

Caxton's Edition of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*: Compositorial Challenges and Chapter Divisions¹

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Almost everything that can be said about the technical aspects of the work of the early printers is based on assumption, either by applying to the earlier times the facts which are known with certainty about the techniques of the later period, or by interpreting what can be observed in the books they printed.

—Lotte Hellinga²

Le Morte Darthur has been at the centre of a particularly long-lived and heated debate within the community of textual scholars. This debate was sparked by the “remarkable discovery” in 1934 of a manuscript of Malory’s opus.³ Before Walter Oakeshott discovered the ‘Winchester Manuscript’ in the Fellows’ Library of Winchester College, England, the uncontested exemplar for editors and readers alike had been William Caxton’s 1485 edition.

Oakeshott’s discovery caused Eugène Vinaver to set aside years of work on a new Caxton-based edition in favour of producing the first Winchester-based edition, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, published in 1947.⁴ From that point onwards there has been ongoing controversy over which source is the better basis for new editions;⁵ whether Malory wrote eight separate romances or one

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the 2011 conference of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand. My thanks go to those who responded to that presentation and to drafts of this paper for their valuable input. My particular thanks go to the two reviewers, for their thorough and generous comments, to Pawel Skuza, of Flinders University, for his advice on the statistical graphs and discussion, and to Shef Rogers for the time and attention he put into bringing this paper to press.

The research presented in this paper is based on examination of the facsimile of Caxton’s edition, published by Scholar Press in association with the Pierpont Morgan Library in 1976. All references to the text and images note the quire and page within the quire.

² Lotte Hellinga, “Printing,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1400–1557 Vol. 3*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, Cambridge History of the Book in Britain (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 68–69.

³ “Malory Find at Winchester: Pre-Caxton MS. of ‘Morte D’Arthur’: Earliest Text in Existence,” *The Daily Telegraph*, June 25, 1934.

⁴ It has since reached a third edition, revised by P. J. C. Field: Sir Thomas Malory, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver and rev. P. J. C. Field, 3rd ed. (Oxford [England]; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵ See for example the essays collected in Bonnie Wheeler, Robert Kindrick, and Michael Norman Salda, eds. *The Malory Debate* (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2000).

unified work;⁶ how extensive the scribal alterations were in the production of the Winchester Manuscript;⁷ and who was responsible for the extensive revisions made to the Roman War section.⁸

As a result, while the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript constituted a seismic shift in scholarship on *Le Morte Darthur*, research on Caxton's edition remains highly relevant, both to the editorial community, and for the wider field of book history. As Lotte Hellinga's statement suggests, the only way we can reconstruct the techniques of a print shop such as Caxton's is through minute observation of the products that he and his employees manufactured. In this paper I present the results of a relatively simple, but nonetheless surprising, study of the formatting of chapter divisions within Caxton's edition of *Le Morte Darthur*. I draw four main findings out of this work, but have also endeavoured to present as much of the collected data as possible, so that other interested readers can consider the implications for themselves. Before heading into that inky detail though, it is necessary for me to provide some background about the textual history, and about the work of composition in a printing house such as Caxton's. These preliminaries provide essential context, and establish the reasoning behind this study of formatting within Caxton's *Le Morte Darthur*.

I begin this history of *Le Morte Darthur* with Sir Thomas Malory, but given Malory's extensive use of French source material in composing his work this is a somewhat arbitrary point of departure.⁹ There has been some debate about which of the eight late-fifteenth-century Thomas Malorys was the author of *Le Morte Darthur*.¹⁰ The most widely accepted candidate is Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel in Warwickshire, whose anarchistic life landed him in jail intermittently from 1443 onwards.¹¹ It was in Newgate prison that Malory wrote his opus,

⁶ The very title of Vinaver's edition demonstrates his opinion that Malory wrote eight 'works'. This was later challenged by various authors in the 1964 collection of essays, *Malory's Originality*. R. M. Lumiansky, ed., *Malory's Originality: A Critical Study of Le Morte D'Arthur* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964).

⁷ While Vinaver argued that "the Winchester scribes copy their text mechanically and seldom, if ever, attempt to correct it" ("Introduction", cix), a number of writers, including Field and Kato, have shown that the Winchester scribes in fact made numerous conscious alterations to the text: P. J. C. Field, "The Earliest Texts of Malory's Morte Darthur," *Poetica* 38 (1993): 26; Takako Kato, "Towards the Digital Winchester: Editing the Winchester Manuscript of Malory's Morte Darthur," *International Journal of English Studies* 5, no. 2 (2005): 183.

⁸ See discussion of this issue below.

⁹ Eugène Vinaver, "Introduction," in *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver and rev. P. J. C. Field, 3rd ed. (Oxford [England]; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ P. J. C. Field, "Thomas Malory: The Hutton Documents," *Medium aevum* 48 (1979): 214; William Matthews, "A Question of Texts," in *The Malory Debate*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler et al. (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 78.

¹¹ Anne F. Sutton, "Malory in Newgate: A New Document," *The Library* 1 (2000): 204; See also P. J. C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993).

finishing it in ‘the ix yere of the reygne of kyng edward the fourth’ according to the final explicit, preserved only in Caxton’s edition.¹² Thus *Le Morte Darthur* was completed between 3 March 1469 and 4 March 1470. On 14 March 1471 Malory was buried at Greyfriars, Newgate Street.¹³

Thanks to the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript we know that after Malory completed *Le Morte Darthur* there followed some degree of scribal reproduction. We know that the Winchester Manuscript pre-dates Caxton’s edition thanks to a ground-breaking examination of the manuscript, conducted in 1977 by Lotte Hellinga in association with the Forensic Science Laboratory of the Metropolitan Police, London. This study showed that some of the smudges and dark marks on various pages of the Winchester Manuscript were actually offsets of oil-based printer’s ink. These smudges were identified as letters from Caxton’s Types 2 and 4, and could only have come from Caxton’s workshop, where just-printed sheets with drying ink must have been placed on the Winchester Manuscript at some point. From bibliographical evidence of when Types 2 and 4 were in use, and from other evidence,¹⁴ Hellinga showed that the Winchester Manuscript had probably been in Caxton’s workshop from 1480 to 1489.¹⁵

The use of red ink for every proper name within the Winchester Manuscript is one of the signs that it was the product of professional scribes, and is certainly not the holograph of the incarcerated author.¹⁶ Nevertheless, there is no way of knowing whether it was a unique manuscript edition, or whether there was extensive scribal reproduction of Malory’s opus, although the lack of casting-off marks on the Winchester Manuscript show that it was not the exemplar from which Caxton’s compositors set the type. We are therefore able to infer the existence of at least one further manuscript of *Le Morte Darthur*, whatever form that might have taken.

¹² Sir Thomas Malory and William Caxton, *Le Morte D’Arthur: Printed by William Caxton, 1485* (London: Scolar Press with the Pierpont Morgan Library, 1976), Quire ee, page 10. Note this quire is a ternion.

¹³ Sutton, “Malory,” 244.

¹⁴ The other major piece of evidence was the presence of a fragment of a papal indulgence used to repair a tear on folio 243 of the Winchester Manuscript. This indulgence was granted in 1489 by Innocent VIII and printed by Caxton. For further information about the indulgence see Walter F. Oakeshott, “A Malory MS: The Discovery at Winchester: Variants From the Text of Caxton,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 1934.

¹⁵ Lotte Hellinga and Hilton Kelliher, “The Malory Manuscript,” *The British Library Journal* 3.2 (1977): 94–99.

¹⁶ Carol M. Meale, “‘The Hoole Book’: Editing and the Creation of Meaning in Malory’s Text,” in *Companion to Malory*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards, *Arthurian Studies* 37 (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 10.

We do not know precisely how *Le Morte Darthur* came to the attention of England's first printer,¹⁷ but it must have been around 1480,¹⁸ after which the text underwent a range of editorial and compositorial revisions. From Caxton's preface we know that he divided the text into the 21 books and 506 chapters presented in his edition.¹⁹ Walter Oakeshott was the first to compare the Winchester Manuscript and Caxton's edition, noting that they agree for the most part, with a tendency towards modernised spelling and phrases in Caxton's edition, but differ markedly in the Roman War section, which in the Caxton edition is half the size of that in the manuscript.²⁰ In Caxton's edition this section is equivalent to book 5, and it is this section that has attracted the most controversy since 1934. Vinaver felt sure that the editor of the Roman War section was Caxton,²¹ but William Matthews questioned this in a paper presented posthumously in 1975. In that paper, Matthews proposed that Malory himself had been the reviser.²² More recently the linguistic analyses of Yuji Nakao and Shunichi Noguchi have shown to a very high level of probability that it was Caxton who re-wrote the Roman War section.²³

If we accept Caxton's epilogue, work on *Le Morte Darthur* was completed on 31 July 1485, just three weeks before the Battle of Bosworth and the end of the Wars of the Roses.²⁴ This study is concerned with a particular moment in the textual history briefly surveyed here—the point at which the *Le Morte Darthur* was prepared for printing and the type was set by Caxton's compositors. The specific study of chapter divisions is informed in large part by Lotte Hellinga's explanation of the process of printing by formes, a process introduced into Caxton's printing

¹⁷ In his preface Caxton remarks only that he has endeavoured "to enprynte a book of the noble hyftoryes of the sayd kynge Arthur . . . after a cotype unto me delyverd". Malory and Caxton, *Morte D'Arthur*, Quire (i–iiii), page 5.

¹⁸ P. J. C. Field, "Caxton's Roman War," in *The Malory Debate*, Arthurian Studies (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 132.

¹⁹ Malory and Caxton, *Morte D'Arthur*, Quire (i–iiii), page 6; See also Meale, "Hoole Book," 7.

²⁰ Oakeshott, "Malory MS."

²¹ Vinaver, "Introduction," cix.

²² This thesis was first presented (posthumously) to the Exeter Arthurian Congress in 1975. The paper was not printed until 1997, before being reprinted in 2000 in *The Malory Debate*. William Matthews, "A Question of Texts," in *The Malory Debate*, Arthurian Studies (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 65–108. See also the discussion of the complicated transmission of Matthews' paper in Field, "Roman War."

²³ Noguchi discussed words, word-pairs and phrases that are found in the Roman War section and elsewhere in Caxton's prose, but nowhere in the Winchester Manuscript: Shunichi Noguchi, "Caxton's Malory," *Poetica* 8 (1977): 72–84. Nakao's study was based on what Field called "linguistically unobtrusive material" (Field, "Roman War," 151) such as particles, conjunctions and specific forms of the verb 'to be.' Nakao concluded that it is "almost certain" that Caxton revised the Roman War section himself. Yuji Nakao, "Musings on the Reviser of Book V in Caxton's Malory," in *The Malory Debate*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler, Robert Kindrick, and Michael Norman Salda (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 209.

²⁴ Malory and Caxton, *Morte D'Arthur*, Quire ee, page 10.

house when he obtained a new press in 1480.²⁵ Hellinga notes that the first presses were “capable of printing one side of half a sheet of paper or vellum, corresponding with one folio page (or two quarto pages).”²⁶ This was improved in the early 1470s through the introduction of a movable carriage, “which enabled the printer to place a larger forme on the press, corresponding to the size of a whole sheet (of standard sizes of paper or vellum), and to print it in two pulls of the press.”²⁷

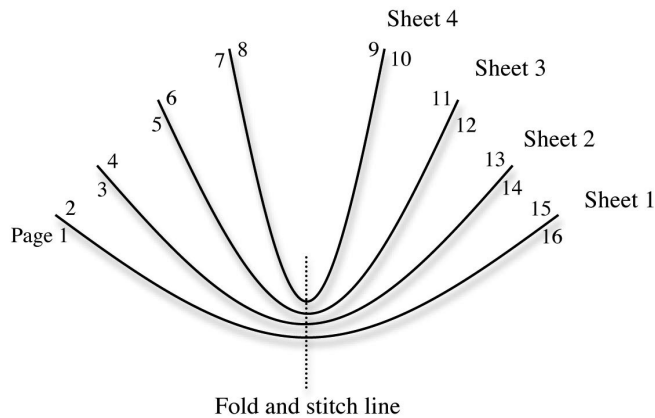


Figure 1: *A folio quaternion*

In both half-sheet and full-sheet imposition, text must be cast-off to discern “the total size of the book and also its structure in pages, sheets and quires”, but there was a significant difference in the accuracy of casting-off required for these two methods of imposition.²⁸ Using the original hand press, with half-sheet imposition, “a great deal of adjustment to the original calculation and marking was possible.”²⁹ On the other hand, for a folio quaternion, such as Caxton’s *Le Morte Darthur*,³⁰ full-sheet imposition meant that pages 1 and 16, 2 and 15 and so on, would have been imposed together (see Figure 1). Consequently “it was necessary to set and prepare pages in the combination required for the formes to be put on the press, but not the order in which the text was to be read.”³¹ As a result “the

²⁵ Hellinga, “Printing,” 80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.; Philip Gaskell explains that while printing papers of the hand-press period “were produced in a confusing variety of qualities, weights, and sizes,” most fifteenth-century folios were printed on paper measuring either 70 x 50cm or 50 x 30 (or 35) cm. Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 80–81.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁰ The collation is: (i–iiii)⁸ (v–viii)¹⁰ a–z & A–Z aa–dd⁸ ee⁶

³¹ Hellinga, “Printing,” 80.

forecast had to be more precise and had to indicate with a degree of precision where in the text each page had to begin (and the previous page had to end).³²

When mistakes were made in the casting-off of an exemplar, compositors were forced to make the apportioned text fit the page. Copy-fitting, as this process is known, became a kind of art in its own right, as compositors used a wide range of techniques to fit text. These included: “using deviant spelling, unusually large numbers of contractions, variations in punctuation, spacing or the use of capitals, reductions, on occasion, of the number of lines to the page, and deviating from the text of the copy.”³³ Variations in the formatting of chapter divisions within Caxton's edition of *Le Morte Darthur* can be construed as evidence of copy-fitting. By extension, the level of regularity (or variation) in formatting may provide evidence of the accuracy (or inaccuracy) of the casting-off of the exemplar.

This is not the first study of formatting within Caxton's edition of *Le Morte Darthur*. Takako Kato has studied the use of paraph marks and white space by the compositors, and has shown that inserting these primitive paragraph divisions into the text was one means through which the compositors spaced out the copy.³⁴ Toshiyuki Takamiya also showed, in his 1996 study of chapter divisions that fall at page breaks, that at these breaks there was a higher chance of linguistic changes being made for copy-fitting purposes.³⁵ Nevertheless, to my knowledge no study has previously considered the formatting of chapter divisions across the whole of Caxton's edition.

The particular need for work on the formatting of chapter divisions within this text can be explained by the extreme variation in the way these divisions were set. As Figures 2 and 3 show, this varied from very tight interlinear divisions, to spacious divisions of five or six lines.

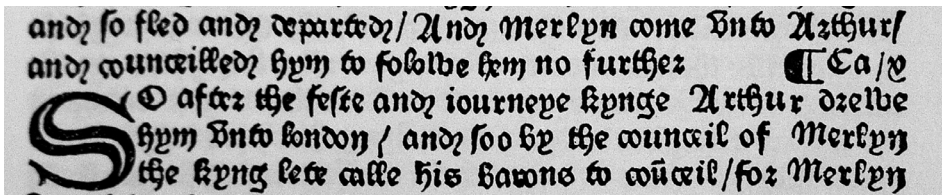


Figure 2 Book 1, chapter 10 (*Quite a*, page 13). (Images reproduced with the special permission of The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. PML 17560.)

³² Ibid.

³³ Lotte Hellinga, “Notes on the Order of Setting a Fifteenth-century Book,” *Quaerendo* 4.1 (1974): 66.

³⁴ Takako Kato, *Caxton's Morte Dathur: The Printing Process and the Authenticity of the Text* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2002).

³⁵ Toshiyuki Takamiya, “Chapter Divisions and Page Breaks in Caxton's *Morte Darthur*,” *Poetica* 45 (1996): 63–78.

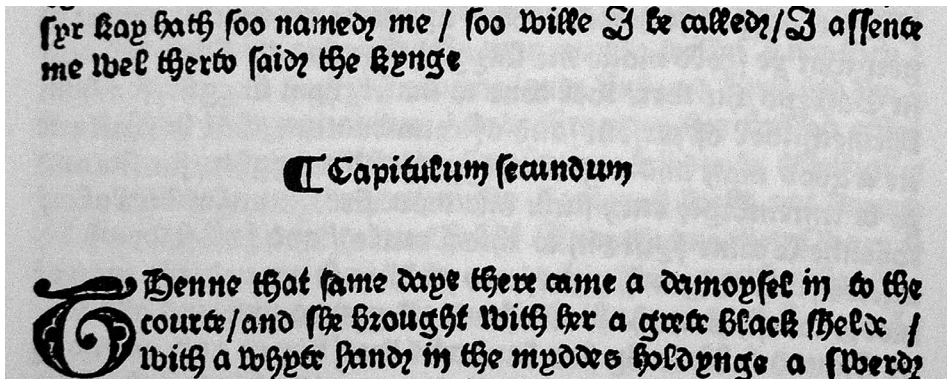


Figure 3 Book 9, chapter 2 (Quire u, page 2). (Images reproduced with the special permission of The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. PML 17560.)

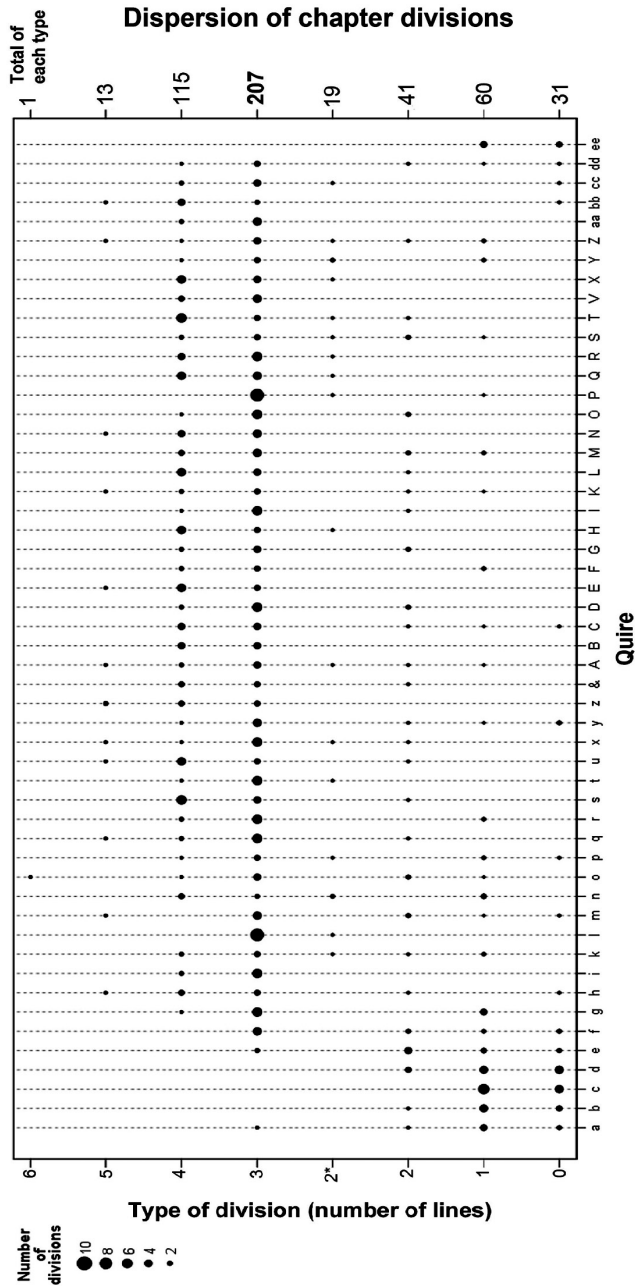
Having observed this variation I set out to map the formatting of every chapter and book division across this edition by examining the number of lines taken up by each division. The book divisions proved to be less suitable for this analysis, but the formatting of book divisions bears on one core finding, which I will return to below. Before I describe the findings, some notes on methodology are necessary, although most of the intricate detail of this is presented as Appendix A.

I have already noted that Caxton's edition of *Le Morte Darthur* is comprised of 21 books and 506 chapters. The dispersal of the chapters within the books is far from even, varying from six chapters in book 15, to eighty-eight chapters in book 10. Similarly, while most of the chapters range from one to three pages in length, the book lengths vary considerably.³⁶ Consequently, in mapping the formatting of chapter divisions across the edition I use quires rather than books as the dividing criteria. As the collation description shows (see note 30 above), the quires are of a regular length apart from the final quire, which has one sheet fewer than the norm. A further complication is that the number of chapter divisions per book and per quire is not necessarily the same as the number of chapters. There are several cases of both missed and repeated chapter headings across the edition. For example book 18 contains 25 chapters but has 27 chapter divisions due to two repetitions of chapter headings.

My analysis starts from quire a, as this is the start of the text proper, and it excludes divisions for the first chapter of each book as the formatting at book divisions complicates these considerably. After counting the lines taken up by each chapter division (see Appendix B for full details) I produced two graphs, which reveal the pattern of formatting across quires a to ee. Graph 1 shows the dispersion of chapter divisions of each kind across the whole edition and the totals of each kind. For example the column describing quire Z represents the breakdown of

³⁶ Meale, "Hoole Book," 7.

chapter divisions in that quire: there are two one-line divisions, one two-line, one two*-line, five three-line, one four-line and one five-line.



Graph 1: Dispersion of chapter divisions by quire

Graph 1 also shows the total number of each type of chapter division—and this basic numeration represents the first finding of this study. The figures reveal that the most common form of chapter division is that using three lines (this usually involves one blank line, one line for a centred chapter heading and one further blank line). There is also a relatively high number of divisions using four lines. The two* group represents two-line top-page divisions. While the total number of these is not substantial, it is important to consider them apart from other two-line divisions, as their form (centred chapter heading at the top of a page followed by one blank line) makes them more closely related to the three-line divisions. The high proportion of three-line and four-line divisions leads me to conclude that the compositors were aiming to set out the text in that format.

A further point of interest in these numbers is the fact that there are far more cases of interlinear or one-line divisions than there are of five- or six-line divisions. This shows that at chapter divisions the compositors found themselves forced to compress text more often than they had to expand it. This is a somewhat counter-intuitive finding, as Kato's study of paraps within this same edition reveals consistent work by compositors to expand the apportioned text. Similarly, in Hellinga's 1974 study of the setting of Jacob Bellaert's edition of *l'Histoire de Jason*, printed in Haarlem in c1485, she concluded that "in general we find that there was more often too much space for the text than too little."³⁷ The significant number of interlinear chapter divisions (such as that shown in Figure 2) are perhaps the most interesting group, as these indicate situations where the formatting was pushed to its limit in order to accommodate additional text. These pages are therefore those most likely to have undergone linguistic changes in order to fit the copy.

From Graph 1 we can also extrapolate the second and third findings of this study. The second finding concerns the very tight formatting of divisions within quire ee. This is the final quire, and the only quire of the main edition that is made up of a ternion (three sheets) rather than the usual quaternion (or 12 pages rather than 16). While the chapter divisions within this quire are all interlinear or one-line division, the final page of the quire is blank, while the text on page eleven finishes in the middle of the page. It appears that for quire ee the casting-off allowed for only a small amount of space for chapter divisions, to ensure that the text did not spill over onto an expensive additional page. This contraction was more extreme than actually required, leaving a page and a half of free space at the end of the quire.

The third finding from Graph 1 is possibly the most striking, but also the most difficult to explain—that is the extreme contraction of chapter divisions in the first quires of the text (a–d). In the first four quires there is only one three-line division, and no divisions larger than that, while 15 of the 31 total interlinear chapter divisions occur in these four quires. Seven of these interlinear divisions show

³⁷ Hellinga, "Notes," 66.

particularly cramped formatting—for example the heading for book 1, chapter 10 is abbreviated to “Ca / x” (quire a). Kato’s study also shows that these quires exhibit relatively low numbers of paraphs,³⁸ so this is not a case of compositors preferring once spacing device over another. These quires are genuinely contracted when compared to the rest of the edition. Quires a–d also have a relatively high number of missed numbers in the sequences of chapter numbers—with three missed numbers out of a total of five for the whole edition (the others are in quires g and o).

The contracted formatting in quires a–d is difficult to explain with any degree of certainty, but we can imagine several scenarios from which this pattern could emerge. It may be that the decision to format chapter divisions with a three-line break was made after casting-off had already started, and that the sections already cast-off were not revised. Similarly the decision to break the text up into chapters may have occurred after casting-off had begun. Again this suggestion requires that the printers omitted to revise the casting-off of the first sections.

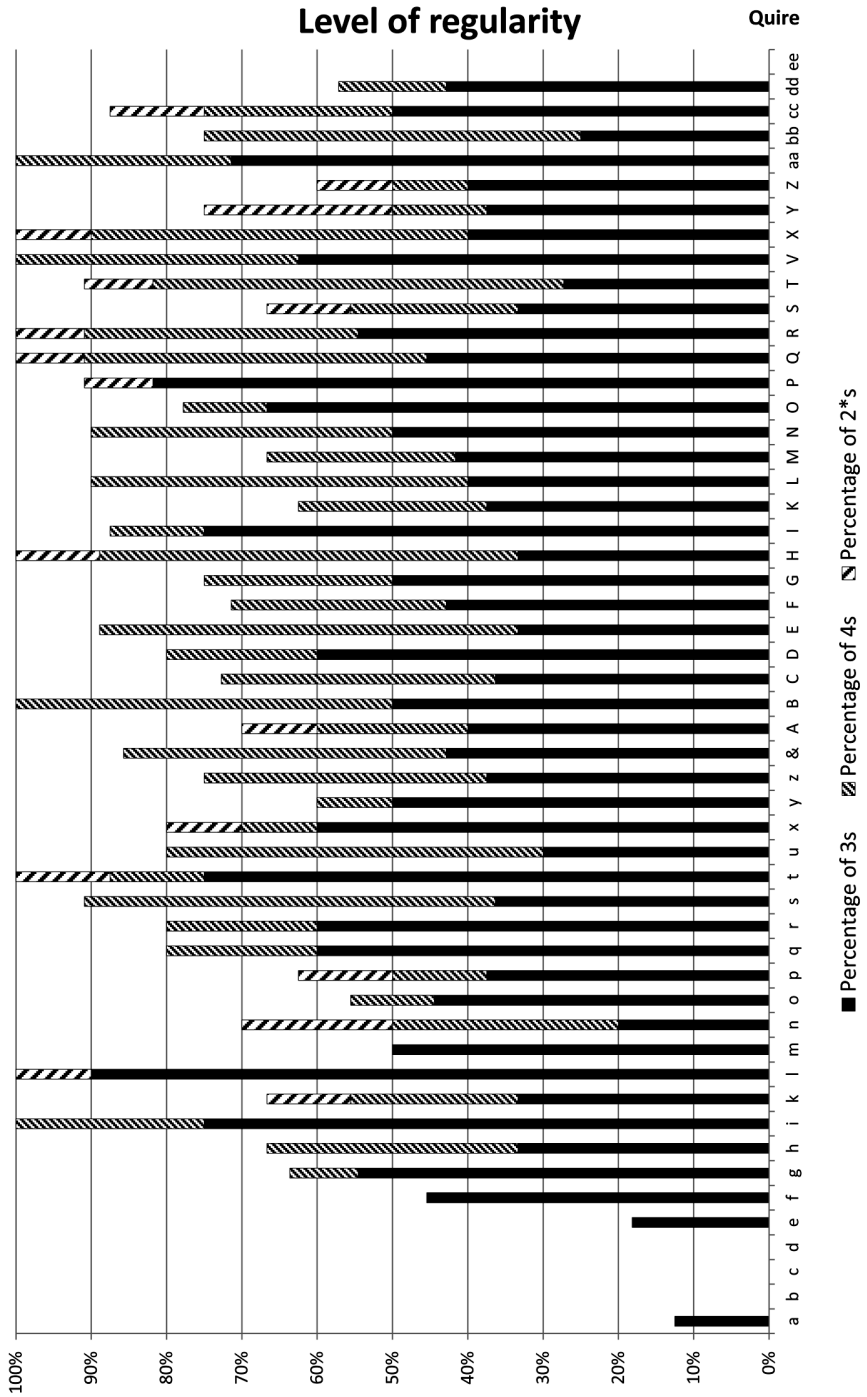
Alternatively the casting-off could have been done particularly poorly at the start, by someone who either forgot or did not know to leave additional space for pages with chapter divisions. We can postulate that these initial quires may have been cast-off by an inexperienced hand who either received instruction, or was replaced by someone more competent after the errors were discovered. Finally it is possible that the whole text was cast off very inaccurately. The compositors may have realised this after pages from the initial quires had already been printed, at which point the casting-off was revised. Even if this second casting-off was done with more accuracy, this scenario could explain the variation through the remainder of the edition, as compositors would have had to decipher two different sets of casting-off marks, and could have easily become confused.

Building upon my first finding and conclusion (that Caxton’s staff aimed to use three- or four-line divisions for chapters) I developed a bespoke measure of regularity that charts the percentage of two^{*}-, three- and four-line divisions per quire.³⁹ The product of this is Graph 2, which represents the level of regularity of chapter divisions and which can be seen as a test of how accurate the compositors were at casting-off and at setting the type across quires a–ee.

While Graph 2 confirms the irregularity of quires a–d and ee, it also permits us to explore a different factor—whether there is any difference between the regularity of chapter divisions in the Roman War section (book 5) and the other

³⁸ Kato, *Caxton's Morte Darthur*.

³⁹ I initially thought to measure the level of regularity through the average number of lines per chapter division per quire. It quickly became apparent that this would not work, as quire o illustrates. While quire o achieves a ‘perfect’ three-line average it in fact contains substantial irregularity (as shown in Graph 1): one chapter number is missing from the sequence and one chapter is mis-numbered; one division takes up six lines at the bottom of a page, while the following division uses just one line. In this chapter the ideal three-line division is achieved just four times out of nine divisions. So we find that the perfect average of quire o, and other quires, does not stand up to scrutiny.



Graph 2: Level of regularity in the formatting of chapter divisions

books in the edition. The reasoning behind this exploration is simple. If we accept that Caxton revised the Roman War section to the extent of halving the text and substantially rewriting it, a logical inference is that this section might have been set from a different exemplar to the rest of the text (which underwent only minor editing). The Roman War exemplar may have been a Caxton holograph, or a fair copy produced from such a holograph.

Book 5 begins on page 14 of quire h, takes up all of quire i, and ends on the fifth page of quire k. As such, i is the only quire made up entirely of material from the Roman War section. Graph 1 shows that the eight chapter divisions in quire i break down into six three-line and two four-line divisions, while Graph 2 represents this as 100% regularity. Comparison with other quires in Graph 2 shows that quire i is one of only 10 quires to achieve total regularity. We can therefore say that quire i displays a relatively, if not uniquely, high level of regularity in the formatting of chapter divisions. Conversely quires h and k both achieve only 67% regularity.

I mentioned above that the formatting of book divisions is important for one finding, and it is this one. The divisions that introduce books 5 and 6 (in quires h and k respectively) are the only top-page divisions in the edition other than the introduction of the first book. By this, I mean that all of the material that separates one book from the next (the explicit, incipit and book heading) are at the head of a page. In contrast, the bulk of book divisions are either placed mid-page (of which there are ten), or are split over two pages (of which there are eight). These split divisions have the explicit, and usually also the incipit, at the end of one page and the start of the first chapter at the head of the next page. The result is that book 5 is unique among the books in this edition because it takes up 21 *complete* pages. We can add to this evidence the fact that the final page of book 4 has one line fewer than the norm, while the final division in that book uses a full 5 lines—stretching the text out in a relatively unusual way (see Graph 1).

No single piece of evidence that I have presented could support the case for a separate Roman War exemplar alone. However, by adding up these building blocks I believe it is possible to make such a case. The neat book divisions, and the unique fact that book 5 does not run over onto a fraction of a page as the other books do, indicate careful casting-off of this section so that it could be drawn into the compositorial process smoothly, but separately. We can well imagine how complicated it would be to cast-off portions of text from two exemplars to fit neatly within one page, particularly given (probable) differences between the size and script of the exemplars. Further, the fact that quire i demonstrates a relatively high level of regularity further supports the suggestion that this book was set from a different exemplar to the bulk of the book, and that the casting off of this exemplar was slightly more successful than at other points in the process.

I have presented here four findings drawn from close analysis of the chapter and book divisions in Caxton's edition of *Le Morte Darthur*. The first three of these bear particular relevance to scholars interested in textual alterations that might have been made to *Le Morte Darthur* for copy-fitting purposes. In particular, these results suggest closer attention might usefully be paid to the text at interlinear chapter divisions, and in quires a-d and ee, as the extreme contraction of formatting at these points suggests that there may be associated textual contractions. The last finding provides circumstantial support for the view that Caxton revised the Roman War section, and further indicates that there is some probability that this section was set from a different exemplar to the rest of the edition. Most of all, though, I hope that this study has demonstrated how much we might still be able to learn about techniques of the early hand-press period, even from a text as persistently studied as *Le Morte Darthur*.

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