

Malory's Morgan le Fay: The Danger of Unrestrained Feminine Power

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MEDIEVAL IDEAS about witches, who were thought to be primarily women, exhibit a substantial gynophobia. Of witchcraft accusations up to the year 1500, 71 percent of the accused were women, as were 71 percent of those who were executed for witchcraft.¹ Overall, the development of the witch stereotype in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance represents a paradox, demonstrating women's power and powerlessness at the same time. In the words of Walter Stephens, "Witchcraft theorists' logic contradicts their misogynistic rhetoric, for it betrays no fear of feminine power, but rather a will to prove such power exists; not a simple hatred of female sexuality, but rather a desire to appropriate and exploit women's real or imagined potential."² This paradox can be seen in the character of Morgan le Fay in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, which may represent views on powerful women in English society in the fifteenth century. As a witch, Morgan le Fay gains access to power in several ways. Through necromancy, she gains knowledge of demons and how to control them. Through her ability to perform *maleficium*, which "came to mean malevolent sorcery in particular,"³ she can take vengeance on those she deems have wronged her. In conspiracy with others, she can plot to overthrow the government or imprison opponents. Curiously, in spite of all her powers, Morgan is rarely successful in any of her plots. Nevertheless, she remains a medieval symbol of the potential danger of uncontrolled female power.

Defining the Witch as Female

The beliefs and legal structures necessary to the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries developed in earlier times during which the stereotype of the witch as female took shape. According to Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters's introduction to their collection of primary documents, "this ideal schema of witch activities had taken shape—by 1450 at the latest,"⁴ the same time period in which Sir Thomas Malory was writing *Le Morte Darthur*.⁵ Important texts about witches appeared around this time also. Although the definitive manual for witch hunting, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, was written in 1486, a little after *Le Morte Darthur* was published, there were earlier treatises on witches. Nicholas Eymeric, the Inquisitor of Aragon, wrote a guide for inquisitors titled *Directorium Inquisitorium* in 1376. Johannes Nider, a Dominican theologian, discussed witchcraft in the fifth book of his *Formicarius* in 1437. Indeed, it seems that Malory was writing his text during a time of increased fear and targeting of witches, a time when the various elements of the later witch hunts were coalescing. Further, it was during Malory's time and the century preceding that the presumption of witches as female became more dominant. Richard Kieckhefer states that "In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries women outnumbered men by about two to one as defendants in the witch trials; in the later fifteenth century [Malory's time period] the difference seems to have become more pronounced."⁶ Many of these trials took place in France, where many of Malory's sources were composed.⁷ Although Robin Briggs finds it "quite implausible" that "persecution [was] imposed from above" with "patriarchalism . . . made to carry the blame," he nevertheless states, "Ultimately witchcraft was a theory of power; it attributed secret and unnatural power to those who were formerly powerless. In this way it allowed men to project their own aggression into women."⁸ Kieckhefer explains that the identification of witches as primarily women was mainly due to the fact that "The general culture portrayed women as having weak intellect and will. When institutions were set against them, women would have less power than men to resist."⁹

Morgan as Necromancer

In order to determine what type of witch Morgan would be perceived as in the Middle Ages, one must examine the various ideas about magic during this period. There were at least two systems of magical practices recognized during the medieval period, the first being necromancy, defined as “divination . . . by conjuring the spirits of the dead,” and which was practiced by “clerics above all others,”¹⁰ and the second being “a widespread and diffuse system of common spells, charms, blessings, potions, powders, and talismans.”¹¹ Early in the medieval period, the Church was mainly concerned with restricting necromancy; however, gradually, throughout the fourteenth century and early in the fifteenth century (just before Malory wrote *Le Morte Darthur*), the theory of witchcraft began to conflate them. Nicholas Eymeric’s *Directorium inquisitorum* and *Contra demonum inuocatores* were key texts in this process.¹² These texts helped provide the basis for the ideas on witchcraft that later theorists, closer to Malory’s time, built on. In Eymeric’s text and other treatises a key question was whether magic involved the worship of demons in determining which types were forbidden. Progressively throughout the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, theological writers believed that magic could not occur without worship of or a pact with demons which made sorcerers/magicians, in Eymeric’s terms, “heretics,” and as a result, “they are to be relinquished to the secular arm, punished by the ultimate torture according to all the canonical sanctions which judge other heretics.”¹³

If necromancy had become so closely associated with common sorcery and witchcraft by Malory’s time, then it may explain why Morgan can be identified as a necromancer, which she is at the time of Igraine’s marriage. Malory tells us that she “was put to schole in a nonnery, and ther she lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromancye.”¹⁴ Another reason why Morgan could be identified with necromancy, a form of witchcraft that, as previously noted, was understood as male was her frequent usurpation of male roles throughout the text. For example, she attempts to have Arthur killed so she can rule in his place; however, she does not attempt to fight him herself but uses her lover Accolon as her proxy. She also controls a castle given to her by Arthur, and rules

it as a “lord” of the castle would. Morgan seeks power over others to do her bidding, including her lover Accolon and her husband, just as a necromancer would seek power over a demon to do his bidding.

Witches Pose Danger to Men

Many medieval male writers were especially concerned about the danger to men from powerful female witches such as Morgan; this medieval concern can be seen particularly in *Malleus Maleficarum*. Although misogyny is evident throughout the treatise, it is most explicit in the section explaining “why a larger number of sorcerers is found among the delicate female sex than among men.”¹⁵ The double standard and interest in controlling women dominates the reasons given in answer to this question. Primarily, women transgress medieval limitations on feminine behavior when they act on ambition or desire, in women called “avarice” and “lust.” Kramer and Sprenger, the authors of the *Malleus*, say, “For the basis of all the faults of women is greed.”¹⁶ Their distaste for women’s power is shown in such statements as, “a woman is unwilling to be ruled but proceeds by her own impulse, even to her own harm.”¹⁷ Further, they state their opinion that women must be controlled most strongly when they say, “When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil thoughts.”¹⁸ This evil, moreover, is most significant when it is directed against men: “When they behave this [destructive] way among themselves, how much more so against men!”¹⁹

Surely the scene where Morgan attempts to kill her own, sleeping, husband best illustrates the evil that women were capable of in the view of the authors of the *Malleus* and like-minded medieval men: “And lyghtly she toke the swerde and pullyd hit oute, and wente boldely unto the beddis syde and awayted how and hwere she myght sle hym beste. And as she hevyd up the swerde to smyte, sir Uwayne lepte unto his modir and caught hir by the honde”²⁰ At this point Morgan begs forgiveness explaining that she was “tempted with a fende,” and Uwain grants her mercy. Immediately after he has spared her, she steals the magical scabbard away from Arthur. The fact that Morgan wastes no time in continuing her evil agenda would not have surprised demonologists of the fifteenth century who generally believed:

the Devil's power over [a witch] once she had made the pact was complete, and her soul was damned. Her only hope of salvation was to be arrested and to recant before her execution. By such reasoning the torment and killing of witches was for their own good as well as that of God and of society.²¹

While this idea that the witch must be executed even if she recants was current in Malory's time, Uwain does not follow this line of thinking most likely because he is unaware of Morgan's involvement in a conspiracy to overthrow the king which is under way at the same time as this incident.

As an instructive parallel to this scene, the *Malleus* provides "the method of passing sentence on a woman who has confessed heresy but is relapsed though repentant," and it provides for no mercy decreeing that "The Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist should not be denied to such a person if he makes a humble request, but however much he may repent, he is nonetheless to be handed over to the secular arm as a relapsed person to be stricken with the death penalty."²² Jeffrey B. Russell and Brooks Alexander note that the connection between heresy and witchcraft or sorcery existed since at least the thirteenth century, explaining that "in the years between 1227 and 1235, the papal inquisition was established" and it "moved decisively to assimilate sorcery to heresy."²³ Such comments demonstrate that there was no forgiveness for witches, and that Uwain's attitude towards his mother was overly merciful and kind, if not dangerous, in the view of a medieval reader.

Witchcraft as Rebellion

According to medieval theory, not only could witches individually pose a threat to others, but also they could present even greater dangers to society through conspiracies. Medieval people feared these conspiracies of witches might become an actual rebellion, as represented in *Le Morte Darthur* when Morgan uses Accolon in an attempt to overthrow Arthur and take his place. As Brian Levack explains,

As a heretic and apostate the witch was considered guilty of *lese majeste* or treason against God; as a devil-worshipper she was

part of an enormous political conspiracy; as a lower-class peasant she was part of a movement that was striving to turn the world upside down, reversing the divinely established hierarchical order of society and rejecting all of its moral norms.²⁴

The fifteenth century provided many examples of politically motivated accusations of witchcraft, and charges were occasionally directed at the accuser's own family.²⁵ The charge of witchcraft could serve as the perfect tool to counteract a woman's power, both political and financial. The strength of such an accusation derived from the fact that it required relatively little proof (in the case of Joan of Navarre, mother of Henry V, the confession of Joan's chaplain was all that was needed) and from the repulsion it would inspire people to feel for the accused. In Morgan's case, however, she is not merely accused of conspiracy; she is guilty of it.

Morgan in fact demonstrates the danger of a conspiracy of witches in multiple ways. As previously described, Morgan threatens to murder her sleeping husband Uriens; however, she also threatens the life of King Arthur. Using magic, her associates, and her lover Accolon, she arranges for Arthur and Accolon to fight while unaware of each other's identity. Accolon wields Excalibur and possesses the magical scabbard which prevents the bearer from losing blood, and Arthur has poor imitations. Despite this disadvantage, Arthur prevails, and Accolon dies. Despite his knowledge of the plot and willingness to participate, Accolon seems to be shocked and repentant immediately upon hearing that he has in fact done battle with his lord, and, mortally wounded, he pleads for mercy, telling Arthur as his excuse, "for I knew you nat."²⁶ Arthur acknowledges that this excuse does call for mercy. Although Accolon did in fact mean to help Morgan kill him, Morgan's reputation as a sorceress, as a witch, tips the scales in Accolon's favor, since Arthur believes that "my sister Morgan le Fay by hir false crauftis made [Accolon] to agre to hir fals lustes," even though Accolon has said nothing to encourage this interpretation. Thus Arthur holds Morgan primarily responsible for the plot against his life.

Medieval witchcraft theory took up the question of responsibility in the case of a person being bewitched or persuaded to do evil by the devil. According to the *Malleus*, although a witch may be tricked by the

devil into doing his bidding, this does not absolve her of responsibility since she has consented to a pact with the devil of her own will. On this point, the *Malleus* argues (later citing Augustine for support) that while “The devil produces a disposition by making an internal suggestion, and persuades by making a keener internal and external stimulus. . . . the cause of human depravity goes back to man’s will this being the cause that achieves the effect.”²⁷ This means that although a person might be influenced by temptation from a demon, he or she is still responsible for giving in to the temptation because his or her own free will determines the choice. Accolon, therefore, should accept his fair share of the blame for the episode described above.

Although Morgan’s direct rebellion fails, she nevertheless remains a dangerous threat to Arthur. In the immediate aftermath of Morgan’s failed plot to take over the government, she quickly follows with two more acts of hostility against Arthur. First, she steals his magical scabbard, which prevents the wearer from losing blood, and throws it into a lake. Cornered by Arthur and his men, she then turns herself and her men into stones and, after Arthur and his knights leave, returns herself and all her men to their former state.²⁸ To reinforce the point that Arthur cannot defeat her, she sends a message to Arthur: “tell hym I feare hym nat whyle I can make me and myne in lyknesse of stonys, and lette hym wete I can do much more whan I se my tyme.”²⁹ This shape-shifting ability is something Morgan shares with only one other person in the text, Merlin. Merlin demonstrates this ability multiple times, most notably when he changes Uther into the likeness of Gorlois in order for Gorlois to spend the night with Igraine and transforms himself into a likeness of Gorlois’s knight Jordanus.

Shape shifting is a relatively unusual detail in witch trials, and when it did appear, it usually involved the witch becoming an animal, most often a wolf or a cat.³⁰ Merlin’s and Morgan’s shape-shifting abilities, then, may owe more to Celtic mythology than to witchcraft theory. There is a comparable incident to Morgan’s theft of Arthur’s scabbard in Celtic mythology involving Cuchulinn and the Celtic goddess the Morrigan. As Lucy Allen Paton explains, the two cases are similar in that both the Morrigan in the Celtic tale and Morgain (her spelling) have stolen something from the male hero and are being pursued by the heroes:

Cuchulinn is about to attack the Morrigan when she and the cow vanish from sight, and she reappears in changed form; Arthur is on the point of overtaking Morgain, when she flings the scabbard out of sight and into the lake and shifts her shape. The Morrigan reminds Cuchulinn that she can transform herself at her pleasure, and threatens him with destruction; Morgain reminds Arthur that while she can transform herself into stone she does not dread him.³¹

Both incidents emphasize the Morrigan's/Morgain's invulnerability and the vulnerability of the main male character to her.

Morgan's second act of aggression following her attempted *coup d'état* comes after the threat that she "can do much more whan I se my tyme." Strangely contrasting to the tone of the threat just mentioned, Morgan sends Arthur a "gift," ostensibly as a gesture of peace, with a message that says, "what thyng she hath offended she woll amende hit at your owne plesure."³² However, the "gift" is a mantle which would burn the wearer to death. Alerted to the danger by Nyneve, Arthur is not harmed. Ironically, Morgan has attempted to burn Arthur, which is exactly the punishment meted out to witches (usually on the Continent, not customarily in England) and is thus what Arthur's knights had wished on Morgan moments before Morgan's damsel arrived. In any case, what she has attempted would be classified in medieval terms as classic *maleficium*. The *Malleus Maleficarum* provides many examples of the types of harm that witches can cause, including the example of a sorceress who, at the moment of execution by burning, threatened the executioner and then "she blew into his face, and he was immediately stricken throughout his body with fearsome leprosy, surviving only for a few days."³³ This witch of the Black Forrest, mentioned in the *Malleus*, however, did not have to worry about Nyneve anticipating the spell and turning the *maleficium* back onto the witch.

Even after Morgan's plot to overthrow Arthur has failed, she remains an unneutralized and persistent threat. Specifically, she retains control of a castle, ironically given to her by Arthur himself, who cannot win it back by besieging it, and from which she launches assaults on him. As Sir Palomydes explains, "And ever as she myght she made warre on kynge

Arthure, and all daungerous knyghtes she wytholdyth with her for to dystroy all thos knyghtes that kyng Arthure lovyth.”³⁴ The fact that King Arthur cannot get the castle by “no maner of engyne” may imply that Morgan is using enchantment to enhance the castle’s defenses.

Susan Murray comments on the various literary meanings of the castle in medieval literature:

First, the castle can be said to be a metaphor for the feminine with all the mysterious enclosed spaces implied by both women and castles. Second, since the presence of a woman, and eventually an heir, is requisite in the lord’s establishment of the stable home/demesne, the castle may be considered representative of domestic and social codes that are the foundation of a stable social entity. Finally, the castle and the lord’s lady may be seen as metonyms that stand for the lord’s power.³⁵

Morgan seems to have reversed the gendered meanings of the castle here since she does not participate in any of the “domestic” roles described; in fact, she appears to be taking the “lord’s” place in Murray’s discussion. The castle is the metonym of Morgan’s power. A conspiracy and/or rebellion is implied in the statement “all daungerous knyghtes she wytholdyth with her for to dystroy all thos knyghtes that kyng Arthure lovyth.” Certainly, Morgan’s castle represents the opposite of Murray’s “stable social entity.” Morgan is in fact attempting to destroy her society’s embodiment of stability in the person of Arthur.

Witchcraft and Sexuality

Witches were not only dangerous because of possible conspiracies and rebellions; the fear of witches/women also had a significant sexual element that Morgan demonstrates in her connection with other sorceresses and her treatment of Launcelot as well as her taking of lovers. Barstow asserts, “Much of the basis for the legends of demon lovers stemmed from the belief that women were sexually insatiable and could not be satisfied by mere mortal men.”³⁶ According to Martine Segalen (quoted in Barstow), “Of all the maleficent powers which a man is led to fear in his wife, the most redoubtable are her sexual appetites, which

threaten to subjugate him to her power.”³⁷ Malory portrays Morgan in a manner consistent with these beliefs. She acts on her sexual desires, which her husband apparently does not satisfy, by having multiple lovers, including Accolon and Hemison, both of whom die. Not only is she not controlled by her husband, but her attention appears to put her lovers in danger as well.

This medieval attitude towards female sexuality can be most clearly seen in beliefs about the witches’ sabbat.³⁸ Barstow describes the details of these supposed sabbats:

Moving further into the realm of judicial fantasy, we find women accused of flying to the sabbat on phallic broomsticks, being seduced by demon lovers, joining in orgiastic dances, kissing the devil’s ass, copulating indiscriminately with men, other women, relatives, demons, or the devil himself, and giving birth to demon children. Women were believed capable of these acts because of three qualities: being hypersexed, weak-willed, and given to melancholy.³⁹

Nothing so salacious occurs in *Le Morte Darthur*, but Morgan does associate with other sorceresses in committing various crimes.

In a crime against the great knight Launcelot, Morgan and three other sorceresses, all “queenys of a grete astate,” kidnap him while he is sleeping.⁴⁰ Morgan takes the lead, putting him under a spell in order to transport him back to her castle. Later the four sorceresses confront Launcelot with a difficult choice. Noting his reputation for loyalty to Queen Guenevere, nevertheless, they tell him: “now thou shalt hir love lose for ever, and she thyne. For hit behovyth the now to chose one of us four. . . . Now chose one of us, whyche that thou wolte have to thy peramour, other ellys to dye in this preson.”⁴¹ Of course, Launcelot, the loyal lover, replies “I woll none of you.” While this scene is quite tame compared to the sensational description of the witches’ sabbat, it nevertheless shares with those beliefs the emphasis on women’s supposed insatiable need for sex. As the *Malleus*’s authors write, “Everything is governed by carnal lusting, which is insatiable in them.”⁴²

Not only does this scene demonstrate this medieval belief in women’s insatiable desire for sex, but also it demonstrates the danger that women’s

power was believed to represent to men. Witches could specifically cause men to be impotent in that “male members are taken away as if they have been altogether torn out of the body.”⁴³ However, this threat was not due solely to witches’ own power, but because God maintains a higher power over human bodies. Further, not all cases of impotence involve actual loss of a body part; the authors of the *Malleus* claim, “In addition, let us cite a few illustrations to show that [witches] take away male members, not, of course, by stripping human bodies of them in reality but by concealing them with the art of conjuring.”⁴⁴ Even if men were vulnerable to this illusion, God retains the true power as the authors declare: “God’s creation is stronger than the Devil’s in the same way that His work is stronger than the Devil’s.”⁴⁵ By this logic while power does not really belong to (female) witches (who get their power through the devil), nevertheless, they can be blamed, and executed, for unleashing it.

While the *Malleus*’s authors were concerned with literal physical impotence (even if it was only an illusion), Launcelot is subject to symbolic impotence at the hands of the sorceresses. He is totally in the power of these women, both because of their magical powers and because the castle and servants belong to Morgan. In this situation Launcelot has been symbolically stripped of his masculinity—trapped in a cell with his armor taken away from him. Launcelot responds angrily to the sorceresses’ demands: “This is an harde case . . . that other I muste dye other to chose one of you.”⁴⁶

Launcelot recovers his potency through the help of Morgan’s damsel who releases him after he promises that he will help her father at a tournament. When she brings him his dinner and asks him how he is, he responds, “Truly, damesel . . . never so ylle.”⁴⁷ Totally under the power of dangerous women and stripped of his own masculine power, Launcelot is at a very low point. However, Morgan’s disloyal damsel offers Launcelot an avenue of escape and a way to recover his masculine potency. She asks him to fight on her father’s side in an upcoming tournament. Perhaps understandably under the circumstances, Launcelot does not agree to her request until he knows the name (and therefore reputation) of her father. The damsel promises to return to him his “armoure, [his] horse, shelde, and spere.”⁴⁸ Therefore, knowing her father has a good reputation, he can be assured that he can recover his potency while keeping

his honor. Such servants as this damsel are one of the prime factors in the failure of Morgan's plots.

An examination of the theory of witchcraft in the Middle Ages can place Morgan le Fay's behavior in historical context. Although she does not mention witchcraft specifically, Joan Ferrante illustrates the dynamics of a woman denied legitimate power who destructively attempts to gain power in other ways. Ferrante contends, "that not all women will accept the passive role imposed on them; if they are denied a direct and open role, they will find a way to assert their will, and the secret, hidden way can be dangerous."⁴⁹ Ferrante's statement applies directly to Morgan who desires power so much that she attempts to murder her brother and her husband. By the time King Mark's barons call Morgan le Fay "the false sorseres and wycche moste that is now lyvyng' . . . [who] in her dayes she was an enemy to all trew lovers,"⁵⁰ her status as a witch and enemy of Camelot has already been established for most readers. Her actions define her as a witch, as Malory's fifteenth-century audience would have understood the term.

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∞ END NOTES

1. Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (San Francisco: Pandora/HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), Appendix B, 179.
2. Walter Stephens, "Witches Who Steal Penises: Impotence and Illusion in *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 496.
3. Jeffrey B. Russell and Brooks Alexander, *A History of Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 2007), 52.
4. Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters, introduction to *Witchcraft in Europe 1100-1700: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 11.
5. Richard Kieckhefer states that by examining the frequency of trial documents throughout the Middle Ages, one can see an increase in the number of trials during the fourteenth century, and an even higher increase during the middle of the fifteenth century. The nature of the accusations

and trials also changed, from accusations against a single suspect to “sweeping witch hunts.” Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 199.

6. *Ibid.*, 198.

7. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 194. According to Robin Briggs, “there are some regions where 90 percent or more of known witches were women,” which includes England. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors* (New York: Penguin, 1996), 261.

8. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 285.

9. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 198.

10. *Ibid.*, 152-53.

11. Michael D. Bailey, “From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 76 (2001): 965.

12. In these texts he “established the basic clerical framework for the essential nature, and necessary condemnation, of all demonic sorcery for the remainder of the Middle Ages and well into the early modern period” (Bailey, “From Sorcery to Witchcraft,” 971).

13. Nicholas Eymeric, *Directorum Inquisitorum*, excerpt in *Witchcraft in Europe 1100–1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters, 88.

14. Thomas Malory, *Works*, ed. Eugène Vinaver (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 5.

15. Christopher S. McKay, trans., *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus maleficarum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 160.

16. *Ibid.*, 163.

17. *Ibid.*, 168.

18. *Ibid.*, 163.

19. *Ibid.*, 168.

20. Malory, *Works*, 90.

21. Russell and Alexander, *A History of Witchcraft*, 78.

22. McKay, *The Hammer of Witches*, 611. Although the title refers to a woman, the text refers to the accused in the masculine.

23. Russell and Alexander, *A History of Witchcraft*, 70.

24. Brian Levack, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Longman Inc., 1987), 58-59. Although not witchcraft, the heresy trial of Sir John Oldcastle in 1414 and 1417 illustrated such a rebellion. Oldcastle was accused of a plot to seize the king, at one point taking the field with 25,000

men “to destroy the king and all his lords.” *English Historical Documents IV*, ed. A. R. Myers (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969), 863.

25. In 1419 Joan of Navarre was accused by her son, Henry V, of plotting to murder him through magic. The accusation extended to her chaplain John Randolf, who confessed to using sorcery and necromancy. Joan was never brought to trial, though she was denied her dower and was kept in “exceedingly polite custody.” Margaret Wade Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life: A Small Sound of the Trumpet* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1986), 217. Not long before Henry’s death he reinstated her dower, implying that the charge was motivated less by a real belief in her guilt as a witch and more by a need for her money, since Henry suffered monetary pressures, including the pressure of financing a war with France. Christina Hole, *Witchcraft in England* (New York: Collier Books, 1947), 150–51.

26. Malory, *Works*, 88.

27. McKay, *The Hammer of Witches*, 155.

28. Malory, *Works*, 92.

29. *Ibid.*, 93.

30. See Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 108–11.

31. Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), 24.

32. Malory, *Works*, 93.

33. McKay, *The Hammer of Witches*, 360.

34. Malory, *Works*, 367.

35. Susan Murray, “Women and Castles in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Malory,” *Arthuriana* 13, no.1 (2003): 18.

36. Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 137.

37. Martine Segalen, *Love and Power in the Peasant Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 126–27 quoted in Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 137.

38. These beliefs did not begin during the witch trials, however. As Briggs explains, “Charges of nocturnal conspiracy, black magic, child murder, orgiastic sexuality and perverted ritual were nothing new in Europe when they were applied to witches. They had been used against early Christians and then against heretics, Jews and lepers. . . . The stereotype is obvious; it consisted of inverting all the positive values of society, adding a lot of lurid detail (often borrowed from earlier allegations), then throwing the resulting bucket of filth over the selected victims” (Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 32).

39. Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 135.

40. Malory, *Works*, 151.

41. Ibid., 152.
42. McKay, *The Hammer of Witches*, 170.
43. Ibid., 315, among other references.
44. Ibid., 323.
45. Ibid., 91.
46. Malory, *Works*, 152.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 153.
49. Joan Ferrante, "Public Postures and Private Maneuvers: Roles Medieval Women Play," in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 227.
50. Malory, *Works*, 270.