Malory's Originality

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FOREWORD

This book presents a commentary on Le Morte Darthur which, in the authors' opinions, more fully illuminates Malory's literary aims and techniques than any criticism so far available. In several instances hitherto unused source materials are brought to bear upon Malory's work, and throughout new analyses of his purposes are offered.

From one point of view this book can be called a collection of essays by diverse hands. It differs considerably, however, from the usual collection of that sort. The various studies were prepared by a group of people working for the most part in one place, and working systematically upon selected segments of a single book. Also, the various studies were conducted with a single approach and methodology. Though no effort has been made toward uniformity of expository style in the various essays, our hope is that the end result represents a generally unified analysis and argument.

The text of Malory's book which we have used is that to be found in Eugène Vinaver (ed.), The Works of Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947), three volumes with consecutive pagination. This edition is referred to throughout the footnotes as Works, followed by page numbers. A slightly altered reissue of this edition appeared in 1948. Our understanding is that Professor Vinaver is now preparing a revision of the three-volume edition.

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Several parts of this book appeared earlier in learned journals. These parts are included here, in revised form, with permission of the editors concerned: Chapter II, PMLA for 1950; Chapter III, MLN for 1953; Chapter VI, PMLA for 1956; Chapter VII, Mediaeval Studies for 1957.

December, 1963

The Editor