castle and text in the 'here and now' result in this temporary time-space compression that enables memories of the past to become clarified in the present. The subject matter of the myth, with its motif of 'The Once and Future King' serves to naturalise this connection with the past. It negotiates the difference between 'life' and 'death' as Arthur is merely sleeping, waiting to return, and provides a cohesive whole where it is seen as eminently natural for past memory to be reactivated in the present. The layered meanings in the site are not necessarily only of general history, but also of something that can be of more personal interest to the visitors, so proving that "objects build up layered meanings over time to form histories of social events, relations and emotions that can be reanimated, denied or otherwise manipulated, depending on the context of the object's use" (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 49-50). 'Making Real' involves the physical remains of the castle bringing both personal and public elements of the past alive in the present.

4.4 Othering and Negative Tastes: Constructing identity in opposition

I have shown in this chapter how it is not merely the author function that can be activated and used as a signifier of cultural value, but that there are times when both the ancient function and Arthur function serve that purpose also. However, before concluding I wish to look at those visitors who chose not to appropriate Arthur for cultural distinction. After all, "the meaning or value of the same place is... flexible in

the hands of different people or cultures... and inevitably contested” (Gieryn 2000: 465). Of the 46 people I interviewed, a sizeable minority of eleven people were explicit in the Arthurian myth not being a reason for their visit. Seven of these had visited because of the ‘real’ history attached to the site, and in that respect appropriated the ancient function, but not in an Arthurian form.

However, although it might be suggested that Arthur is not important for those who seek to deny the Arthurian connection to the site and look beyond that to a ‘true’ history, it is significant to note another aspect of travellers’ behaviour, that “travellers and tourists are alike in pursuing focussed experience when they go abroad. It follows that anything which conflicts with this focus is valued negatively” (Rojek 1993: 178). This ‘focussed experience’ is seen in those who visit the castle for the ‘history’ of the site. In this instance, the Arthur function gets in the way of their quest for self-realisation, so must be negated and reconfigured as ‘other’. By doing this, “Othering functions as a self-aggrandizing device” (Wilkinson and Kitzenger 1996: 8) that establishes a hierarchy of knowledge and power. Thus, Othering “reinforce[s] the power and purported superiority of those with control over the processes of representation” (Wilkinson and Kitzenger 1996: 5). Mike demonstrated how the historical elements were privileged on occasion at the expense of myth, saying that the myth was “sort of Corny.” Gwendolin meanwhile called it “all a bit... pie in the sky,” before using the myth to define her own opinions:

Gwendolin: Knights of the round table, and Guinevere, and, um, all that. It’s, it’s... I don’t think it’s historically particularly accurate.

BE: Do you think that matters?

Gwendolin: To me it does. I like hard facts.

Juan Pablo also defined history by its opposition to the myth:

BE: Is the history something that interests you?

Juan Pablo: Well, there’s a lot of myth... which we tend to ignore. But the actual history part of it, probably going back Saxon, that’s quite interesting.

Those who had visited for reasons other than the Arthurian myth often demonstrated their cultural capital by ridiculing the myth, and consequently elevating their own stated interest in either the scenery or the history. This was in contrast to others who saw their cultural capital in terms of their knowledge and experience of the myth. How visitors framed their cultural capital depended on the individual concerned. In the cases of Gwendolin and Juan Pablo, they were not apathetic in their response to the myth, and indeed, had a negative reaction. “Tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance... of the tastes of others” (Bourdieu 1984: 56). By making it appear that they had seen through the sham, it was therefore implied that they knew better than others. This had the effect in their eyes of privileging either the history or the scenery as the ‘authentic’ reason for visiting the castle. Undoubtedly this reflects Pertti Alasuutari’s work on moral hierarchies, where the ‘real’ is privileged above fantasy (cf. Alasuutari 1992: 570), confirming the view that “some genres are considered to be worth more than others” (Höijer 1999: 182). Fiction in the form of a fantastical Arthur is seen as distorting the ‘truth’ of the ‘real’ and thus is made subservient (Alasuutari 1999: 97) to the real, as it is considered to be a social duty to be well-informed; fiction meanwhile is seen as an indolent act of relatively little worth in comparison. Therefore, the ‘reality’ of the history gains primacy in these visitors’ eyes and fulfills their social duty to be well informed.

The history presented on site is as much a matter of interpretation as the myth itself. The current theory is that the site was probably the power base of a dark age Cornish King (cf Thomas, C. 1993: 88-90), and this has superseded the earlier belief that the site was an early monastic community. Nonetheless, the fact that this is merely interpretation rather than ‘real’ is shown by the fact that:

Mainly from Wales there are Lives of early British saints, fragmentary annals or chronicles purporting to cover the distant past, and even collections of genealogies or of regnal lists... But none of these sources mentions Tintagel, or any place identifiable as Tintagel, or anywhere within Cornwall representing a royal capital in the medieval sense (Thomas, C. 1993: 14).

Therefore, although evidence points to the site being occupied by men of power, to interpret it as the site of a dark age Cornish King is speculation. The only way visitors

can make this history 'true' is by accentuating the fictional aspects of the myth surrounding Arthur.

For these visitors, Arthur provides a useful way of authenticating the 'real' history lying beneath the site. The fiction of Arthur (the unreal) makes the 'truth' of his history or the history of the site the 'real'. Even when Arthur is denied and ridiculed, the representation of Arthur is needed by this group of visitors in order that the 'history' appears real. Arthur naturalises the 'real' presentation of history at the site by providing an opposition, therefore allowing these visitors' own construction of what is 'real' to hold sway. The presence of the history on-site is established by the resulting absence of a mythic interpretation of the site by these people (cf Said 1995: 208).

Arthur's 'absence' can also be attributed to another form of cultural 'other', the cultural distinction between the traveller and the tourist, as made by Rojek: "The traveller views travel experience as a resource in the quest for self-realisation" (1993: 177) whilst "high culture, the culture of the traveller, saw itself as the polar opposite of low culture, the culture attributed to the tourist" (1993: 174). Mike further negated Arthur by linking Arthur with the 'low culture' of tourism by saying "that's a sort of a tourist draw I think," when asked about Arthur. When I asked Fenella if the castle were representative of Britain's culture and tourist attractions as a whole, she distinguished visiting the castle as fitting a higher cultural function, saying, "Culture and tourist attractions? Culture attractions, yes. Tourist attractions... probably no. Because it's better!" The castle fell into the former category, but not the latter.

This distinction between 'traveller' and tourist' is important in noting why some people, who initially appeared not to be visiting the site because of the Arthurian connection had closer ties to the myth than it at first appeared. In conversation it became apparent that their initial denial of Arthur was a discourse possibly constructed in an attempt to cater for my status as academic and thus mask opinions that might be voiced to people with less perceived Arthurian cultural capital, as in the instance of Gerald. He said that the reason he would visit the site again would be because of the scenery. When I asked about the significance of the Arthurian tales to the site, he distanced himself from tourists by saying, "it gets the visitors, that would

get the visitors in, yeah.” However, when I asked him why he thought these tales would pull the visitors in, his response was illuminating:

Gerald: People like myths and legends, and magic, and, well *we* like a bit of mystery don't *we* (my emphasis).

In this conversation, suddenly he attached himself to those people who like mystery, constructing a discourse that placed him in a group setting, as part of a crowd. His opinion on the tales continued as he said, “I like listening to them, but they're not what I believe.” He was keen to emphasise his understanding that the tales were fictional, a myth. Nevertheless, he had also betrayed an undercurrent of affection for them. He then continued by suggesting that the site was typically British in character because of its connection to the Arthurian tales, and attached Arthur to his reason to come, saying it was “that much *and* the scenery” (my emphasis).

It transpired on interviewing people that many visitors viewed themselves as superior to the ‘other’ of the tourist. Their use of Arthur was more high cultural, more unique, more valid than those who visited the site because of the ‘tourist draw’ of Arthur. However, those visiting because of the connection to Arthur, and those visiting because of the ‘real’ history were distancing themselves from the cultural identity of the tourist. “The insistence with which respondents point out the limits and conditions of validity of their judgements, distinguishing... the possible uses or audiences, or more precisely, the possible use for the audience... shows that they reject the idea that [a subject]... can please ‘universally’” (Bourdieu 1984: 42). Therefore, to console themselves that their own interpretation was privileged, many visitors felt the need to point out there was an inferior definition of Arthur held by the ‘tourists’. This was not their own definition, which was considered to be more unique and authentic than that linked to brash commercial reasons.

So it is clear that in this group, there is another section who hid their identity by adopting a discursive frame more in keeping with their expectations of what I, as a ‘serious’ academic, expected from them. Indeed, although Arthur may have cultural value to certain people and groups, there is also a perceived ‘lunatic fringe’ attached to the subject, who step outside the rules of society. This is parodied in the novel *The*

Once and Future Con where the hero, Nick Madrid, spends his time being stalked by these ‘nutters’ who sporadically try to kill him because of his involvement in setting up an Arthurian theme park. As he says, “King Arthur brings out the fruitcakes” (Gutteridge 1999: 104). As such, people do not wish to be associated with these ‘fruitcakes’ and are reticent to openly acknowledge their reasons for coming. Speaking to Mo and Wendy brought this out. Mo had no interest in the Arthurian myth, whereas his wife said, “that’s what I come here for ‘cause... if he did then I would like to come here if he did... it would be better for it if he, you know, Arthur was here.” However, each time she mentioned what she thought, her husband would interrupt and run down her comments:

Wendy: Merlin’s Cave is a big factor for me as well.

Mo: She likes her fantasies (*laughs*)

...

Wendy: Camelot...

Mo: ...Wherever that is(!) In the sky somewhere! (*laughs*)

...

Wendy: I believe Merlin lived in those caves.

Mo: (*Patronisingly*) There you go.

...

Wendy: (*On Merlin*) The first ever one used to live in the country didn’t he?

Mo: The madman, yes!

It was very difficult to talk with Wendy about the appeal of Arthur to her. She was naturally disinclined to talk about Arthur, because she knew her opinions would be ridiculed, and this was merely confirmed by her husband’s actions whenever she *did* speak. The value of Arthur is measured by the interest of the information he conveys (Bourdieu 1984: 43). To Wendy, Arthur has value because the information has significance to her whereas to Mo, the moral hierarchy where fantasy is considered an inferior cultural form results in Camelot being mocked as ‘in the sky’. Without the

legitimation of either author, Arthur or ancient functions, the Arthurian myth becomes culturally devalued and not worthy of appropriation.

In this chapter, I have shown that Tintagel castle's presentation of the site as an authentic Arthurian site requires activation of signifiers of cultural value such as the author, Arthur or ancient function. The presentation of the site may very well "substitute signs of the real for the real itself" (Baudrillard 1983: 4) in its construction as Arthur's legendary birthplace, but this is a construction in which many of the visitors collude (cf chapter two, pp. 54-55). However, it is unwise to suggest that it is impossible to stage an illusion anymore as Baudrillard claims (1983: 38), as the illusion staged is experienced as such by many of those visiting, whichever illusion they themselves choose to believe. We have seen how myth functions to provide an outlet for our "nostalgia for origins, the search for a myth that accounts for our beginnings" (Carey 1988: 11), but by asserting these values of myth the commodification of the myth has been naturalised, and even at the sacred site of the castle we are paying to experience the myth. The functions of myth have served to maintain an artificial construction of social and cultural boundaries that threatens otherwise to collapse. Tintagel's remains have one big advantage, its "claims to authenticity through place or *siting*" (MacDonald 1997: 169) and this connection garnered through high cultural literary texts allows the correlation between site and castle to appear as 'authentic'.

I also showed, however, how this Arthurian 'authenticity' was not experienced by all visitors. As such, there were times when the Arthurian myth was not appropriated as a marker of distinction, indeed some visitors constructed their identity in *opposition* to Arthur. Consequently, although I have shown how the dominant high-cultural myth is appropriated as a signifier of value, I have shown how this is not a monolithic effect. Having demonstrated how authenticity is constructed and maintained at the 'heritage' site of Tintagel, I now wish to turn to alternative places, in order to see whether Arthur is appropriated in the same way. As such, I shall now look at an alternative site of Arthur, seemingly at polar opposites in the cultural scale to that of Tintagel in order to show how the Arthurian myth, even when seemingly valueless when in play at unashamedly 'popular' sites, is still sufficiently malleable that it can still act as a signifier of cultural value.

Chapter 5: Themed Sites of Arthur or *On Either Side the River Lie*⁷⁴: From high culture to the everyday

The previous chapter looked at how the Arthurian myth was used to authenticate a 'sacred' site of Arthur. Indeed, the über-myth, or representation of the Arthurian myth constructed for a given culture by many of the visitors, enabled Tintagel Castle's links with Arthur to be naturalised, and the historical construction of this link was dissipated. Nonetheless, by using the inauthentic village to validate the castle's relative authenticity, we have seen how for certain constructions of cultural identity there is a tension between the cultural capital inherent in the dominant Arthurian myth and popular culture (also see chapter three, pp. 68-72).

The Arthurian myth is present at geographic sites other than 'official' Arthurian sites such as that of Tintagel. Although in the previous chapter I have shown that Chris Rojek's split of modern life into Modernity 1 and 2 is a useful observation (see page 124), he also makes other perceptive comments which can be used with regards to the appropriation of the Arthurian myth. He claims:

Leisure and tourism are now equivalent to mere consumption activity. The modernist quest for authenticity and self-realization has come to an end. Instead we are in a stage of post-leisure and post-tourism in which we can relax enough not to bother about self-improvement or capturing the essence of every sight (Rojek 1993: 133-134).

As the previous chapter showed, this is patently not the case at Tintagel for many of the visitors. There is no reason to dismiss Rojek's notion out of hand however, and by analysing the Camelot Theme Park near Chorley in Lancashire (which I visited on 7th and 8th August 2003), I aim to show how Arthur may be appropriated by sites other than the high cultural 'heritage' site. In this chapter I shall look at how the theme park uses the Arthurian myth as an element of distinction, while also looking at how the high cultural dominant myth and popular cultural theme park work with and in tension with one another. Firstly, however, I wish to show how the park appropriates the Arthur function for its meaning.

5.1 Presentation of the Site

Camelot Theme Park (Camelot) opened in 1986⁷⁵ and attracts 400,000 visitors per season (twice the amount of paying visitors that Tintagel castle receives). Cultural theory dealing with theme parks often emphasises that they are the epitome of a postmodern leisure experience, and demonstrate the “decomposition of hierarchical distinctions between high and low culture, irresistible eclecticism and the mixing of codes” (Rojek 1995: 7). This approach to tourism is in contrast to that seen at Tintagel castle, where these elements of distinction are sought to be maintained. At Camelot, the ancient myth of Arthur is placed side-by-side with fairground rides. A quick tour of the park enables the visitor to see attractions ranging from the water chute of *Pendragon's Plunge* to a replica of a medieval village to the *Coca Cola Foodhalls*, housed in a plastic and steel pavilion.

This eclectic mix of styles is prevalent throughout the site. *King Arthur's Camelot* rifle range, the first stall you reach in the site, features crossbows (rather than rifles) and the participant shoots from the position of certain chivalric knights from the dominant myth, such as Galahad, Balin, Palomides, and Lancelot. Meanwhile, mainstream contemporary pop music such as Belinda Carlisle and Shania Twain blasts from the speakers, this ‘inauthentic’ music (as will be dealt with in chapter seven) merely serving to heighten the impression that Camelot Theme Park is not attempting to make the myth ‘real’ as at Tintagel. Even the phone boxes are a postmodern pastiche of the traditional red box topped with an olde thatched roof, whilst the postmodern element extends into *The Knights Valley* which consists of traditional fairground stalls where the Arthur function is used in a limited way. Although ‘King Arthur's Shot’ offers the chance to throw a basketball into a hoop and win a prize, the name of the stall is seen to be of little consequence to the prize on offer, that of a green furry toy hippopotamus. The marketing manager Sandra Dempsey conveyed the depthless nature of the centrepiece of the park, the jousting tournament by commenting that “it’s a show. It’s... entertainment value” (interview with author) while a comment from one of the knights taking part was that “proper chainmail’d be far heavier,” thus showing that spectacle is valued above ‘the real’ at this site.

Camelot is a “pleasure-producing place” (Desmond 1999: 169) and the emphasis is very much on fun and the visual. At Camelot visitors go to marvel at the park’s inauthenticity (Bryman 1995: 177), and find a site with the emphasis on fantastic spectacle and imitation, rather than education (cf Bryman, 1995: 178). Sandra Dempsey emphasised the importance of the separation from the ‘real’ at Camelot, as opposed to the contrasting values of making the myth real at Tintagel; “it’s obviously ‘magical’ I suppose I think, especially with the castle frontage... so the Knights of the Round Table, the Jousting tournament... there are parts of it where you want to do... you probably get a bit carried away with the theme but there are parts of it where you could actually be in any theme park in the country” (interview). Nonetheless, in stating that you could get “carried away with the theme,” Dempsey articulates how the high-cultural values constructed in the dominant Romance form of the myth are intrinsically opposed to the popular-cultural values embodied in the theme park.

The entrance to the park uses the Arthur function to close down meanings and lays out from the very start which version of the Arthurian myth is to be presented on site; a pastiche of the dominant romance form. A friendly red dragon greets you by telling you that Camelot is “where dwells the most gallant and kindly king ever to have lived!”⁷⁶ Colour is used to reinforce the fun element of the park and positions Camelot as a popular cultural attraction. Sandra Dempsey articulated how the park was originally “into knights in battle dress, and to me we seemed to go very parchment coloured and medieval in that way... and lost a lot of the colour, which then influences the families with smaller children. In the last few years we’ve started going the other way and introducing a lot more colour.” By no longer presenting the past as faded or a ‘parchment colour’, Dempsey serves to marginalise the ancient function in this instance in favour of the bright, colourful ‘here and now’, as seen at *The Cadbury’s Jousting Arena* which features a gaudy yellow and red striped wooden pavilion with ‘tents’ and a throne. The use of vivid colour marks Camelot out as a fun, popular-cultural oriented place, by positioning itself against the ‘artistic’ and ‘serious’ connotations that go with black and white (cf Frosh 2003: 156). The connotations of bright colour as associated with childish naivety also position the theme park as a more depthless site than Tintagel.

As black and white is a way of “conveying ‘pastness’” (Frosh 2003: 158), the

conscious use of bright colour sets Camelot up as very much situating itself within modern-day cultural values. Whilst Tintagel castle reaffirms the past through a high cultural form of distinction, and allows its visitors to feel part of Britain's utopian heritage, Camelot is symptomatic of a theme park identity that "ratifies the values of corporate culture and allows the 20th century pilgrim to reaffirm faith in capitalist scriptures of progress through technology, control through managerial hierarchy, and consumerism" (Adams quoted in Wasko 2001: 163).

That the essence of the park is linked to consumption becomes readily apparent at the jousting tournament where crowds gather from the other attractions, and watch from every available vantage point, not just in *The Cadbury's Jousting Arena* itself. The joust begins with an MC who works the audience, ensuring that they feel involved in the spectacle. "Hilarity, excitement, and thrills!" says the MC for the jousting. He then introduces "the one and only Mad Edgar!" 'Mad Edgar' works the crowd also, while other people blow bubbles. This is all to create an atmosphere where the inflatable mallets 'Mad Edgar' is selling "for only £1.50" become an essential part of the show, that the children buy purely for their sign-value, where "consumption is... a coded system of signs... The use of that system via consumption is an important way in which people communicate with one another" (Baudrillard 1997: 15). In this instance, buying the mallets enables the children to show themselves as part of a collective identity which asserts their commitment to, and approval of, the spectacle on offer (cf Gell 1986: 122-123)⁷⁷.

Commercialism rules, so the park's policy is to maximise the number of rides rather than focus on the Arthurian theming (interview with Sandra Dempsey). Whilst in Tintagel the visitors are keen to split the commercial from the authentic, it seems that in Camelot a different type of tourist visits. Here, they are 'post tourists':

The post-tourist... is attracted by experience as an end in itself and not by what the experience teaches about one's inner resources, or whether the attraction is authentic... [there] is the recognition that the tourist experience may not, and often does not, add up to very much... the accessories of the sight- the gift shops, the eating places, the tourist coaches and other tourists- are celebrated for being as much a part of the tourist experience as the sight itself (Rojek 1993: 177).

In this instance, the Arthur function is not considered to be as significant in the site as opposed to the whole touristic experience available at the park. The impression that the Arthur function is weak at Camelot is enhanced by the souvenir shop which has little on an Arthurian theme; souvenirs include a Samurai sword and the Incredible Hulk alongside 'personalized souvenirs' of keyrings with the theme park logo and 'Excalibur swords'. It seems a theme park such as Camelot has "no educational veneer. It merely... [tells] a story, offering the selective consumption of space and time as entertainment" (Zukin 1991: 223). It does not mean that this is all that is desired however, as became clear when I was invited to sit in on a focus group run by the park on 8th August. This involved children who had applied to be 'Mini-Merlins' and had suggestions for how the park should be run. In including this focus group's views, I am aware that the demand for competence that may come with an application to join the focus group may restrict the members to those children with prior Arthurian cultural capital (cf Wahl-Jorgensen 2002: 77). Nevertheless, the focus group enabled me to gather instances of one particular visiting group's critical discourses about the theme park (cf Buckingham 2001: 273). Of the 'Mini-Merlins', two children wanted educational elements. One suggested an educational tour about how they make armour, and about the knights of the round table while another suggested 'Tintagel Towers', featuring Arthur, Merlin, and the knights in a Banquet hall. It was suggested there could be a walk round museum of the knights of the realm. For these children, there was more of a desire for the theme park experience to be culturally educational, thus suggesting they had a "learned and scholarly disposition" (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991: 62) and a cultivated taste quite different to the taste culture that Zukin argues theme parks cater for.

Nonetheless, the focus group threw up the revelation that prior expectations surrounding the theme park were that it would be a commodified site, with a consequent marginalisation of the high cultural dominant myth. The parents in the focus group mentioned jokingly that the best thing about their day at the park was that they were offered the chance to enter the site for free in return for their participation in the focus group. However, there was a serious issue beneath this. People visit the park expecting to pay, they expect the site to be a commodified epitome of capitalist ideology. The park is an instance where there is "a careful interaction of fun and entertainment with commodification and consumption" (Wasko 2001: 158). The

pavilioned 'food court' is sponsored by Coca Cola whilst the pavilions themselves are supported by large Coca Cola bottles instead of sticks/struts. The Birthday area in the corner of the food hall itself has a frieze on the wall of Arthur and his knights feasting merrily. The frieze shows a knight carrying in a rack of ribs, cooked 'traditionally', whilst the food on the table is burgers, chips, jelly and ice cream, the knights are clad in blue and have the *Cadbury's* logo on their tunics. Sponsorship abounds, with examples like the *Cadbury Jousting Arena* and *Bertie Bassett's Driving School* (see Figure 5.1).

In the opening section of this chapter, I have shown how on initial impressions the Arthur function appears to be weak at Camelot, and although the theme park appropriates the dominant Romance form of the myth, it simply reproduces Arthur as a postmodern pastiche (cf Harvey 1989: 82). However, this is not the only way that the Arthur function is in operation at the park. Sandra Dempsey talked of how the connection with Arthur was nonetheless used to provoke certain effects and meanings:

Every theme park and attraction in the country will have a centrepiece entertainment, and this fits with the... you go anywhere else, and they've got a licence to do whatever they want- well, we don't *have* to do jousting but, well, this is unique. This is the only permanent jousting arena of this size in the country so we would be *stupid* not to do it, and it's something that they're not going to see anywhere else.

In the case of the jousting arena, the Arthur function is used as a marker of distinction in order to render Camelot 'unique' among theme parks (cf Bryman 2004: 16). In this instance, in what David Harvey calls, "an ever-deepening commodity culture" (1996: 298), the Arthurian myth is used "as a means of attracting customers where the actual products being offered do not differ greatly from one seller to the next" (Gottdiener 2001: 130). This distinction was something picked up on by the 'Mini-Merlins'. The children mostly cited the jousting as the stand-out attraction and tended to enjoy theme parks as a whole, but thought the theming was important as otherwise Camelot would lose its distinction from other parks. As the park is unable to make the pursuit of profit "the prime focus of their appeal to potential consumers, who do not directly benefit from corporate profit making... [the park] must disguise the instrumental

Figure 5.1: A seemingly weak Arthur function at the park, as sponsorship dominates



exchange relation of money for a commodity as another relation between commercial place and the consumer” (Gottdiener 2001: 72). The dominant Arthurian myth, with its high-cultural background and consequent “refusal... of everything which offers pleasures that are too immediately accessible” (Bourdieu 1984: 486), allows the theme park to naturalise its commercial nature. In this instance, the Arthur function allows the park to “*connote*... something other than its principal function” (Gottdiener 2001: 72), which is to make money.

Although George Ritzer argues that “in a rationalized society, people much prefer to know what to expect in most settings and at most times. They neither desire nor expect surprises... Predictability makes for much peace of mind in day-to-day dealings” (2000: 83), this is perhaps a simplistic way to view the operations of the theme park⁷⁸. ‘Magic and mystery’ is something that is certainly prevalent throughout the park. Alan Bryman uses the term ‘Disneyization’ (2004) to describe how theme parks operate, where “Disneyization is a mode of delivery, in the sense of the *staging* of goods and services for consumption” (Bryman 2006: 320). Although Disneyization is driven by an attempt to increase consumption, it “seeks to create variety and difference, where McDonaldization wreaks likeness and similarity” (Bryman 2004: 4).

What Camelot does show is that Disneyization and McDonaldization can co-exist (Bryman 2004: 28, 157). Originally Camelot used to theme the food via Arthurian associations, but I am told by Sandra Dempsey that in their focus groups, it came across that people wanted known brands, because it was perceived as safer (cf Ritzer 2006: 16). Previously, the park “also sold Coke beverages ‘but didn’t make use of the Coke brand.’... Research indicated people wanted food ‘they felt safe with’” (Anon 1999: n.p.). In this instance, the power of the Coke brand overshadows any intrinsic positive significations within the Arthurian names. Because of the populist nature of the entertainment on offer, the high cultural value of the myth is marginalised. A brand “talks about the peace of mind, the status, the sense of belonging” (Knowles 2001: 42), and this enables the purchaser to feel part of a group, part of a collective gaze. With the lack of an Arthur function in this particular instance, it seems that Ritzer is correct when he argues that “instead of a world dominated by enchantment,

magic, and mystery, we have one in which everything seems clear, cut-and-dried, logical, and routine” (Ritzer 2000: 132).

However on closer inspection, Camelot can be seen as an example of “a frequent mixing and confusing of categories [that] effects a carnival-like dissolution of opposites... there are numerous allusions to the world of the fantastic” (Bennett 1995: 242). It becomes apparent that the Arthurian myth has served to naturalise what is in fact “anti-carnavalesque, feasts of atomization, celebrations of the existing order of things in the guise of escape from it, Fordist fun” (Sorkin 1992: 208). In spite of the park’s superficial appearance as a place for fun and entertainment, it is still a value-laden environment. Meg Hart is wrong to suggest that “location identities become more and more difficult to establish as the world becomes Disneyfied or McDonaldised” (Hart 2000: 101), and despite the fact that Sandra Dempsey professed the theming was irrelevant, “the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right with the function of inventing imaginary or informal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions” (Jameson 1981: 79). The park’s publicity centred on the Arthurian theme⁷⁹, and this subject matter offers a ready made access to standard theme park elements such as “the reference to other universes, to imaginary pasts... to popular narrative universes... and to the exotic” (Bennett 1995: 243). The Arthurian themes of fantasy, magic, escape, and great feasts can be applied, and the ‘otherworld’ in which Arthur features is important in constructing a Disneyesque environment, where “part of the allure of the Disney worlds is the carefully constructed environments that separate visitors from the ‘real world’” (Wasko 2001: 169).

This spectacular construction of environments at the park becomes clear upon analysis of the signage at the *Cadbury’s Jousting Arena*, which says: “*Warning, DO NOT cross the yellow line. DO NOT touch the horses. These animals are specially trained for the jousting arena and are likely to bite when touched by visitors.*” By informing visitors that the horses are ‘specially trained’, the park constructs them as glamorous and highly skilled. Moreover, by warning that the animals may bite, an element of danger is also hinted at and “one can supposedly see some things that exist outside normal human seeing, things that would otherwise be inaccessible. This scientized and touristic claim is joined to the zoo and circus tradition of

spectacularizing animals” (Davis, S. 1997: 97). The description of the horses creates a more spectacular and frightening environment than it is in actuality, as the horses seem quite happy to be touched after the joust, and creates the impression of an artificial danger that can only be mastered by experts. The joust area is a space where “Architecture is used to create a powerful awareness for the audience that unsupervised contact with the... [animals] is off-limits. The charismatic animals need protection from unauthorized touch, and customers must keep their distance from the dangerous animals” (Davis, S. 1997: 104). This construction means that people applaud, not just at the triumph of the victor in the joust, but at the skills involved in performing the joust. One spectator clearly admires the work put into the display as she marvels, “think how much effort they’ve put into training for this” (fieldnotes). There is awe at the spectacle in itself and “the public is meant to admire the perfection of the fake” (Eco 1995: 44) as the audience are in awe of the riders’ prowess, asking one another, “how often do you see this kind of thing, jousting and stuff. You don’t, do you!” (fieldnotes)

The jousters are of course actors playing a part, and follow Chris Rojek’s definition of ‘Celeactors’, which “are imaginary constructions. Nevertheless... they operate as models for emulation, embody desire and galvanize issues in popular culture, dramatize prejudice, affect public opinion and contribute to identity formation” (Rojek 2001: 26). The joust rests on a tension between the ‘humanising’ of the jousters into a recognisable, ‘familiar’ form such as wrestlers, and maintenance of the tournament as an ‘authentic’ joust (cf Desmond 1999: 200).

In order to maintain the atmosphere of fun and frivolity, it is important to look at what is *not* presented in this version of the Arthurian myth and the joust does not present the dark side of Arthur. There is no attempt by Arthur to murder Mordred on the occasion of his birth and at the conclusion of his reign, Arthur will abdicate the throne rather than die at the hands of his Bastard son. The fact he abdicates brings to the fore quite literally the *Once and Future King* motif as because Arthur is not dead, he retains the possibility of being our future king. This adaptation of the myth is an upbeat, positive and optimistic version in keeping with the theme of the park. By encouraging an atmosphere akin to that of a wrestling match, it cartoonifies the joust and negates the threat of violence. This positive view of the past is also seen as

Gawain loses his fight with Lancelot, it is made clear that the defeat is deserved as he is portrayed as the bad guy, there is “the gradual construction of a highly moral image: that of the perfect ‘bastard’” (Barthes 2000: 23) as the knights’ defined roles are exaggerated. Lancelot deliberately and heroically dispenses with his shield and still has the advantage, until Gawain does a devious trip when Arthur’s back is turned. “a move that obviously only has any value or function because in fact half the audience can see it and get indignant about it” (Barthes 2000: 22-23).

Yet the signage in relation to the horses hints at an element of control present at the park. The positive significations of fantasy and magic are “an assimilated otherness that is on offer, an already recuperated and tamed fantastic” (Bennett 1995: 243). In contrast to Tintagel, the signing throughout the park was more explicit in making Camelot a ‘protected’ environment by use of commands to make the visitors act according to the park’s wishes (see Van Dijk 1997: 17-19). This approach was quite unlike the freedom seemingly given at Tintagel for the visitor to walk where they wished. Signs are posted throughout the park, defining very precisely what Queue jumping is (see Figure 5.2). Security is tight (an example of which I shall analyse later), and the happy carefree park is heavily regulated around a dominant ideology of what *is* happy and carefree. The layout controls visitors’ activities whilst the shows are carefully timetabled, and consist of carefully planned choreography (cf Bryman 2004: 131-156). Whereas Tintagel was keen to maintain the impression of choice over where to visit and what to view, here there is a certain element of passivity in the attractions such as the jousting tournament, as ‘Mad Edgar’ tells the audience when to boo and cheer, and what reaction to give to each character. The jousting tournament involves the crowd, but only to reinforce the version of the myth presented at the site.

No doubt is left in the audience’s minds as to which jousters’ example to follow, as, “the public is overwhelmed with the obviousness of the roles... each physical type expresses to excess the part which has been assigned to the contestant” (Barthes 2000: 17). I am told by Sandra Dempsey:

Perceval and Lancelot are always the good- the better looking, shall we say, of the knights... people do get carried away with the storyline and they get well into the meaning behind it. And we have loads of people who’ll say ‘oh I’ve been to the park every year for the last 4 or 5 years, and the jousting

Figure 5.2: Queue jumping defined precisely by the park, showing the level of control at Camelot.



tournament hasn't changed.' Well no, it *can't* change. What's there to change to it? Other than saying 'well, the black knight's winning this season.'

In this way, the wrestling contest attempts to impose its own counter-myth in opposition to the dominant form. In this interpretation, the Arthurian Myth is a pure and obvious "mythological fight between good and evil" (Barthes 2000: 23), further emphasised by the final *coupes de grace*, when Gawain holds Lancelot for Mordred to deliver the final, victorious blow having dispensed with Perceval. Despite these difficulties, Lancelot heroically gets out of this bind and wins. "What wrestling is above all meant to portray is a purely moral concept: that of justice... The baser the action of the 'bastard', the more delighted the public is by the retribution he justly

receives in return” (Barthes 2000: 21). It is clear that “the audience comes to the arena... to see justice done” (Stone 1971: 322), and Lancelot is emphasised as a real hero as he defeats unfair odds to win. He now seems superhuman owing to the staging of the joust that allows him to triumph over seemingly insurmountable obstacles (cf Rojek 2001: 13).

Lancelot is now made into a star figure owing to the manipulation of the crowd by Mad Edgar and the choreographed moves in the wrestling tournament (cf Rojek 2001: 10). Before this construct, Lancelot is merely equal to the other knights. This is demonstrated on the second day when we see there is no *one* Lancelot. The next day’s joust features exactly the same choreographing, yet the knight who played Lancelot is now playing Perceval, and a new man is playing Lancelot. The character of Lancelot himself, with all his positive significations, is what is important⁸⁰. It is fair to say that “we regard as somehow special those who, but for appearing within the media, would be interchangeable with ourselves... [we] regard ourselves as ‘merely’ ordinary” (Couldry 2000b: 56). Lancelot and Perceval stay out to meet the crowd, along with King Arthur. Mordred and Gawain wait a little before returning so that the attention focuses on the winners, and when they return not many in the crowd notice they are there, so focussed are they on the heroes. The fact that the Arthur function holds weight in this instance is seen as the jousters sign autographs in character, as ‘Lancelot’ or ‘Perceval’. They are kept behind the barrier of *The Cadbury’s Jousting Arena* and the stand because “too much contact... would destroy the ‘mystique’... [and destroy the]... visual and dramatic illusion” (Couldry 2000b: 101) of the joust.

The practices surrounding the Camelot theme park sees it distancing itself from its Arthurian connection as it does not fit well with the popular, commodified aims of the park. This is in contrast to Tintagel castle, which seeks to harness the cultural capital in the dominant myth in order to present itself as ‘authentic’. Camelot follows certain places in Tintagel village in that the Arthurian names have little relevance⁸¹. Here the difference is that the meaningless use of the names is of little significance to the visitors and is not viewed negatively by them. People go to Tintagel for the cultural authority the myth brings to the place, to ‘make it real’. Here, they come for a good time. The positive signification of Arthur, of an ideal king who rules a happy land, a country where you can be yourself and be happy, comes across. As such, without the

legitimation of the myth, the only way Camelot can function is not to make any claims to authenticity, but to embrace its inauthenticity instead. The importance of the lack of reality is seen when walking through 'The Village of Bluebell Bottom' that features mock medieval wattle and daub thatched buildings in a more realistic style than that of the obviously faerie castle. It is away from the noise of the fairground, detached and countrified, and borders the fields next to it, but pop music is still pumped over the speakers. "I never knew they had music in the villages!" says one boy as he passes. In an echo of the effect at Tintagel Castle (see chapter four, page 120), this particular area of the park is expected to be authentic as it consists of simulated buildings rather than a mere pastiche. Because this *looks* more authentic, it is expected to *be* more authentic, so pop music appears to be an anachronism in this instance, though visitors do not remark on its presence elsewhere on the site.

What Arthur and the myth brings as a whole to the park are the elements or connotations of mystery and magic. The park's main slogan is "The Magical Kingdom of Camelot," and the emphasis is thoroughly on the fantasy element, rather than a historical Arthur. In this way, the dissolving of myth into something authorless, something that cannot be fixed is especially important as it provides an indeterminate past which Camelot can be compared to, and thus becomes relevant to the present. The difficulty in explaining what myth actually *is* helps to achieve this mystery. At the Mini-Merlin focus group, when the knight is asked to lead them all to the main entrance he yields to Merlin, emphasising the magical, fantastical element. This magical element is seen by the children's prior perception of the myth at the focus group. Merlin was the favourite character of most of the children. One young boy was keen on the magic of Camelot whilst another one liked theme parks generally and was interested in Wizards and magic. Meanwhile, 'Merlin's Private Magic Show' was what one girl was looking forward to most, whilst another girl was eagerly anticipating going to Camelot and had a prior image of the magical castle.

5.2 Inauthenticity and Cultural Capital

As such, Camelot's appropriation of the Arthurian myth is seen to be not as weak as it first appears. The Arthur function still enables the park to attain cultural value within the sphere of the popular, and allows it to maintain its distinction from other tourist

sites. By so doing, Camelot protects itself from a descent into homogeneity. Having analysed in the preceding pages how Camelot appropriates the Arthurian myth I now wish to look at how this appropriation is received with regards to the dominant über-myth, and in so doing I shall return to the concept of an academic subculture that I discussed in Chapter two. For an academic community, which maintains its distinction by using the Arthurian myth to establish boundaries and maintain a distinction between academically valid subjects and popular values (see pp. 55-58) the juxtaposition of high cultural myth with popular cultural theme park may lead academics to look with distaste on the theme park, and show “a disgust for objects which impose enjoyment” (Bourdieu 1984: 488). Certain academics have made an attempt to legitimate theme parks, and Mike Featherstone claims that “particular forms of cultural capital, such as popular and mass culture (jazz, rock music, cinema, *theme parks*) may themselves become regarded as more legitimate and the source of prestige and further up the symbolic hierarchy” (1991: 106, my emphasis). This supposed legitimation of Theme Parks is continued by Susan Davis who claims that “themed resorts are prime, even prestigious destinations” (1997: 6). However, the majority of academics clearly do not agree with this perspective. David Buckingham remarks on academic antipathy to Disney (2001: 269), and how a historical site or museum may be condemned by academics “by comparing it to a Disney theme park” (2001: 270), thus showing how theme parks are put in opposition to ‘authentic’ cultural tourist sites such as Tintagel. The consequence of this is that Camelot would be unlikely to gain cultural acceptance within an academic subculture. Although theme parks embody:

The largely working class enjoyment of conviviality, sociability and being part of a crowd... [they find that] professional opinion-formers (brochure writers, teachers, Countryside Commission staff etc.) are largely middle class and it is within the middle class that the romantic desire for positional goods is largely based (Walterm quoted in Urry 1990: 139).

The cultural capital inherent in the myth can lead those who write about Camelot to look with horror upon its commercialism and mixing of codes, so voraciously consumed by the visitors. There is a clear “relationship between the tourist site and the form of knowledge appropriate to it” (Frow 1997: 65). These writers often frown on the way that a supposedly high cultural agent such as Arthur is debased in such a

site (cf Guyot 2001: 127) and cultural geographer Peter Fowler's outraged remarks on Camelot highlight this issue. Stating his position early, he laments the fact that "in these days of curtailed research grants and entrepreneurial acceptability, even the past as a research field seems able only to survive by trading in some of its purity" (Fowler, P.J. 1992: 130). Considering an academic culture as one that is untainted by commercialism, the defence of his own cultural capital results in outrage at the debasement of the past he sees in Camelot, which is described as "an obvious and pretty tatty-looking eruption into the landscape visible from the M6 motorway, is not really much more than an old-style fun fair dressed up in Arthurian clichés packaged with dreadful inevitability for 'the family day out'" (Fowler, P.J. 1992: 133).

Taste formers in the media, in this case journalists (cf chapter three, page 100), also react against the mixing of cultural elements. *The Times* reports how Camelot is offering courses including "human resources, health and safety, leisure and tourism and management buy-outs. *All of which would no doubt have left King Arthur reeling*" (Hall 1999: 21, my emphasis). Meanwhile, the *Leicester Mercury* questions the legitimacy of the park; "we're not sure what King Arthur would have made of it all" (Anon 1999: n.p.). This means that in order to naturalise their own cultural position, an academic subculture and taste-culture must set up an opposition to Camelot by emphasising the high value of the über-myth (cf chapter three, pp. 68-69): "these mythic roots only have to be allowed to take their course in order to generate at will... apocalyptic denunciations of all forms of 'levelling', 'trivialization' or 'manipulation'" (Bourdieu 1984: 468-469). As Camelot trivialises the myth in the eyes of Peter Fowler, the theme park must be denounced as only then may "the... opposition between high... and low... spiritual and material" (Bourdieu 1984: 468) come into play.

The strength of the dominant myth of Arthur is seen when looking at how an academic study of Camelot is received by those outside of an academic subculture. At Tintagel visitors immediately accepted without question I was there for academic study. People would joke with me when I was walking round taking notes about whether I had learned much yet. Some people would take an interest, stop me, and ask questions such as what my PhD consisted of and how long I had to go. I had none of this at Camelot.

One particular incident served to show the clash of cultural positions between researcher and theme park. Whilst observing the park in operation, I am approached by a member of the park's security and asked what I am making notes about. I explain I am studying a PhD, looking at Arthur in contemporary culture, and I am seeing how the theme park works. She passes this information on to her male colleague who looks doubtful. I ask if I can help at all and am told they have some concerns about childrens' safety, and would it be possible to have a look at what I'm writing? I pass my notes to her, she briefly glances through and shows it to her colleague saying, "yeah, it's basically just a script of the show."

The marketing manager apologises for this when I see her later in the day, and says how "that's the kind of world we live in, I'm afraid." This serves to demonstrate how "complex preferences have come to develop for the range of appropriate others that different social groups expect to look at and photograph in different places; and in turn different expectations are held by different social groups about who are appropriate others to gaze at oneself" (Urry 1990: 137-138). In this instance, there is an assumption that my photography is not to witness and record the 'authentic' experience, as it might be considered at a high cultural tourist site such as Tintagel (cf Rojek 1993: 177), nor is it considered that my photography is to ratify my attendance at the site for future reference (cf Barthes 1981: 85 and Desmond 1999: 231). Rather, the assumption is made that my taking of photographs is for some implied paedophilic or deviant reason (cf de Young 2004: 65). The park is oriented around families. I, as a single male threaten the collective gaze and stand out among the park's dominant culture⁸². I therefore represent a threat to the "haven of safety in a world which is riddled with fear and the threat (whether real or imagined) of danger" (Bryman 1995: 91). The park is set up so that although the emphasis is on fun and enjoyment, the fun and enjoyment must be that which is acceptable to a certain hegemonic position. There is an expectation that a theme park consists of safe, clean, family entertainment, a "constructed separateness from the outside world" (Bennett 1995: 245).

However, another consequence of my encounter with security was to demonstrate the tensions involved in the 'popular' cultural value of the theme park as opposed to the 'high' dominant myth, and I as academic was not expected to be carrying out research

at such a site. From an academic perspective, “the shift towards postmodern culture... [is seen] as particularly threatening to the intellectuals... [as academics] have an interest in reclaiming the investments they have made in reclaiming their cultural capital” (Featherstone 1991: 56). This is achieved “by regulating what counts as the ‘good’ subject, i.e. the authorised and competent self... [in this way the academic can] restrict and pathologise specific cultural groups, while promoting the achieved ‘normality’ and ‘legitimate’ authority” (Hills 2002: 5) of themselves.

The mixing and merging of many times results in a difficulty of definition, as people are unable to decide whether to focus on the “Camelot Theme Park [that] gives you and your son the chance to experience an age long since gone” (Anon 2002: 2). To get over the barrier to cultural acceptance owing to the high status of the dominant myth, the only way Camelot will receive praise from certain areas is if it is made to work with, not against the high cultural elements inherent in certain interpretations of the myth. *The Times* reports how, “Camelot, the many-towered Lancashire theme park, should be better known than it is. It handles a theme the Arthurian legend *with good taste*, avoiding the all too familiar funfair descent into tackiness” (Cox 1990: n.p., my emphasis). ‘Good Taste’ may only be associated with the theme park when it is viewed as a natural extension of Tennyson’s “many-tower’d Camelot” (1991: 26).

There is clearly an attempt to set up an opposition between the high cultural, non-commercial element of myth and the popular cultural, commodified element of the theme park. However, it became clear on my visit that this über-mythic distinction between the high cultural theme and pop cultural product was not one made by many visitors, as their taste was more inclined towards an “immediately accessible” (Bourdieu 1984: 32) popular taste. Although to one of the focus group’s parents, the park’s theme was relevant as it was “what it was all about” and was like “going back in time,” this was constantly in tension with the “brash themes of modernity” (Bennett 1995: 243) crucial to a theme park, as many children flocked to the biggest, most spectacular rides, taking little notice of the theme. The site is not visited by people wishing to make the types of distinction voiced by the taste-formers, so no cultural struggle over myth and meaning takes place in the park itself.

Although the park’s determination to control its presentation extended to denying me

the opportunity to approach visitors on site to ask them questions, they distributed 5,000 leaflets on my behalf asking people to contact me if they wished to help me on my PhD. The very fact that, on my appeal for help for people to answer questions, only one person responded⁸³ suggests that the significations of Arthur are meaningless to visitors. It is clear that it is unwise to assume an Arthurian meaning implicit in people's use of the site, "from time to time it is virtually meaningless or at least a secondary activity... general, everyday media use is identified [by scholars] with attentive and meaningful reading of specific texts, and that is precisely what it is not" (Hermes 1995: 15). Some members of the 'Mini-Merlin' focus group were only looking forward to the rides, with distinctly non-Arthurian justifications as to why. One child was especially looking forward to *Excalibur 2*, as you "go up high and upside down," whilst another child said, "I'm going on *Excalibur 2* because it's the biggest innit?" (fieldnotes) In this respect, Valerie L. Smith makes the astute observation on her visit to a theme park that although "youths were excited and stimulated by the rides and thrills, whereas the family most valued the day of togetherness... few attendees came away 'really feeling a part of the place' inasmuch as 'place' was a virtual reality" (2001: 61).

The significations of Arthur are almost too familiar to be noticed at the theme park, and "although readers may recognize the codes of a given text and accord it limited associative meaning, they do not always accord it generalized significance, that is, a distant and nameable place in their world views and fantasies" (Hermes 1995: 16). It is clear that those reviewers and academics who accord meaning to the Arthurian theme may have imposed their own assumptions about the perceived value of myth onto the visitors, so generating Hermes's 'fallacy of meaningfulness' (1995: 12-17) in this context.

The marketing manager, Sandra Dempsey, said that every ride in the park was given an Arthurian name, even if it was not related to the ride. She then followed that up by assuming a lack of cultural capital in her visitors, and negating the capital within Arthur by suggesting, "does anybody know what they mean anyway?" If Tintagel castle has a perceived authenticity, then Camelot revels in its inauthenticity. Camelot is clearly hyperrealistic as it makes it clear that its fantasy is a reproduction (cf Eco 1995: 43). However, Camelot is no less real than Tintagel, it merely lacks the

authenticity provided by the ancient function. Camelot is also not tied to any expectations of authenticity by its visitors, as is the case with Tintagel:

BE: Would you say if you were in a place with more Arthurian connections, like Tintagel or Wales, that the theming would be more important?

SD: Yeah, possibly. 'Cause they've got that claim to the name haven't they, and this doesn't. this is almost his holiday home really. This is King Arthur's holiday seat.

Camelot is an example of how “today’s signs possess superficial rather than deeply felt meanings. They are *fundamentally* disconnected from the use-value of the commodities with which they are associated” (Gottdiener 2001: 76). However, the fact that this inauthenticity is so open and is not concealed means that visitors do not visit Camelot expecting the high cultural values of the Arthurian myth to be in place. Although the feeling of escape is a key reason for visiting the theme park, here escape is not used as a vehicle for signifying distinction, but instead “one is encouraged to forget about every day cares and worries” (Wasko 2001: 172) as the Camelot Theme Park represents something “unreal, escapist or overly romantic” (*ibid*). In contrast to Tintagel, Camelot stands for itself as opposed to using the ‘reality’ of the myth as justification for its existence. Hence Sandra Dempsey denies the significance of Arthur to the park, as it does not wish to be tied to any authentic ‘reality’ or for its own values to be in tension with the high cultural elements inherent in the chivalric Arthur.

In this section, I have shown how although certain significations are activated to naturalise elements of commercialism, ultimately the park finds itself hamstrung by this value, and must work to marginalise Arthur in order to be successful. Nonetheless, despite these attempts at marginalisation, it is clear that in distorting the commercial process at work in the park, the Arthurian myth actually has as vital a role to play in how Camelot functions as it does at Tintagel.

5.3 An Arthurian Building Site: Cultural value and everyday life

Before concluding this section on Arthurian place, I would like to deal briefly with sites that are not necessarily consciously and actively visited by tourists for ‘escape’

or enjoyment. Indeed, these are geographical sites in which people live and go about their everyday lives. There are times when the Arthurian myth “lurk[s] within the interstices of everyday life and threaten[s] to irrupt into it” (Featherstone 1992: 162), and it is present in many housing estates round the country where the streets take the names of Arthurian characters. I visited three of these places: estates in Stretton, on the edge of Burton-On-Trent; Duston, a suburb of Northampton; and Leicester Forest East, Leicester. These places shared many features with one another, which enable us to see the way in which the Arthurian stories and characters are used, appropriated and perceived in culture, and enable us to analyse Arthurian place in terms of “a theory of everyday practices of lived space” (de Certeau 1984: 96).

Within the housing estates there are many common features and common uses of the Arthurian names to construct a sense of place. Much as with Camelot, although the use of Arthurian signifiers initially appears to be meaningless, I shall demonstrate how these spatially distinct areas of Britain become interchangeable places by appropriating and constructing the Arthurian myth in a similar fashion at each site. This section will analyse how the space of the Arthurian housing estate appears as a practiced place (cf de Certeau 1984: 130). However, although initially appearing to be similar homogenous sites, I shall demonstrate how each estate’s use of the Arthurian myth generates meaning and distinction in contrast to their surroundings.

Initially, it is important to look at how the cultural value deriving from the Arthurian myth is appropriated at the sites. I shall now show that although previous sites I have examined (for example Tintagel village and Camelot) were relatively ‘new’ when compared with the aged structure of Tintagel castle, and consequently found themselves unwilling or unable to use the ancient function⁸⁴, in the case of these housing estates the authority, and consequent distinction, of the landscape is generated by use of this function. The very anonymity of the author in this instance is a cultural boon rather than a hindrance. Much as with Tintagel Castle (chapter four, page 118), at these sites time has resulted in any reference to the authorship of the dominant Arthurian myth being decentred. Thus the anonymity both of the landscape *and* of the sources for the Arthurian names is important. The loss of the author function gives space for the ancient function to breathe.

The names create the illusion of permanence owing to their longstanding status within culture, and thus they help to naturalise the differences between the inhabitants of the 'Arthurian' estate and their neighbours. This difference is constructed and maintained in the space by the act of naming, by the greater investment in the Arthurian estates as opposed to the estates surrounding them, and by the artificial barriers erected around the estates. Thus, the perception of class barriers as being permanent is important in maintaining the value of the properties. Harvey describes how "those who have invested in the physical qualities of place have to ensure that activities arise which render their investments profitable by enduring the permanence of place" (1996: 296).

In this way, the ancient function is utilised to differentiate the housing estate from the homogenised terraces facing on to the 'Arthurian' estates and the higher cultural value of the Arthurian estate is signified by the use of high cultural, 'traditional' references in terms of the buildings' construction. This is important when we consider how people's attachment with a place increases the longer they and their ancestors have inhabited it (Relph 1976: 31). This sense of attachment is seen in a quote from a resident of another Stretton, this time Stretton on Dunsmore, a traditional Warwickshire village which was under threat of being demolished for an airport. Dave Bonner voices the feelings of the majority of the residents who were determined to save their village. He voices how place "is not just bricks and mortar," and the campaign is not merely about "the physical impact this airport will have. We are talking about people who have lived in these villages all their lives, who can trace their ancestors back centuries. The emotional impact is equally massive and should not be underestimated" (Groves 2002:11). This sense of attachment is only forged through the passing of centuries (cf Lim 2000: 270), and the visual manifestation of this effect is seen in the stereotypical English country village setting of Stretton on Dunsmore with its buildings consisting of a variety of traditional black and white country cottages mixed with later Victorian cottages.

The sense of tradition as felt in Stretton on Dunsmore is not possible in a newly built housing estate, and this can create problems where the aim is to attract new residents to fill the new houses. These residents will have no attachment to a place that did not exist previously. After all, "such involvement with place is founded on the easy grasping in time spans of centuries" (Relph 1976: 32). Thus it can be seen that the

ancient function of the Arthurian myth will aid people's attachment and attraction to the place. As the houses themselves have no history or background, and so consequently the community of people inhabiting the estates can trace no historical lineage to the place itself, the naming of the estates acts as a substitute. If memories are what tie people to place (de Certeau 1984: 108), then the ancient function can work as a substitute, allowing for the association of the residents' new 'home' with permanence (cf Tandogan and Incirlioglu 2004: 107) even if the estate itself is new. This 'permanence' is emphasised by using the most 'permanent' characters in the dominant myth for street names, such as Lancelot, Guinevere, and Gawaine, as opposed to more obscure characters such as Palomides.

In this instance, I have shown how the ancient function is appropriated within the Arthurian housing estates, and how "in the spaces brutally lit by an alien reason, proper names carve out pockets of hidden and familiar meanings" (de Certeau 1984: 104). In order for the developers' financial investment in the site to be profitable, "the selling of place, using all the artifices of advertising and image construction that can be mustered, has become of considerable importance" (Harvey 1996: 297/298). Thus the naming of the estates constructs a regal, royal, palatial image that is further emphasised in the advertising. Jackson Grundy advertised a house for sale in Excalibur Close, Duston, saying it was, "located on a *select* development" (26/12/02, my emphasis), whilst a house for sale at the same time on Guinevere Way, Leicester Forest East was described as being in a "*premier* location"⁸⁵. The need for distinction in order to sell the houses is made clear and the hyperbolic construction of the places as 'premier' or 'select' is made in order to facilitate the formation of a social attitude that views these particular estates as having greater cultural value than their respective neighbouring estates (cf Van Dijk 1993: 259).

The initial impression of each housing estate is that although an effort has been made to differentiate the respective sites from their surroundings, it appears that the myth generates superficial distinctions, much as also appeared to be the case at Camelot. David Harvey comments how: "places that seek to differentiate themselves as marketable entities end up creating a kind of serial replication of homogeneity" (1996: 298), and initial impressions suggest that the designs in any of the three English housing estates could be interchangeable with one another. A conscious effort has

been made to make the houses appear of high status, to give them a 'sign-value' where "consumption, like the education system, is a class institution" (Baudrillard 1997: 59). There are numerous postmodern references, with the use of Architectural features such as Greco-Roman style design and Tudor black and white facings (cf Jencks 1993: 286, see Figure 5.3). However closer inspection of the practises at the sites shows that, although each housing estate may be interchangeable with one another, this is not to say that the use of Arthurian street names carries no meaning. I shall now demonstrate how Arthur, even in an everyday site like a housing estate, carries meaning and distinction.

Initially, it is worth observing that these estates are new and within commuting distance of London. As such they are likely to attract fairly mobile people. This was confirmed by my observations walking round the estates, where it was seen that in the main the residents consisted of families with young children. These young families have a tendency to be more transient in their nature than older residents of communities (cf Baker, C. 2005: 115 and 117), and Relph makes the perceptive comment that "the most mobile and transient people are not automatically homeless or placeless, but may be able to achieve very quickly an attachment to new places either because the landscapes are similar to ones already well-known or because those people are open to new experiences" (1976: 30). In this respect, the 'serial replication of Homogeneity' that results from the building style will be of use in speeding up the time within which the new residents will settle. As the designs of the houses will be familiar, in a style that is common around the country, so people moving into the estate are greeted with an air of familiarity that will help them to settle faster than if the designs of the houses were disturbing and unfamiliar, whilst also enabling them to move more freely between different geographical areas, yet similarly designed places, as their career requires.

Figure 5.3: ‘Spectacular’ houses on the corners of Excalibur Close, Leicester Forest East and Lancelot Court, Duston, Northampton (bottom). Note the use of mock Tudor beams on the former, and Greco Roman pillars surrounding the entrance to the latter



However, these 'hidden and familiar meanings' are not solely carried out by use of the ancient function, as the Arthur function can also be seen in operation at these sites. The very act of naming the streets after Arthurian characters is further confirmation of an attempt to claim these particular urban spaces as a marker of distinction. If everyday life is associated with the mundane then the Arthur function, with its heroic connotations, allows for the capacity of the estates to attain distinction (cf Featherstone 1992: 160). E.C. Relph states that "space is claimed for man by naming it" (1976: 16), whilst Harvey suggests "the named entity indicates some sort of bounded permanence... at a given location" (1996: 294). For the modern housing estate, the names provide familiarity in what would otherwise be a strange land. Newly built, previously the land was countryside and uninhabited. The Arthur and ancient functions work in tandem at these sites and the naming of the estate, especially with names loaded with such signification of age and permanence, allows nature to be manipulated by man in the form of the housing estate.

It is also important to look at how these places themselves are constructed, and how "the relations between spatial and signifying practices... designate what 'authorizes'... spatial appropriations" (de Certeau 1984: 105). The spatial construction of the housing estates dovetails with the appropriation of Arthur in order to convey a sense of distinction. Spatially, each of the three estates were structured in order that each road would feature at least one particularly 'spectacular' house, thereby allowing the slightly lesser houses to be reflected in that house's glory (see figure 5.3). This house was usually placed on the corner of the road next to the street name, thus associating the royal court of Arthur with the grand houses. As "Architecture... is a way of enclosing emptiness, marking off a space and in the first instance consecrating that" (Belsey 2005: 83), the size of the houses being in excess of the need of their owners serves to enable the use of a large, individually styled house as a signifier of both monetary wealth and cultural distinction.

Spatial practices are used not only to maintain distinction in the estates' own right, but are also used to negotiate the tensions between the 'Arthurian' spaces and the spaces surrounding these sites. The estates maintain their distinction from the surrounding estates partly by the use of cul-de-sacs. There are a disproportionate number of Closes in the estates, and entry is usually limited to one road. These cul-de-sacs act both as a

physical mark and a symbol of the separation between the richer and poorer. In certain areas, such as Arthurs Court in Stretton a wooden fence divides the estate from the poorer areas and further prevents access by foot from these poorer areas of the town. Michel de Certeau effectively sums up this spatial construction when he remarks how “the Architect’s desire to cement up the picket fence... is also his illusion, for without knowing it, he is working toward the political freezing of the place” (1984: 128). Galahad Court in Duston meanwhile, is cut off from the poorer areas to its rear by the making the road a cul-de-sac, which in terms of practicality and use serves no purpose and makes access to the main road more inconvenient. The only reason it is a cul-de-sac is to create a barrier between rich and poor and highlights how “it is the partition of space which structures it” (de Certeau 1984: 123). This emphasises the fact that “*place* had to be secured against the uncontrolled vectors of spatiality.” (Harvey 1996: 292) Before these particular places were constructed, all areas were indistinct from one another. After construction, and aided by the signifiers linked to the Arthurian street names, the estates become a method by which their inhabitants can display their distinction.

Yet it is not merely the housing estate itself that is significant, but also the countryside which each and every estate faces on to. The naming of the streets with Arthurian names also helps to combat any negative comments with regards to the building of the houses on what were once greenfield sites. Although Kevin Donnelly claims that “the distinctions between city and country are now, perhaps more than ever, dissolved as the boundaries between the two and their respective attributes have become less and less distinct” (1995: 44), Denis Cosgrove and Mona Domosh tell how metaphors such as ‘invasion’ and ‘succession’ are used to describe housing changes in cities, whilst “Capital ‘penetrates’ peripheral areas” (1993: 30). These metaphors all have the potential for negative connotations, as the countryside is ‘invaded’.

However, in contrast to the negative connotations surrounding an ‘invasion’ of the countryside, the use of the similar words in the Arthurian myth fulfil the promise of a rightful ‘invasion’ with God’s blessing that is entirely warranted. This is seen particularly in Malory’s Roman War section (see chapter one, pp. 24-27). As such, the ‘invasion’ of these housing estates is connotatively justified and a positive sign

regarding the 'invasion' of the countryside dominates any possible negative connotations.

Consequently, the tension between the modern estate and nature is overcome in the myth, and this tension is further negotiated when versions of Arthur's death are considered. At these modern estates, an attempt is made to mirror a traditional village topology where the village is based around the focal point of a village green, such as that seen at Stretton on Dunsmore. An effort to replicate this 'village effect' is seen not only in the construction of the houses on the 'Arthurian' housing estates, but also in the construction of a 'traditional' village countrified view, with many green spaces created between the houses, in order to simulate a country setting. In relation to National Parks, Chris Rojek explains how these 'spaces of nature' operate, mirroring how nature is 'staged' and constructed at the housing estate:

Far from offering us experience of pre-social nature, unscarred by history, class or politics, the parks are, in fact, social constructs, man-made environments in which Nature is required to conform to certain social ideals. For example, it must radiate cleanliness, vastness, emptiness, silence and space. In other words it must be the exact opposite of the metropolis. The parks are stage representations of nature (1993: 198).

The importance of the link to nature is emphasised by Wilson Connolly in their advertising for the expansion to the estate in Duston. They stress how the estate will contain, "60 acres of parks and open areas... A network of woodland footpaths, bridlepaths and cycle ways will also be established and linked to existing routes" (<http://www.taylorwoodrow.com/> accessed 26/12/02). With this desired emphasis on nature, the use of Arthurian names is given added significance. A commonly told folktale of Arthur involves a farmer from Moberly who is asked to sell his horse by a stranger. The farmer is taken to a cave to see Arthur and his knights sleeping, waiting for their return, before the cave vanishes (see Lindahl 1998: 17). Lindahl suggests that this story shows, "at a certain crossroads in time... and at the outer boundaries of civilization... *the otherworld penetrates momentarily into the everyday world*" (*ibid*, my emphasis). He explains how the tales of Arthur's death, "are couched in such a way that they can be interpreted... as natural... occurrences" (*ibid*). As such, the housing estate built on the edge of the country and of nature is itself seen as a natural

occurrence, glossing over its cultural construction. Arthur's position as in neither the natural nor the everyday world is further emphasised by the lack of street names named after the king himself. Although Gawaine, Galahad, Lancelot and Guinevere occur often, Arthur himself occurs less frequently. Even when he does appear, it is often not him directly that appears but a shimmering illusion, tantalisingly near but not able to be placed; it becomes *his* Close or *his* Court, such as 'King Arthurs Court' in Stretton. As with the legend of his return where his body appears fleetingly, only to vanish, so the image of Arthur is evoked fleetingly in the street names, either through his knights or through his possessions. He himself however is untouchable, still straddling the line between life and death, between nature and civilisation, so seeming to confirm that "the places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences. What can be seen designates what is no longer there" (de Certeau 1984: 108).

The need for the housing estates to be on the edge of nature is seen in relation to their status as 'select' areas of residence, as "the bourgeoisie often try to design and protect places of distinctive qualities... in terms of relations to *both nature and to culture*" (Harvey 1996: 298-299, my emphasis). The effect of the view of the landscape is to enable the residents to be "hoisted out of a world of dreary necessity and dropped, albeit temporarily, into an infantile heaven where nothing would seem to impinge on their freedom, where nothing would seem to bound their luxurious desire. They are incorporeal spirits in fields where no one toils." (Smith, J. 1993: 81-82) As such, the use of Arthurian street names further enhances this image, as a nostalgic look at a pre-industrial time, a purer time when 'man and the land were one' (as portrayed by Boorman in *Excalibur*), untainted by pollution and other negative aspects of reality. The estate built on the edge of the natural landscape allows the estate to be associated with this natural environment, and enables a distinction to be made between the estate and other parts of the city in the industrial heartland. It also enables the estates with higher cultural value to appear more private, where personal life is shut out by the 'mirror' of the countryside surrounding their houses. This is in contrast to the estates with less cultural value where:

Anyone who lives in a shoddy apartment building or tenement knows when their neighbour uses the toilet, showers, copulates, argues, or weeps through the night... Thus, the unequal allocation of space which the landscape fixes both expresses and creates a more significant inequality... Privacy

is a privilege that supports the pretensions of the privileged; for the unprivileged, the absence of privacy ridicules their pretensions with absurdity and irony (Smith, J. 1993: 84).

To combat this, all of the properties in the 'Arthurian' estates are either detached or semi-detached, with a good sized garden and wide streets. The surrounding neighbourhoods are terraced housing on narrow streets, with far smaller gardens or yards. In an echo of Foucault's analysis of Bentham's Panopticon, the systems of power in the contrasting estates become apparent. Constantly aware of the cramped terraces in which the occupant lives, they will be constrained by the thought of being constantly under observation, even if this is not so (cf Foucault 1991b: 201). In contrast the 'Arthurian' estates, with the privacy afforded them by the countryside, offer a freedom from this constraint.

In this chapter, I have shown how the Arthurian myth is appropriated not only by 'authentic' heritage sites, but also by sites of the everyday. At these sites, although the myth may not initially seem as important in the meaning making process of visitors as it is in Tintagel, its appropriation by the respective sites still acts as a marker of distinction. Indeed, in many ways the use of the Arthurian myth is made more easy at such sites, "because they did not have to sanitize a local history, package a heritage, or commodify an indigenous culture" (Frenkel and Walton 2000: 569-470), unlike at Tintagel. Initially, I looked at the Camelot Theme Park and showed how, although utilising the dominant Arthurian myth brought to the fore tensions between high and popular cultural values, by ultimately reconfiguring the Arthurian myth the theme park naturalised its commercial nature. Although a 'popular' cultural site, this was not to say that the Arthurian myth could not be used as a marker of distinction. Michel de Certeau argues that with aged tales such as that of the Arthurian myth, "the ancient ritual that creates fields of action is recognizable in the 'fragments' of narration planted around the obscure threshold of our existence" (de Certeau 1984: 128). By analysis of the Arthurian street names, I have shown that this is the case. It would be unwise to limit analysis of the Arthurian myth in the everyday solely to geographical sites, however. The final two chapters will therefore look at what Theodor Adorno (1992: 211-224) might have considered to be the epitome of the everyday- popular music.

Section IV: Music

Chapter 6: Excessive Sites of Arthur? Progressive Rock Formations

Although the role of the Arthurian myth in music remained “marginal and obscure until the nineteenth century” (Barber 2002: 1), the fact that popular music is well served by ‘Arthurian’ texts is shown by Dan Nastali’s (2002) and Jerome V. Reel Jr’s (2002) respective reviews of the releases available. However, it is within the field of progressive rock that Arthur appears to be most commonly appropriated⁸⁶. In this chapter, I shall look at the Arthurian album that has arguably had the greatest commercial and cultural impact within the progressive rock field, Rick Wakeman’s *The Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table (Arthur)*⁸⁷.

In so doing, I shall draw heavily on Bourdieu’s theory of fields of cultural production where “the structure of the field... is nothing other than the structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of the external or symbolic profits... which are at stake in the field” (1993: 30). That is Wakeman, as an artist in the progressive rock field, was required to compete for status with other progressive musicians and this involved him attempting to gain symbolic capital, prestige and recognition, within the remit of the values specifically prized within the progressive rock subculture. I aim to show how Wakeman appropriated the Arthurian myth in order to consecrate his position within the field of progressive rock. After looking at how Wakeman strives for position within this field, I complicate my argument and discuss how the progressive rock field as a whole had moved towards the commercial field by the time Wakeman released his album, thus meaning that Wakeman found himself straddling the boundaries of both the progressive and commercial fields. In doing this, I show how progressive rock cannot necessarily be considered a homogenous entity, but is “a series of related but separate styles” (Moore 2001: 64). Finally, I consider critics’ reception of the album, consequently showing how Arthur is repositioned by a number of critics in order to naturalise their own taste-culture in relation to progressive rock⁸⁸. Firstly however, it is necessary for me to chart the trajectory of the progressive rock field.

6.1 Heart of the Sunrise: The field of progressive rock

That progressive rock seeks to distinguish itself from the commercial field appears at first to be an uncontroversial statement. Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy explain how progressive rock was a manifestation of the 1960s counterculture (2004: 66). The mode of appreciation of the music was something quite different to Adorno's conception of popular music as a music which requires a mode of listening that is merely "simultaneously one of distraction and inattention" (1992: 218-219). Paul Willis observes how for members of the counterculture, "music was serious for them and not a matter of momentary diversion. The appropriate way to receive music was, therefore, in quiet concentrated listening. Music was not simple enjoyment, a distraction, it was an *experience*" (1978: 156, see also Covach 1997: 3). Consequently, progressive rock developed certain core values that artists found themselves needing to adhere to if they wished to attain a consecrated position in the field (cf Bourdieu 1993: 50-51). Macan states how:

'Progressive rock' came to have a more specific meaning, signifying a style that sought to expand the boundaries of rock on both a stylistic basis (via the use of longer and more involved structural formats) and on a conceptual basis (via the treatment of epic subject matter), mainly through the appropriation of elements associated with classical music (1997: 26).

Paul Stump draws attention to how inter-textual strategies and publicity were used to distinguish progressive rock from the mainstream commercial field. Stump describes how "progressive musicians, if their A&R staff were to be believed, weren't just rock musicians. They were- in the 1970s anyway- 'artists', driven by high and romantic notions of personal expression and originality, individual authenticity, honesty and similar praiseworthy universals" (1997: 10).

That Wakeman's *Arthur* incorporated many of progressive rock's core systems of belief (cf Bourdieu 1993: 35-36) becomes apparent on analysis of both the album itself and the inter-textual materials surrounding it. However, Bourdieu's theory of cultural production is shown to have limitations when it is applied to a field such as that of progressive rock. If Macan considers that "progressive rock... was the vital

expression of a bohemian, middle-class intelligensia” (1997: 144), then Bourdieu’s theory is, I would argue, insufficiently complex to deal with this ‘middlebrow’ field. Although Bourdieu claims that “the more autonomous the field becomes... the more clear-cut is the division between the field of restricted production... and the field of large-scale production... which is *symbolically excluded and discredited*” (Bourdieu 1993: 39), Holly Kruse discusses how even in a field of restricted musical production, the artists and producers take part “in a market defined and structured by major labels” (1998: 189). Chris Atton further draws attention to the complexity of the progressive rock field, as he points out that *Yes* have had “an uninterrupted commercial career... [with] reliance on small labels... [being] minimal” (2001: 139). Paul Lopes in his critique of Bourdieu’s theory of fields of cultural production adds an extra field to those defined by Bourdieu, where “the field [of power] is more or less constituted by the relationship between two sub-fields... the sub-field of small-scale production (or ‘restricted production’) and the sub-field of large-scale production” (Hesmondhalgh 2006: 214). In addition to these fields, Lopes adds the field of restricted popular art, and I would argue that the progressive rock field fits well into this category. Lopes states how the principles of legitimacy are:

Determined for industrial art by the general demand of popular music audiences, mass media professionals, and mass media gatekeepers, based on an industrial *mediated mass market*. The principles of legitimacy for restricted popular art... [are] determined by artistic subcultures of musicians, audiences, producers, and critics, based on the *charismatic consecration* provided by subcultures whose cultural identities were more intimately tied to a genre of music (2000: 174).

Progressive rock, although borrowing from classical sources, is not restricted solely to these appropriations. Durrell S. Bowman considers that “the bourgeois origins and formal ‘classical’ proclivities of progressive rock were (and are) considerably overstated. With a few notable exceptions... most progressive rock musicians come from the same small town and working-class British origins where hard rock and heavy metal originated” (2002: 185). However, it is also possible to overstate the significance of this statement with regards to the structure of the field. Regardless of background, “there is a specific economy of the... field, based on a particular form of belief” (Bourdieu 1993: 35), and in progressive rock this ‘form of belief’ saw the need for musicians to borrow successfully from the authenticity of ‘high cultural’ classical

music in order to attain a consecrated position in the field. Consequently, although Macan may overstate the importance attached to a classical training for the musicians, in positioning itself very firmly as a middlebrow field, progressive rock sought to borrow many musical ideas from classical music, consequently distinguishing itself from more mainstream pop. Typically described as “a style of self-consciously complex rock often associated with prominent keyboards, complex metric shifts, fantastic (often mythological) lyrics, and an emphasis on flashy virtuosity” (Holm-Hudson 2002: 2), progressive rock obtains its authenticity from “the inclusion of musical styles from other than a rock format” (*ibid*), especially classical music, enabling it to gain a devolved authenticity from the high cultural form (see also Mazullo 1999: 149 and Covach 1997: 4).

In *Arthur*, Wakeman ensured that the classical influences within his work dominated those of rock by drawing out these high-cultural elements, especially with the obvious approach of hiring the ‘New World Symphony Orchestra’ to play on his album. Lawrence W. Levine charts the cultural trajectory of the symphony orchestra (1988: 104-146) that saw symphonic music and orchestras sacralized in opposition to popular music. To watch an orchestra meant “entrance into a nexus where... one’s cultivated tastes... [served to exclude] those without sufficient cultural capital” (Barlow 2001: 34). The dominance of the high-cultural orchestra over the popular cultural ‘band’ was further emphasised as Wakeman stated the importance of getting “the band to fit with the orchestra” (Welch 1975a: 3), rather than either contrasting the orchestra with the band or getting them “to rock with the group, which sounds horrible” (*ibid*). By asking the band to ‘fit with’ the orchestra, Wakeman naturalises a cultural hierarchy that places high-culture as the ‘authentic’ culture, requiring the ‘popular culture’ of the band to adapt, and be made to ‘fit’ if it is to be authenticated in return. If asking the orchestra to ‘rock with the band’ makes it sound ‘horrible’, this shows how “the process of sacralization” (Levine 1988: 136) of the orchestra sees it head a cultural hierarchy where other musical forms have lower cultural value and are thus potentially incompatible.

Moreover, stylistic devices within the musical text itself serve to draw attention to progressive rock’s classical appropriations. Macan reviews how ideas such as the use of the multimovement suite are used to ‘paint’ a picture (1997: 21) by the music, and

this approach is one that stands out particularly on Wakeman's album (cf Nicholls 2004: 123), particularly the track *Merlin the Magician* (cf Josephson 1992: 86). Interviews also provided Wakeman with an opportunity to express his aesthetic views on music and thus to clarify his cultural positioning (cf Janssen 1998: 269). Consequently, Wakeman drew attention to the aesthetic changes of 'mood' within *Merlin...*:

There is a sort of honky-tonk piece which comes twice which is meant to show the lighthearted madness of a magician in the king's court. There's the loony bit with the Moogs which is meant to envisage somebody down in the basement with their big pots stirring away doing all these crazy potions and there's a little soft melody at the front which is meant to depict one of the legends where he snuffed it at the end (Wooding 1978: 130).

With this track, Wakeman demonstrates how progressive rock saw "the incorporation of thematically important instrumental passages into songs [which] increased the length of tracks to unforeseen proportions" (Palmer 2001: 245). Yet *Arthur* shows another form of distinction inextricably associated with progressive rock, the concept album (cf Mazullo 2001: 434). The increasing popularity of the LP allowed for longer tracks, and as "European art [progressive] music and jazz... were grouped together with adult pop via their shared format, the LP, it was increasingly possible to conceive of adult pop itself as 'classical' or bourgeois high art" (Keightley 2004: 378). The concept album further drew out these high cultural references by deriving their narrative and imagery "from extant literary sources" (Nicholls 2004: 131).

In this context, the appropriation of the dominant romance form of the Arthurian myth would appear to be entirely apt for Wakeman. This becomes even more apparent when it is considered that progressive rock is not just distinguished by its musical style, but also by its lyrical content. Moreover, contributing to the perception of the work requires analyses of:

Not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work... the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of viewing and recognising the work of art as such (Bourdieu 1993: 37).

Great attention was paid to the lyrics (Willis 1978: 157) by the fans, who studied them in more detail than was the norm in other musical forms. Constant themes in progressive rock lyrics included mythology and science fiction (Macan 1997: 3). In order to attain a consecrated position in the progressive rock field it would be important for Wakeman to borrow, not only from the high cultural field of classical music, but also from high cultural forms of literature, such as the dominant romance form of the Arthurian myth⁸⁹. Kevin Holm-Hudson explains that to appropriate high-cultural texts was common practice, and “expanding beyond the high-culture positioning of the musical ‘text’ in progressive rock, one can observe a similar influence in progressive rock’s lyrics. Classic works of literature influenced a number of progressive rock’s lyrics” (2002: 13).

Meanings are closed down in favour of a romance Arthur from the very beginning, as the album artwork immediately signifies which version of the myth will be presented. Borthwick and Moy argue that for progressive rock “the album artwork became hugely important... In some cases album package, staging, costume and performance all became fused into a powerfully unified whole work of art” (2004: 68, see also Nicholls 2004: 130). The gatefold sleeve opens to a painting that immediately brings to mind the chivalric Arthur, featuring the stereotypical romance image of two knights jousting, whilst the grail is positioned top centre in the picture, dominating the knights and thus emphasising the prominence of this romance signifier (see Figure 6.1).

Roger Dean, artist for virtually all of *Yes*’s album covers over the years, is clear in how important he considers the artwork and imagery in evoking a response: “songs can tell a story, music can create moods or atmospheres and obviously emotional responses; it can also enhance and be enhanced by images” (quoted in Macan 1997: 63).

Figure 6.1: The centre of Wakeman's gatefold sleeve, showing a 'typical' dramatic chivalric joust, with the Holy Grail taking prominence top centre



Although Alan M. Kent makes the baffling statement that Wakeman's album "employed Celtic themes" (2001: 213), it is clear that expectations are for a chivalric Arthur along the lines of Malory and Tennyson. The lyric booklet's cover is a pop art image of Winchester's Round Table, forging a link between the dominant Arthurian myth (cf Malory 1969: 91) and Wakeman's present-day interpretation (cf chapter five, pp. 149-150). The opening statement in the album itself serves to confirm the romance interpretation: "Whoso pulleth out this sword from this stone and anvil, is the true-born king of all Britain," mirrors the statement in Malory and sets down very firmly parameters for Wakeman's sources. Songs featuring romance characters such as Galahad⁹⁰ and Lancelot serve to further enhance this impression, whilst the Christian element of the dominant romance myth is heightened by the repetition of "By God's hand" at the end of 'Lancelot and the Black Knight', thereby demonstrating clearly that the round table is seen as existing by virtue of God's blessing, and Arthur's court has a divine right to carry out God's will⁹¹.

In case the listener is in any doubt, the strength of an Anglicised (romance) as opposed to a Celtic (folk) version of Arthur is seen in 'The Last Battle' where England is clearly held to be dominant. Logres (England) is called the 'Holy realm' and it is suggested that re-establishing Logres will save Britain. England is made the dominant element of both Britain and the myth, and it is suggested that Britain needs

a strong England in order to survive. Meanwhile, in the album booklet Welsh is excluded in the languages featured. Although other countries with a strong Arthurian tradition (German, French and Spanish⁹²) are allowed translation of the narrative, Welsh is not. This ‘Anglicisation’ of the myth would be of vital importance for Wakeman’s symbolic capital, as progressive rock was considered to be “the most distinctively English... of all rock and pop forms” (Stump 1997: 10, see also Martin, B. 1996: 53, and Hardwick (forthcoming)).

Yet the use of the Arthurian myth would also allow Wakeman to strive for symbolic capital where previously it had been denied him. “The craftsmanship, grace and panache of language” (Willis 1978: 103) within the lyrics was considered to be important for members of the progressive rock subculture, and Wakeman’s quest for a consecrated position in the field had been handicapped by the fact that, as he acknowledged himself, “words have never been my strong point” (Welch 1975a: 3). The elevated language of Malory, described by Scott as “written in excellent old English, and breathing a high tone of chivalry” (quoted in Parins 1995: 78), was used to open the album and went some way to mediating this discrepancy, as this enabled Wakeman’s lyrics to be associated with the high romance form.

This association with the high aesthetic of poetry as dominant art form with most prestige (Bourdieu 1993: 51) was continued in interviews, as Wakeman mused how “virtually every famous classical or romantic poet wrote about him [Arthur] at some time” (Wooding 1978: 129). If this statement were to be taken literally it would be problematic, as I showed in an earlier chapter how the über-myth naturalised the dominance of Malory’s text over and above texts such as that of Dryden, for example. Also, many of these ‘famous classical or romantic poets’ such as Milton had considered an Arthurian epic but rejected it (see Knight 1983: 150). However, Wakeman’s claim would be important in order to emphasise the high cultural identity of the romance myth, thereby gaining him symbolic capital. His reference to the great poets is “a quite special use of discourse which is... addressed to a past author on the basis of a social solidarity disguised as intellectual solidarity” (Bourdieu 1984: 73).

Linking Wakeman to this charismatic legitimation would be particularly important. Although Peter Wicke claims the romantic notion of the individual “has no part to

play in rock music” (1982: 228), after his split from *Yes* Wakeman was now in the spotlight even more as a solo performer. Even though in *Yes* “with his long blonde hair, onstage flamboyance and keyboard savvy, [Wakeman] had become the centre of attention” (Cain 1975: n.p.), now he would be judged entirely on his solo prowess outside the bounds of a group setting. To associate himself with the great poets would enable him to be seen as the natural leader and fitting successor to them, important when in progressive rock “the soloist takes on the role of Romantic hero, the fearless individualist whose virtuoso exploits model an escape from social constraints” (Macan 1997: 46). As such, it would be important for Wakeman to equate himself as ‘one of the Romantics’ in order to nurture his position as a leading solo performer in progressive rock. Had he taken the approach of listing Tennyson, Dryden, and some more unknown poets he would have risked diminishing his own role as ‘romantic hero’ within progressive rock, as it would be shown that despite the cultural capital inherent in the myth, use of Arthurian material by well-known poets was an exception, rather than the rule, hence making his choice of material seem less appropriate.

The refusal to list the poets’ names serves a further purpose. By making them anonymous, Wakeman also ensures the author function is weakened with respect to previous interpretations. This denial of previous authorial validity allows his own individual virtuosity to take centre stage (cf chapter one, page 31), important when the “artistic field [is] founded upon a belief in the quasi-magical powers attributed to the... artist” (Bourdieu 1993: 259).

Although I have shown above that Wakeman’s appropriation of the high-cultural romance form of the myth was extensive, he was required to adapt the romance Arthur in order to maintain his symbolic position with relation to further elements of progressive rock’s core values. Though Marion Wynne-Davies notes that both Malory and Tennyson challenge the patriarchal order, ultimately “the *Morte Darthur* does not liberate its ladies and damsels and gentlewomen and widows” (1996: 77), whilst Tennyson “identifies himself with the imperial and patriarchal monarch of the legends” (1996: 129)⁹³. These interpretations lead to the possible stereotyping of women into mere objects of beauty in the dominant myth, whilst the man fulfills his role of strong protector (cf Wynne-Davies 1996: 57). It can be argued that, for

example, in *The Idylls*... there is “association of unrestrained female sexuality with the decline and corruption of a once ideal state” (Wynne-Davies 1996: 130).

It is clear that Wakeman needed to adapt this rigid patriarchal structure for a counterculture ideology that sought to redefine the boundaries of masculine and feminine, leading to a certain androgynous subculture (cf Willis 1978:100) where masculine and feminine boundaries were dissolved (Macan 1997: 43). This is achieved by disrupting the traditional borders of masculinity and femininity by the use of acoustic and electric instruments, a typical progressive rock value, with their:

Contrasts of harsh, closed, ‘masculine’ timbres... with more open, relaxed, ‘feminine’ timbres that lack strong attacks and piercing upper frequencies... [that is used to] mirror the conflicts between patriarchal and matriarchal modes of social organization that were of great significance to the counterculture (Macan 1997: 31).

Notwithstanding the music, Wakeman uses the myth itself and his presentation of an otherwise conventional story to subvert these boundaries in ‘The Lady of the Lake’. An initial reading of the lyrics appears to suggest a conventional interpretation of how Arthur was given Excalibur:

An arm clothed in white Samite
from out the quiet water
I am the lady of the lake
Come take my sword
Wear it by your side.

However, this song is sung by the ‘Nottingham Festival’ male vocal group. By having a male voice choir sing ‘I am the Lady of the Lake’ Wakeman serves to make the character androgynous, and thus mirrors the redefinition of masculine and feminine roles within the counterculture. By showing “a new willingness to redefine ‘masculinity’ in contemporary rock” (Macan 1997: 32), this would also naturalise Wakeman’s stage image, with his long hair and distinctly feminine cape. The cape actually served a practical purpose, to enable him to switch between his numerous banks of keyboards effectively, but thanks to re-definition of the myth, is thus able to become a symbol of distinction in his search for subcultural capital. The redefinition

of masculinity is also seen in the presentation of Arthur. Both sword and anvil are conventional masculine images, yet “Sir Kay the bravest knight,” and as such the strongest and most ‘masculine’ of the knights, was not the man who was able to draw the sword from the stone, and thus be considered most suited for the role of king. Instead the task falls to Arthur, and the painting of Arthur within the booklet is particularly androgynous. Arthur is portrayed as having very feminine features, whilst his hair is blonde and moderately long. His attire meanwhile consists of blue tights, further adding to his feminine appearance. Arthur is presented in colour in contrast to the black and white colouring of the rest of the picture, bringing him and his appearance to the foreground.

It is not just what Wakeman included in the album that is of significance, but what is missing also. Certain elements of the story are omitted to negotiate the tension between the patriarchal dominant myth and androgynous subculture; when talking about ‘Lancelot and the Black Knight’, Wakeman tells how the actual song finishes with the mortal wounding of the Black Knight “but the story goes on and he [Lancelot] meets a girl there called Elaine.” It is important for Wakeman to pass over this section of Lancelot’s tale if he is not to end up reasserting traditional gender boundaries. Elaine, with her unremitting obedience to Lancelot, internalises a society that associates women with self-sacrifice and unquestioning service to their men, rather than asserting their own identities (Wynne-Davies 1996: 74). With such a conclusion to the tale, it is therefore necessary to exclude this particular section.

On the one hand, the mythical narrative fitted well with the idea of a society “far different than our own, and to the hippies’ way of thinking, far more desirable; pastoral and linked to the earth in a way that we are not, sharing a sense of community and possessing a spiritual insight that we have lost” (Macan 1997: 80). In order to achieve this homology, Wakeman found himself drawing not only on Malory, but on TH White’s *Once and Future King*, with its pacifist tendencies (see Nastali 2002: 147)⁹⁴. Wakeman allows his version of the myth to extol the futility of war, another common theme to be found in both the counterculture and progressive rock (Macan 1997: 79). In interviews Wakeman brought up the cause of pacifism:

I'm not altogether a pacifist. In the last war, I would have fought because as often as not, if there is someone or something that is really evil, the only way is to fight. But I wouldn't have liked to live in any age with the threat of war (Wooding 1978: 129-130).

Thus Wakeman's Arthurian interpretation comes back to the hippies' philosophy, as Wakeman's Arthur is reluctant to fight Mordred yet finally does so. Wakeman saw Arthur as:

Very kindly, but not particularly brave. Merlin used to look after him with all his spells etc., and Merlin told him he was going to die at the last battle, and never to fight Mordred. He went ahead and fought him, but didn't want to. He knew he was going to lose before he went. I don't think he was particularly brave. I think he lived off the reputation of other knights (Wooding 1978: 130).

This is a view of Arthur not as an active warrior king but more as a thoughtful, sensitive ruler, thereby showing Wakeman's appropriation not of the Celtic warrior Arthur, but the dominant romance version. Because of Arthur's decision to fight, the kingdom is plunged into chaos and, as such, war is seen as a futile option, thereby lending Wakeman's interpretation a contemporary significance for the counterculture via its appropriation of the high-cultural myth. In the opening section of this chapter, I argued that Arthur is appropriated by Wakeman in order to help him strive for consecration in the progressive rock field. In the next section, I shall demonstrate how Arthur is also positioned by Wakeman's inter-textual strategies in order to maintain his commercial standing.

6.2 The Solid Time of Change: Wakeman's shift towards the commercial field

As Sean Albiez notes, "progressive rock is a slippery term that attempts to contain a diverse range of music promoting experimentation, individualism, an art aesthetic, and paradoxically, golden age romanticism and futurist hyper-modernism" (2003: 359). If progressive rock had crossed from "the commercial to the artisanal" (Atton 2001: 31) field by the 1990s, Wakeman's album was released at a time when progressive rock found itself crossing *into* the commercial field. As Wakeman's commercial standing was "a matter of position and trajectory within the field, so that... [they vary] from one agent and one moment to another" (Bourdieu 1993: 72), he was required to adopt alternative position-taking strategies to appeal to consumers

outside of the progressive rock subculture. By the time of the album's release, progressive rock had moved to the end of its "idealistic and innovative" era (Martin, B. 1998: 61) and had moved into the mainstream (see also Atton 2001: 30). Wakeman, although well established in the progressive rock field, had by now also crossed over into mainstream consciousness, and as a result was also required to maintain and struggle for a position in the commercial field. This meant appealing to "large numbers of people from diverse social groups and across large geographical areas" (Toynbee 2002: 150). As Tony Kirschner perceptively remarks, "success... is not a simple issue. It can be measured in terms of number of fans or record sales [the field of large-scale production]... cultural influence... or peer influence [the field of restricted production]" (1998: 251).

Arthur would reach number 2 and stay in the charts for 28 weeks, whilst his previous album *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* had topped the album charts during its 30 week stay (see Roberts, D. 2003). Consequently Wakeman's music at this time demonstrated what Chris Atton terms:

A confluence (at times apparently contradictory) between the three dominant elements in its formation and development: its status as a commercial popular music product, its aim to achieve 'art' status as an electrified form for classical music; and the countercultural elements from which it was born" (2001: 30).

Although it was true that "what progressive rock musicians... couldn't avoid... was to become 'popular', to be placed, that is, in an established 'entertaining' role" (Frith 1989: 63), Wakeman embraced this popularisation and did not try to avoid it. Although Sheila Whiteley claims that progressive rock's cultural positioning "is a contradictory position to mainstream pop conventions" (2000: 236), she does not take into account how the mainstream, whilst appearing to be a stable entity, is in a constant state of flux. Jason Toynbee explains how this is owing to its dependence "on the importation of musical authenticity" (2002: 154). As such, there is a constant flow of musical styles through the mainstream. As 'authentic' styles are appropriated, they then "provide [a] means of hearing through difference" (Toynbee 2002: 160) for other subcultures, who define their own authenticity by means of a "burlesque exaggeration... of an imagined *other*" (Thornton 1995: 101). Consequently,

“mainstreams... [can] pass through periods of intense turbulence” (Toynbee 2002: 153). Thus for progressive rock, as its position as an ‘other’ musical voice gained strength, it found itself both shifting towards the mainstream, while also affecting the position of the mainstream at that particular instant (cf Toynbee 2002: 153).

Therefore by this stage, Wakeman was no longer merely charismatically consecrated in the progressive rock field, but was required to struggle for position within the industrial art field also. As such, strategies would be required in order for him to find a position in this field, and once again his use of the myth would help in this quest. Indeed, although undoubtedly having a high position in the progressive rock field, Wakeman had always been considered something of a renegade as his “penchant for partying clashed with the sedate nature of the *Yes* men” (Cain 1975: 28). Wakeman had also been a session musician for many years, including work for Cat Stevens and T-Rex. Roy Shuker (2001: 112) shows how session musicians are rated near the bottom of the cultural hierarchy with a ‘commercial’ rather than ‘artistic’ status, while Andrew Blake describes how session musicians are associated with blandness (1997: 18), and session work is considered to be a “financially rewarding” (1997: 61) rather than artistically rewarding career. Moreover Wakeman was open about the fact that, among other reasons for leaving the Royal College of Music before graduating, one was to maximise his economic capital (Wakeman 1995: 74).

His split with *Yes* served to further emphasise his shift in position from the progressive field to a mainstream field. Although he claimed the split was for artistic reasons, his statement also drew attention to his liking for a less complex approach than the one being pursued by *Yes* at that time. Wakeman’s comment that he was “more for everything to be worked around melody rather than everything to be worked around clever noises” (Wooding 1978: 108) was a position-taking strategy that distanced himself from the more highbrow progressive rock position that valued difficulty within the music as a key objective (cf Bourdieu 1984: 65). Of his split with *Yes*, Bill Martin notes Wakeman was less interested in playing progressive music “on such a high level” (1998: 232) than his successor, Patrick Moraz. Wakeman was also keen to emphasise his difference from the ‘authentic’ countercultural style of *Yes*:

With the exception of me, they had all become vegetarians in a big way. I was the only heavy drinker in the band and so socially we grew a long way apart. I spent most of my spare time on tour eating curries and drinking with the crew whilst Jon, Chris, Alan and Steve went off in search of the nearest place that sold nutburgers (Wakeman 1995: 118, see also Wooding 1978: 112).

Whilst *Yes* were associated with “compositional virtuosity” (Palmer 2001: 244), Wakeman took a different approach and his programme for the ice shows of *Arthur* treats the myth playfully. The front cover has an amusing picture of the group dressed in knightly attire, in the profiles of the performers they are given entertaining nicknames such as ‘Sir Fatman’. The down-to-earth atmosphere is heightened by them being given grades for “Drinking prowess,” “State of liver,” and “Hangover rating” (see Figure 6.2). Although undoubtedly incorporating an element of progressive rock’s tendency to subvert the values of high culture (cf Macan 1997: 166), it also demonstrates Wakeman’s movement to a more populist position.

Although a high cultural classical method of presentation is also used in his concert programme⁸, it exists in combination and tension with a more populist approach, showing how Wakeman is attempting to straddle two fields at the same time. He manages this by allowing enough space within his inter-textual framework for his version of *Arthur* to be appropriated by different classes and groups according to their taste for simplicity or complexity, ‘low’ or ‘high’ culture (cf Brooker 2000: 13). This cultural indeterminacy is further enhanced by his use of an Orchestra. Although as I discussed earlier, Wakeman’s hiring of a classical orchestra was undoubtedly a strategy that allowed him to take prestige from classical influences (cf Stump 1997: 45), Wakeman hired a ‘pop’ orchestra rather than an orchestra that had received consecration within the classical high aesthetic field. The picture of David Meesham in the programme shows him conducting a brass band in the street (see Figure 6.2), playing with the expected image of a conductor.

Figure 6.2: David Measham conducting the number 92 bus.



DAVID MEASHAM conductor (92 bus route from Southall) new name **SIR STICKTHING**.

What a sight David is to behold. This bearded wonder prancing about with his baton (at least we think it is his baton) in his hand, wearing his second hand blue barbers jacket and yeti boots. David spends a lot of time down under, and goes to Australia a lot too. It is reputed that he would have a kangaroo if it stopped hopping. He is lovingly known as the Monster Meash.

Drinking prowess A-
State of liver D+
Hangover rating B

By using a ‘popular’, or ‘light classical’ orchestra, Wakeman would ensure that his classical influences would be both “accessible and popular” (Barlow 2001: 34). Meanwhile, Wakeman is presented as distancing himself from the establishment, as classical music ‘purists’ from a consecrated orchestra such as the London Symphony Orchestra would find the concept of a popular orchestra anathema (cf Barlow 2001: 34), and so the reader is told how his “London Symphony Orchestra ban was still in operation” (Wooding 1978: 128).

Although I have shown how Wakeman’s position-taking strategies saw him draw attention to his appropriation of the high-cultural dominant Arthurian myth, he also took care to ensure that popular values such as simplicity were also revealed, in an attempt to appeal to a commercial field more disposed toward works “devoid of artistic ambition or pretension” (Bourdieu 1984: 16). As Wakeman marginalised the author function so as to raise his own cultural standing, by simply saying that “there are lots of legends about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table” (Wooding 1978: 128-129) he simultaneously ensured the cultural value that the author function could bring to the myth was marginalised, so moving himself towards a populist position where “individual writers can obviously stand out in the field but they do so always in relation to the genre they write in” (Gelder 2004: 40). This position is further enhanced as his description of the myth emphasises its simplicity and popularity, thus moving away from a high cultural stance where the dominant myth can only be comprehended by those “possessing the disposition and the aesthetic

competence which are tacitly required” (Bourdieu 1993: 257) to understand progressive rock.

Wakeman further positions himself by remarking how “a couple of the stories were taken from children’s books; writing for children is often far more colourful than in adult books. I picked out four of the most popular stories, and two that aren’t so well known” (Wooding 1978: 130). In this respect, Wakeman follows the approach of the Camelot Theme Park (chapter five, pp. 149-150) in linking his work to themes of childishness and fun, rather than the complexity and sincerity associated with progressive rock. This is further enhanced by the pop-art treatment of the ancient pictures and artefacts in the booklet, as the Round Table takes on a Warholian brightly coloured and gaudy hue, drawing the Winchester Round Table into the realm of the everyday (cf Cagle 1995: 49). This served to highlight that Wakeman’s sources would not be restricted only to the high-cultural dominant myth as exemplified by Malory and Tennyson, and instead linked Wakeman to a movement which “strove to represent objects immediately recognizable by, and appealing to, large audiences” (Gemünden 1998: 43).

Wakeman’s open text allows for other reading formations to be applied depending on the cultural competencies of each field respectively. In this respect, Wakeman follows a similar process to that discussed by Akitsugu Kawamoto with regards to *Emerson, Lake and Palmer (ELP)*. Kawamoto notes that as *ELP* found commercial success, so “it was necessary that the countercultural ideology formerly represented as ‘insult’ to the establishment be ‘misread’; i.e. it would still be referred to but at the same time revised to some extent” (2005: 233). Although I have shown how Wakeman’s appropriation of White allows for a pacifist interpretation of his *Arthur*, Wakeman often distanced himself from a countercultural view of an idealised past in interviews: “I don’t think it was a particularly good era to live in. In fact, I don’t think any was particularly good to live in until about the 1960s. Every age up until then suffered from battles and wars” (Wooding 1978: 129). Although ‘The Last Battle’ commences seemingly with a lament for the past as it bemoans “Gone are the days of the knights,” it soon becomes clear that this is not a nostalgic look back to the past, as we hear that these days of the knights included:

Gallant men softly crying
Brave armies dying.

A tragic Arthur is portrayed, as Wakeman displays an apocalyptic vision that highlights the barbarity of war. The final stanza of the song inverts the dominant mythical position that sees the Round Table as standing for justice and chivalry:

Gone are the days of the knights
Of the Round Table and fights
Of the realm of King Arthur
Peace ever after
Gone are the days of the knights.

Here we see that the Round Table is equated with ‘fights’ and discord rather than any positive themes of unity, whilst it is considered that only after the realm of King Arthur has ended will there be ‘Peace ever after.’ This in itself is a dramatic reversal of the Arthurian myth, and shows that Wakeman also re-appropriated the Arthur function in a different form to the ‘traditional’ use that had seen Arthur used either to legitimate the dynasty of rulers, or as a nostalgic yearning for the past where Arthur will return to save Britain in its hour of need (cf chapter four, pp. 125-126). Here, Wakeman uses the myth as a warning from the past that our society should not be modelled on what has gone before and instead prefers to focus on a celebration of the present.

I have shown in this section how Wakeman’s position-taking strategies saw him re-position the Arthurian myth in order to make an appeal to the commercial field. This also, as a consecrated artist within progressive rock, saw him adopt a commercial position-taking strategy, and so influence a “change in the space of possibles” (Bourdieu 1993: 32) within the field. Consequently, progressive rock moved to a position where popular cultural references threatened to displace those of classical music. However, this attempt by Wakeman to change the rules of the game would lead to interesting critiques from both the establishment press and the rock press. In the final section, I shall show how these critiques played out, albeit from different positions. By re-claiming the ‘high’ Arthur whilst emphasising Wakeman’s ‘low’

rock origins and his populism, the press viewed as 'establishment' by the counterculture, and embodying dominant cultural values, saw Wakeman's *Arthur* as an example of barbarous taste, a "naïve exhibitionism of 'conspicuous consumption', which seeks distinction in the crude display of ill-mastered luxury" (Bourdieu 1984: 31). Meanwhile, the rock press saw adoption of the high cultural form of the myth, coupled with Wakeman's progressive rock heritage and excesses, as a betrayal of rock's core values.

6.3 Sound Chaser: The Arthurian myth and taste-formers' battle for authenticity in rock

John J. Sheinbaum indicates how:

Rock journalists' reaction against the style [progressive rock] stemmed from a countercultural political agenda: rock is supposed to be a rebellious music, a music that shocks the 'establishment' and challenges its conventions. A style of rock so influenced by the music of the establishment- which seemed to aspire to the privileged status held by that music- could only be met with derision (2002: 21).

Sheinbaum goes on to demonstrate how signs of value in rock music were opposed to those most often seen in society. The wider cultural field of rock music had built its symbolic capital upon a strategy of opposition to the establishment.

The trappings of 'high' music were not signals of value at all, or- perhaps more sharply stated- were merely signals of *conventional* value. The dreaded 'establishment' and its institutions had a great stake in continuing to assert the values of 'high' culture (2002: 27).

Sheinbaum then reviews the taste-culture typical to rock critics, who tended to "treat... the music as conventionally 'high'- a clear signal that this is 'bad' rock music- or as stylistically impure music" (2002: 29, see also Stump 1997: 349 and Covach 1997: 4). Lower social groups were considered to be authentic because "they and their music were thought to be outside commercial fabrication" (Weinstein 2002: 93), which thus meant that progressive rock had therefore become "a betrayal of rock's populist origins" (Macan 1997: 3, see also Holm-Hudson 2002: 5).

What became clear in the reviews for Wakeman's album was that, in order to demonstrate that Wakeman's album was indeed stylistically impure, taste-formers sought to re-position the Arthurian myth and sought to form their own determination of an 'authentic' presentation of the myth, and thus consequently naturalise within their own particular taste culture a concept of an 'authentic' musical style. The strategy taken by the rock media was to link Wakeman's *Arthur* to the high cultural form of the myth. Having done this, the rock media could then expose the 'high' Arthur as inauthentic, and thus naturalise Wakeman's inauthenticity as a result.

For example, a music weekly with an oppositional taste-culture to that of progressive rock was the *NME*. Matthew Bannister charts how "UK music weeklies such as the *NME* played an important role in the dissemination of indie in the 1980s, but even before that, 1970s rock journalism... provided the first, and arguably the most important theorisation of punk/indie values" (2006: 79). Consequently, the *NME* found itself defining its own values of taste as authenticating more 'traditional' rock values where appropriation from popular cultural, rather than high cultural sources was a signifier of value. On the album's release, this weekly magazine devoted a whole page on the album's release to both a review, and an article setting the work in a wider context of Arthuriana. By setting the paper in opposition to progressive rock, the *NME* demonstrated clearly how "nothing classifies the classifier more than the way he or she classifies" (Bourdieu 1990: 132). Taste comes down to primarily a popular, commodified issue with the question, "can you *afford* to have bad taste?" (Macdonald 1975: 20) Contrary to Wakeman's vague references to a number of texts, including children's books, the *NME* makes explicit a high-cultural link as Malory is described as "the Wakeman goldmine" (Tyler 1975: 20). The phrasing of this statement serves to expose Wakeman's inauthenticity. The 'goldmine' that is Malory is thus exposed as nothing more than a commercial activity in itself, thus devaluing the supposed consecration of a high-cultural canon. Malory is also listed as Wakeman's only source, thus linking Wakeman to this newly inauthentic high-cultural positioning.

As a result, although I showed previously that White is a major source for Wakeman, this popular source⁹⁵ is required to be marginalised by the *NME* in order to distance their own taste from that of Wakeman's and progressive rock in general. As the text

that was probably most popular at that time, it would be important for a taste culture that values a popular aesthetic to distance Wakeman from this source. The popular authenticity of White sees the *NME* review White as “magnificent” (Tyler 1975: 20), and thus finds itself unable to acknowledge White as a Wakeman source. The folk-authenticity of Arthur is celebrated, as we hear how in *the Mabinogion* Arthur is, “everything a Celtic folk hero should be” (*ibid*), and these collection of tales are “far more authentic” (*ibid*) than any other interpretation. The Welsh Arthur is considered to have, “the best literary credentials” (*ibid*). The *Mabinogion*, with its folk-tale origins, would be far more appealing to a general rock field where “the very signs commonly held as sources of value in the reception of Western music in general have become signs of the very opposite within rock criticism” (Sheinbaum 2002: 25).

In the meantime, the review attempts to expose the inauthenticity of the dominant myth. The romance Arthur is ridiculed and Chretien de Troye’s version of the myth is considered to be full of “repulsive French gallantry” (Tyler 1975: 20). Malory’s author function is also diminished by the reviewer, yet the reason for this is not to allow Wakeman’s creative genius to stand in its place. Rather Chretien’s “Franco-Welsh mish-mash” (*ibid*), the description serving to further undermine the author function, instead suggesting an “infinitely reproducible, superficial, and contextless work” (Malpas 2005: 119), is considered to be Malory’s only source.

This has two effects on the cultural status of Malory represented in this instance. The first is to deny that Malory’s sources also include more ‘folk’ efforts itself, such as the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (as discussed in Chapter one), whilst also devaluing Malory’s author function as his role is reduced to merely that of translator. Lorri Chamberlain explains how, viewed as “‘at best an echo,’ translation has been figured literally and metaphorically in secondary terms” (2004: 307) to that of authorship, where translation is perceived culturally as a derivative copy of the original, creative text. Malory’s tome is treated with suspicion and critiqued as ‘guff’. This phrasing positions Malory as “tainted” (Llewellyn and Harrison 2006: 585) and inauthentic with regards to its interpretation of Arthur, thereby offering a counter to a high-cultural aesthetic which views “serious art music... [as] asocial in its significance, *untainted* and thus of inestimably more value” (Shepherd 1982: 148, my emphasis). Moreover, it is phrased that Malory wrote the tale in order to achieve acceptance by

the establishment. According to the *NME*, it is because of the *Morte Darthur* that “Thomas Malory became Sir Thomas Malory before you could rub two squires together” (Tyler 1975: 20). As I showed in the first chapter, certain attempts to discover Malory’s biographical history would lead to him appearing very much anti-establishment. However in this instance, in order that Wakeman becomes tainted as standing for values outside the rock subculture’s criteria, an alternative interpretation of knighthood that links Malory with the establishment is required instead. Tennyson is meanwhile considered inferior when compared to earlier, purer, and more authentic ‘folk’ originated poems, *The Idyls*... are described as a “sub-Beowulfian epic poem” (*ibid*).

As “authenticity is arguably the most important value ascribed to popular music” (Thornton 1995: 26), the Arthurian myth is appropriated by Wakeman to give his work authenticity. Consequently, for those taste-formers occupying a different taste culture to Wakeman, it is important for them to show how Wakeman’s version of the myth is not *really* authentic after all. As the authenticity of the ‘high’ Arthur is exposed, Wakeman himself and his album are shown to be part of the value system of the establishment, and thus inauthentic in its own right within the more general rock field. With Wakeman’s sources now culturally devalued, this enables the review of the album to focus on the inauthentic nature of the music itself. Consequently, the album is described by Ian Macdonald in his review of the album as “Rent-an-Epic... [with] Mock Liszt, fake Brahms... [and] phoney Aaron Copeland... embellished with a few random electronic seagulls” (1975: 20). Wakeman is positioned here as little more than a classical cover artist. As such, in the wider context of “a rock aesthetic stressing individual distinction, authenticity, and the reliance of self-compositions, the routine and predictable covers exemplified by... [certain popular acts] quickly fell into disrepute” (Inglis 2005: 169)⁹⁶. By associating Wakeman with his inauthentic source, the strategy of this article is to naturalise the derivative nature of Wakeman’s work, and thus ensure Wakeman’s interpretation is shown as inauthentic.

For a more high cultural press of course, Wakeman’s high cultural influences would not be a problem. However, as I showed earlier in this chapter, progressive rock was not a purely highbrow taste culture. Indeed, for all progressive music’s attempts to create a unity between high and popular culture, “the progressive rock repertory does

not construct a synthesis at all, but instead occupies the spaces between these value systems” (Sheinbaum 2002: 30), and so it was unable to be accepted by either. Progressive rock “never entirely abandoned the legacy of the pop song. Most progressive rock albums contain at least a few songs of 3-4 minutes in length” (Macan 1997: 43), and although progressive may have drawn on high culture, this was in a combination of “classical music’s sense of space and monumental scope with rock’s raw power and energy” (Macan 1997: 3). Meanwhile, Wakeman’s populist credentials were now at their peak, and that would not endear him to a high value system that “regard[ed] commercial success as suspect” (Bourdieu 1993: 50).

Indeed, it was considered equally important for progressive rock to “subvert many of high culture’s central tenets” (Macan 1997: 166) and Wakeman’s subtle distancing from the progressive rock field would result in his work being criticised exactly for having the popular leanings that he introduced to it. Those analysing progressive rock find Wakeman does not fit comfortably within the required standards of aesthetic value that exist within the field, and Macan suggests that “there is not as much substance beneath the surface of the music as one would hope for... often creating a pastiche-like effect in the process” (1997: 45). Stump comes to a similar conclusion; “there was professionalism, ingenuity, emotional literacy, but little compositional depth” (1997: 166), whilst bemoaning; “would that such good taste had been in evidence with Rick Wakeman’s stabs at musical fantasy” (1997: 190, see also Voorvelt 2000: 67, 72).

The *Times* of 2nd June 1975 reviewed Wakeman’s concert and sought to emphasise the distance between progressive and high culture by stating that, “Rick Wakeman is the latest arrival among rock music’s self-appointed virtuosi” (Norman 1975: 7). It is clear that by any normative value system within the high aesthetic, Wakeman would be considered in no way a virtuoso, and Wakeman’s “self-appointed status is considered spurious” (McLennan 2003: 550). This conclusion is enhanced by the description of the concert, which magnifies the boring, repetitive, simplistic nature of the music and display, opposing the show to high aesthetic values of complexity and difficulty. We hear how “the same electric note [was struck] an astonishing number of times” (Norman 1975: 7). To classical purists, repetition would be seen as “narrow predictability” (Potter 1998: 39), thereby enabling the dominant culture to assert its

taste by refusal of the progressive rock aesthetic, and thus re-affirming a system of belief that suggests “contemporary popular music shows itself to be stifled by its own conditions of production, endlessly repeating a very restricted repertoire of images and sounds” (Durant 1985: 98). Re-appropriation of the Arthurian canon would be a necessary strategy in this approach, as the ‘low’ values of rock are magnified by use of the hyperbolic ‘astonishing’ to provide an absurd contrast with the ‘high’ values of the myth. We are told by the *Times* reviewer how it “was a little hard to believe” the audience were now in Camelot, as “Wakeman... spent some time telling jokes about beer and Jews and being drunk” (Norman 1975: 7). By this statement, the reviewer creates the impression of an absurd juxtaposition of systems of value that cannot work in synthesis. If that were not enough, we are then told that, “we were not in the noble past, but in a superstar’s wooly-minded, undisciplined present” (*ibid*). Wakeman’s present is most definitely not ‘noble’ and instead he has to make do with the rather condescending comment that the show had a certain “foolish charm” (*ibid*).

In the same year, the 19th June issue of *Rolling Stone* also chose to magnify the dichotomy between the high myth and the popular form of entertainment. Their review questions whether Wakeman is aware of the meaning of items such as the rose on the booklet, and assumes he is not. By this strategy, the reviewer asserts his own cultural capital at the expense of Wakeman, thereby exposing Wakeman as inauthentic whilst asserting his own authority to criticise based on his ‘superior’ knowledge of the myth. This enables the reviewer to highlight the inauthentic commercial nature of the performance, and to claim Wakeman “is writing ultra-light entertainments, *not without their cynical edge methinks*. These entertainments are popular with a group of people who I suspect are *afraid of real classical music*” (Ward 1975, my emphasis). Wakeman is populist, ‘cynical’ and inauthentic when compared to the authenticity of ‘real’ classical music, good taste is considered to belong only to those who have the cultural competence to understand the ‘authentic’ classical aesthetic (cf Bourdieu 1984: 65, 74). The creation of an opposition between ‘real’ classical music and Wakeman serves to ensure the maintenance of classical music’s elevated stature in relation to other musical forms. Meanwhile *Sounds* (5/4/1975), when discussing how, “the album handles the Arthurian legends sympathetically” (Barton 1975: 17), nonetheless voiced doubts about the contrast

between the high myth and the popular cultural form, “you wonder if it is, really, all it pretends to be.”

Ultimately, it is only when the album is received without comparison to the dominant Arthurian myth that it receives a favourable response. As an album by Rick Wakeman, rather than either a progressive rock album or an Arthurian album, reviews become more favourable. *Melody Maker* sums up this location of Wakeman’s cultural standing: “If one approaches ‘Arthur’ from the standpoint of entertainment designed to appeal to a wide audience, than one can enjoy this dramatization of the legends in the same way one might appreciate a lighthearted musical or cinema spectacular” (Welch 1975b: 37).

In this chapter I have shown how Wakeman, in his attempt to redefine the progressive rock field whilst also struggling for a position in the popular music field found himself occupying not only progressive rock’s positioning as a middlebrow taste culture, but an almost unique position between high and popular culture that saw him attempt to re-position the progressive rock field itself. I have shown how the battle for cultural legitimacy took place by appropriating identities of the Arthurian myth, and it was the battle for these identifications upon which the struggle over cultural distinction took place. What is clear is that progressive rock can not be simply looked at as ‘art’ music as some academic commentators have been prone to do. Instead, I have shown how the differing cultural competencies of various taste-cultures affect their response to Wakeman’s *Arthur*. Although I showed in chapter three how a popular music album such as Wakeman’s may not hold much value within that particular academic subculture, the implicit positioning of progressive rock within the cultural hierarchy of philosopher Bill Martin sees him condemn more ‘lowbrow’ tastes such as melodic rock, of which he complains that he does not believe “there has ever been a more awful form of music” (1998: 263). Martin’s comments serve to illustrate how a genre such as progressive rock, with its high cultural leanings, proves to be far more akin to an academic taste-culture than music rooted more obviously in the ‘popular’. The next chapter seeks to redress this balance by looking at this ‘awful form of rock music’ to see how it too is not averse to appropriating the Arthurian myth in its bid for cultural legitimacy.

Chapter 7: Commercial Sites of Arthur? Middlebrow Anxiety and the Melodic Rock Aesthetic

To suggest that Rick Wakeman and progressive rock is the only area of the rock spectrum where the Arthurian myth proves to be a popular subject would be to ignore Arthurian appropriations ranging from such bands as the thrash metal of Gravedigger's *Excalibur* to the power-metal of the band Kamelot (emphasising the crunching metallic style of their music by substituting Ks for Cs). Gary Hughes, singer and main songwriter of the melodic rock band *Ten*, whilst also writing albums for the Magnum vocalist Bob Catley, released his *Once and Future King (OAFK)* two CD rock opera in 2003. As a popular rock version of Arthur, Hughes's provides an interesting comparison to Wakeman's work. As Wakeman's album was released at a time when progressive rock had crossed over into the mainstream, so Hughes's work arrived in a period when the subcultural field in which he was positioned had retreated from the mainstream. In this chapter I shall demonstrate how the melodic rock subculture has developed as a reading formation, before looking at how Arthur is appropriated by Gary Hughes for his rock opera. Finally, I analyse how this reading of Arthur is both constructed and received within the melodic rock field.

7.1 Vicious Companions: The struggle for status in the melodic rock field

Firstly, it is necessary to chart the melodic rock field's trajectory from its inception until the release of Gary Hughes's *OAFK*. This will enable us to see how the development of the field has impacted on the music texts released in the present day. Consequently, this approach will allow for an analysis of the version of Arthur that Gary Hughes chooses to present in his rock opera, and also how this is received by fans and critics respectively. In this section, I look at how melodic rock is positioned within an academic subcultural hierarchy, and discuss its relationship to the field of large-scale production.

Much as with Wakeman, the melodic rock field occupies an unusual position with regards to economic and cultural fields, mainly due to the trajectory that the melodic rock field has taken through its existence. "Even at the height of its popularity, it [heavy metal] had begun to fragment" (Kahn-Harris 2002: 135), and this

fragmentation saw heavy metal split both into more extreme versions such as death metal, but also into forms such as melodic rock. Originally seen as a commodified form of the more 'authentic' rock forms such as heavy metal or progressive rock, melodic rock sought a "generic cross-fertilization" (Straw 1990: 101) of elements from many areas of rock and pop music.

As such it is clear that the melodic rock field has, at certain stages throughout its development, been anything but autonomous from the economic field. However, much as progressive rock has slipped from the spotlight, it is clear that the melodic rock field has seen its fanbase decline. Consequently, Chris Atton's charting of progressive rock's cultural trajectory can be adopted for melodic rock also. "From being a major contributor to major record company coffers... [melodic rock] has for many years found itself a pariah, its chosen music... almost written out of rock history (at best written-off)" (Atton 2001: 30), thus suggesting that the field has indeed shifted away from the economic field. Moreover, Holly Kruse argues that some acts can occupy spaces in both the fields of large-scale and restricted production. In contrast to Bourdieu who presents these as 'distinct' fields, Kruse suggests that acts in the restricted field have "never been fully autonomous from the economic field" (2003: 153). With its background in the economic field, melodic rock appears to be a fine example of how, rather than being set up purely as an opposition between the commercial and the aesthetic, the restricted melodic rock field can work in tension with the field of large-scale production.

Melodic rock has singularly avoided analysis within academia, partly because of its commercial roots and "the traditional reluctance inherent to the academic community to engage itself with forms of popular culture" (Karja 2006: 7), especially within popular music. The casual dismissal of certain forms of rock within the academy are shown in Harris M. Berger's flippant comment that "whereas metal bands want to overturn society, a commercial rock band merely want to pull a little harmless mischief" (Berger, H. 1999: 51), whilst Richard Shusterman makes the startling generalisation that by the 1990s, rock's "long swell of creative energy... [had] largely waned" (Shusterman 1999: 223). Deena Weinstein puts forward an excellent critique as to why critics might avoid melodic rock:

Rock critics must overcome the judgement that they are engaged in a trivial pursuit and they do so by differentiating good from bad music, defining their superior taste by contrast to the forms that they brand debased. Since many critics have been schooled in high culture, they are particularly sensitive to charges that they are simply hyping commercial dross. If they defended all kinds of rock music, they would not have any prospects for gaining credibility in the general culture” (2004: 306).

It is clear that this can be extended to rock criticism within the academy. Melodic rock finds itself stuck between traditional aesthetic value judgements, and the problem that it has been positioned as being just *too* commercial, with its ideologies naturalised too deeply for it to be of any political worth for academics to analyse. In the previous chapter I argued that the mainstream was not a stable entity (pp. 190-191), and this instability often results in subcultural identities being affiliated into the mainstream sensibility (cf Toynbee 2002: 160). Although I also discussed how the mainstream is often used by members of subcultures to position themselves as authentic in opposition to the inauthentic mainstream (cf Thornton 1995: 101), the mainstream is also used by academics as a term used to “search for the normal, the average, the routine and the mundane... as a counterbalance to sociology’s orientation toward the conspicuous and bizarre” (Thornton 1995: 94).

In a genre where, as Albin J. Zak III says of Def Leppard, their “sound is intentionally controlled, made safe for mainstream pop consumption” (2001: 64-65) this aligns melodic rock too closely with a mainstream sensibility, where “pop music has most often been noted... for its *madeness*- that is, the songwriting and/or technological craft that goes into its production... [and thus finds itself] labelled as artificial and inauthentic” (Oakes 2004: 70). Elizabeth L. Wollman extends the point, when she suggests that rock in general has “strong commercial moorings- which are often downplayed by the music industry, denied by the rock press, and ignored by fans” (2004: 311). Christopher Washburne further articulates the worry that “it is troubling to think that... music scholars choose to write about their own favourite music... while ignoring the mundane. The music that actually plays a role in the everyday lives of millions” (2004: 143). Nonetheless, despite the lack of analysis of the genre, melodic rock follows similar patterns to other subcultures and these approaches can be used to give an outline of how the subculture has developed. However, unlike most subcultures dealt with in academia, melodic rock occupies an unusual position in that

its roots are in a commercial form which then retreats into a near invisible category of rock music, away and apart from the mainstream.

Melodic rock's roots lie in the 1980s. As metal and rock bands sought to increase commercial potential, so the complexity of keyboard laden melodies of progressive rock were merged with the heaviness and rhythmic nature of heavy metal, with hooks⁹⁷ and choruses akin to mainstream pop also used in order to increase its fanbase beyond the hardcore of a rock subculture, and move into the mainstream. Robert Walser argues that Bon Jovi, one of the more successful melodic rock bands "focussed the intensity and heaviness of metal with the romantic sincerity of pop and the 'authenticity' of rock, helping to create a huge new gender-balanced audience for heavy metal" (1993: 13), and a similar formula could be applied to melodic rock as a whole. As Longhurst shows that Rock n Roll was always a hybrid form (1995: 95), so it can be argued that melodic rock became itself a hybrid form of rock. Melodic rock has proven itself "capable of creating its own archetypes by hybridizing with, and improving on, features or genres usually associated with art music" (Nicholls 2004: 103).

One of the consequences of melodic rock commercialising itself is that, rather than being a field discrete from the economic field, criteria of success such as the amount of albums sold (cf Bourdieu 1993: 38) became important. Although Anti-Ville Karja claims that "the 1960s and 1970s [were] the golden era of album-oriented rock" (2006: 15), for bands such as Def Leppard the 1980s proved equally fruitful, certainly in commercial terms⁹⁸. Although referring to country music and pop, Allan Moore's analysis applies equally well to melodic rock in that:

Whereas in the late 1960s, authenticity was the preserve of a politicised, selfless counter-culture, in the late 1980s there was no such counter-culture, and thus 'authenticity' became allied to... an unreserved embrace of the 'pop' to which it was so antithetical twenty years earlier (2002: 213-214).

Suddenly, a position-taking strategy that valued the hit single as opposed to the traditional high cultural approach that views "a three-minute single... as superficial" (Fast 2001: 77) could be one that lent authority to melodic rock and would signal a

melodic rock text as authentic. Def Leppard's success is a key example of how melodic rock shifted to a more commodified populist form than many of the previous rock bands. Whilst the likes of Led Zeppelin shunned singles in order to emphasise their artistic integrity (cf Fast 2001: 72), and "the group's commitment to musical truth informed an 'anti-commercialism' which turned out to have a remarkable selling power" (Frith and Horne 1989: 90), Def Leppard embraced the concept of the top 40 hit, targeting the lucrative US market and managing 5 top twenty singles in the UK off the *Hysteria* album alone, with the title track also reaching number 26 (Roberts, D. 2003: 148). Indeed, the *Guinness British Hit Singles and Albums* feel the need to begin their description of the band with the phrase "mainstream UK rock stalwarts" (*ibid*).

What is clear nonetheless, is that the relations between melodic rock and the mainstream have "not [been] stable, but under constant negotiation and reformation" (Karja 2006: 17). As the mainstream appeal of these bands has faded, so melodic rock has retreated from the mainstream, and moved back into being a discrete subculture. Rowe argues that such movements within rock fields are not unusual, and that "rock [has been] alternatively positioned as dominated by consumer capitalism or as subversive of capitalism" (1995: 50). From a position of huge commercial success and great popularity, melodic rock has now become virtually invisible to those outside of the subculture (cf Harris 2000: 5). It is erroneous to think that, as Toynbee claims, "by the 1980s the rock community had already begun to break up" (2002: 159). Rather, it is better to acknowledge that the community has been driven underground, and has become more recognisable as a subculture⁹⁹.

Although Rupa Huq claims that one "problem with subcultural theory is that it implies long-term commitment, whereas participants are always drifting off into other scenes" (2002: 92), this is not entirely accurate. Although it is indeed true that many of the original fans of melodic rock have now drifted away from the genre, the consequence of this is that those who are left are those who have made a long-term commitment to the musical form. As an example, within the *Magnum* discussion list¹⁰⁰ 111 out of the 139 people who listed their ages are in the group 25-40. That is 79.85% of the group.

However although in many subcultures “movement away from the subculture towards the mainstream is perceived as... a betrayal of ‘roots’” (Bannister 2006: 81), this is not necessarily the case for melodic rock, where many of its consecrated artists originate from a position close to the mainstream. Hills sums up the distinction between past and present relations to the field of production when discussing his own fandom of the band *Toto*. He naturalises their original position in the economic field, while noting how this has changed: “Toto, although an American AOR/MOR band, are largely ignored in their home market... Toto are... valued by their fans through discourses of musicianship” (2002: 84). Although attempting to set up his own tastes as cult tastes, Hills cannot avoid making the distinction that this musical virtuosity occurs *despite* the band’s melodic rock background, suggesting that the natural position of such bands would be in opposition to discourses of musicianship, that is in the popular chart field. His claim that Toto are ignored is also slightly erroneous and looks at the band from a rigid synchronic position rather than its diachronic path. Although they may indeed have faded from the public spotlight by 2002, this statement avoids the fact that with *Africa* and *Rosanna* hitting numbers 1 and 2 in the Billboard Singles charts in 1982 (see Strong 1994: 738-739), Grammy awards for their album *Toto IV*, and band members’ appearances on Michael Jackson’s massive selling *Thriller* album, Toto were anything but ignored in their home country in the early 1980s.

Having shown in this section melodic rock’s origination within the field of large-scale production, I now wish to look at how the position of the melodic rock field affects Hughes’s appropriation of the Arthurian myth. As such, the following section discusses how popular versions of the myth are utilised by Hughes. However, my argument is complicated by the fact that melodic rock has retreated from the mainstream position it held in the 1980s. Therefore, I also discuss how the high-cultural value of the dominant Arthurian myth legitimates melodic rock as an ‘authentic’ subculture.

7.2 Born To Be King? Gary Hughes’s Arthurian Interpretation

King Arthur would prove to be a useful subject matter for Hughes to mine. By utilising and appropriating Arthur’s “specific *cultural* role... it was its *cultural*

meaning which was most related to [the album's] status" (Willis 1978: 52). As melodic rock albums require a 'big' sound, so the grandeur and melodrama of Arthur proves to be a good fit. Thus, *OAFK* "mediated not only essential cultural values, but directly developed them in other elements of expressive style" (Willis 1978: 53). As a high-pop authenticity is required to achieve a homology with the melodic rock field, so the myth can be used in order to obtain this authenticity by appropriating a certain form of Arthur. Arthur provides an opportunity for Hughes's albums to both resist the mainstream, yet also intertwine with certain elements of it, having as it does ties to the high cultural texts of Malory and Tennyson, yet also allowing for borrowing from popular novels such as Cornwell's *Warlord Chronicles*. It is important to note that "independence is always a form of negotiation with the dominant culture, a much more complex and ambiguous notion than simple 'resistance'" (Bannister 2006: 78). The high cultural background of Arthur is used as legitimation of melodic rock's aspirations for authenticity and musicianship, an opportunity for Hughes to be involved in "the symbolic revolution through which artists free themselves from bourgeois demands and define themselves as the sole masters of their art" (Bourdieu 1993: 169), yet also saves Hughes from having to abandon the commercial 'authenticity' also ingrained in the subculture.

A textual reading of the album suggests that it is indeed the populist sources that take centre stage within Hughes's interpretation. It is true that by analysing the text Hughes' myriad of sources are revealed to an extent. The tell-tale use of the name 'Morgana' lends a nod to Boorman's *Excalibur*, for example, whilst other elements, although found in popular sources, can also be found in ancient texts. *The Mabinogion* makes a brief reference to Twrch killing "Gwydre son of Arthur" (1976: 172), whilst the description of Anglesey as 'Dragon Island' does not date solely from Zimmer Bradley. The 6th century historian Gildas makes a passionate condemnation of Maelgwyn of Gwynedd in his *Ruin of Britain*, although it is unclear whether the Island referred to is Britain as a whole, or just Anglesey:

What of you, dragon of the island, you who have removed many
Of these tyrants from their country and even their life? You are
Last on my list, but first in evil
(1978: 32).

Nonetheless, the dominant source for Hughes's text appears to be Bernard Cornwell's *Warlord Chronicles*. Although the tensions between Pagan and Christian have been a popular theme since Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon* (1983), and although many elements are certainly not unique to Cornwell¹⁰¹, many of the more important plot turns are to be found in both Cornwell and Hughes's work, as detailed in Table 7.1

Table 7.1 Comparison between Bernard Cornwell's *Warlord Chronicles* and Gary Hughes's *Once and Future King*

Hughes	Cornwell
<i>The Druid's Sacred Isle- The Dragon Island- Ynys Mon.</i>	<i>Ynys Mon was still sacred to the few Druids who, like Merlin, tried to restore the Gods to Great Britain (1997: 34).</i>
The shield wall as main battle technique.	The shield wall as main battle technique.
<i>Arthur swears his oath to protect the land and unite the warring kings.</i>	<i>His ideal of a nation at peace with itself (1997: 240).</i>
Galahad as warrior.	<i>Galahad cut down two men... 'Let me fight!' (1996: 278)</i>
<i>Guinevere bears Arthur a son- Gwydre.</i>	<i>Arthur immediately decreed that her child must be a daughter and, of course, would marry his Gwydre when the time came (1997: 138).</i>
<i>Gawaine (a virgin prince).</i>	<i>'Merlin... taught me to be pure' (1998: 67).</i>
<i>Merlin and Nimue swear a mighty oath to bring back the Old Gods to Britain... To do this they will eventually have to offer as sacrifice, all the sacred Druidic Treasures.</i>	<i>'By themselves they're tawdry nothings, but put them all together and you can have the Gods hopping like frogs' (1996: 409).</i>
<i>Arthur and Galahad arrive with the royal guard in time to prevent the conclusion of the brutal rite. Gwydre is rescued but Gawaine is already dead. Merlin... and Nimue manage to take the corpse of Gawaine with them.</i>	<i>Gwydre lived. He was in the grip of two Blackshields who, seeing Arthur, let the boy go free... The corpse's throat had been cut almost to the spine and all the man's blood had run down into the Cauldron, and still it ran to drip from the lank, reddened ends of Gawains long hair (1998: 106). <i>Merlin and Nimue took the other Treasures away. An ox-cart carried the cauldron with its ghastly contents (1998: 111).</i></i>

<i>Merlin brings the corpse of Gawaine to Mynydd Baddon and devises a deception that Gawaine will be tied to a horse and ridden through the Saxon warband, unaffected by their arrows.</i>	<i>It was the horseman I watched... the rider's face was nothing but a grinning skull covered by dessicated yellow skin. It was Gawain, dead Gawain... Thus began the slaughter of Mynydd Baddon (1998: 271).</i>
<i>Nimue is furious that Merlin has already 'wasted' Gawaine on the Saxon warriors.</i>	<i>'Nimue did not approve of me bringing Gawain to this battle, she believes it was a waste' (1998: 289).</i>
<i>In her fury and madness she orders Merlin bound- she cages him like an animal and his eyes are burned out.</i>	<i>The cage barred the last few yards of the gorge... and I twitched with alarm as a thing scabbled towards me... Merlin was blind (1998: 402).</i>
<i>She [Nimue] must have it [Excalibur] for the rituals that will bring the Old Gods back to Britain.</i>	<i>'She wants Excalibur, she wants every scrap of power so that when she relights the fires the Gods will have no choice but to respond' (1998: 352).</i>
<i>As Arthur watches she [Nimue] sacrifices Merlin to her Sea God Manawydan... Within minutes of Merlin's bleeding corpse drifting from sight, a terrible storm lashes Arthur's ships.</i>	<i>He was still smiling as Nimue leaned down from her saddle with the knife. One hard stroke was all it needed (1998: 434). <i>She heaved and pushed Merlin's corpse further into the water. At last, free of the mud, he floated and she pushed him out into the current as a gift to her Lord, Manawydan (1998: 435).</i></i>

Meanwhile, the album itself also works hard to signal Hughes' borrowings from a myriad of both high and popular cultural sources. The singers chosen for the project range from singers from the field of progressive rock (Damien Wilson and DC Cooper) to the more commercial and 'traditional' melodic rock singer Danny Vaughan (*Waysted* and *Tyketto*). This may not only "have the potential... to pose an intriguing interpretive problem" (Zak 2001: 52), so problematising whether the field borrows from 'high' or 'popular' sources, but also serves to allow different interpretive communities to draw out elements best suited to them, and has the commercial benefit that the album would possibly "sell to a wider audience" (*ibid*).

The lyrics meanwhile show a nod both to the appropriation of Arthur, but also show how core values of the melodic rock subculture are incorporated also. The title track articulates the idea of Arthur as myth, a fluid story that is re-shaped and re-told through the ages, and as such allows space for Hughes's own interpretation without

being tied to any canonical representation of Arthur, whilst also introducing the idea that Hughes is tied to the story's 'lineage', in addition to the lineage of melodic rock:

They've slain the man but not his heartbeat,
His spirit soars on the wind.
They claim the day, but the fire inside remains,
For the lost, once and future king.

In contrast to this explicit reference to Arthur, other songs reference the commercial peak of melodic rock. *Avalon* draws on generic popular song lyrics ("I love you, I need you, the truth will not deceive you") that have no explicit Arthurian reference, and instead could be drawn from any commercial melodic rock album. As such, Hughes manages to straddle the 'high-pop' space inhabited by melodic rock.

The opening track manages to encapsulate all the tensions present in melodic rock. It begins with a bombastic, neo-orchestral symphonic keyboard sound, signalling from the very start "a seriousness of purpose and depth of meaning that the lyrics alone cannot sustain" (Dettmar and Richey 1999: 3). Meanwhile, although melodic rock features the core 'masculine' instruments of drums, guitar and bass that most rock genres use, many melodic rock bands also add a keyboard player. The keyboard is often seen as a 'feminine' instrument with regards to its timbre, compared to the 'masculine' guitar (cf Walser 1993: 108, Macan 1997: 43). Moreover, by starting the Opera not with a song about Arthur, but of his sword Excalibur, Hughes negotiates the different polarities of the field. In a field which has a legacy of certain bands¹⁰² in the genre being labelled as "cock rock" (cf Longhurst 1995: 121) with an emphasis on male physicality, and where musicians were liable to "symbolically use... the electric guitar as a phallus or gun" (Negus 1996: 125, see also Den Tandt 2004: 140), then for Hughes to pay homage to his roots there must be some reference to past traditions whilst acknowledging the greater depth required for distinction in the present day.

In this context, lyrics such as AC/DC's *Let Me Put My Love Into You*, with unsubtle innuendos about how the singer has "got the power any hour to show the man in me... [with] reputations blown to pieces with my artillery" are not necessarily appropriate. However, despite its new-found position away from the field of large-scale

production, melodic rock “can never be gender-neutral because rock music is intelligible only in its historical and discursive contexts” (Walser 1993: 135). As such, starting the album with a song about the sword, with its own phallic connotations¹⁰³ allows the masculinist tendencies still apparent within melodic rock, where “in terms of gender ideology, rock bands and rock instruments are masculine” (Bayton 1998: 40), to be packaged in a form that will avoid offending the sensibilities of certain members of the audience.

The very structure of the album itself as ‘Rock Opera’ also appears to be a by-product of melodic rock’s retreat from the mainstream¹⁰⁴. The number of ‘Rock Operas’ being released by melodic rock artists has increased dramatically and in recent years the subgenre has seen the likes of Dio’s *Magica* (2000), Bob Catley’s *Middle Earth* (2001), Nikolo Kotsev’s *Nostradamus* (2003), and Tobias Sammet’s *Avantasia* (2002) in addition to Gary Hughes’s *OAFK*. As sales have declined, so releasing singles has proven to be unviable commercially. The result of this has been that albums rather than singles have become the dominant form of release, of similar length to that of classical music, signalling clearly how “the signs of rock authenticity... change over time” (Auslander 1999: 71). The consequence of this is that an album allows more space for greater exploration of themes (cf Thornton 1995: 74). This has meant that similar strategies have been employed to those of progressive rock in order to emphasise the musicianship and artistic integrity of the performers such as use of a synthesiser to simulate an orchestral backing and a blending of acoustic, electric and electronic instruments (Holm-Hudson 2002: 3). It could also be argued that the production of the album signals it as a melodic rock record (cf Zak 2001: 41). Guitarist Chris Francis’s powerfully controlled guitar riffs are balanced with more delicate piano and keyboard melodies. The use of different timbres and acoustic and electric parts is “a signifier to fans of the band members’ complex and multi-faceted identities” (Fast 2001: 80) and thus showcase the skill, variety, and complexity within the music.

Martina Elicker argues that “composers of rock operas attempted to ‘intellectualize’ the rock music scene and at the same time bridge the gap between classical music and pop music” (2002: 307), whilst Stephen Davies suggests that it is difficult to classify Rock Opera, occupying as it does a space between the high cultural form of opera,

and popular cultural form of pop music (1999: 193). As such, for a genre such as melodic rock where its identity occupies a liminal space between high and popular culture, rock opera is an ideal form. Although appealing to certain high cultural elements, the Rock Opera differs from the concept albums found in progressive rock in that the songs “can sustain an unprecedented degree of independence” (Nicholls 2004: 105) from surrounding tracks.

In contrast to Rick Wakeman, whose *Arthur* was released at a time when despite progressive rock’s mainstream success, “it should be perceived as having some quality of the underground ideology” (Kawamoto 2005: 233), the position is inverted for Hughes, and for his *OAFK* it is important that, although now in an underground genre, it should have some quality of the mainstream ideology and “should be perceived as something more sophisticated and polished” (Kawamoto 2005: 233).

Having textually analysed *OAFK*, I now wish to turn to Hughes’s inter-textual position-taking strategies. In a reversal of the subcultural position that Wakeman found himself in upon the release of *Arthur*, I shall now look at how in interviews, Hughes was required to appeal to the mainstream commercial origins of melodic rock. In addition to this, Hughes was required to struggle for position within melodic rock’s current status as a field of restricted production, with Hughes’s need to strive for symbolic capital as a result.

7.3 Before First Light: The Inter-textual shaping of *OAFK*

This section discusses how the inter-textual strategies employed by both Hughes and his record company seek to straddle melodic rock’s new-found middle-brow positioning, with appeals made to both populist and highbrow elements within the album. Hughes is eager to point out in interviews the commercial nature that still lies within the text, despite its rock opera origins. He states that “from a radio or performance standpoint where you might only play selected tracks it is imperative that the songs make sense when extracted from the albums... I had to try and make it as universally acceptable as possible”¹⁰⁵. Moreover, there is implicit positioning against the likes of Wakeman, as Hughes highlights the individual nature of his songs in contrast with those found in progressive rock concept albums, for example, arguing

that “it can all become a blur. Almost like fifty minutes of the same song”¹⁰⁶. However, an effort is made to position the commercial element of melodic rock as authentic in its own right, as we are told that elements are “*pure commercial rock*” (my emphasis¹⁰⁷) thus generating the populist authenticity of ‘straightforward’ rock as opposed to needless complexity.

Therefore, although “writing a long song with a complex story is *obviously* more challenging than writing a 3 minute rock song, even though the latter is more likely to achieve chart success!” (my emphasis¹⁰⁸) Hughes does not go so far as to write songs that could be seen as “a decadent art cut off from social life, respecting neither God nor man” (Bourdieu 1984: 49) and thus not acting in tandem with his ‘historical’ Arthur. Hughes makes an attempt to make the ‘historical’ Arthur “become... concretised as past reality” (Munslow 1997: 69) and the Arthurian myth thus offers Hughes a definite link with the past, a link with an ‘authentic’ truth. This relates to authenticity in melodic rock, which involves paying homage to yet reconfiguring the commercial roots of the genre. This is especially important as the rock aesthetic is itself “a quest for authenticity and roots” (Toynbee 2002: 158) and it is clear that to maintain his position within the melodic rock field, “the importance of retaining a point of origin” (Moore 2002: 215) for his work is vital to Hughes.

The need for a ‘point of origin’ is something that Gary Hughes recognises, and he seeks to gain cultural authority from aligning himself with consecrated acts within the field. The official *Ten* website blurb makes the curious boast that “Gary’s reputation as a singer had grown, and as well as almost having an audition with Def Leppard... Gary was also offered the role of singer for the Mamas Boys”¹⁰⁹. This is a clear case of Hughes aligning himself with one of the consecrated artists of the field. It is in Hughes’s “interest to... perpetuate... the existing rules of the game” (Bourdieu 1993: 183), especially as this field is one that seems to be resistant to change. There appears to be “a need for security and authenticity... changeless and secure” (Willis 1990: 44) for fans of the genre. As such, artists’:

Strategies... depend on the state of the legitimate problematic, that is, the space of possibilities inherited from previous struggles, which tends to define the space of possible position-takings and

thus orient the search for solutions and, as a result, the evolution of production (Bourdieu 1993: 183-184).

Hughes therefore shows the importance of continually placing his music in a melodic rock 'Lineage' (cf Walser 1993: 13). Kruse makes an insightful critique of indie music, that should also be taken on board for other forms: "the idea of class habitus, however, is not sufficient to explain production, consumption, and social practice in indie music scenes: generation, gender, and ethnicity also help shape indie music contexts" (2003: 151). Generation is particularly important for shaping melodic rock. This approach is furthered by the advertising for the album, which makes the boast that "the stunning final result is guaranteed to set in stone the talents of Gary Hughes as a songwriter and producer and shows the class and the immense quality of [sic] British hard rock school, heir of [sic] the tradition of such giants as Whitesnake, Rainbow, UFO, Magnum and Thin Lizzy!"¹¹⁰

Therefore, to be authentic within the melodic rock field, a certain nod to this mainstream background is deemed necessary. Authenticity "is an effect not just of the music itself but also of prior musical and extra-musical knowledge and beliefs; that what counts as authentic varies among musical genres and subcultures" (Auslander 1999: 66). Within a review of *OAFK* for *Fireworks*, Dave Cockett laments the fact that had the track *Dragon Island Cathedral* "been written a dozen or so years ago, I feel confident that it would've scored some major chart action" (2003b: 29). By revealing this attitude Cockett is suggesting that to some in the melodic rock field, authenticity and commercialism are not necessarily mutually exclusive. With a nostalgic nod to the past, Cockett is also showing a desire for mainstream acceptance (cf Walser 1993: 45).

As David Hesmondhalgh points out, it is a fallacy that popular music is only consumed by youth subcultures, and "the musical experiences of other people, of different ages... have been marginalised" (2002: 117). Moreover, as the members of the subculture have become older, this has resulted in a gain in capital (both financial and cultural) among the fans. Access to greater cultural capital occurs "by qualification and by promotion" (Bourdieu 1984: 296) among the fans. Therefore as their cultural capital increases, although melodic rock may have its roots in a

commodified form, commercial acclaim becomes of secondary importance within the field. “The cultural importance of being genuine and sincere... seek[s] to elevate their culture... above the realm of mass culture, media and commerce” (Thornton 1995: 31). Indeed, even the title ‘melodic rock’, rather than the use of the acronym AOR (Adult Oriented Rock) shows the genre’s desire to signify its authenticity, as “a term like melody suggests something to be valued whereas tune suggests a [sic] everyday banal form” (Middleton, quoted in Longhurst 1995: 159).

Therefore, when the time came to promote Hughes’s *OAFK* albums, melodic rock had found itself utilising strategies to distinguish itself from the mainstream. It is interesting to note that although some of these ‘strategies’ are naturalised as conscious decisions in the eyes of the artists, they are also by-products of the decline in commercial success of the genre. In many instances, “the ‘new’ is constructed from a revoicing of traditional and generic elements” (Bannister 2006: 84). As such, melodic rock needs to signify that commercial decline is not an act of failure, but a strategy of distinction. In order for this to work, elements of melodic rock that were previously foregrounded for authentication yet are no longer viable in the new subcultural climate, are now pushed to the background. It is necessary for melodic rock “to emphasise certain ‘root’ elements [of the genre] at the expense of others” (Karja 2006: 12). An example of this ‘revoicing’ can be seen in how the music itself is presented. Although traditionally rock music has been authenticated by its live performance¹¹¹ it is unlikely that *OAFK* would ever be seen live due to monetary constraints. Hughes acknowledges that “in the current climate it’s quite hard to even contemplate something like that when it would be so costly to put on” (Cockett 2003a: 28).

However, this change in emphasis means forms of authentication focus more on the mediated text, its creation and its creator. “By virtue of their creation as recordings rather than live performances- [virtual operas] define for themselves a virtual dramatic space” (Nicholls 2004: 103). Strategies are also put in place to ensure that readings are closed down in order to focus on the text itself and its creation. As Gary Hughes recorded and produced *OAFK* in his own studio this is positioned not as a commercial necessity on his part, but rather as a deliberate strategic choice. Recording in his own studio, although forced on Hughes to an extent because of declining

budgets as melodic rock has moved away from mainstream, “offers the attractive façade of a ‘pure’ listening experience- an unadulterated exchange between artist and listener” (Hibbett 2005: 61). This also means “demystifying the record-making process as that belonging exclusively to and within the invisible space of major corporations” (*ibid*). Fortunately, as recording technologies have improved the cost has reduced and so access to the equipment has become within reach of more people. Therefore, the consequence need not necessarily be the loss of the high production values associated with melodic rock (cf Szekely 2006: 102, see also Regev 2002: 253).

Moreover, although Whiteley et al claim that “the centrality of the recording studio in the whole compositional process... blurs the distinction between artist and producer” (2004: 16), for Gary Hughes, who doubles as both composer and producer, this enables his creative role to be both reinforced and enhanced (cf Mayhew 2004: 155-156). This is especially so in an age where “producers now enjoy unprecedented visibility” (Zak 2001: 180) and are seen not as separate to the creative process, but as “the musicians’ artistic collaborators” (Zak 2001: 17).

Hughes’s relationship with the independent record companies *Now and Then Productions* and *Frontiers* is also beneficial to Hughes’s position-taking within the melodic rock field. Although it may be the case that it is not necessarily the choice of an artist to be signed to an independent label, but rather that the major labels choose to allow this owing to their strategic direction (cf Negus 1999: 96), a by product of the majors not being interested in melodic rock is that Gary Hughes can present his status on an independent label as a strategy of difference and distinction, allowing him to focus on artistic control rather than being constrained by commercial need (cf Hesmondhalgh 1998: 243 and Cohen 1997: 19). When talking about his Rock Opera’s inception, Hughes remarks that “it’s been more a labour of love than anything else” (Cockett 2003a: 26). The happy result of this is that it allows “the quality of independence... [to be] often celebrated because of a posited distance between itself and the undesirable values associated with the production of music in its most rationalized form” (Rowe 1995: 24).

Moreover, Hughes negotiates well the difficulties of appropriating high cultural forms, whilst turning this to his advantage and capitalizing on authentic music's "tendency to emphasize and put high value on the authorship of performers" (Regev 2002: 254). *OAFK* is released outside of his band moniker of *Ten*, which allows emphasis on Hughes and Hughes alone as creative genius and artist, composer and producer combined. This runs contrary to the traditional, and thus maybe more commercial, impression of a "classic rock 'bandness'" (Den Tandt 2004: 152). As Wakeman had also found necessary, Hughes was required to marginalise the dominant myth in order to allow a position-taking strategy that focussed on his own individuality and compositional abilities. By emphasising "there is so much grey area that leaves some space for your own version" (Cockett 2003a: 26) this allows for space as Hughes to ensure he is not tied to a canonical version, and thus he is able to strategically emphasise himself as creative genius behind the album and make a bid for "charismatic legitimation" (Bourdieu 1993: 51) within the field. As a review for the *Atomic Chaser* website¹¹² hails the "ingenious mind" of Hughes, so the 'uniqueness' and 'originality' of Hughes's version are also constructed as we are told how "the story of King Arthur has been told a million times over, but never like this."

Moreover when it comes to interviews with Hughes, he has successfully ensured that the album is seen in terms of his breadth of reading and research, thus creating a well-rounded album away from generic clichés. Yet Hughes himself occupies a somewhat ambivalent position with regards to his sources. In listing the books he researched as ranging from Malory to Monmouth to Lawhead to Cornwell, he keeps open the probability that his sources are myriad and drawn from both high and popular cultural origins. To mirror the 'high-pop' status of melodic rock, Hughes inverts the more usual high and popular cultural roles of his sources. It is important for Hughes's "aesthetic experience... [to be] *apart* but thoroughly *accessible*" (Collins 2002: 23). He attaches authority to the suggestion that "the majority of experts now agree he [Arthur] was... a post Roman pagan war band leader," whilst suggesting that "a number of the more magical/ mystical elements have been retained from a story telling position (It's entertainment after all!)"¹¹³. Therefore, the 'historical' Arthur allows Hughes to retain traditional commercial elements of melodic rock whilst adapting to it's new-found need for higher cultural capital. He promises "the *apartness* of genuine aesthetic expression, but at the same time promises to deliver

that experience to a mass audience” (Collins 2002: 24). Although not producing a “whimsical Hollywood favourite”¹¹⁴, Hughes has ensured that Malory has been re-appropriated to entertainment whilst more popular treatments of the myth are simultaneously raised in cultural status as their authority is valued.

Having shown how Hughes uses inter-texts in order to activate particular reading formations, the final segment of this chapter looks at the reception of the albums by the melodic rock audience. In the previous chapter I showed how Wakeman’s critical reception depended upon which taste culture responded at any one time. In this section, I analyse how response to a text does not merely differ between different taste-cultures, but can differ within this *particular* subculture. I will demonstrate how this struggle for position in the melodic rock field relies on “classificatory schemes, which exist and signify only in their mutual relations, and serve as landmarks or beacons” (Bourdieu 1993: 95).

7.4 Can I Hear the Crowd Applauding? The Melodic Rock Audience’s Reception of *OAFK*

In looking at how the album is received within the melodic rock field, it is important to look at the interrelation of a set of variables and how they relate to one another to determine the taste culture of the melodic rock subculture. Bourdieu expands further, saying that:

The correlation between a practice and social origin... is the resultant of two effects (which may either reinforce or offset each other): on the one hand, the inculcation effect directly exerted by the family or the original conditions of existence; on the other hand, the *specific effect of social trajectory*” (1984: 111, my emphasis).

That is, those fans remaining in the subculture consist of many who have acquired their cultural and symbolic capital, not necessarily through the sole acts of education and class background, but also by their acquired knowledge through time. The effects of this are clear, as a subculture that now consists of people who have acquired their subcultural capital by age, the genre is more firmly fixed in terms of its fans than it was in the 80s. This has a number of effects. Firstly, as the melodic rock scene has

moved away from the mainstream its fans have become relatively more homogenised, and secondly authenticity rather than commercial acclaim has become of paramount importance.

In order to observe how this may affect *OAFK*'s reception, I interviewed *Ten* and Gary Hughes fans who responded to my request from the *Ten* yahoogroups discussion list and the official *Ten* website's discussion forum. Meanwhile, I also make reference to discussions held on the melodicrock.com forum¹¹⁵ in order to theorise as to how Gary Hughes may be positioned within the melodic rock field by fans of the genre, but not of his work.

Melodic rock may have become less popular, but it also means that those who are left act contrary to Rupa Huq's theoretical framework that suggests fans' participation in musical fields are never stable. Melodic rock fans, indeed, are defined by their longevity, and this is often signified by their wearing of tour T-Shirts from tours long ago. This also has the added bonus of showing that the wearer has been into the band for a long time and therefore shows them to be a 'true' fan (cf Berger, H. 1999: 34 and Auslander 1999: 58). Those fans left are the ones with greatest symbolic capital, demonstrating their ability to accumulate knowledge. Indeed, pride of their knowledge of melodic rock extends to their knowledge of Arthur. Because "some fans must be seen to be more important, more knowledgeable than others" (Cavicchi 1998: 106), when the unofficial website www.tenofthebest.com ran a competition to win a copy of *OAFK* Part 1 where entrants had to name 4 'major' knights of the round table, virtually every entrant felt the need to display their knowledge by naming more knights than were asked for.

So Huq's criticisms of subcultural theory do not quite apply here, and come about more because Huq herself is talking about an "ephemeral" youth subculture, rather than an older and more established one. If "dance music culture is dynamic- a process not a fixed entity" (2002: 97), then the stability of melodic rock fans is thus reflected in a genre that is resistant to change (cf chapter two, page 38). As 'youth' arguably shifts to the next big thing so the hardcore remain, moving from mainstream to fringe. Jerome is a fan who certainly follows this pattern, demonstrating the melodic rock fans' new-found isolation as the mainstream has drifted away, as he complains that

“at work they all think I’m a bit old for this sort of nonsense.” This shows clearly that not only were “their tastes... [perceived to be] out of date” (Willis 1990: 43), but the consequence of this is that “by deliberate choice, then, and not by the accident of passive reception, they chose this music” (*ibid*). Jerome’s liking of melodic rock suggests that fans of the genre use it as a mark of distinction, a strategy to “mark themselves off from their families or community” (Frith 1996: 90).

One of the consequences is that members of the subculture demonstrate all too readily how “residual (past) dominant, and emergent popular musics exist in every country, engaged in an ideological struggle that is apparent within the ever-changing musical landscape” (Robinson et al 1991: 109). Their response, indeed, is to celebrate their difference to youth culture, and celebrate the perceived greater amount of cultural capital they have in comparison. Tom utters disparagingly: “Do the majority of young people in Britain have a clue about music?” As “an older generation raised on rock was left stranded by these developments [in music], and began to buy once again the canonical rock albums of its youth, but on the new ‘yuppie’ format of the compact disc” (Toynbee 2002: 157), so it was the case that not only were the more established acts ‘re-consumed’, but younger bands in the same genre came to fans’ attention.

Having set themselves up as distinct from the mainstream, chart music is an area that the fans are particularly keen to position themselves against. Jim insists that Hughes’s compositions are “in a completely different league” to the music in the charts. Tom meanwhile, expresses an ambivalent position: “It would be great to see Gary Hughes make it big-time but I personally think it would spoil things.” Here, there is clearly a reaction to the mainstream, yet the mainstream is necessary in order for melodic rock to define itself in opposition to. “Even when a... culture defines itself against the overexposed entertainments of... the prime-time pleasures of *Top of the Pops*, its identity and activities are conditioned by the desire to be part of something that is not widely distributed” (Thornton 1995: 121).

Brandon sums up what artistic integrity is to the fans, attempting to construct Hughes along the lines of “the Christ-like mystique of the *artiste maudit*, sacrificed in this world and consecrated in the next... Pure art,” after all, “is not made to be consumed” (Bourdieu 1993: 169). He remarks:

There are many who don't like Gary Hughes but its obvious the guy writes the music he loves. He's obviously not into it for the money, otherwise he wouldn't be doing a double CD set/concept piece about the Knights of the Roundtable! Not exactly the stuff making the charts right now (23/10/02).

Jim then manages to link pure art and Hughes with the melodic rock field as a whole, as he mentions how he appreciates “real depth in the songwriting... [with] lots of keyboards.” By linking Hughes’s songwriting with one of the stylistic markers of melodic rock, Jim is making a bid for his own subcultural capital, and showing off how he has “mastery of the instruments for appropriation of these goods” (Bourdieu 1993: 227). The naturalisation of the high cultural role of Arthur in order to bestow value on melodic rock is also picked up by Tom, who proclaims that “it seems natural to me for rock songs to be about this kind of stuff.” Arnold meanwhile suggests that “the regal pomp and majesty go well with the legend of Arthur’s heroic deeds of the Round Table.” We see here how “implicit in these identifications... [with the genre] was the idea that they constituted a connection with an authentic musical form and set of musical practices” (Kruse 2003: 115).

Indeed, the fans’ own appropriation of Arthur is useful for them to define their subculture and melodic rock in reaction to the mainstream in that although many of them have an awareness of Arthurian discussion matter that is populist, they are reluctant to admit to Arthur existing in that ‘mainstream’ form. Doris, despite having an awareness of Hollywood films *Camelot* and *First Knight*, sees Arthur as “pretty specialist” subject matter, whilst Jim argues that Arthur “is not a subject well known enough amongst the public,” despite he himself having a reasonably broad knowledge of Arthurian subject matter, ranging from Boorman’s *Excalibur* to Malory.

The use of Cornwell is not picked up on by the fans, most of whom are eager to highlight the depth of research and variety of sources that have supposedly gone into Hughes’ work. Tom is keen to stress that “Gary Hughes is a perfectionist and this shows up by the immense thought and research that goes into the writings of his music.” Meanwhile, he also tells how “Gary has gone into *more* painstaking detail and it’s probably *more* accurate... [than previous interpretations] I know how fanatical he is and how much research he will have done before putting pen to paper!”

(my emphasis). The presentation of Hughes that is being given by Tom, is clearly one that critiques Hughes's interpretation as determined by Arthur's cultural past, even as Hughes himself represents his version as an innovative story, going beyond, and going into greater depth, than those versions of Arthur that have gone before his (cf Bourdieu 1993: 188).

The necessity for fans to distance themselves from 'cliché' is furthered by their reluctance to categorise Hughes' work and is also coupled with the distinction between Hughes' 'facts' based interpretation, "rather than the Hollywood ideal of Arthur." Jerome articulates these fears explicitly that *Sword and Sorcery* is "as much of a writers' cliché as denim and leather" for melodic rock. As such, a historical based version of Arthur comes as a welcome relief to Jerome as it confirms that his taste is indeed authentic. Jerome relates his feelings before the album's release, and how he was "interested and keen to hear it, but apprehensive on his [Gary Hughes's] behalf because of the ammunition it gave to some of the sections of the media hostile to him and the genre as a whole." To Jerome, it is clear that for Hughes' work to be a marginal genre, is something of a shock (cf Atton 2001: 44).

The reluctance to accept Arthur as populist mirrors both fans and Hughes' attitude towards the melodic rock genre as a whole. Hughes himself is uncomfortable at being labelled a melodic rock songwriter¹¹⁶, following the trend that "many artists bridle at genre categories because they see them as restrictive stereotypes, implying formulaic composition" (Walser 1993: 7). Indeed, Hughes is accepting of the fact that melodic rock has "its own confines, which has been a good and bad thing" (quoted in Ling 2002: 56). However, although Walser suggests that artists "feign indifference to the meaningfulness of genre to fans and institutions in order to claim the appearance of artistic freedom" (1993: 7) the fans themselves, if categorising Hughes, feel the need to qualify the categorisation in order to underscore Hughes' artistic and cultural value, whilst at the same time qualifying that "authenticity is arguably the most important value ascribed to popular music" (Thornton 1995: 26). Jason, although arguing that Hughes' music "has a classic rock feel," also deems it necessary to add that it is "contemporary at the same time." Meanwhile both Howard, despite saying that he thought it was "impossible to categorise Gary's music" and Hilda, who felt that she "can't categorise him," then proceed to do just that, as Howard sees "the essential

component of Gary's music... [as] melody" whereas Hilda states that "as I have got older I have settled more on melodic rock."

This attempt to position Hughes as transcendent from the supposedly restrictive boundaries of melodic rock is partly due to the jockeying for position within the melodic rock field itself (cf Rowe 1995: 18). Perhaps surprisingly, melodic rock follows a similar trend to Carol Duncan's analysis of middlebrow museums, in that it is "expected to observe the boundary between 'high' and 'popular' culture, whatever that might mean at any given moment. As categories of cultural analysis, the commercial and the popular can not always be distinguished, but the presence of too much of either can compromise its integrity and very identity" (2002: 130). This means that Hilda articulates the greater depth in Hughes's songwriting in contrast to other melodic rock artists: "I do enjoy lyrics that mean something rather than lots of songs about banging chicks and drinking beer!" Hilda laughs at one particular Gary Hughes song for lyrics in a similar vein, citing it as an example of the type of music Hughes does not resort to "I love his lyrics, well apart from *Suspended Animation* LOL" The distinction from other melodic rock acts is made more specific by Hermione, who attempts to show Hughes as consecrated within the field: "I think it's melodic rock. It's rock and it's melodic, although it tends to be a bit more epic in the lyrics than *just your average melodic rock band*" (my emphasis).

Although Hermione attempts to genericise other melodic rock acts in relation to Hughes, as "the internal demands of the field of production... regard commercial success as suspect" (Bourdieu 1993: 50), Hughes's detractors make an effort to argue that he is too closely related to the popular, so compromising his position within the melodic rock field. As a result certain fans feel the need to distance themselves from the 'dungeons and dragons' tag, marking out the fact that it is no longer appropriate for the taste culture Hughes and his fans inhabit. Instead, this taste culture appropriate a form of Arthur that is perceived as less generic than the dominant Romance form. This is in order to position their taste-culture away from the threat of 'sword and sorcery' and the lack of cultural value that is perceived to be in such an interpretation. As such, they turn to a 'historical' version of the Arthurian myth, and Arthur becomes a legitimating figure. This allows Jerome to view *OAFK* as a work that will enable Hughes to be seen as a consecrated artist within the field, as his version of Arthur is

portrayed as 'unique'. He is "pleasantly surprised... also slightly relieved that there is very little sword and sorcery... down-playing the sword and sorcery aspect is one less stick for the critics to wield... and without wishing to sound precious, Gary Hughes is better than that."

For non-fans of Hughes' music, even those who are fans of other bands within the melodic rock genre, an attempt is also made to re-position Arthur as fantasy, showing that "genre boundaries are not solid or clear; they are conceptual sites of struggles over the meanings and prestige of social signs" (Walser 1993: 4). To this extent, certain strategies are nothing if not unsubtle. On the melodicrock.com noticeboard, 'epitaph' dryly observes:

That's a tad unfair, Spinal Tap were intentionally funny, Ten are Unintentionally funny. The only way Gary Hughes and his hired chums could be regarded as intentionally funny is if they did something spectacularly twee such as, I don't know, recording a Dio-esque double concept album on some whimsical fantasy such as Sir Ploppy Miggins the fabled dwarf dragon slayer or King Arthur and the knights of the round table, which would be pant wettingly funny (7/10/02).

In this outburst, the poster manages to conflate fantasy with commercialism, by reducing the bands status as musicians to that of merely "hired chums." This is clearly an attempt to marginalise both the band *Ten* and also Gary Hughes within the field, as "the small commercial firm has no more chance of becoming a great consecrated firm than the big 'commercial' writer... has of occupying a recognized position in the consecrated avant-garde" (Bourdieu 1993: 104).

This strategy is taken not only due to the fact that fantasy is seen as a "commercialized and popularized" (Possamai 2006: 59, see also chapter three, page 94), but also in order to achieve his detractors' target of defining Hughes' writing as unoriginal and operating within generic clichés such as sword and sorcery. This is in many ways a comment on "the 'horrors' of popular kitsch" (Bourdieu 1984: 61-62) which they see in Hughes's work, and this is developed more explicitly in the following exchange:

Gav: Is it just me or are those King Arthur soundbytes the most hilariously bad Spinal Tapesque piles of wank ever recorded? (25/7/03)

TASKAMP: I don't even need to listen to the King Arthur thing to agree with you (25/07/03)

In many ways, these two melodic rock fans are “recuperating, in parody or sublimation, the very objects refused by the lower-degree aestheticism” (Bourdieu 1984: 61). In an attempt to show melodic rock has cultural value as a whole, they reduce Hughes to nothing but a bad pastiche of ‘authentic’ melodic rock.

These generic clichés also extend to the mainstream view of melodic rock. Jason comments on how friends of his who are not fans perceive melodic rock: “Its difficult to get past the preconceived ideas about melodic rock that most people have. Most of them see it as an immature musical genre.” Meanwhile, the magazine *Classic Rock* has claimed that “fans demand rehashes of the same old ideas” (Ling 2002: 56). The consequence of this is to demonstrate that Hughes’ work is not original, creative or authentic, but instead works to a formula. Hilda reveals that some of her friends “are melodic rock fans and loath *Ten* and Gary Hughes with a passion... to them it is bland, ripping off everyone else.” Liam T considers Hughes’s work to be “derivative, clichéd, unintentionally funny” (7/10/02). This in turn is justified by Hughes’ fans in respect of being faithful to melodic rock’s ‘roots’. Jim acknowledges, yet naturalises the generic elements within Hughes’s work, saying how there are a “fair amount of influences that can be detected in Gary’s writing, but that is hardly surprising considering he only started in the 90s.”

If “middle-brow art cannot renew its techniques and themes without borrowing from high art or, more frequently still, from the ‘bourgeois art’ of a generation or so earlier” (Bourdieu 1993: 129) then *OAFK* manages to straddle the fine line between ensuring there is sufficient commercial ‘authenticity’ in order to satisfy its fans, yet positions this in order to distance itself from the economic field. The Arthurian myth, with its inherent malleability, proves to be a suitable choice of material in order to mediate the tensions within the field as it has both high and popular elements that can be activated, yet also reconfigured as required. We have seen how the melodic rock field has been constructed, and how Hughes recognises “the appropriate posture to be adopted” (Bourdieu 1993: 129) in order for his Arthur to slot into the field and be

used by Hughes in his bid for consecration. Moreover, the Arthurian myth allows fans within the genre to activate particular reading formations as and when required.

As such, although initially appearing to be more oriented towards the commercial field than progressive rock, both Hughes and Wakeman's interpretations show the fluid nature of the Arthurian myth. Although a textual analysis of each album shows the presentation of the myth to be vastly different in each instance, I have shown how artists and critics attempt to position the myth in such a way that legitimates their own taste-culture. I have shown how the Arthurian myth can be used as a marker of distinction across cultural categories and the case study of *OAFK* is no different, showing that even *within* cultural categories, position-taking strategies affect the version of Arthur that is presented and received.

No matter which site of Arthur is analysed, it seems that there are perpetual contests over meaning. Although tied to the dominant myth in some way, shape, or form, alternative reading formations are invoked depending on the cultural competencies of the groups and/or individuals involved. In all cases, the quest for cultural value and distinction is the constant, however. In all sites analysed, as Arthur makes meaning, meaning makes Arthur, and the quest for value ensures the Arthurian signifiers continue to have resonance in the present day.

Conclusion: The Once and Future Thesis

Mark Twain, author of *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* (1971 [1889]) defined a classic as “a book which people praise but don't read” (quoted in Gray, E. 2001: 195). Erik Gray, when modifying this observation went further and argued that “popular usage suggests a somewhat more subtle distinction: a work the apparent familiarity of which is not logically explicable” (2001: 195). In the case of the Arthurian myth, it appears that this definition must be made more subtle still. Although I showed early in this thesis how the chivalric romance form of the myth came to be dominant, it appears that although many are familiar with this particular interpretation, it is a smaller proportion who are aware of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, let alone his role as the “founder of discursivity” (Foucault 1991a: 114) with regards to the chivalric romance form of the myth. The status of this form of Arthur as dominant has been naturalised to such an extent that it appears ‘obvious’ that this is the form of the myth of which people are aware.

In discussing theories of myth, this thesis has appropriated theories from diverse fields such as literary studies, philosophy, and media studies. The fact that so many writers from so many fields have attempted to theorise myth suggests in itself its slippery nature, and leads me to conclude that in many ways, to write of myth is to engage in a mythical act itself. That is, myth has been treated here, not as a function of the text itself, but as a way of attempting to close down the readings of the text and construct certain texts as a ‘sacred narrative’. In this way, I offered a logical explanation as to why Malory's text might become familiar, and also explained how its canonical status has become naturalised. There is of course the danger that, much as I exposed the mythic act of valuing canonical Arthurian texts, so this thesis takes part in a mythic act itself and naturalises my own desired position. This is why it has been important for me to analyse not only taste-cultures that chime with my own preferences, but also texts and cultural appropriations which I strongly dislike on a personal subjective level. The fact that suspicions were raised as to my motives for visiting the Camelot Theme Park showed clearly that I did not fit easily into that particular taste-culture. However, this does not mean that I should therefore naturalise my own position as ‘authentic’ in preference to others, and an attempt has been made to analyse these cultures with equal rigour.

In this sense, it was vitally important to look at the cultural context in which Arthur was sited. Where others have analysed only the textual conditions of the myth, I have gone further and analysed extra-textual elements also. Pierre Bourdieu says of social science that it:

In constructing the social world, takes note of the fact that agents are, in their ordinary practice, the subjects of acts of construction of the social world; but also it aims, among other things, to describe the social genesis of the principles of construction and seeks the basis of these principles in the social world (1984: 467).

In order to analyse this social construction, it was necessary to not only give an overview of how myth has been theorised, but also to address what it meant to *use* a theory of myth. By analysing representative sites of Arthur, distinct patterns have emerged. I have challenged belief in the value of canonical texts such as Malory's *Morte Darthur* by showing how this canonical status has been culturally constructed over history. Its 'sacred' status derives from the author function, and cultural conditions that saw Malory's completion of the text coincide with the dawn of the age of print. Consequently, although the first chapter showed how such a text has gained value due to its cultural-historical construction, the quest for identity and value has also seen Arthurian significations appropriated, re-appropriated, and contested. As such, vastly different versions of Arthur have sprung up, ranging from the chivalric romance king of Malory to the Romano-British warrior chieftain in *King Arthur*. However, even when these counter myths are valued above the dominant romance myth, they still need to tie themselves in some form to the dominant myth. Moreover, these versions of Arthur share one particular thing in common, they are appropriated by cultures, subcultures and even individuals as a means of cultural *distinction*.

Arthur has found his place in culture as a 'floating signifier' (Shichtman and Carley 1994) whose very malleability allows him to be appropriated as required. The very malleability of the Arthurian signifier was clearly shown with regards to the reception of *King Arthur*. Although an über-mythic construction of Arthur saw the film culturally devalued by academics in relation to the dominant myth, different groups

activated alternative reading formations that were appropriate to their own cultural competencies, in order to revalue the myth.

A single text is not enough to prove a theory, but an analysis of Arthur that drifted further away from those more 'traditional' sites such as literature or film began to outline how construction of value was not merely limited to the author function. Indeed, at an 'authentic' tourist site such as Tintagel, the value of ancientness is a trope that comes to the fore. By labelling this affect the ancient function, I have argued that there are many ways in which elements of the myth are used in an attempt to assert the values of difference and authenticity. The plurality of meanings available to any Arthurian appropriation was further developed by a discussion of the Arthur function. Which elements are brought to the fore depends on, clearly, the cultural capital possessed by each consumer in turn. Even a site which at first glance appears to meaninglessly appropriate the Arthurian myth, such as the Camelot Theme Park, still uses the Arthurian myth to enable the park to attain a certain cultural value, and maintain its distinction from other tourist sites.

These chapters made explicit how these three functions worked in tension with one another and did not work in isolation. However, they also showed how despite offering a plurality of meanings, it was not necessarily the case that visitors chose to appropriate all meanings available to them. Indeed, there were times when any one of the functions could be activated by them as a signifier of cultural value. Following on from this idea, the final pair of chapters looked more explicitly at particular subcultural fields of production. By analysing the inter-textual position-taking strategies of both Rick Wakeman and Gary Hughes, I moved further away from the idea of a single meaning of the Arthurian myth as inscribed in the text, and instead developed further the idea of activating particular meanings in order to appeal to different groups. Arthur, although still a floating signifier, can see its values constructed so that cultural positionings of texts as 'authentic' naturalise a cultural hierarchy that values these texts above others as an entirely natural occurrence. What are supposedly natural or individual tastes are in fact founded on social constructions which have been naturalised (cf Fowler, B. 1997: 174).

So Arthur lives on, his meanings may sleep from time to time, but will be awoken when required as a means of cultural distinction. That Arthur is a potent signifying force is clear, and there is no reason to suggest that the myth will not be used in this way for many years to come.

Where to the Future?

That myth will always be appropriated is shown in this very thesis. My own quest for identity and cultural status within this academic subculture has seen me construct a discourse appropriate to the field. After all, “‘making one’s mark’... means winning recognition... of one’s difference from other producers” (Bourdieu 1993: 60). Much like the Arthurian myth itself, a theory on Arthur “represents an ‘endlessly deferred narrative’ which nonetheless possesses an ongoing structure and order” (Hills 2005: 40). This particular narrative differs from others in that it positions itself against more ‘traditional’ literary studies of Arthur and instead looks at the myth from a cultural standpoint. Never before have contemporary sites of Arthur been analysed with such thoroughness, and my re-definition of myth, including the coining of the term *über-myth*, has been important in explicitly positioning this text against those who value the canonical texts of Arthur as inherently ‘superior’.

Although this thesis adds to the critical debate, it by no means closes down all avenues that can be taken for Arthur. Long after this thesis has been forgotten, as long as people produce texts about Arthur, critics will feel the need to produce texts about those texts. However, what this thesis does show is that when discussing the (sub)cultural value of Arthur, there are many more voices to be heard than that of the dominant academic voice. By reflecting on responses to Arthur both in and away from the academic field, my approach has been to show how this cultural value finds a voice, not only in the texts themselves, but also in the inter-textual material surrounding them, and the response to those texts governed by people’s possession and acquisition of cultural capital.

The quest for identity and cultural value still needs work on a global level however. With the honourable exception of the *Arthurnet* mailing list, which owing to its nature consists of an international array of academics, all texts covered here were dealt with

in a British (and often, more specifically, an English) context. I have dealt with these sites in this way in order to get a consistency of response and to avoid generalisations about Arthur's global reach. Even George Ritzer, in his pessimistic view of *The McDonaldization of Society*, concedes that even a global organisation such as McDonald's is required to adapt its food and service according to local culture (2000: 177). Indeed, it appears that even as efforts are made to make society more global in its nature, so this paradoxically reveals the fragmented state of culture beneath the superficial appearance of unity and homogeneity (cf Beck 2000: 67). Even in a British context, I have shown how there are numerous versions of Arthur that are portrayed and appropriated. Therefore, if the many different cultures of the world are now more visible than before (cf Beck 2000: 67), it would be dangerous to attempt a pan-world view of Arthurian culture. Rather than making sweeping statements about a global 'Arthurian' culture, it would be better to look at Sites of Arthur as a 'cultural front', described by Jorge. A. Gonzalez as "a whirling space of motion that, once arrived at a critical bifurcation, suddenly crystallizes into recognizable, yet still unfixed, structures and semblances of symbolic order. In this scenario we can locate the particular sites of concrete cultural struggles" (2001: 115).

There is also a further space for analysis of popular literary texts in terms of their reception. The attempt to position this thesis against more 'traditional' analysis meant that it was necessary for me to move away from literary texts. As such, only a study of Bernard Cornwell has been included in order to show how texts are required to struggle with a dominant antecedent such as Malory in order to gain recognition. This does not mean, however, that as the position of the Arthurian academic field changes, such analyses may not be without merit. Although my position-taking strategy saw me seeking a position within the academic field, so my thesis, by virtue of its attempt to change the hierarchy of positions available in the academic field, subtly moves the position of the field itself (cf Bourdieu 1993: 58).

Consequently, as others contest positions in the field, their bid for consecration will perhaps see them adapt a position-taking strategy relative to this text itself. If academics can reflexively look at the mythical act of constructing the Arthurian canon, the subcultural field of academia may shift to a position where analysis of popular Arthurian texts can be dealt with in a more objective manner. This will mean

that popular fictional texts can find a space for analysis without being naturalised as culturally inferior in comparison with high-cultural canonical literature. Meanwhile, a more objective approach to popular Arthuriana will allow international sites such as the *Excalibur Casino* in Las Vegas to be claimed as legitimate areas of study. Of American Arthurian Sites, Zia Isola claims that “American domestication of Arthurian legend has also apparently resulted in a processed version, a version that is sanitized, purified and made wholesomely palatable by the elision of the fantastic, marvellous, and morally ambiguous elements of the legend” (2002: 32). Whilst there is indeed the possibility that such sites operate in this way, the reading that Isola gives offers no empirical evidence and, as such, serves merely to reinforce an über-mythic naturalisation of Arthuriana, rather than attempting to truly analyse how the myth is appropriated in America by taste-cultures other than her own. Therefore, whether these quests for, and contests over, value that I have discussed are played out over an international arena certainly deserves further consideration.

Moreover, even within a British context, there is space for further research over and beyond this thesis. Although in chapter three I discussed how power relations within the different focus groups affected the reading of *King Arthur* that was produced, and so demonstrated how “gender is constantly redefined and negotiated in the everyday practices through which individuals interact... the construction of gender identities by engaging in a process of reciprocal positioning” (Poggio 2006: 225), there is space for further discussion on how the construction of gender is naturalised by appropriation of the Arthurian myth. Indeed, with respect to Jerry Bruckheimer films in general, Neil Bather argues that they “are strongly masculine” (2004: 39). Although I argued in the introduction that to concentrate too fully on gender would be to detract from my main argument, this is not to say that such analyses are without merit. Representations of Arthur can be pertinent to inquiries into shifting constructions of gender (cf Brown, C. 2003). If the definition of gender is never fixed or closed, but “can vary according to context and over time” (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 2002: 81) then a floating signifier such as Arthur, with potential to be appropriated in differing forms, offers potential to construct the figure of Arthur in differently gendered ways, not to report the essence of the myth, but rather an über-mythic representation of myth, to naturalise gender differences and engage “in a practice which itself constitutes that state of affairs” (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 2002: 98) and makes gender

differences at that particular cultural moment appear as a natural occurrence. If we are to accept the premise of Judith Butler, who argues that “‘the body’ is itself a construction, as are the myriad ‘bodies’ that constitute the domain of gendered subjects” (1999: 13) then activating gendered reading formations of Arthurian texts may allow for a naturalisation of this cultural construction of the body.

Indeed, it is possible to argue contrary to my position that saw me suggest that Gary Hughes’s *OAFK* positions itself as more gender neutral in order to package the genre in a form that catered for the changing position of the subculture. Contrary to this position, it is possible to argue that such texts “emphasize... the natural differences between men and women” (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 2002: 133). To study how gender differences are constructed by appropriation of the Arthurian myth offers the potential for research using a similar theoretical framework to this thesis, in that gender is still susceptible to the same “forms of oppression that various subordinated groups are characteristically vulnerable to” (Lovell 2004: 46). Research on the issue offers the potential to uncover how, much as those groups with less Arthurian cultural capital are silenced on the Arthurnet discussion list, so differing gender relations *within* differing (sub)cultural instances see some groups silenced also.

Moreover, there are tell-tale signs in my own thesis that suggest how a theoretical position that looks at gender in relation to the Arthurian myth can be developed. The shifting interrelated position of gender according to cultural context was further shown during my encounter with security at the Camelot theme park. This showed how “there is a culturally dominant construction of masculinity” (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 2002: 140) that, although “fluid over time and between cultural contexts” (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 2002: 141) saw my position as male re-defined according to the cultural position of the Arthurian site in which I was situated at that particular moment. Although any work in this area would require a modification of Bourdieu to take into account his neglect of “the complexity and multilayeredness of relations between the genders” (Mottier 2002: 355), further work on how gender roles are constructed over a variety of differing Arthurian sites could offer a potential avenue for further research, taking into account a refined hierarchy of positions in the Arthurian academic field that might develop by virtue of this thesis.

Consequently, throughout culture we can see how mythic quests for cultural identity and value are ongoing, including in academic subculture. It is some time since victory was achieved in the quest to place popular culture on the academic syllabus. What is now required is a treaty that does not value popular culture at the expense of high or middlebrow culture, but rather sees a position where all are valued equally. Today's popular texts are, after all, potentially the canonised texts of the future as others take on the quest for value. That a chivalric Arthur has not always been the dominant myth is dealt with tantalisingly infrequently in Roger Simpson (1990) and James Merriman's (1973) discussions on the myth (this is also something that I looked at briefly myself in Chapter two). There is no reason to suggest that a shift in the value of the Arthurian myth might not happen again, but of what we can be relatively sure is that Arthur will return time and again in Once and Future sites.

Endnotes

¹ Or even 'sighting', to stretch a pun a little beyond its shelf-life.

² For a comprehensive list and reviews of the myriad of Arthurian texts available, see Lacy (1996b).

³ For consistency, the spelling used is Caxton's grammatically incorrect spelling, used by scholars such as PJC Field.

⁴ This is despite the fact that the film only "faintly echoes" (Harty 2002: 139) Malory textually.

⁵ Susan Aronstein calls Python a "Postmodern Pastiche" (2005: 110) whilst Donald L. Hoffman makes the observation that the "parodic post-modernism of the Pythons remains anchored in the Middle Ages, where episodic structures are not uncommon, especially in chivalric romances (2002: 143, see also Day (2002) for a general analysis of the film).

⁶ Ronald Hutton claims that as the composition of the *Gododdin* cannot be dated any more accurately than at some stage between 600-1100, the earliest references to Arthur are those in the *Historia Brittonum* (c. 829) or *Annales Cambriae* (c. 953) (Hutton 2003: 41).

⁷ PJC Field's *Malory: Texts and Sources* (1998) embarks on a comprehensive overview of not only texts used, but also Malory's contemporary cultural sources. Stephen Knight's *Arthurian Literature and Society* (1983: 105-148) goes further in dealing with Malory as an allegory of the Wars of the Roses.

⁸ For such works, see Knight (1983) and Field (1999a).

⁹ Indeed, a work that manages to do just that is Christina Hardyment's recent *Malory: The life and times of King Arthur's Chronicler* (2006).

¹⁰ See Belsey (2002a: 7-27) for a historical background.

¹¹ See, for example, Culhwch invoking Olwen in the name of Arthur's warriors (1976: 140-142), and the listing of participants in the council of peace (1976: 190).

¹² See, for example, chapters nine and ten, on pages 246 and 247.

¹³ I have used Vinaver's edited version in order not to colour the effect by using the modified spelling used in the Janet Cowen version cited elsewhere.

¹⁴ Namely *The Winter King* (1996); *Enemy of God* (1997) and *Excalibur* (1998).

¹⁵ See also Tennyson's portrayal of the unhappy knight who is still "the chief of knights" (1983: 171).

¹⁶ See also Pope (1999: 29) for similar attacks.

¹⁷ Although it is wise to remember that for Bourdieu "cultural capital is a matter of disposition, not just acquisition" (Verter 2003:152).

¹⁸ See chapters six and seven for empirical evidence of a cultural field's diachronic changes.

¹⁹ Of course, it is not merely the author function that works as a classificatory practice. Later I shall show how alternative strategies for cultural value can be used with regards to Arthur.

²⁰ See Jump (1967) for a series of critical commentaries on Tennyson that focus on his authorial genius or lack thereof, depending on the critic's position.

²¹ See McConnell (1979: 16) for an example of an academic discourse that makes grand claims about the stability of the Arthurian Myth.

²² See Lacy (2002a: 77-86) on his practical experience of the distinction between an Arthurian academic discourse and that required by popular television programming.

²³ A concept which “inscribe[s]... subjective, bodily actions with objective social force so that the most apparently subjective individual acts take on social meaning,” (King, A. 2000: 417).

²⁴ See Marie-Paule about Barthes’s “visceral aversion” (2000: 99) to this.

²⁵ Also see, for example, Olsen (1990: 163-170) and Sturrock (1979: 62-64) for uncritical summaries of Barthes.

²⁶ Compare this, for instance, with my own decision to give a voice to subcultures that occupy different taste-cultures to my own, as discussed on page 7.

²⁷ Even when proposing an Arthurian model contrary to that of Malory, Steven Spielberg’s ‘historical Arthur’ television mini-series still found it necessary to position the text with regards to Malory and in opposition to Malory, rather than the myth itself. “Steven Spielberg is to demolish the “myth” of Camelot in a television film series about King Arthur that does not feature a round table, Excalibur, Merlin or knights” (*The Daily Telegraph* on 6th October 2002). Meanwhile, the origin of our current perception of the myth is reasserted: “The legend of King Arthur is primarily based on *Le Morte Darthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, written in the 1400s. Malory’s works were the inspiration for a number of paintings, particularly those by the Pre- Raphaelite brotherhood in the 19th Century.” (*Daily Telegraph* 6/10/02) For all the protestations of ‘authenticity’, both the article and the director feel the need to justify themselves by basing their whole ethos around how the production will not be like Malory’s.

²⁸ See also Hall et. al (1978).

²⁹ For excellent overviews of the many forms of myth see Coupe (1997), Segal (2003), and Csapo (2005).

³⁰ As exemplified by the totalising use of the phrase “everyone” by McCarthy.

³¹ Clearly not possible if we accept Sonja Puntsher-Riekmann’s claim that “modern myths are stories about secular, not sacred matters” (1997: 65).

³² See also, for subjective rather than objective analyses of Arthurian texts: Brewer (1986: 124); Lyons (1986: 147); Pearsall (2003: vii); Lambert (1975: ix-x, 1, 55).

³³ For a work to have sacred status, it does not have to be linked to religion. Subcultures can, “attempt to turn myth into history or history into myth and who even create ritual systems to provide the awe and wonder that bring myth to life” (Leeming 2003: 21). Much as a sacred narrative does not have to be a religious narrative, the idea of myths being linked to rituals (Segal 1998: 1-13) does not have to mean a ritual of religious worship. The ritual of record collecting, for example, is one such area where the records “provide the raw materials around which the rituals of homosocial interaction take shape... [the ritual offers] similarity of... [the collector’s] points of reference to those of his peers, confirmation of a shared universe of critical judgement” (Straw 1997: 5).

³⁴ For other culturally constructed ur-versions of myth, this time of the heroes of the American frontier, see Murdoch (2001: 15).

³⁵ See, for example, my discussion of Bernard Cornwell’s texts pp28-33.

³⁶ Indeed, White's alternative reading of this quote is a fine example of the point made in the previous chapter (page 33), that the historical, cultural and institutional contexts can have a great effect upon the meaning of any one text.

³⁷ <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/jshoaf/Arthurnet.htm>

³⁸ <http://www.arthurkingoftimeandspace.com/>

³⁹ In this respect, Gans makes more explicit that which Norris Lacy discussed with regards to 'minor' or 'flawed' works (page 50) in that they serve to enhance the status of the 'master[iecs]' by being set in opposition to them.

⁴⁰ Indeed, my limited entrance into discussion suggests that, despite appearing to be a relatively stable subculture, other voices, academic or otherwise, could well be present on the discussion list, but are silenced by virtue of the discussion list's cultural construction. Although it can be argued that the dominance of medieval scholars is a perception rather than reality, this does not alter how the list *functions*.

⁴¹ See, for example, posts from 23/8/01 to 11/9/01 on the subject.

⁴² Therefore, when classifying a film, it is wise to remember that it is possible to distinguish between the audience of any given film (cf Maltby 1999: 33). As such, particular inter-textual strategies would cater for different audiences.

⁴³ <http://www.scifi.com/scifiwire/art-film.html?2003-07/08/13.00.film> July 2003, also http://www.empireonline.co.uk/site/news/NewsStory.asp?news_id=11783 10 July 2003

⁴⁴ Bruckheimer has also been responsible for producing such films as *Armageddon* (1998) and *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003).

⁴⁵ See, for example Allen (2003: 101-114); Buckland (2003: 84-98); Lincoln (2004: 871-894) or Keller (1999: 142-146).

⁴⁶ Although the Pelagius of history does not always fit well with the Pelagius of the film, he did undoubtedly exist in reality and "it is reasonably certain that he was born not long after 350 in Britain and died not long after 418 somewhere in the countries adjoining the Eastern Mediterranean." (Rees 1988: xii). Furthermore his major treatise, now lost, was entitled *On Free Will* (Rees 1988: 2) and provides a historical background to the cause of freedom that Arthur spends so much time fighting in the film.

⁴⁷ Tom Shippey, although beginning by arguing that "there, is of course, nothing surprising or even especially reprehensible about facts and arguments being manipulated in the service of a particular imagery" (2006: 4), follows up with a stinging condemnation of *King Arthur* and its like, as he bemoans the fact that "too many Hollywood rewritings of history are not only silly, they are dangerously silly" (2006: 14).

⁴⁸ Lacy is part of "an exceptional line-up of contributors" for *The Arthur of the French* (2006).

⁴⁹ See Appendix for a more detailed breakdown of the focus groups' demographics.

⁵⁰ Fitting neatly the generalised expectations of the magistrates that I detailed in my introduction to the groups.

⁵¹ Delfina begins by deferring to the male in the group, by suggesting to Ronald “you’re more important than me, go on.”

⁵² See the *Daily Telegraph* (2004); the *Independent* (2004); and the *Sunday Times* (2004), which all show how the majority of press reviews compared *King Arthur* unfavourably to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Malory and Tennyson.

⁵³ Criticism was also reserved for the lack of realism in the battle scenes by virtue of it being commodified by Americans. See Holbrook (1999: 149) for how blockbuster films tend to be associated with American studio production that is aspiring to mass appeal.

⁵⁴ For the classic account of how a star’s image may be constructed, see Dyer (1998). For a more contemporary analysis of the phenomenon, that also introduces audience response to the theoretical framework, see Austin and Barker (2003)

⁵⁵ In chapter four, I develop further the idea of Arthur as popular hero, and introduce the concept of the Arthur function.

⁵⁶ Although Harvey et al. talk about the Celtic region of Cornwall (2001: 8), the site itself is that of an ‘official’ (Robb 1998: 587) English Heritage site. Amy Hale (2001b: 190) recounts protests from Cornish nationalists about Tintagel being an ‘English Heritage’ site in Cornwall.

⁵⁷ For example, a House of Commons motion of 22nd July 2002 from Paul Flynn, Mr Huw Edwards, Jeremy Corbyn, Mr Win Griffith demonstrated how the appeal to the authority of age is used with regards to the ancientness of the texts themselves, by citing the authority of ancient texts in support of the suitability of possible sites for Spielberg to film his proposed Arthurian mini-series. This is only following a regular pattern through the ages. That Geoffrey of Monmouth felt the need to appeal to the authority of “a certain very ancient book written in the British language.” (Monmouth 1966: 51) It is debatable whether this text ever existed, but Geoffrey felt the need to assert that the only way his text would be recognised was to appeal to an older source, a more ancient source.

⁵⁸ Before discussing Tintagel’s use of the ancient function, I must first give an example of how even the landscape of place is culturally constructed. The access to the castle specifically helps to emphasise its distinctive landscape. This is down a valley, before turning left and seeing the castle perched precariously on the rock, clinging to the edge of the earth itself. This enables the visitor to see the castle from its most spectacular angle. In contrast, the original path to the castle involves travelling North, “from West of Tintagel village, past the vicarage and along the western coast of the valley; then it becomes a hollow way for the last fifty yards or so... This is the medieval approach... Very few people today either use it or know about it” (Thomas, C. 1993: 24). The change in approach serves to maximise the visual impact of the castle, and also by happy chance channels the visitor past English Heritage’s shop. However, on walking down this route to the castle, it appears that this is indeed the natural approach and it is difficult to conceive of approaching from a different route. The commercial maximisation of the site has been achieved without anyone apparently noticing. This is important as “by encouraging the sense of pride in the extraordinary through landscaping and design the architects seeks to pattern leisure behaviour” (Rojek 1995: 62). This image is constantly the view of the castle

standing on the edge of nature. To allow the visitors to approach the castle from another angle would result in them experiencing a sense of anti-climax.

⁵⁹ This forthcoming essay by myself looks at the struggle for meaning and value that takes place in a different cultural context, that of Wales. In this essay, I show how it is necessary to re-position and marginalise the dominant Romance form of the myth in order to enhance discourses of Welsh identity. Of course at Tintagel, maintained by *English Heritage*, this re-positioning is not necessary.

⁶⁰ See Hutton (2003). Carley (2001) gives a detailed account of not only the historical background to Glastonbury's links with Arthur, but the textual background also.

⁶¹ Interview with Rob Orton, curator of the castle, 13/7/03.

⁶² As an aside, the hotel demonstrates clearly how the dominant Tennysonian interpretation must have been the instigator of many tourist excursions and readings of Arthur are closed off towards this aspect throughout the building. The exterior features mock turrets, whilst the *Excali-bar* features Grand stone fireplaces, whilst ornate wood carvings are below the bar and portcullises are above every door archway. The back room is oval with a central dance floor. The side seats are curved to face along the wall, and are much like 'pews' with a wooden facing in front of them, emphasising the Christian, chivalric element of Tennyson's interpretation. Meanwhile many pictures of a chivalric Arthur's court are hung on the walls, mimicking the Pre-Raphaelite style.

⁶³ Found by inputting their postcode into www.upmystreet.com

⁶⁴ In Chapter 5, I deal in more detail with the social construction of similar areas.

⁶⁵ English Heritage leaflet.

⁶⁶ Whereas modern day movie taglines may range from, "Forged by a god. Foretold by a wizard. Found by a man" (*Excalibur*) to "Their greatest battle would be for her love," (*First Knight*) the concept is the same. It is Arthurian matter, the perceived audience expectations surrounding the stories and the resultant efforts on behalf of the producers to impose their own concepts on the character that result in the valorisation of these particular versions of Arthur. The expectation for *First Knight* is not formalised by considering Jerry Zucker as *auteur* and expecting a film along the lines of other films he has directed such as *Airplane* (1980). Instead, the initial expectation for the film as created by the publicity discourses and, later, reviews, position themselves with regards to prior constructions of Arthurian matter. Jacqueline Jenkins says *First Knight* "is noteworthy primarily for its radical representation of Arthur," (Jenkins 1998: 199) whilst the *LA Times* critiques the film by saying it "takes several liberties with the Arthurian legend, which is mostly OK given that the particulars of the story have changed greatly over the 1,400 years it has been part of the Western literary tradition." (www.calendarlive.com/movies/reviews/cl-movie960406-172.story Accessed 23/10/02).

⁶⁷ This bears out the 1988 survey which reached a similar conclusion (Thomas, C. 1993: 9).

⁶⁸ Caxton himself makes use of the 'Arthur-function' in his prologue to *Le Morte Darthur*. Caxton tells how these gentlemen insisted an English text be printed because of Arthur's great deeds. The 'noblemen' give a list of historical relics that 'prove' the existence of Arthur, to which Caxton can only say that, "I could not well deny but that there was such a noble king named Arthur." (Malory 1969a: 5) This tale has the effect of pushing Arthur's historicity and merits to the fore. By recounting this

passage, Caxton is positioning the reader to take note of the authority of Arthur as hero. As such, the readers of this book will have their expectations fashioned and the text is valorised as a result. Richard Blackmore's preface suffers in comparison. He wildly boasts that his motivation for writing *Prince Arthur* was, "to make one Effort towards the rescuing the Muses out of the hands of these Ravishers [other poets]" (1698). Blackmore sidelines Arthur in favour of drawing attention to his own authorial value, but this technique serves merely to antagonise the reader (cf Genette 1997: 198). Consequently, Blackmore is attacked by other poets, his author function suffers, and his tales have slipped into obscurity. So much so that over two hundred years after his death, mention is made of Blackmore's career as a Physician, whereas his poetry is ignored totally (Long 1943). Collective withdrawal of Richard Blackmore's author function has "affected Blackmore's reputation in a way that had little to do with his poetry" (Solomon 1980: 102, see also Zimbardo 1992: 792).

⁶⁹ Identical products with different names can be bought in alternative destinations, such as the houses associated with Shakespeare in Stratford.

⁷⁰ <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.1447> accessed February 2005.

⁷¹ It must be emphasised that despite my initial impressions to the contrary, later analysis of the data showed that Arthur was indeed the main reason for visiting. This confirmed the findings of a 1988 survey in the village, which found that nearly half of the visitors had come because of the Arthurian link (Thomas, C. 1993: 9).

⁷² In this respect, Ollie mirrored the Bedworth focus group I analysed in Chapter 3. coming from a mining town, and speaking with a broad regional accent, he was of a lower class than the majority of visitors, and consequently his tastes were more oriented to the popular novels of Lawhead, rather than the high cultural dominant myth.

⁷³ Although Amy Hale claims Tintagel is one of only a "small number" (Hale 2001b: 189) of sites administered by English Heritage in Cornwall for which an interpretation is provided.

⁷⁴ Tennyson (1991: 26)

⁷⁵ Interview with Sandra Dempsey, marketing manager at the theme park.

⁷⁶ That a theme park on an Arthurian theme brings with it certain expectations becomes clear, as a reviewer for the *Wigan Evening Post* bemoaned the fact that they "did not see any knights in shining armour wandering around, although they do offer jousting displays" (Eccles: 2002).

⁷⁷ This linking of fun to consumption is seen in an Article in *The Daily Mirror*, "It's the kind of fun day out that great legends are made of... And you can buy anything from inflatable maces and toy swords to T-shirts and soft toys- perfect reminders of your amazing day out at Camelot" (Anon 1998: n.p.).

⁷⁸ See Ritzer and Liska (1997: 97) for a development of Ritzers thesis in relation to theme parks.

⁷⁹ Along with the Mini-Merlins focus group, the theme park 'knights' each year a selection of children who "have overcome personal difficulties, tried especially hard at school or spent time helping others" (Aston 2006: 12).

⁸⁰ The focus on Lancelot demonstrates effectively how the Arthur function is not limited merely to Arthur himself (cf pp 123-124).

⁸¹ For example, the water schute *Pendragon's Plunge* has no specifically 'Arthurian' content to it.

⁸² Terry Thomas comments on how a Moral panic in the 1990s saw theme parks portrayed as a familial, innocent place which was under threat from paedophiles visiting. The spiral of concern that followed this led to it being perceived that vigilance were needed to make sure that sex offenders were policed and kept out of theme parks (2000: 20). See also Scourfield and Coffey (2006) for an account of Jonathan Scourfield's difficulty in gaining access to a social services department for ethnographic research. Here, Scourfield's age (early 30s), class background (middle class), along with his educational and professional status (see Scourfield and Coffey 2006: 31) saw him presenting a 'soft' masculinity that was perceived as a threat. Indeed, Scourfield's social status is remarkably similar to mine at the time of my encounter.

⁸³ That she was a lecturer in tourism, suggested a prior investment in, and disposition to play the game of academic research (Bourdieu 1988: 89). This spectacularly disastrous lack of response, also suggested that I ought to have made more effort to phrase my questions more in line with the taste-cultures I wished to interview. In the interests of consistency, I used similar questions to those asked at Tintagel, yet a group of people with higher levels of education and a disposition towards the kind of academic work I was conducting, meant they recognised and supported PhD research as a legitimate act.

⁸⁴ See my discussion of Tintagel village on page 119, and also my discussion on the Camelot Theme Park earlier in this chapter.

⁸⁵ Halifax advertising brochure, 26/12/02, my emphasis.

⁸⁶ For example, progressive bands *Galahad* and *Pendragon* are well established in the present day scene, whilst leading progressive band *Arena* were originally to be called *Avalon* until they found the name was already in use by yet another band in the field.

⁸⁷ Even in 2003, nearly 30 years after its release, Dave Ling asks Wakeman to give anecdotes about his notorious live performances of the album on the ice at Wembley's Empire pool (2003: 40).

⁸⁸ Although ideally it would have been useful to look at fan reception of the album, the time difference between its release in 1975 and the present makes this impractical, as fans' capital will have altered over the intervening years (as I shall demonstrate in chapter seven). Therefore, a decision was made to exclude fan analysis for this chapter, in order not to skew results when compared to the rest of the thesis, which looks at fan reception at the cultural moment of consumption.

⁸⁹ For example see Reel who comments how "The sacred parts... [of Wakeman's work] remain joined in the chivalric" (2002: 132).

⁹⁰ With its celebration of the 'dolorous stroke' (cf Malory 1969: 91).

⁹¹ The religious elements of the myth would prove to be particularly important for Wakeman's struggle to assert his position within the field, as progressive rock has been considered a particularly Anglican musical form (cf Macan 1997: 32, 66/67, 147).

⁹² See, for example, *The Arthur of the Germans* (2000), *The Arthur of the French* (2006), and *The Arthur of the Iberians* (forthcoming).

⁹³ For example, Malory displays the strength of a patriarchal society when he tells of the custom of the castle Tristram visits, "when a knight cometh here he must needs fight with our lord, and he that is the

weaker must lose his head. And when that is done, if his lady that he bringeth be fouler than our lord's wife, she must lose her head, and if she be fairer proved than is our lady, then shall the lady of this castle lose her head" (Malory 1969a: 346-47).

⁹⁴ Among other clues, the use of the name 'Wart' is most explicit in showing the influence of White.

⁹⁵ White's books had by this stage proved immensely popular, and had been the source for the musical *Camelot* (1967) and also the Disney film *The Sword in the Stone* (1963).

⁹⁶ Weinstein (1998: 138) argues that a cover privileges the 'original' song over the reproduction.

⁹⁷ "Associated with 'catchiness' and marketability" (Traut 2005: 57).

⁹⁸ In the US, Def Leppard "achieved the feat of two consecutive albums selling more than 8 million, whilst their *Hysteria* album had spent 101 weeks on the British chart by 2003" (Roberts, D. 2003:148).

⁹⁹ In this respect, the melodic rock field further confirms the argument I made in the first chapter (page 33), that showed Bourdieu's limitations owing to his, at times, overly deterministic analysis of the trajectory of cultural fields.

¹⁰⁰ Used for reference because the information for *Ten* is restricted, and *Magnum's* vocalist Bob Catley has strong links to Gary Hughes and his *OAFK* project.

¹⁰¹ There are detail differences, such as Guinevere being Christian in Hughes's interpretation, and worshipping Isis in Cornwell's (1997: 438).

¹⁰² Such as *Whitesnake*, one of the bands Hughes is marketed as "heir of [sic] the tradition"

¹⁰³ See, for example, Pamela Moss's discussion on the sexual innuendo within Bruce Springsteen's lyrics (1992: 171).

¹⁰⁴ The fact that Wakeman's concept album was released in the context of progressive rock's shift towards a mainstream position offers empirical evidence for the fluid nature of the mainstream.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with www.melodicrock.com (<http://www.melodicrock.com/interviews/garyhughes-oafk.html> accessed 29/03/06).

¹⁰⁶ Interview with www.melodicrock.com

¹⁰⁷ Interview with www.melodicrock.com

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Gary Hughes conducted by email 23/06/03.

¹⁰⁹ http://www.ten-online.com/garyhughes/the_man.htm Accessed 10/03/06

¹¹⁰ Advert on the back cover of *Fireworks* issue 13 Sep/Oct 2003

¹¹¹ Zuberi remarks how "the Smiths were... considered more authentic because they could 'cut it live', touring extensively and using 'real' instruments" (2001: 30). See also, among others, Bannister (2006: 83), Thornton (1995: 26) and Toynbee (2000: 58).

¹¹² All reviews accessed from www.nowandthen.co.uk 7/09/05.

¹¹³ Interview with Gary Hughes conducted by email 23/06/03.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Gary Hughes conducted by email 23/06/03.

¹¹⁵ *Ten* discussion forum: (<http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/ten-online/>). *Ten* website forum:

(<http://www.ten-online.com/phpbb/>). Melodicrock.com forum

(<http://forums.melodicrock.com/phorum33/list.php?f=1>).

¹¹⁶ Interview with Gary Hughes conducted by email 23/06/03.

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Appendix: Focus group demographics for the film *King Arthur*

The groups were chosen in an expectation of achieving different results and responses between the groups owing to their difference in their composition, which varied in terms of their level of education, their age, their place of residence and other demographic elements. Note, for example, the relatively high level of education for the group of magistrates as opposed to the group from Bedworth, and the disposition towards economic, rather than cultural capital for the group of computer programmers, who had higher salaries than the other groups, yet a relatively lower level of education when compared to the magistrates. The groups were chosen in a specific effort to compare results from groups that held a cultural position separate to the Arthurian academic subculture discussed earlier in the chapter, which enabled the results from these focus groups to show “the dynamic nature of cultural and social processes and of meaning production” (Gray, A. 2003: 18), and to therefore enable the results to show the “complex ways in which individuals, or agents, or subjects, inhabit their specific formations, identities and subjectivities” (*ibid*). By doing so, I attempted to present how these groups interpreted the film (cf Wimmer and Dominick 2000: 119), and to show the range of views and cultural competencies that affected which reading formations were activated. Pseudonyms were used in all cases.

Computer Programmers

Name	Age	Educational Level	Occupation	Estimated Salary (pa)	Marital Status
James	43	A level	IT	£60,000	Single
Josemedee	59	A level	IT	£50,000	Married
Rob	36	Degree	IT	£40,000	Co-habiting
Beatrice	32	Degree	IT	£35,000	Co-habiting
Steve	52	Physics degree	IT	£90,000	Married
Duncan	58	O Level	IT	£50,000	Married
Darren	46	A Level	IT	£40,000	Single

Magistrates

Name	Age	Educational Level	Occupation	Estimated Salary (pa)	Marital Status
Osbert	65	MA	Lecturer	£40,000	Married
Violet	56	O Level	Post Office assistant	£12,000	Married
Delfina	75	Degree	Retired lecturer	N/A	Married
Ronald	47	Degree	Tax Officer	£30,000	Single
Garfield	61	PhD	Retired	N/A	Married
Maja	58	Degree	Semi-retired translator	£15,000	Married

'Bedworth'

Name	Age	Educational Level	Occupation	Estimated Salary (pa)	Marital Status
Wade	28	GCSE	Bookseller	£12,000	Separated
Cornel	26	GCSE	Warehouse Operative	£16k	Single
Jess	28	GCSE	Receptionist	£12.5k	Separated
Noel	28	Degree	IT	£29k	Single
Tara	26	GCSE	Unemployed	N/A	Single
Julian	27	A Level	Unemployed	N/A	Single

