'The Old Order Changeth': Arthurian literary production from Tennyson to White

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PhD Thesis
Cardiff University
September, 2007

UMI Number: U585003

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Student ID Number:	991321740

Summary of Thesis:

This is a study of modern retellings of the Arthurian story, from Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1842-1891) to T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* (1938-1958). It has three main aims. First, while primarily a literary history, it attempts to form an integrated narrative of the modern Arthurian legend through the study of creative literature, scholarship, historiography, visual art, journalism and popular culture. Second, unlike earlier Anglo-American accounts of modern Arthuriana, this thesis concentrates exclusively on British literature, including previously-ignored retellings of the legend by Scottish, Irish, Welsh and Cornish writers and emphasises the influence of Celtic writing on contemporary English literature.

Third, this thesis attempts to demonstrate how post-Tennysonian English literature is fundamentally different from earlier manifestations of the legend. The medieval and Victorian traditions, this study argues, were characterised by a series of literary revolutions, beginning with the creation of a paradigmatic text (Geoffrey's *Historia*, Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Tennyson's *Idylls*), which served the ideological needs of elite social groups. After the creation of such texts there followed lengthy periods of stable literary production which essentially reproduced and expanded the ideological franchise of the paradigm. Yet at certain points, due to major social and economic transition, the Arthurian paradigm no longer functioned effectively in its paradigmatic mould and underwent a period of crisis – only to emerge in a new paradigmatic formation.

Yet the modern, post-Tennysonian tradition has not conformed to this hegemonic structure. In the absence of a paradigm, Arthurian literature since the 1920s has been characterised by a series of diverse and contradictory trends. Some of these have been nationalist in orientation, while others have developed directly out of scholarly approaches. Politically, they have been informed by a range of ideologies, from conservatism to feminism and from anarchism to clerical fascism.

This thesis examines the causes of the breakdown of the paradigmatic structure in twentieth-century Arthurian literature, while chronicling the significance of the trends that developed in its place – shaping the Arthurian story into a much more British political narrative. Yet with the current breakdown in the conception of Britain as a political unit, the Arthurian story seems ready for another major shift in form and significance.

Acknowledgements

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List of Illustrations

Figures 1-14 can be found between chapters 2 and 3; figures 15-28 can be found between chapters 4 and 5.

Note

This thesis uses a double note system. Endnotes are used for bibliographic information, while footnotes are used to elucidate meaning, or to expand on a point raised in the text. Chapter titles are all taken from Tennyson's *The Idylls of the King*, saving the first, which is taken from 'The Epic', an 82-line poem which framed the original 'Morte d'Arthur' of 1842.

Introduction

Like Tennyson's Leodogran, unsure whether to give his daughter, Guinevere, as wife to the young king, the early Victorian age was sceptical of Arthur. Many writers doubted whether the stories of a medieval age far removed from their own in taste, culture and religion could be made relevant to them. And yet they acquiesced: the 'doubtful throne' became assured and the Victorian age – in poetry, prose, art, music, drama and scholarship – became 'of one mind with him.'[1] The single work which affected this change – which forced this inheritance – was the *Idylls of the King*, a work which spanned the age and turned its bourgeois ideology into epic.* Even where it was not the primary inspiration for artists' and poets' turning to Arthur, it quickly became the greatest influence upon them. Through the legend, Tennyson raised England's 'crown'd Republic' to the level of myth; and the medieval Matter of Britain became Anglicised, domesticated and middle-class.[2] For fifty years writers choosing to rewrite the legend did little other than repeat, in various forms, this Victorian poem. Yet after the Great War, an event which shattered so many nineteenth-century monuments, British culture largely rejected the *Idylls* as an imitable cultural icon.

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* Tennyson published the 'Morte d'Arthur' in 1842, though it was written nearly ten years earlier; the poet made his final changes to the poem in 1891.

In its place a multiplicity of Arthurs sprang up – he was a sun god, a vestige of some ancient pagan ritual, a historical personage, a British hero of resistance. No longer an English gentleman of 'stateliest port', Arthur became a champion of Cornish and Welsh independence.[3] If his story symbolised Britain's multi-ethnic identity, it could also focalise a mono-racial society. It could be made to represent the destruction of spiritual values; it could be rewritten as right-wing propaganda, socialist aspiration or liberal nostalgia. The legends could be retold in simple ballads, or through a system of complex, modernist allusion; it could even be retold as a novel. The variety of these Arthurs underlines the fact that there was no dominant retelling in the twentieth century – that the twentieth-century Arthur was in many ways a contradictory figure. Certainly no Arthurian writer of the last century achieved anything like Tennyson's success and influence – not T. Gwynn Jones or John Masefield; nor David Jones or even T.H. White, whose *Once and Future King* (1958) is perhaps the best-known version of the last hundred years.

This is a study of these modern retellings, stretching from Tennyson to White. It is also about cultural inheritance – the ways in which twentieth-century authors struggled with their Victorian predecessor, while trying to shape new Arthurs for a new age. While predominantly a literary history, this thesis incorporates a critical narrative of Arthurian scholarship from John Rhŷs's *Arthurian Studies* (1892), which marked the first major break with the English-French axis which had hitherto dominated Arthurian criticism, to R.S. Loomis's *Arthurian Literature of the Middle Ages* (1959), which reintegrated the diverse critical approaches which had developed in the first half of the twentieth century. In terms of Malory studies it ranges from the various editions of the *Morte Darthur* produced in the nineteenth century, with their emphasis on celebrating an English epic, to the publication of Eugène Vinaver's

Works in 1947, which presented a very different *Morte Darthur* – one that was barely

English and hardly an epic. This study tries to not only to demonstrate creative

literature's indebtedness to scholars like Rhŷs, Loomis, Vinaver, Jessie Weston,

Alfred Nutt and W.P. Ker; it also attempts to present them as authors of the modern

Matter of Britain in their own right. Moreover, their scholarship is understood as a

cultural product formed out of the same ideological forces which are apparent in

fictional retellings: notably nationalism, chauvinism and misogyny, as well as the

politics of a declining liberalism, an assertive, reactionary conservatism and a

tentative socialism.

There already exist many studies of the modern Arthur. In 2006 there even

appeared *A History of Arthurian Scholarship* which surveyed much of the critical

material this present study examines.[4] The most common accounts of modern fictional

retellings of the legend are found in the historical surveys which chronicle the myth

from its medieval beginnings down to the contemporary, such as those by Richard

Barber (1961, 1986), Stephen Knight (1983), Jennifer R. Goodman (1987) and Alan

Lupack (2006), as well as a host of popular works.[5] There are also several articles

dealing with modern Arthuriana which have appeared as part of multi-authored

histories of the legend, including those by Geoffrey Ashe (1968), Elisabeth Brewer

(1996), Muriel Whitaker (1996), Raymond Thompson (1996), Chris Brooks and Inga

Bryden (1999) and Gossedge and Knight (2008).[6]

Bibliographies of modern retellings by Clark S. Northup and John J. Parry

(1944), Stephen R. Reimer (1981), Mary Wildman (1982) and William D. Reynolds

(1983) should also be mentioned.[7] Norris J. Lacy's *Arthurian Encyclopedia* (1986,

1991, 1996; supplemented in 2001), which remains the most inclusive guide to

Arthurian literature from the Celtic sources to the modern adaptations, is the

culmination of this bibliographic approach.[8] There are also several works that have

dealt with specific areas of Arthuriana, the most important of which have been those

on the Grail by Juliette Wood (2000), Dhira B. Mahoney (2000), Barber (2004) and

John B. Marino (2004)[9] by and on visual representations of the legend by Whitaker

(1990), Debra N. Mancoff (1990) and Christine Poulson (1999).[10] Kevin J. Harty,

meanwhile, has largely defined the study of 'cinema Arthuriana', a term of his own

devising.[11] In addition there have been a few studies of individual Arthurian writers,

including book-length studies by Charles Moorman (1960), Elisabeth Brewer (1993)

and David Llewellyn Dodds (1991, 1994).[12] Shorter pieces, including articles and

book reviews, have been cited, where relevant, in the text.

The first large-scale work which surveyed post-medieval Arthurian literature

was M.W. MacCallum's *Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King' and Arthurian Story from the*

XVIth Century (1894), which pioneered a narrative of literary production from

Spenser to the Victorian period.[13] His work concluded with several chapters on

Tennyson's *Idylls*, which it understood to be the glorious culmination of a tradition,

not just another retelling of a medieval story – a sentiment repeated in later studies by

W.P. Ker (1896) and W. Lewis Jones (1911).[14] MacCallum's account of post-

medieval literature was expanded by many critics, though none, until Margaret J.C.

Reid in 1938, took the story past Tennyson.[15] Reid's *Arthurian Legend*, a survey of

medieval and modern literature, included discussion of a number of twentieth-century

writers, including Laurence Binyon, T.S. Eliot, Thomas Hardy, John Masefield, John

Cowper Powys and Edwin Arlington Robinson, as well as discussing otherwise-

neglected nineteenth-century figures including Mark Twain and Richard Wagner.

However, her treatment of modern authors was brief and often negative.[16]

It was not until the publication of Nathan Comfort Starr's *King Arthur Today* (1954), an analysis of the legend from 1901 to 1953, that the study of modern Arthuriana began to acquire scholarly rigour.[17] Starr structured his book thematically, with chapters on Merlin, Tristram and Isoult, the Grail and so forth. While providing a wide survey of the field, Starr privileged certain writers – Edwin Arlington Robinson, John Masefield, Charles Williams and T.H. White – believing them to be artistically superior to their contemporaries. Starr also noted the influence of scholarship on creative writers (often neglected by later critics of modern Arthuriana) and the importance of the Victorian poets in shaping early twentieth-century responses to Arthur, while noting that 'the outstanding twentieth-century versions break almost completely' with their forbears. So comprehensive was his book that it was not until Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer published their *Return of King Arthur* in 1983 that Starr's work was superseded.[18] Consisting of synopses and commentary, Taylor and Brewer's study charted the early nineteenth-century revival, Tennyson and the Victorians, twentieth-century dramatic and poetic treatments, as well as the later developments in a variety of novel subgenres. Their work also gave a substantial amount of space to American retellings of the legend, as Starr had earlier done.

Since the publication of Brewer and Taylor's book, modern Arthuriana has been a frequent source for studies. Raymond Thompson's *The Return from Avalon* (1985) concentrated exclusively on post-Second World War Arthurian fiction.[19] Debra N. Mancoff published two collections of essays on modern Arthuriana in 1992 and 1998.[20] Alan Lupack and Barabara Tepa Lupack published *King Arthur in America* in 1999, the first work to be wholly concerned with American reinventions of the tradition. And in 2002, Donald Hoffman and Elizabeth Sklar published a collection of essays by predominantly American critics on Arthur and popular culture,

including chapters on Tintagel, King Arthur and Vietnam, adaptations for television and comic-books.[21]

This study is indebted to many of these works, as my notes demonstrate. But it also differs from them in a number of ways. First, unlike the literary studies above, this thesis attempts to integrate the exceptional scholarship the period produced into a coherent narrative of the Arthurian legend at this time. Second, unlike earlier accounts of modern Arthuriana, which are all transatlantic studies (with the exception of *King Arthur in America*), this thesis concentrates exclusively on literature produced within the British Isles. The transatlantic bias of earlier studies resulted in the neglect of many writers whose work tended to exist outside of the Anglo-American parallels most critics pursue.[*] This was especially true in the case of non-English British authors, such as T. Gwynn Jones, Glyn Jones, David Jones and Robert Morton Nance. Indeed, reflecting the actual corpus of literature, much consideration is given to the Cornish and Welsh ideological uses of the Arthurian story in the twentieth century, while I have also attempted to postulate on why Ireland and Scotland produced relatively few works on the legend.

Apart from providing a counterbalance to the Anglocentricity of previous works, this study's emphasis on the importance of the Celtic contribution to British literary production also results in a change in the ways in which English writers, such as John Masefield and T.H. White (both standard figures in studies of modern Arthuriana), can be viewed. Indeed, it is a central contention of this thesis that from the late 1920s to the mid 1940s Arthurian literary production in England steadily lost the Anglocentricity of its Victorian forbears and increasingly came to be written as an

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[*] The trend for transatlantic studies may be something of a historical accident, owing to the fact that many of the scholars who have written on the modern Arthur have been Americans: Maynadier, Reid, Starr, Mancoff, Thompson, Mahoney, Lupack, Tepa Lupack, Hoffman, Sklar and Marino. The very first chronicler of post-medieval Arthuriana, Mungo MacCallum, was an Australian professor at Sydney University.

Anglo-Celtic product – a development that has continued into the modern day with the growth of the historical novel.

Third, this thesis also attempts to show how post-Tennysonian Arthurian writing is fundamentally different from earlier traditions – at least in England, where Arthurian literary production had always possessed a structure which separated it from its Celtic and continental equivalents. This structure, this thesis contends, has essentially been paradigmatic. Since the beginning of the 'English' Arthur, the tradition has been characterised by the production of culturally iconic texts which have operated as archetypal versions of the myth: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1138), Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (c. 1469) and, in the nineteenth century, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Not only did these texts prove to be influential on subsequent literary productions of the legend, they also proved to be models of the legend which completely dominated their contemporaries' understanding of the stories of Arthur. In their respective periods, the *Historia*, the *Morte* and the *Idylls* were not only the most widely-consumed version of the legend in England, they also constituted almost the entire myth for their readers and audiences. Thus, the *Historia* was not only the most popular version of the myth in the twelfth century, it simply *was* the myth for most English readers until the fifteenth century. Likewise, when Malory translated and redacted the French romances of the thirteenth century into English prose of the 1400s, his humanist retelling provided generations of readers with the most authoritative version of the myth then existing. And in the nineteenth century, such was the dominance of the *Idylls* that when authors and critics read the *Morte Darthur* their resulting poems, plays and scholarship were far more in line with what Tennyson had written than that produced by Malory in the fifteenth century.

To these three paradigmatic accounts of the legend subsequent literary and artistic interpretations have obediently deferred, tending to reproduce, with gradual modification, the paradigmatic text's narrative, cultural and ideological themes in a variety of forms and genres – thus extending the cultural potency of the paradigm over a longer period than if the authoritative text had existed in isolation. Under such a system, Arthurian cultural production was a dogmatic enterprise, enforced by the ideological machinations of elite social groups keen to regulate a political myth that functioned as an effective means of disseminating the ideals on which those societies were based. Thus, for example, the largely historiographical Arthurian tradition of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries is best known under the rubric 'Galfridian', and the large body of poetic and lyrical manifestations of the legend produced in the nineteenth century are most accurately termed 'Tennysonian'.

In the period since the First World War, however, this hegemonic pattern of English literary production has greatly diminished and no paradigmatic text has existed to enforce prescribed cultural signification of subsequent Arthurian literature. This greater freedom from ideological regulation has been due to a range of considerations, including the influence of medieval Welsh literature and the prominence of a number of Anglo-Welsh writers who sought to locate their contradictory national identities within the Arthurian story. Political factors were also important, the most vital of which was the collapse of liberalism in the interwar period and the altered demands made of literature as ideological vehicle in the post-war age. Instead, since the 1920s, Arthurian literary production – far from operating in a normative paradigm structure – has been characterised by a series of diverse and sometimes contradictory trends. Some of these have been nationalist in orientation: English, Welsh and Cornish, or Celtic and Anglo-Celtic. Other trends have developed

directly out of scholarly approaches, for example: Christian, Pagan, Ritualist and historical. Politically they have been informed by a range of ideologies, from conservatism to feminism and from anarchism to clerical fascism.

The following section expands on the paradigmatic form of the Arthurian legend in the medieval period; but before discussing this model in more detail it is necessary to say something regarding the applicability the theory of paradigms to the legends of Arthur. My discussion of the paradigmatic account of Arthurian literary production is grounded in the philosophy of Thomas Kuhn, especially his seminal study of the practice of science, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). The terms used throughout this study – 'paradigm', 'paradigmatic shift', 'normal literary production' and 'crisis' – are all taken from Kuhn's analysis of the history of scientific production. The advantage, I believe, of presenting Arthurian literature through such a structuralist model is that it presents an alternative to the organic lexicon which has resulted in scholars discussing the legend as a 'seed-bed' of culture, from which certain texts or sub-genres have 'blossomed' or 'flowered'. As the American critic Gordon Hall Gerould wrote of the French romances in 1927:

> Scholars have too often treated this sudden florescence of romance as if it were a true and not a metaphorical flowering: something botanical, uncontrolled by human actions, which is to lose sight of the plain fact that neither spurious history nor acknowledged fiction comes into being of itself.[22]

By applying Kuhn's model to the production of English Arthuriana, as elucidated in the following section, I have attempted to present a methodological system of comprehending a cultural tradition that has been ruled by the ideological needs of social elites and which has been characterised by several major authoritative texts and long periods of dogmatic literary stability, interrupted by briefer periods of crisis in

which the Arthurian legend has failed to remain constant in its usual socio-political

role, before it has returned to an authoritative – or paradigmatic – state.

Kuhn himself rejected any attempt to employ his theory of paradigmatic shifts

to any branch of knowledge outside of the 'hard sciences'. In 1977, fifteen years after

the publication of *Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn wrote that 'a paradigm is what

members of a scientific community, and they alone, share.'[23] His rejection of the

applicability of his theory to other discourses partly rests on the significance of his use

of the term 'paradigm'. While the *OED* defines 'paradigm' as 'a pattern or model of

something' or 'a typical instance of something', Kuhn suggested a much greater

significance: a conceptual model which underlies the theories and practices of a

particular branch of science and, hence, a complete world view.[24] Hardly can

Malory's *Morte Darthur*, as great as it is, be confidently claimed to be a complete

world view. But nonetheless, in terms of the Arthurian legend, Tennyson's *Idylls* and

Geoffrey's *Historia* did represent the whole Arthurian story for their contemporary

readerships. And in the case of Geoffrey and Tennyson in particular, their Arthuriads

did present an epic monument to their patronising class: the Anglo-Norman elite of

the mid-twelfth century and the English bourgeoisie of the nineteenth – epics which

heavily defined their social and cultural self-image.*

Kuhn's comment on the inappropriate applicability of his theory to other

discourses is questionable on several grounds. As a scientist himself, Kuhn would

have been very much aware of how a theorist has little control on the appropriation of

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* Malory's position is harder to gauge. In his Arthuriad, Malory had offered his class ideological
consolations for many losses – among them the martial and political diminishment of the knight, the
collapse of the French dominions and the waning of the feudal system. How influential Malory may
have been, however, is more obscure. As discussed below, the *Morte Darthur* did influence a
considerable influence on later writers, while Malory himself seems to have been greatly esteemed. Yet
the taste for romance was challenged by the puritan revolution of the next century, as well as the
cultural abandonment of the medieval in favour of the Classical. Moreover, the destruction of the
monasteries greatly reduces our knowledge of the cultural life of the mid-sixteenth century.

their work. Also, Kuhn, in denying the possible application of his theory to other discourses, was also making an attempt to preserve the 'public face of science' and to protect its 'autonomy' from 'marauding outsiders like Marxists and New Agers'.[25] Certainly, it was not until the 1970s that Kuhn began to heavily emphasise that the paradigmatic structure of science was wholly inapplicable to researchers outside of the hard sciences.[26] Also, at no point did Kuhn refer to cultural discourses – much less legends – in his discussion of paradigms. In my use of the paradigmatic model as relevant to the production of the Matter of Britain, I have not tried to argue that some obscure connection between the discipline of science and the discipline of writing Arthurian literature. Likewise, the paradigmatic model is one which I believe is not general to literary production, but specific to the historical manifestations of the Arthurian legend as they have appeared in England from Geoffrey's *Historia* to Tennyson's *Idylls*. The paradigmatic model of Arthurian literary production is, I believe, the only explanation of the evolving Arthurian legend which can account for English Arthuriana's anomalous position with regard to the wider European and, since the nineteenth century, international manifestations of the legend. More regulated, more historiographical and more malleable to political-governmental propaganda, the English paradigmatic Arthurian tradition in the medieval period is the subject of the next section.

The structure of Arthurian literary production in Medieval Britain

In the medieval period interest in the Arthurian story period extended across Christendom. Treatments of the story of Arthur varied greatly between societies, depending on the cultural utility each national or social group was able to derive from the narrative. Within the constituent parts of the British Isles there developed very

different Arthurian traditions. Bar a few scattered references and a fifteenth-century translation of the French *Queste del Saint Graal* (c. 1225), Irish Arthurian literature is almost nonexistent.[27] Scottish Arthurian texts – chiefly historiographical – are more numerous. Generally, the Arthur of the Scots was envisioned in reaction to the English use of Arthur as a figurehead for their imperial ambitions. The chronicles of John of Fordun (c. 1385), Walter Bower (c. 1440), Hector Boece (1527) and William Stewart (1534) repeatedly stressed Scotland's historical independence and asserted that the British throne belonged not to the illegitimate Arthur but to Gawain or Mordred, the rightful heirs of King Lot and Anna, Uther's legitimate daughter.[28] They essentially present antitheses to Geoffrey's *Historia* and its English derivatives.[*] Yet, Scottish literature seems never to have developed an Arthurian tradition that was independent of English colonialism.

Wales, of course, possessed a much older Arthurian corpus. Yet the precise nature, or natures, of its cultural utility is difficult to determine. Often the Arthurian legend has been perceived as a cultural consolation for the misfortunes of Welsh history.[29] Yet the erratic presentations of Arthur suggest that the myth did not always operate in such a simplistic manner. N.J. Higham has recently argued that the pre-Galfridian Arthur was largely a localised figure and did not become a pan-Welsh hero until the twelfth century.[30] Thus, while the dynasties of Gwynedd and Dyfed were keen to patronise a legend about a '*dux bellorum*' and great Christian warrior in the *Historia Brittonum* (829-30) and the *Annales Cambriae* (c. 954), other locales were less inclined to produce celebratory Arthurian literature.[31] For instance, the Arthur of the *Vitae Sancti* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries is but a 'foil' for the various saints to demonstrate their superiority over secular powers. The Arthur of these texts

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[*] An unjustly imperious Arthur is also evident in a late fifteenth-century romance (usually thought to be Scottish), in which he is contrasted unfavourably with Golgaros, a knight who resists Arthur's feudal aggression, '[a]s my eldaris of ald / Had done before me' (*Golagros and Gawane*, ll. 453-4).

appears as a hell-bent villain, a tyrant and a would-be rapist – hardly reconcilable to

the earlier Christian warlord.[32] *Culhwch ac Olwen* (c. 1050) presents Arthur as a

heroically irresponsible king who alienates his chief vassal, Kay, who subsequently

abandons Arthur's court and will not be reconciled with him even 'when the latter

was wanting in strength or when his men were being killed'.[33] The calamitous effects

of such poor kingship can be witnessed in *Pa gur yv y porthaur*? ('What Man is the

Gatekeeper?'), in which Arthur, having lost his kingdom, recalls the exploits of his

former warriors – especially Kay, who has seemingly turned against Arthur.[34] No

single Arthur emerges from the early Brythonic literature, much less one that can be

described as providing simple historical escapism. Rather, the Arthur of early Welsh

was an ideological device used for numerous purposes: dynastic propaganda,

Christian politics and elucidation of poor leadership.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's greatest achievement – and certainly his greatest

contribution to the Arthurian legend – was his ability to synthesise a diverse and

conflicting corpus of Brythonic literature into a coherent stable text. The *Historia* was

remarkably popular in Wales; translations of his Latin history, known as the *Brut y*

Brenhinedd, are found in roughly sixty manuscripts – far more than any other Welsh

Arthurian text.[35] Subsequent literary production was more susceptible to French

influence than its English counterpart would be. The three romances, *Geraint, Owein*

and *Peredur* (c. 1250) are all heavily marked by French literary styles, though their

narratives are probably Welsh in origin.[36] The Grail also makes its appearance in

Welsh literature before English, with translations of the *Queste del Saint Graal* and

the *Perlesvaus* appearing in the fourteenth century.[37] But after these romances were

produced and the earlier tradition was recorded, Welsh literary interest in Arthur

appears to have been increasingly marginal.[38] While the collapse of Welsh political

independence in the late thirteenth century encouraged the scribes of Wales to preserve what existing literature there was, it did not encourage contemporary writers to produce narratives of an earlier period of Celtic superiority. Although there appears to have been a folk-belief in the return of Arthur to lead the Welsh against the English, in their heroic tales the poets and bards of Wales were soon able to turn to Owain Glyndŵr as a realistic figure of national redemption and resistance.[39]

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Elis Gruffydd noted in his late *Chronicle* (c. 1550) that the Welsh were not as interested in Arthur as were the contemporary English.[40] As with most of Europe, Arthurian literature in England began with Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* and following this archetype the Arthur of the English was overwhelmingly political. Unlike on the continent, the English Arthur was chiefly a figure of historiography, rather than romance, and as a 'historical fact' was eminently adaptable to ideological manipulation. The excessive political usage of the myth by elites of medieval and early-modern England gave rise to the peculiar shape of English Arthurian literary production. In order to facilitate the close relationship between medieval state ideology and the Arthurian legend, the development of the Matter of Britain in England was a far more structured and regulated affair than it was in the rest of Europe. With such extensive ideological utility the narrative could scarcely be left in the hands of individual romancers and their patrons, as had occurred in France, whose uses of the Arthurian story might not always be in accord with monarchical and national interests. Essentially paradigmatic, the cultivation of the legend in England has traditionally been an authoritarian enterprise with major texts operating as archetypes that govern subsequent literary production in terms of its main narrative, themes and ideological utility.

There were two such stages before the nineteenth century. The first was the

Galfridian (from the middle of the twelfth century to the beginning of the fifteenth);

the second, the Malorian (from the late fifteenth century to the late sixteenth).

Geoffrey's *Historia* ignited Europe's fascination with the Brythonic hero; but for the

Anglo-Normans his work was of particular ideological importance. The *Historia* was

the work of a foreign *arriviste* from the borderlands of the Welsh-English Marches. It

synthesised a diverse corpus of Celtic myth and historiography and refashioned it

within the structure of contemporary French and Classical literary styles.[41] It was a

new literary edifice – a monument to the Anglo-Normans' place in European culture.

It furnished Geoffrey's patrons with a historical identity similar to that provided by

the Charlemagne *chansons* to the French Capetian dynasty.[42] It equipped the

conquerors of England with a predecessor of heroic proportions, a pan-British king

who would be utilised in numerous later attempts to extend English sovereignty over

Wales and Scotland. But, more immediately, Geoffrey's *Historia* also represented the

Anglo-Normans' subjects, the Saxons, as relatively recent invaders of Brythonic

Britain – a position that allowed the foreign elite to consolidate their own position in

England through disavowing the right of Saxon suzerainty.[43]

Malory's *Morte Darthur* was received in a very different climate. While both

the *Historia* and the *Morte* were written during periods of civil war, the reign of

Henry II (1154-89) heralded a period of social, economic and, above all, cultural

growth and stability in comparison to the 'The Anarchy' (1135-54) of dynastic

conflict and unsettled government. Thus, while the *Historia* was written in a civil war

context, it continued to be read – and adapted by subsequent historians – in a long

period of political and intellectual ascendancy. In comparison, the *Morte Darthur* was

written in a period of even more destructive civil strife, the War of the Roses (1455-

86) which formed the climax to half a century of dimishment in England's place in European affairs. After the French repudiations of the Treaty of Valois (1420) England's continental ambitions sharply diminished and the country spent much of the century in destructive civil wars.

Malory's *Morte* did not so much replace Geoffrey's *Historia* as apply a nostalgic lens through which 'England's' former greatness could be viewed. Malory did this through combining elements of Geoffrey's narrative* with the French romances, which had largely been absent in Galfridian literary production.[44] Throughout, Malory extensively abbreviated his French sources, greatly reduced their magical features and controlled religious allegory and doctrinal expression. In contrast he expanded upon accounts of martial conflict, increased the sense of heroism surrounding his chief characters and placed much emphasis on the virtuous qualities of secular chivalry. These alterations reduced the conflicts which had existed between the French and English traditions.[45] The effect was to expand and humanise Geoffrey's historiography. It imbued a new sense of spectacle into the old story; its more recognisable, 'human' characters were more appealing to writers and more imitable for courtly princes, as several Tudor-age figures would demonstrate. But, most importantly, it Anglicised a body of great foreign literature – once more establishing Arthur as the English elite's own.

The success of any paradigm lay, fundamentally, in its popularity. The *Historia* survives in over two hundred and ten manuscripts (with many more being lost over time) while Malory's *Morte* was printed six times between 1485 and 1634 and would have existed in an unknown quantity of non-extant manuscripts also.[46] Ninety years after Malory completed his Arthuriad – and at the height of the

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* Geoffrey's narrative was known to Malory through John Hardyng's *Chronicle* (c. 1465), a minor source throughout the *Morte*, and the chronicle-derived *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (c. 1350).

destruction of the libraries of the great monastic houses – John Bale, antiquarian and bibliophile, was able to state that '[i]n our times, Malory enjoys an illustrious reputation'.[47] Such popularity gave rise to numerous derivative works which increased the authority of the paradigm, which led to an unwillingness among other writers to deviate from the paradigmatic narrative and ideological base. The *Morte Darthur* was the basis for several subsequent works: *Sir Lancelot du Lake*, *The Legend of King Arthur*, *King Arthur's Death* and the parodic *The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* (all late fifteenth century).[48] And Malorian echoes are also apparent in Sydney's *Arcadia* (composed 1580), Hughes's *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1588), and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590-6).[49] The paradigmatic effect of Geoffrey's *Historia* was more pronounced, with the Galfridian story of Arthur being reproduced in numerous medieval histories, including Wace's *Le Roman de Brut* (c. 1155), Layamon's *Brut* (c. 1200), the chronicles of Robert of Gloucester (c. 1270), Thomas Bek of Castleford (1327) and Robert Mannying of Brunne (1338), as well as the anonymous *Short Metrical Chronicle* (shortly after 1307).[50] These and the later prose *Brut* (evolved from about 1370 onwards) kept the Galfridian Arthur of history in circulation until the Tudor period, with Caxton publishing the *Brut* in 1480.

But the Galfridian and Malorian paradigms' cultural authority was not the result of organic literary development; Geoffrey's and Malory's success was not merely the outcome of having written entertaining stories. Their authority relied on their intimate relation to national politics. The Arthurian story was patronised, employed and monopolised by the secular elite of medieval and early-modern England. It was used for propagandist effect by numerous English monarchs from Henry II to Henry VIII, with generations of kings attempting to establish themselves as the heirs to the Arthurian imperium. The 'historical fact' of Arthur's empire played

a major part in legitimatising England's colonial ambitions with regard to Wales and Scotland – as well as being used by Henry VIII in 1537 to establish independence from Rome.[51] Sub-paradigmatic literary production maintained the close associations with the English crown. Geoffrey's *Historia* was dedicated to the various powerbrokers of the day;[*52] Wace's *Brut*, written under royal patronage, reproduced Geoffrey's story but extended its ideological utility as propaganda for Henry II.[53] Later, as kings of England lost their Anglo-Norman identity, subsequent historians rewrote the *Historia* as an Anglicised epic – again preserving the associations between the contemporary monarch and the figure of Arthur. Pierre de Langtoft's fourteenth-century chronicle, for instance, after rehearsing the traditional Galfridian story of Arthur, later makes numerous comparisons between Arthur and Edward I, claiming that even 'Arthur had never [held] the fiefs so fully' as Edward held Cornwall, Wales and Ireland.[54] In the Malorian period, Henry Tudor employed his slender genealogical descent from the Welsh princes to present himself as the direct descendent of Arthur, thus legitimatising his claim to the Welsh-English throne, as well as demonstrating the power of the English monarchy through many Arthurian spectacles, pageants and tournaments.[55] Above all, the later sub-paradigmatic writers made the Arthurian story more representative of the ideals, tensions and beliefs of the evolving social groups they ideologised.

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[*] The most common of the *Historia*'s dedicatees was Robert, Earl of Gloucester. An illegitimate son of Henry I, Robert was a court favourite and became a leading magnate of the Anglo-Norman realm with territories in both England and Normandy. He was a powerful figure in the Time of Anarchy, first supporting Stephen, but later capturing and deposing him in 1141, in favour of Matilda. Following his father, Robert developed a scholarly reputation. He certainly became an extraordinary patron, sponsoring Henry of Malmesbury's *De Regum Gestis Anglorum* (1125) as well as Geoffrey's *Historia*. He also continued the building of Tewkesbury Abbey. Nigel Higham has written that 'Arthur's background had similarities with the family circumstances of the similarly royal but illegitimate Robert, [...] eldest surviving son of Henry I' (*Myth-Making and History*, 225). This raises the possibility that Arthur's illegitimacy, absent in all earlier extant literature, may even have been modelled on Geoffrey's greatest patron.

With such ideological utility at their disposal, the political elite were unwilling

to extend the propagandist franchise to social groups whose interests might be at

variance with their own. Such a situation had arisen in France in the thirteenth

century. The Vulgate cycle (c. 1215-36) was a huge compendium of heterogeneous

and contradictory romances roughly organised not upon the political history of pre-

Conquest Britain but around the story of the Grail and the grandeur of individual

warrior aristocrats. Texts such as the *Queste del Saint Graal* (c. 1225) and the non-

Vulgate *Perlesvaus* (c. 1210) were not only indifferent to the national and

monarchical implications of the Arthurian story, they were directly opposed to the

secular world of chivalry and dynastic politics.[56] In these texts the secular-ideological

functions of earlier Galfridian chronicle and romance were inverted: Arthur became

the leader of a band of bloodthirsty, hell-bound villains, and the pursuit of earthly

goals – fame, martial prowess and riches – were transformed into evils which, in the

Queste, only adherence to the teachings of Cistercian monasticism could

legitimatise.[57]

In England, such a tradition never seriously challenged the statist, secular use

of the legend. As Felicity Riddy has written, only texts 'sanctioned' by the *Historia*

were fit to be translated from the French and consumed in England. Texts which

challenged the Galfridian paradigm flared only 'momentarily into textual life' before

dying out.[*58] Thus the English romance tradition was mainly comprised of either

versified episodes drawn from the chronicles themselves, such as *Arthur* (c. 1400) or

the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (c. 1350), or were translations of French romances

reconciled to the Arthur of the Galfridian tradition, such as the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*

(c. 1400) or the fourteenth-century translation of Chrétien's *Perceval* (c. 1177) which

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[*] Riddy argues that the whole period of medieval Arthurian literature is governed by the *Historia*. My contention differs in that I believe a major break in the Galfridian authority occurred around 1400, with Malory's *Morte Darthur* establishing a new authority over subsequent cultural production.

removed all traces of the Grail, that most ideologically troublesome element of the Arthurian story, being the least reconcilable to secular politics.[59]

Over time the Arthurian story expanded in terms of narrative and cultural utility, though these extensions rarely compromised the ideological interests of the primary audience, the state and monarch. Yet as the paradigmatic version became more entrenched in English culture it became less able to respond to social and political changes, such as the political calamities of the fifteenth century or the Reformation of the following century. At these points Arthurian literary production went into crisis.

There was a demonstrable decline in the authority of the *Historia* in the fifteenth century. With England suffering a series of political cataclysms the feudal elite became too occupied waging insular, destructive wars to patronise a myth about imperial expansion and strong, central government. Arthurian literature became more diverse, more antagonistic to the older Galfridian tradition. Indeed, after 1400 not one substantial Arthurian literary work was produced that can be said to fit within the established Galfridian paradigm. French Grail texts began to be translated for mercantile readerships – as did romances relating to Merlin.[60] Literature satirising Arthur and his aristocratic followers became popular. He appears as an unjust aggressor in *Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carlyle* (c. 1400) and *The Turke and Gowin* (c. 1450), an irresponsible monarch in *King Arthur and King Cornwall* (c. 1450) and *The Avowing of King Arthur* (c. 1425) and as a foolish cuckold in *Sir Corneus* and *The Boy in the Mantle* (c. 1450).[61] He and his knights are continually defeated on their quests by lowly carls, imperious hosts and old haggard women.*

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* Several of these 'crisis-period' Arthurian texts are 'King and Subject' stories, a major genre in the late medieval period. In *Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carlyle*, for instance, after the low-born carl has admonished a 'hard lesson in true courtesy' to his social superiors, Kay and Baldwin, the poem ends in an Arthurian feast, the most common means of symbolising the validation of the dominant order. Yet

This crisis was resolved, however, by Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* which restored the Arthur to its traditional elitist and statist form and which also absorbed the other ideological conflicts of three hundred years of Arthurian literary production into a new paradigm.

The crisis of the Malorian paradigm can be said to have begun, quite precisely, in 1534, with the passing of the Act of Supremacy. Although the self-conscious Arthurianising of the early Tudor dynasty seemed to have equalled that of the Plantagenets, Malory's paradigm did not achieve the longevity of Geoffrey's. The historical (and historically incredible) Arthur was enlisted in the cause to establish spiritual and temporal independence from Rome. Yet after this divorce from the Catholic Church, the figure of Arthur was of ever-diminishing importance. Humanist and Puritan scholars, including Vives in 1528 and Roger Ascham in 1570 attacked the legends of Arthur as immoral and harmful.[62]

Arthur could not survive for long in such a climate. The ascension of James VI of Scotland to the English throne in 1603 brought a flurry of Arthurian masques and pageants designed by Ben Jonson, Thomas Campion, William Camden and others designed to propagandise the new king.[63] Malory continued to be published until 1634 and works like Robert Chester's poem sequence *Loves Martyr* (1601, reworked as *The Annals of Great Britaine* in 1611) continued to keep the stories of Arthur in circulation, as did a large number of cheap popular broadsides. Yet Arthur was steadily moving away from the interests of high culture. The great poets of the seventeenth century – Milton, Jonson and Dryden – abandoned any thoughts they had

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here it is the carl who initiates the celebrations and invites Arthur to attend his feast: demonstrating through the splendour of his hospitality that this carl (who appears to be a landowner of considerable worth) is very much the equal of Arthur's knights, if not of Arthur himself. Similar conclusions brought about by the non-aristocratic intruder into the Arthurian court occur in *A Carle off Carlile* – a later version of the *Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carlyle* narrative – *The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* and *King Arthur and King Cornwall*.

of writing epic treatments of the legend and no great work on the Arthurian story was produced until the nineteenth century. Many seemed to share Milton's opinion, given in his *History of Britain* (1677), that the story of Arthur was a 'simple fraud of a fable'.[64]

* * * * *

Yet the legend Tennyson inherited was not that of Milton's despondency. The nineteenth-century Arthurian revival began a long time before he took up the legend – the story of Arthur occupying the minds of many earlier writers and scholars, including Thomas Warton, Robert Southey, Thomas Love Peacock and Walter Scott. The first chapter examines the ways in which these writers influenced Tennyson's approach to the legend, before moving on to discuss how the *Idylls* restored the Arthurian story to its Galfridian and Malorian eminence – as well as its paradigmatic structure. It concludes with a survey of the *Idylls*' monumental influence on subsequent literary production, which lasted until the outbreak of the Great War.

The second chapter concentrates on the historical moment when the Tennysonian paradigm ceased to dominate the Arthurian story: the 1914-1918 conflict. The Matter of Britain was largely abandoned in these years – a tale of Britons being overwhelmed by Saxon hordes was hardly the basis for morale-boosting literature. Yet while the war was a quiet time for Arthur, these were the great years for the 'maiden knight', Sir Galahad. Evident in poetry, art and particularly journalism, Galahad, along with St George, embodied the chivalric ethos which defined so much of Britain's wartime propaganda. The cultural significance of the knight in these years was the result of the Victorian cult of Galahad, which had developed throughout the nineteenth century as an ancillary to the larger Arthurian paradigm, and was sustained until the war's end by a succession of sermonising bishops, moralising artists and

homilising public-school masters. Yet at the end of the conflict Galahad was almost

wholly discarded – becoming a rare figure in post-war Arthuriana. In contrast, the

story of Arthur, now divorced from its Tennysonian paradigm, began to be rewritten

by a host of writers who had emerged from the war with a sense of disassociation with

the Victorian past, including T.E. Lawrence, David Jones, John Masefield and T.S.

Eliot.

Galahad's absence is particularly noticeable in the first body of literature

which matured in the absence of the Tennysonian paradigm: the story of the Grail.

The third chapter considers how scholars such as Jessie L. Weston and Alfred Nutt

recreated the 'noble tale off the Sankegreall' in the early years of the twentieth

century, before it was taken up and embellished by creative writers, such as Eliot,

Mary Butts, Arthur Machen and John Cowper Powys.[65] The resulting literature was

very different from the tales of Galahad and the Grail produced in the nineteenth

century. Usually set in the modern day, with little or no reference to its traditional

Arthurian frame, this new Grail was concerned with mysterious rituals, themes of

sexual fertility and spiritual rejuvenation, while scholars and writers alike paid close

attention to the early Celtic literature which had largely been excluded under the

auspices of the Anglocentric *Idylls*. Yet this newly-awakened interest in the Grail did

not produce a unified body of literature. Indeed, the field was diverse and often

combative as writers struggled to appropriate the significance of the mystical object

for their own scholarly and ideological ends. This heterogeneous Grail proved to be

the prototype for the post-war Arthurian legend as a whole.

Chapter four breaks from the study of what has predominantly been English

literature in order to discuss the Arthurian legend as produced by the Celtic nations.

Many writers, including James Joyce, James Bridie, T. Gwynn Jones and Henry

Jenner, contributed to a series of Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Cornish traditions that lay outside of the better-known English (or Anglo-American, as it is often understood) conception of the modern Arthurian story. Many of the Celtic writers, often working in regional languages, were amongst the first to reclaim the Matter of Britain from its Tennysonian mould. This chapter also pays attention to the role Arthur has played in the construction of Cornish and Welsh national identities, though it also considers the failure of each of the Celtic nations to continue to develop their Arthurian traditions into the second half of the twentieth century.

Chapter five continues the study of the role of 'Celtic' literature in four major reworkings of the Arthurian story: those of Ernest Rhys, John Masefield, David Jones and Charles Williams. In their approach to the Matter of Britain these poets – the only writers saving T.H. White to attempt to rewrite the entire legend in the interwar period – can all be termed Anglo-Celtic. Unlike the earlier English Arthurian writers and the Celtic nationalist poets of chapter four, Rhys, Masefield, Jones and Williams were all concerned with remaking the legend into an inclusive British myth, which utilised both the early Welsh literature of the *Mabinogion* and the English *Morte Darthur* of Thomas Malory. And though their politics varied from socialism to radical conservatism, they each sought to realise the Arthurian legend as somehow 'essential' to Britain, not just spiritually, but culturally, socially and politically.

The final chapter is an examination of T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, a work that proved to be perhaps the most popular retelling of the legend in the second half of the twentieth century. Yet the work is also an anachronism, a text which largely ignores the considerable scholarly and creative advances in the legend that had emerged in the first half of the twentieth century and which, in its revised 1958 form (that known as *The Once and Future King*), reinscribed the Anglocentricity

of the Arthurian story – thus obscuring the idea of Britishness with which the legend

had been imbued during the interwar period. As well as moving away from its earlier

Anglo-Celtic basis, as White revised his Arthuriad in the 1950s it also became a much

more ideologically conservative version of the Arthurian story. This chapter

concludes with a brief survey of the numerous versions of the story to emerge in the

post-war years, the most important of which was the trend for historical realism and

the triumph of the novel as the dominant Arthurian medium. A brief conclusion

contains an overview of the disappearance of the paradigmatic structure of the English

Arthurian tradition, along with a series of speculations on why the form of the legend

changed so dramatically in the twentieth century.

Chapter One

From 'chaff and draff' to national epic: Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and nineteenth-century Arthuriana

When Tennyson's 'Morte d'Arthur' was first published in 1842 its mournful verses, written 'under the shock' of Arthur Hallam's death, were offset by 'The Epic', a poetic frame of eighty-two lines which recounts a light-hearted Christmas Eve spent among four male friends after a day occupied with skating, playing forfeits and kissing girls beneath the mistletoe. During this evening it is mentioned that one of those present, Everard Hall, had once written an epic on the Arthurian legend while at university, most of which has been destroyed.[1] Cajoled by his friends to read the surviving fragment of this work, Hall initially refuses:

> 'Nay, nay,' said Hall,
> 'Why take the style of those heroic times?
> For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
> Nor we those times; and why should any man
> Remodel models? these twelve books of mine
> Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth,
> Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt.'[2]

In time, Hall relents and reads them the surviving fragment of his epic retelling of the legend, the 'Morte d'Arthur'. By presenting his account of the death of Arthur as an undergraduate poem, Tennyson was excusing its archaisms and Classical echoes; but the poet was also noting the difficulties in refashioning the ancient story of Arthur for a nineteenth-century readership. Hall's disparagement of the poem reflects Tennyson's own struggle to compose an Arthurian epic: his early notebooks contain several unrealised schemes for such a work and the question 'why should any man / Remodel models?' is one that occupied the poet throughout his life.

But Everard Hall's remarks are pertinent to many writers' attempts to retell the story of Arthur between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Like Hall, Ben Jonson, John Milton and John Dryden all planned, then set aside, their schemes to produce an Arthurian epic, while some that were produced could fairly be described as 'mere chaff and draff'. Works such as John Dryden's semi-opera, *King Arthur* (1691), Richard Blackmore's epic of 1685 and 1697, as well as Fielding's proto-pantomime, *Tom Thumb* (1730), are aberrations within the larger structure of Arthurian literary production and were rarely commended by critics.[3] They were composed almost wholly in ignorance of the literary tradition of the Middle Ages: the Age of Reason spurned the 'barbarism' of the cultural heritage of the Middle Ages in favour of the adopted Classics, while writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had neither the knowledge nor the sympathetic means of reproducing the Arthurian story effectively. After the Reformation, Arthur's story, tainted with Catholicism and the 'barbarism' of the Middle Ages (and, after the English Civil War, absolute monarchism), had drifted away from high culture and moved into the lower domains of popular culture and political propaganda.

Here in this underworld Arthur existed for some two hundred years, before

emerging – first in antiquarian scholarship, then in increasingly popular forms of

creative literature – to command a position in Victorian culture that was so ubiquitous

that it rivalled even the Arthur of Geoffrey's twelfth-century *Historia*.[4] The

forefathers of Victorian medievalism – above all Thomas Warton and Walter Scott –

had produced a far more sympathetic readership for tales from the medieval past than

had existed since the Reformation. Scholars made the old romances available to new

readers, while poets and novelists were demonstrating how these tales could be made

relevant to contemporary culture.

Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859-91), which incorporated the 1842 'Morte

d'Arthur' in its conclusion, was the culmination and the greatest expression of

nineteenth-century Arthuriana. It synthesised many of the discordant versions of the

medieval legend that had grown concurrently with the rediscovery of the romances in

the late eighteenth century. Tennyson took the many antagonistic nationalist, political

and cultural uses of the myth evident in the Romantic period, and replaced it with an

Anglocentric, liberal-bourgeois epic. Due to its remarkable popular and artistic

success Tennyson's version of the legend regulated Arthurian literary production

throughout the remainder of the Victorian age. His *Idylls* effectively became *the* story

of Arthur, their influence apparent everywhere – in poetry, prose, drama, visual art,

architecture, music and scholarship. In this way the cultural production of Matter of

Britain not only re-attained the eminent position that it had enjoyed in the Middle

Ages, it also regained the 'shape' that it had possessed between the twelfth and

sixteenth centuries, which was, as discussed in the introduction, essentially

paradigmatic. But before examining the *Idylls*'s paradigmatic position in nineteenth-

century literary culture, it is worth considering the how the Arthurian story was able

to gain a sympathetic readership in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Modern Arthurian literature before Tennyson

For several centuries after the Reformation, Arthur's literary environment had been

confined to political propaganda, chapbooks, broadsides and burlesque theatre. His

court and list of knights had diminished into obscurity, their names seldom

remembered. Even Arthur's queen had been forgotten: in the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries she was as likely to be called Emmeline or Dollololla as

Guinevere.[5] Thomas Warton's *Observations on 'The Faerie Queene' of Spenser*

(1758) and his monumental *History of English Poetry* (1774-81) marked the

beginning of the Arthurian story's revival as a high cultural commodity. His great

knowledge of medieval romance, gathered from an exhaustive study of the

manuscripts in the Bodleian, the recently-founded British Museum, as well as the

collections of personal friends, ushered in a new era of appreciation for the literature

and culture of the Middle Ages and his position as one of the key founders of British

medievalism ought to be better recognised.[6] His chief aim in the *Observations* and his

History was to rescue medieval literature from contemporary 'prejudice and

ignorance' and to elevate it to the position of 'true poetry':

> For however monstrous and unnatural these compositions may appear to this
> age of reason and refinement, they merit more attention than the world is
> willing to bestow. [... Because of] their terrible graces of magic and
> enchantment [they] rouse and invigorate all the powers of imagination: to start
> the fancy with those sublime and alarming images, which true poetry best
> delights to display.[7]

Warton believed that medieval literature – and Arthurian literature in particular –

would rejuvenate contemporary literary production. A poet himself, whose output

included Arthurian verses,[8] Warton was convinced that present 'English literature and English poetry suffer, while so many pieces of this kind still remain concealed and forgotten in our MS libraries.'[9]

Yet when the medieval manuscripts were recovered from their obscure resting places, what emerged was not an immediate rejuvenation of English literature, but a site of national anxieties. Stephanie Barczewski has argued that the Arthurian legend moved from an inclusive myth of British identity in the early part of the nineteenth century to a more exclusive Anglocentric conception in the second half of the century.[10] Yet the Arthur of the Romantic age shows very little sense of British cohesiveness between English, Cornish, Scottish and Welsh writers.[11] Rather, a number of conflicting 'traditions' regarding the Matter of Britain were formulated at this time, with writers from each constituent part of the United Kingdom attempting to lay claim to a cultural pre-eminence with regard to medieval Arthurian literature, though other literary debates were concerned with questions of morality, religion and class.

Scholars and creative writers from Scotland (James Pinkerton, David Lang, Walter Scott and Anne Bannerman),[12] Cornwall (William Hal, George Woodley, Thomas Hogg and R.S. Hawker)[13] and Wales (William Owen Pughe, Iolo Morganwg, Owen Jones)[14] excavated and reworked native Arthurian traditions for their own nationalist purposes. English scholars also republished medieval Arthurian literature: Thomas Percy (1765), Joseph Ritson (1783 and 1802), George Ellis (1805) and John Dunlop (1814) all published Arthurian ballads, romances and résumés.[15] By 1850 nearly every English Arthurian text had been published,[16] the most important being the three editions of Malory's *Morte Darthur* produced between 1816 and 1817.[17]

The first republication of the *Morte* since 1634 has often been heralded by critics as the pivotal factor in the Arthurian resurgence.[18] Yet an immediate effect is hard to discern. Indeed, at the time English Arthurian scholarship was heavily influenced by Celtic and Continental textual studies. Le Grand d'Aussy's *Fabliaux* (1779-1781), which contained several Arthurian pieces, was translated twice and published in five editions by 1800, and a further edition was made in 1815.[19] Likewise, Dunlop's *History of Fiction* (1814) gave narrative synopses of several French romances,[20] while Robert Southey's introduction to the 1817 edition of the *Morte Darthur* (an important influence on Tennyson's *Idylls*) summarised many more.[21] Southey scarcely mentioned any English Arthurian work and he made it clear that he considered the *Morte* to be little more than a series of translations of French romances, a selection which Scott believed had been 'extracted at hazard, and without much art or combination'.[22] Southey also had doubts as to the worth of the Arthurian legend for contemporary writers, declaring that 'no poem of lasting popularity has been produced upon a Round Table story.'[23]

Similarly, English scholars and poets, who had seldom demonstrated an interest in Welsh literature, began to learn *Cymraeg* – including Sharon Turner, George Ellis, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey.[24] Although Joseph Ritson characterised Welsh scholars as possessing 'more vanity' and 'less judgment' than any other 'people in the world',[25] others, such as Turner, wrote spirited defences of the antiquity of medieval Welsh poetry.[26] But perhaps the most important of the Celtic Revivalists' English protégées was Charlotte Guest, who between 1838 and 1849 published a three-volume translation of *The Mabinogion*, which as well as being an important work in itself also stimulated the work of numerous academics, authors and

poets.[27] It was also, as discussed below, pivotal in Tennyson's composition of the *Idylls of the King*.

Creative writers, meanwhile, were similarly in thrall to the Celtic conception of the Arthurian legend. John Thelwall's 'The Fairy of the Lake' (1801), Felicia Hemans's 'Taliesin's Prophecy' (1822) and Thomas Love Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829) were all rooted in Welsh scholarship and in Hemans's and Peacock's cases, they were also concerned with the destructive effects of Saxon and English colonisation (something even more notable by the fact that Peacock was at this time employed by the East India Company).[28] Peacock's 1829 work is also important in that it was the very first novel-length treatment of the legend – a form that would not become popular with Arthurian writers until T.H. White's *The Sword in the Stone* (1938). The main hero of *The Misfortunes of Elphin* is the literature and culture of Wales – a culture that had traditionally possessed little credit in England. Its characters, narrative and incidental poetry were all drawn from the scholarship of Pughe (of whom Peacock was a great friend) and others.[29] And as if to declare its indebtedness to the research of the Celtic revivalists, *The Misfortunes of Elphin* even provided the first English translations of several Welsh Arthurian poems contained in the *Myvyrian Archaiology*.[30]

The Arthur of the Romantic period was, then, a diverse and contradictory figure which represented a variety of mutually antagonistic national ideologies. The gradual formation of Great Britain from the sixteenth century had meant that the national sphere in which the Arthurian revival took place was very different from those of the medieval period. The Matter of Britain was the property of a diverse set of writers: Cornish separatists, English satirists and colonial apologists, as well as Welsh and Scottish scholars who exhibited cultural pride in their respective literary

pasts. Romantic Arthurian production was essentially a battle for possession of the

ideological utility of the legend. English literature, though clearly fascinated by the

Arthurian story, appeared to be losing this cultural contest; it was in thrall to a

conception of the Matter of Britain as something inherently foreign. Coleridge

summarised the attitude in 1833: 'As to Arthur, you could not by any means make a

poem on him national to Englishmen. What have we to do with him?'[31] Yet

Tennyson, at least, thought that nineteenth-century England could have a lot 'to do'

with Arthur.

Tennyson's early Arthurian poems: domesticating the legend

Tennyson's *Idylls* was the great reassertion of the Arthur of the English, eclipsing all

other versions of the legend produced in the nineteenth century. Among the last verses

to be written for the *Idylls of the King*, 'To the Queen' (1873), summarised

Tennyson's achievement in adapting the story of Arthur for the Victorian world. His

Arthur was:

> Ideal manhood closed in real man,
> Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
> Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
> And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still;[32]

Tennyson's Arthur was not a historical Celtic chieftain; his Arthur was not the legend

that clung to the Scottish 'cairn' or the Welsh 'cromlech'. Rather, Tennyson's Arthur

was a distinctly English king. 'To the Queen', however, was a late epitome of the

Idylls, written after nearly all of the individual parts of the poem were complete. His

progression from his early notes to the final edition the *Idylls* is far more influenced

by the disparate versions of Arthur, evinced in Romantic literature and scholarship,

than is usually stated by his commentators. Indeed his Arthurian oeuvre can be seen as

a microcosm of the ideological tensions inherent in the Arthurian myth throughout the century. And like the 'chaff and draff' of Everard Hall's epic, much of Tennyson's early work was destroyed or never fully realised.

Tennyson's first attempt at the Matter of Britain was a Celtic Arthuriad set in Lyonesse, a now ruined part of Cornwall, which would chronicle the gradual encroachment of the Saxons upon the kingdom.[33] After this initial scheme became unrealisable he turned to 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832), based on a popular Italian novelette, *Qui conta come la Damigella di Scalot mori per amore di Lancialotto de Lac* (1804).[34] This poem was one of several attempts by contemporary English poets to present an alternative to the heavily Celticised version of the Arthurian story. Like Letitia Elizabeth Landon's 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' (1833) and Reginald Heber's 'La Morte d'Arthur' (1830), Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' did not attempt to Anglicise the legend directly – the weight of Welsh, Scottish and French literature precluded such an approach at this time – but rather sought to reconcile Arthur to the moralism of contemporary bourgeois English culture. These writers did this through turning legends of Arthur into a domesticated epic.

Tennyson and Landon both chose to treat the story of Lancelot and Elaine, though neither, it seems, had read Malory.[*] 'The Lady of Shalott' used the story to reflect upon Tennyson's prospective life as a poet, employing the image of Elaine's mirror (by which she observes the outside world) as metaphor of the artist's task of discerning and recording life through an artificial lens. As a result the poem became

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[*] Tennyson claimed that '"The Lady of Shalott" is evidently the Elaine of the *Morte d'Arthur* [sic], but I do not think I had ever heard of the latter when I wrote the former'. See the preliminary notes to 'The Lady of Shalott' in *Tennyson: a selected edition*, 18-20 (19). Given the slightness of Arthurian detail in Landon's 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' (bar Lancelot himself, no traditional Arthurian character features in the poem) knowledge of Malory seems unlikely, though not impossible. The probable source of the poem was most likely a prose synopsis – such as contained in the résumés of Ellis or Dunlop (see above) – or even perhaps Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott', which had appeared the previous year.

the subject for several artistic narrative treatments, most famously by John William

Waterhouse in 1888. Although Tennyson's poem proved to be the more popular of the

two, Landon's 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' more obviously demonstrates the

element of domesticity that later writers (including Tennyson) would weave into the

medieval legend. Lancelot's affair with Elaine was transformed by Landon into a

narrative that presented the masculine, warlike world as fundamentally at odds with

domestic happiness:

> They might have been happy, if love could but learn
> A lesson from some flowers, and like their leaves turn
> Round into their own inward world, their own lone fragrant nest,
> Content with its sweetness, content with its rest.
>
> But the sound of the trumpet was heard from afar.
> And Sir Lancelot rode forth again to the war.
> And the wood-nymph was left as aye woman will be,
> Who trusts her whole being, oh false love, to thee.[35]

Female abandonment was a common feature of Landon's verse (though rarely was the

deserter as illustrious a hero as Lancelot), but its inclusion here marked a turning point

in Arthurian literature. Post-medieval Arthurian writers had rarely written of romantic

or sexual engagements with any degree of seriousness. Before the nineteenth century

they were usually a source of ribald humour, as in Fielding's *Tom Thumb* (1730),

where Arthur's queen, Dollalolla, is described as 'a woman entirely faultless saving

that she is a little given to Drink; a little too much a Virago towards her Husband. And

in love with Tom Thumb'.[36]

The nineteenth century took a sterner moral view. Walter Scott, in his 'Bridal

of Triermain' (1813), chastised Arthur for his dalliance with Guendolen, a fairy

temptress, which keeps the king from fulfilling his obligations to the land. Saxon

advances remain unchecked while 'Caliburn, the British pride, / Hangs useless by a

lovers' side'. Such neglect of an individual's duty to his community was denounced

by Scott, as he declared: 'How mirth can into folly glide, / And folly into sin!'[37]

Landon was similarly concerned with the correspondence between personal desire and

public duty, but, unlike Scott, Landon placed her moral emphasis upon the

individual's responsibility to intimate, rather than societal, relationships. Essentially,

she elevated the domestic sphere above that of the political. In the *Idylls*, Tennyson

would synthesise the attitudes of Landon and Scott in his attempt to establish a firmer

equilibrium between the domestic and political domains.

Written on a more ambitious scale was Reginald Heber's 'Le Morte d'Arthur'.

Although incomplete, this was the first attempt in the nineteenth century to retell the

whole Arthurian story. Heber was also the first English writer to realise the

importance of Malory in such an endeavour.[*] He adapted the story as a domestic

tragedy: at the time of the poem's beginning Arthur has already won his European

dominions, and the destiny of the Round Table is firmly controlled by the scheming,

wily and doleful female characters, whose roles are greatly increased from those in

Malory. This was also a much more respectable version of the medieval story; Heber

removed scenes of bloodshed and altered what he thought unchaste: Arthur's fatal sin,

for example, is transposed from the incestuous relationship with his half-sister to the

slaying of Sir Paladore, who is here the lover of Morgue and father of Mordred.[38] Had

he not pursued his religious career so zealously (he became, in 1823, the first Bishop

of Calcutta, a diocese which included India, Ceylon and Australia), Heber's 'Le Morte

d'Arthur' could have been a major Arthuriad.[39] As it was, Heber's work still exercised

an influence on subsequent literature: the structure of the 'Morte d'Arthur' – driven

by dialogue, retrospective accounts of earlier episodes not included in the central story

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[*] Heber actually began his retelling of Malory in 1810: six years before the *Morte Darthur* was reprinted.

and introspective soliloquies – would be used by Tennyson in his own full-length treatment of the myth.

These works presented a version of the Arthurian story which, through their respectability and domesticity, suggested that the legend could be made pertinent to contemporary middle-class readerships. Yet Tennyson himself was unconvinced of the surest means of producing a great epic that could be made relevant to nineteenth-century England. In 1842, along with a much-revised version of 'The Lady of Shalott', he published three more Arthurian poems: the 'Morte d'Arthur', 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'Sir Galahad'. The first of these was a poetic vision of Arthur's removal to the Isle of Avalon, where he is to be healed of his 'grievous wound'.[40] Although the poem found great success, particularly when it was transformed, in 1869, into 'The Passing of Arthur', the conclusion to the *Idylls of the King*, initial praise was by no means unanimous. John Sterling commented in his review that 'the miraculous legend of "Excalibur" does not come very near to us, and as reproduced by any modern writer must be a mere ingenious exercise of fancy' and Leigh Hunt seemed equally dubious on the appropriateness of Tennyson's treatment of a medieval story.[41] It was strictures such as these that had caused Tennyson to insert his 'Morte d'Arthur' within the contemporary frame of 'The Epic', and to present the poem as the work of a fictional undergraduate.

The forty-five line 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' is in many ways an expansion of Malory's discourse on the 'lusty moneth of May', in which lovers, like the trees and flowers that 'burgenyth and florysshyth', do 'spryngith, burgenyth, buddyth, and florysshyth in lusty dedis'.[42] Tennyson's poem is a lyrical description of the lovers' illicit affair. Its setting is harmonious, even collusive, with their romantic designs: the misty mountains laugh, the birds sweetly sing and even the 'drooping

chestnut-buds began / To spread into the perfect fan'.[43] Only the ambiguous final lines

hint at the tragedy that approaches:

> A man had given all other bliss,
> And all his worldly worth for this,
> To waste his whole heart in one kiss
>   Upon her perfect lips.[44]

The poem is free of the censure Tennyson would later heap upon the lovers in the

Idylls. It is a fragment of a much larger poem devised by Tennyson, which was never

published and was perhaps never completed to the poet's satisfaction. This larger

work has not survived, save in a prose synopsis made by J.M. Kemble.* What did

survive, however, with its heady imagery and sympathetic account of the lovers'

affair, became an important inspiration for the Pre-Raphaelites.[45]

Perhaps the most influential of the 1842 poems was 'Sir Galahad', an eighty-

four line monologue, delivered by the 'maiden-knight', in which he ruminates on how

'faith and prayer' and his 'virgin heart' provides him with greater strength than that

given to other, less chaste men:

> My good blade carves the casques of men,
>   My tough lance thrusteth sure,
> My strength is as the strength of ten,
>   Because my heart is pure.[46]

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* '[I]n the Spring, Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot ride through the forest green, fayre and amorous: And such a queen! such a knight! Merlin with spindle shanks, vast brows and beard and a forehead like a mundane egg, over a face wrinkled with ten thousand crow-feet meets them, and tells Sir L. that he's doing well for his fame to be riding out with a light o' love &c. Whereupon the knight, nowise backward in retort, tells him it is a shame that such an old scandal to antiquity should be talking, since his own propensities are no secret, and since he very well knows what will become of him in the valley of Avilion some day. Merlin, who tropically is Worldly Prudence, is of course miserably floored. So are the representatives of Worldly Force, who in the shape of three knights, sheathed, Sir, in trap from toe to toe, run at Sir L. and are most unceremoniously shot from their saddles like stones from a sling. But the Garde Joyeuse is now in sight; the knight I confess is singing but a loose song, when his own son Sir Galahad (the type of Chastity) passes by; he knows his father but does no speak to him, *blushes and rides on his way!* Voila tout. Much of this is written and stupendous' (quoted in Ricks's headnote to 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere', 97).

Like the Galahad of 'The Holy Grail' (1869), his quest is a purely individualistic one

and he fails to embody an ideal of social commitment, which Tennyson would later

hold as the ideal of the Round Table, flawed though that institution would appear. In

the opening lines, the three-time repetition of 'My' emphasises the knight's

detachment from the world around him – already there is something of the egoist in

Tennyson's presentation of Galahad. His knight errantry, though he champions

maidens 'To save them from shame and thrall', is subsumed within Galahad's greater

quest for spiritual glory. Whether in spite or because of this egotism, 'Sir Galahad'

became a hugely influential poem. It inspired numerous romantic treatments by visual

artists, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Elizabeth Siddall, Edward Burne Jones,

George Frederick Watts, Arthur Hughes and Joseph Noël Patton (see figs 3-9).

Tennyson's poem also inaugurated the Victorian cult of Galahad initially patronised

by Muscular Christians,* as a means of encouraging schoolboys to lead chaste,

wholesome and socially-conscious lives, but which later fell subject to increasingly

jingoist discourses on the importance of serving England and Empire with an almost

spiritual dedication (as discussed in the following chapter).

The Idylls of the King as bourgeois epic

The success of Tennyson's 1842 Arthurian poems did little to assure the poet of the

form his eventual epic should take, and he continued to plot a series of unrealised

large-scale works, including a five-act 'masque', which was abandoned in the late

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* I his recent history of the topic, Donald Hall stated thtat the 'muscular Christian' movement is associated with 'physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself... [For] muscular Christians, the male body appears as a metaphor for social, national, and religious bodies, while at the same time it attempts to enforce a particular construction of those bodies' (*Muscular Christianity*, 1995, 7-8). The robust moralism of such writers as Thomas Hughes, Charles Kinglsey, George MacDonald and Charlotte M. Yonge typify the tradition which lasted until the First World War.

1840s.[47] By 1856, however, he began to develop the *Idylls of the King*, the work that would take the rest of his life – and the core of the Victorian era – to complete.

First to be published were 'Nimuë' and 'Enid', in a trail edition of 1857, and 'Guinevere' and 'Elaine', in 1859. Although renamed in later editions, the early titles of these poems drew more attention to the women of the legend than had been evident in all the centuries of Arthurian literary production. They also consolidated the domesticated vision of the legend which the Victorian age would produce. In 1869 four other idylls were published: 'The Holy Grail', 'Pelleas and Ettare' and 'The Coming of Arthur', with the 1842 'Morte d'Arthur' re-emerging as 'The Passing of Arthur'. 'The Last Tournament' and 'Gareth and Lynette' were added in 1872; the earlier 'Enid' was divided into two poems, 'The Marriage of Geraint' and 'Geraint and Enid', and the last poem, 'Balin and Balan', was added in 1886 to make up the Latin epic twelve.[48] The Victorian era had its national epic and Arthurian literature had a new paradigm.

As with Geoffrey's *Historia* and Malory's *Morte Darthur*, at the centre of Tennyson's work was a process of synthesis and editing – a means of making the Arthurian myth not only pertinent to Tennyson's age and class, but also the dominant cultural myth of his times. One of the main dilemmas facing Tennyson was the nineteenth century's anxieties over the immorality of the medieval Arthurian story, fears which go back as far as the sixteenth-century Puritanism of Roger Ascham, who had written of Malory's *Morte Darthur*:

> The pleasure of which booke standeth in two special poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye: in which booke, those be counted the noblest knights that do kill most men without any quarrell, and commit fowlest aduoulteres by subtlest shiftes [...] What toyes, the dayly reading of such a book may worke in the will of a yong jentleman, or a yong mayde, that liveth welthelie and idleie, wise men can judge, and honest men do pitie.[49]

In the nineteenth century, fears over Malory, while less hysterical, were no less apparent. In his rewriting of the *Morte Darthur*, Reginald Heber had deemed it prudent to omit many of the Malory's 'immoral' passages. One of the 1816 editors of Malory thought it necessary to make perform some 'highly needed pruning' to the original text so that the it might take its place among the family's bookshelves, rather than remain 'secreted from the fair sex'.[50] Although the deluxe 1817 edition made many fewer cuts in the original text, in its introduction, Robert Southey was aghast at the barbarity of many French romances, as well as being morally shocked by the theme of 'aggravated' adultery contained in the *Morte* itself.[51] Southey also thought the French writers had committed a 'foul offence' in engrafting vices and dishonour upon Tristram, 'whom another writer has described as a Knight of prowess and of worth'.[52] This oddly personal defence of the moral character of Arthurian figures is also found in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *King Arthur* (1848). This text went to extreme lengths to rehabilitate the virtuousness of the myth, including Lytton's decision to recast the adulterous Guinevere as two persons: one became Arthur's wife, the other Lancelot's bride. Lytton did this, he claimed in his preface, 'to vindicate the fidelity of the Cymrian queen Guenever from the scandal which the levity of the French writers had [added] most improperly'.[53]

Tennyson did not resort to these drastic alterations. Instead he included and even expanded on the lascivious elements of the myth, but contained them within a tightly-controlled system of antitheses. Thus the evil of Vivien is contrasted to the goodness of Arthur; Arthur's ideal of truth juxtaposed with her vision of '[t]he old true filth'.[54] In such close juxtaposition, the extremes of both virtue and evil become more pronounced. Such a construct allowed Tennyson to draw on the most 'immoral'

of all Arthurian sources: the French romances, which had been so worrisome to his predecessors.

Although Vivien is mentioned in a brief passage in Malory,[55] it was the Vulgate *Merlin*, summarised with extensive quotation in Southey's introduction, which provided the genesis for Tennyson's 'wily woman'. Southey's introduction described Vivien as 'sorrowful and vexed', attempting to 'fawn to flatter' in order to 'delude and deceive'.[56] Tennyson followed Southey so closely in creating this *femme fatale* that one early reader of the idyll claimed 'that such a poem would corrupt the young, that no ladies could buy it or read it'.[57] Tennyson quickly recalled the trial edition. But within the larger structure of the *Idylls* Vivien's licentiousness was transformed into 'the evil genius of the Round Table'.[58] She became the primogenitor of all the wickedness that befalls Arthur and his kingdom – including the discovery of Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery.[59] Indeed, her much-vaunted immorality was refashioned into criminality: Swinburne's facetious comment that she was a 'simply a subject for a police court' was entirely consonant with Tennyson's depiction of her.[60] Thus Tennyson rarely had to perform the 'highly needed pruning' his predecessors thought necessary in order to make the Arthurian story permissible for contemporary readers. It was through emphasising, rather than removing, the wicked elements of the Arthurian story, that Tennyson achieved the *Idylls'* proper moral tone.[*]

It is notable that Tennyson did not begin his *Idylls* with tales drawn from Malory, but like many of his Romantic predecessors, drew from non-English sources. Yet unlike Peacock, Hemans and numerous scholars, Tennyson was not content to

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[*] Although Tennyson rarely altered the narrative of his sources, he did produce occasional cuts, especially with regard to the moral character of Arthur. The most notable example is Arthur's non-paternity of Mordred. In the original text of 'Guinevere', for instance, Mordred is described by the king as his 'sister's son' (l. 569). In the later 1870 edition of the poem Mordred is further removed from Arthur, becoming 'the man they call / My sister's son – no kin of mine, who leagues / With Lords of the White Horse' (ll. 569-71).

reproduce foreign models – he appropriated them into an Anglocentric structure. Such

a process is evident in his treatment of the Merlin and Vivien story in its unification of

French 'immorality' with English 'respectability'. But the appropriation of foreign

literature into an English structure is even more pronounced in the contemporary

'Enid', Tennyson's adaptation of the thirteenth-century Welsh romance, 'Geraint

fil[ius] Erbin'. 'Geraint' was one of the five Arthurian tales contained in Charlotte

Guest's translation of *The Mabinogion*, a text which reasserted the cultural

importance of an older Welsh corpus which was autonomous to the English Arthurian

tradition.

As with his later treatment of the *Morte Darthur*, it is a rather bloodless

retelling. In the original, Geraint abandons the knightly world of tourneys and battle in

order to reside in peace with Enid until her shame at his perceived cowardice spurs

him into further martial conflict. It articulated the conflicts between the familial

obligations and the duties of a feudal, predominantly homosocial, community.

Tennyson domesticated the tale. In 'Enid' the dramatic action is germinated in a

marital misunderstanding, as Enid, at night, weeps at the slurs that men say of him:

> True tears upon his broad and naked breast
>   ...awoke him, and by great mischance
> He heard but fragments of her later words,
> And that she feared she was not a good wife.[61]

Later, as Geraint learns of his mistake in doubting his wife's fidelity, he is reconciled

to her, apologising profusely for having doubted her and declaring that 'henceforward

[he would] rather die than doubt.'[62] Whereas in the Welsh original (as translated by

Guest), Geraint is merely 'grieved for two causes; one was, to see that Enid had lost

her colour and her wonted aspect; and the other, to know that she was in the right'.[63]

Essentially Tennyson was transforming the feudal tensions of the original Welsh

romance into an ode to virtuous married life.* Tennyson made further changes to his

Welsh source: rather than the dramatic action of the original, Tennyson's version was

comprised of a series of dialogues; and instead of the more fantastical elements of the

Welsh romance, the idyll was more naturalistic – more recognisable to a

contemporary Victorian audience. He was also careful to remove the Welsh

nationalist sentiments that were evident in the earlier years of Arthurian scholarship

and literary production. His remodelling of 'Geraint' perfectly fits into the larger,

domesticated structure of the central section of the *Idylls* – its Welsh origins lending

no more than a Celtic flavour to a poem dedicated, as Tennyson wrote in 'To the

Queen', to 'an ever broadening England'.[64]

After successfully synthesising diverse French and Welsh sources into an

English bourgeois structure, Tennyson mostly drew his subsequent idylls from the

Morte Darthur, though several are almost wholly original.[†] But unlike Malory, whose

protagonist is most often Lancelot, Tennyson placed Arthur at the epicentre of his

work.[‡] More than anything else, the king of the *Idylls* is a paragon of virtue. In the

Romantic tradition he was frequently castigated as the most criminal of all the

Knights of the Round Table – he was an adulterer in Walter Scott's 'The Bridal of

Triermain', a coward in Anne Bannerman's 'The Prophecy of Merlin' (1801) and an

ineffectual ruler in a host of other texts. But in the *Idylls* he is repeatedly described as

a 'blameless king', capable of inspiring not only great deeds from his followers but

also imbuing them with something of his own Christ-like nature.[65] The monk

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* It remains unclear whether Tennyson knew Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, the focus of which is not about the primacy of marriage (as in Tennyson) but the need for a warrior-knight to fight.

† Of the other nine *Idylls*, the most original were 'The Coming of Arthur', 'The Last Tournament' (which took only incidental details from Malory) and 'Guinevere', which derived only its setting from the *Morte Darthur*.

‡ 'For Lancelot was the first in Tournament, / But Arthur mightiest on the battlefield' ('Gareth and Lynette', ll. 485-6).

Ambrosius describes Arthur's knights as 'like to coins, / Some true, some light, but every one of you / Stamp'd with the image of the King'.[66] A similar passage occurs in Bedivere's description of the founding of the Round Table, at which '[a] momentary likeness of the King' appeared in each of the knights' faces.[67] These knights revere 'the King, as if he were / Their conscience, and their conscience as their king'.[68] In an age of constitutional monarchy, Tennyson did not present Arthur as some warlike autocrat; instead, it was as a moral entity – 'Ideal manhood closed in real man' – that Tennyson made the figure of a sixth-century king, and hence the whole Arthurian legend, relevant to his contemporary readers.[69] Within this '[n]ew-old' tale, he was the figurehead of a new moral code – chivalry – that was presented as an ideal model of Victorian society.[70] Like Arthur's knights, the reader became stamped with the image of the king.

Yet despite Arthur's perfection, the focus of the *Idylls* is firmly on the cynicism, falsehood and moral decay which gradually overwhelm Arthur's court. Indeed, Tennyson's conception of Arthurian society was rooted in its demise: the poem that was to become the conclusion to the cycle, the 1842 'Morte d'Arthur', was the first to be composed and thus the creative inception of the *Idylls* was its very destruction; the Arthurian story was essentially rewritten as tragedy. In the first poem of the narrative sequence, 'The Coming of Arthur', the king proclaims in response to Rome's demand for tribute: 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new' – words echoed in the final idyll as the kingdom is destroyed.[71] And between these two poems, the *Idylls* chart this demise through the symbolism of contrasting themes brought jarringly together. The personal failure of Arthur to uphold the systems of power and authority are the result of his inability to marry his own lofty idealism with the sensual world, symbolised by Guinevere. Merlin's destruction is the result of the intellect

being similarly corrupted by the sexual, in his desire for Vivien. Lancelot and

Guinevere's adultery demonstrates the disastrous conflicts between passion and the

social construct of marriage. The whole kingdom is destroyed by the knights' and

their ladies' inability to harmonise domestic desires with public duty. It is no accident

that of the ten central idylls of this great domestic tragedy, all save 'The Holy Grail'

are directly focussed on the relationships of brothers, lovers, husbands and wives, and

the impact these relationships have on the state. Although this is a theme that is

apparent in many medieval romances – the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* being a notable

example – never before had the impact of each character's action and moral state

mattered so much to the wellbeing of society.

*   *   *   *   *

The question Everard Hall asks in 'The Epic' is 'why should any man / Remodel

models?' Bluntly, the answer is that the Victorian era required a national epic. More

precisely, the bourgeoisie, through monumental achievements of industry, colonialism

and social change, had acquired a dominant position which required cultural

validation.* The story of Arthur had from at least the time of Geoffrey's *Historia*

provided elite social groups with such legitimisation. Yet the Arthurian story's

historic ideological utility resulted in a paradoxical situation for Victorian writers.

They wished to invest the Matter of Britain with their own ideological positions, in

order to present bourgeois power as emerging from an historical continuum, yet they

also had to divorce the Arthurian story from its previous cultural utility as aristocratic

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* Of course, the English bourgeoisie were already achieving cultural validation through the form of the
realist novel. The great ideologues of the mid-Victorian era – Dickens, Eliot, Gaskell and Thackeray
among others – were already producing monuments to liberal capitalism by the time Tennyson was
publishing the *Idylls* from 1859 on. The realist novel, however, operated in a piecemeal fashion. Its
concerns, by necessity of its genre, were geographically-localised and temporally specific. What
Tennyson provided was an epic – raising the concerns, ideals and beliefs of the English middle classes
to the status of myth. The *Idylls* are as close an embodiment of the bourgeois ideological superstructure
as one poet could achieve. It was unique among the cultural achievements of the Victorian age.

and monarchical ideology. Major alteration of the legend's central story was impossible – it was too well known and, besides, there had to seem to be an apparently unbroken form of tradition that underlay the whole myth. Yet Tennyson nevertheless achieved success – largely due to his poetic approach, which, following Reginald Heber, was dialogic rather than narrative.

Tennyson did not rewrite the narrative of the Matter of Britain, but provided a new reading of it. The story of Arthur and the knights of the Round Table lies outside Tennyson's poems: in Malory and the broad corpus of medieval romance. Within the *Idylls* the narrative of Arthur's reign is 'remembered, imagined, turned into the stuff of legend.'[72] Unlike Malory's tales, which largely consist of direct action occasionally interspersed with characters' thoughts and feelings, which are all the more pronounced for their infrequency, Tennyson's figures provide continual introspection, dialogue and spoken reflections. These form a commentary on the legend, inscribing a new set of meanings (moral, religious, social and political) onto the pre-existing narrative framework. And this metatextual signification gains authority from appearing internal to the meaning of the myth: the characters' 'thoughts', psychology and symbolism appear to drive the very narrative around which they are clustered. Indeed, this sense of internalisation was utterly central to Tennyson's concept of Arthur, as he stated in a letter to J.T. Knowles:

> *Idylls of the King* implies something more and other than the mere legends of Arthur: else why did I not name the books 'Idylls of King Arthur'? It should have been clearer to my readers that in the very title there is an allusion to the King within us.[73]

This approach seems almost unique in Western literature – only the *Divine Comedy* forms a predecessor. Indeed, Tennyson was an astute reader of Dante: according to

Pattison, he owned eleven copies of the *Divine Comedy* and it is seems likely that the

Idylls' dialogic technique was consciously taken from Florentine's work.[74]

There are many structural affinities between the *Idylls* and the *Divine Comedy*.

Both poets constructed their epic works from a huge variety of cultural allusions,

historic and contemporary, Classical and Christian. Both works remodel and alter the

significance of the past and its myths, though this is rarely achieved by narrative

changes. Instead, Dante and Tennyson effect the re-inscription of meaning

dialogically. Thus, for example, it is Ulysses himself who confesses to the reader why

he is condemned to the eighth circle of Dante's Hell (canto xxvi, ll. 90-142) for the

medieval sin of intellectual promiscuity. While this sin – an anachronistic imposition

of fourteenth-century Christian belief – is obviously superimposed by Dante, when

voiced by Ulysses himself, it appears to be internal to the Classical myth. Essentially,

Dante's re-signification of the story of Ulysses appears to work interiorly. Through

having the inhabitants of Malory's *Morte Darthur* themselves articulate the causes of

the Round Table's collapse, Tennyson's *Idylls* perform the same feat of 'internally'

transforming the meaning of the medieval Arthurian tradition.* As a result, Tennyson

transformed the meaning of a whole legend, with all its plurality of intent, yet barely

altered one significant narrative detail. As Tennyson's ideal of Arthur was stamped on

knight and reader, it was also superimposed upon the older Arthurian legends. As the

epilogue to the cycle declares, Tennyson's Arthur was certainly not 'that gray king' of

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* Of Tennyson's non-Arthurian poems, 'Ulysses' is perhaps the most obvious instance of his poetic borrowing from Dante. Ostensibly, the resignification of the Odysseus story in 'Ulysses' is very different from the 'interior' alteration of meaning in the *Idylls*, as 'Ulysses' is a sequel, or coda, to Homer's *Odyssey*. In the *Idylls* the knights and their king exist within the Malorian narrative frame, whereas when Tennyson's Ulysses says 'I cannot rest from travel' he speaks long after the events of Homer's tale. However, Tennyson's primary source was not Homer, but Dante's *Inferno* (canto XXVI). And through his imitation of the monologue of Dante's Ulysses, Tennyson's own mariner not only alters the meaning of Homer's original, but Dante's as well: for as Dante condemned the curiosity and presumption of the ancient Greek in his desire for new adventure, Tennyson's Ulysses is exalted for his restless aspiration ('Death closes all; but something ere the end, / Some work of noble note, may yet be done, / Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods', ll. 53-5). Thus Tennyson not only narratively alters the *Odyssey* he also, through dialogue, interiorly alters Dante's canto.

Scottish or Welsh myth, but nor was he 'him / Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's'.[75]

The *Idylls* exhibited as much of the Victorian world as one poet could muster – 'all its lights / And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe'.[76] It articulated England's moral aims and its cultural aspirations. It elevated the English bourgeois state, the 'crowned Republic', to the level of myth. Tennyson's domestication of the Arthurian story not only made it relevant to his readership, it made the 'crowing common-sense, / That saved [the nation] many times' equal to the martial heroism of Britain's imagined past.[77] The 'faint Homeric echoes', apologised for in 'The Epic' of 1842, became a chorus proclaiming the virtue and greatness of the domestic, respectable, tradition-revering middle class. Yet as it did so the *Idylls* also dramatised the social anxieties inherent in the bourgeois state – fears over cynicism and inertia, the evolving role of women in national life and the public consequences of private immorality.[78] But these were all eclipsed by the dread with which the *Idylls* spoke of the decay in 'the faith / That made us rulers'.[79] The early nineteenth century had left the British nation the 'mightiest of all people under Heaven', the English bourgeoisie growing 'wealthier – wealthier – hour by hour'.[80] Yet Tennyson repeatedly referred to '[t]he darkness of that battle in the West, / Where all of high and holy dies away', which kept the image of Britain 'as a sinking land, / Some third-rate isle half lost among her seas' continually in the reader's mind.[81] Thus Tennyson's imagined British past was not only an ideal of earlier mythic greatness, it also served as a stark, though beautiful, warning to his contemporary society.

The Idylls of the King as Arthurian paradigm

There were great public and critical expectations of the *Idylls*: Tennyson had been made Poet Laureate in 1850 and reviewers eagerly anticipated his epic Arthuriad.[82] Its impact on Victorian culture was immense. The 1859 edition sold forty thousand copies in its first few weeks and the poems were repeatedly published throughout the century.[83] Its authority over subsequent Arthurian literature was at least as great as that of either Geoffrey's *Historia* or Malory's *Morte Darthur*.

This success with both readers and writers was prepared for by two earlier important pieces of medievalism: William Dyce's Arthurian frescoes for the Robing Room at the Palace of Westminster (1851-64) and Matthew Arnold's 'Tristram and Iseult' (1852). Like many before him, Dyce, when given his commission to decorate the royal chambers, expressed initial concern over the choice of Malory's *Morte Darthur* as a suitably ethical subject.[84] Yet his misgivings were evidently assuaged, as in 1851 he began his series of paintings: *Religion* (1851), *Generosity* (1852), *Courtesy* (1852), *Mercy* (1854) and *Hospitality* (1864).* Notably, Dyce did not produce a series of historical frescoes but a range of pageants which utilised the Arthurian legend as a sequence of moral exemplars. In painting the figures of the Arthurian legend in this way, Dyce lent a striking political meaning to the myth. The figure of Arthur not only represented a myth of political continuity with the past but, by situating this fountainhead of virtue at the centre of the Houses of Parliament, Dyce also implied that within the institutions of Victorian politics resided the moral health of the country

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* The full titles of these works are: *Religion: the vision of Sir Galahad and his company; Generosity: King Arthur unhorsed and spared by Sir Lancelot; Courtesy: Sir Tristram harping to la Belle Isolde; Mercy: Sir Gawaine swearing to be merciful and never be against ladies;* and *Hospitality: the admission of Sir Tristram to the fellowship of the Round Table.* Dyce's first fresco, *Piety: the knights of the Round Table departing on the quest for the Holy Grail* (1849) was rejected by the Fine Arts Commission and resides in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

– a compelling ideological strategy.* Although Tennyson's treatment of the Arthurian

story was not as overtly political as Dyce's, the latter's highly moralised retelling of

the legend clearly prefigured Tennyson's moralisation of the medieval story.

Matthew Arnold's version of the Tristram story was the first to be produced

for centuries. The poem is divided into three parts. In the first, the dying Tristram is

nursed by his wife, Iseult of Brittany, and recalls the events of his past with Iseult of

Ireland in a series of flashbacks (a narrative technique similar to Tennyson's). The

second concerns Tristram's final reunion with Iseult of Ireland and their death in each

other's arms. The third part is entirely different from the traditional story with Iseult

of Brittany, now widowed, recounting the story of the disastrous love of Merlin for

Vivian to her fatherless children, warning them of the terrible dangers of love.With its

anxieties over passionate love uncontrolled by the institution of marriage, this section

diverts the narrative emphasis away from the tragic affair of Tristram and Iseult of

Ireland and places it upon the survivors of this tragedy – Tristram's wife and the

destroyed family:

> Yes it is lonely for her in her hall.
> The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,
> Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,
> Are there the sole companions to be found.
> But these she loves; and noisier life than this
> She would find ill to bear, weak as she is.[85]

This is medievalism of the most domesticated order, taking place amid embroidery,

petted dogs and nightly prayers; its chief dramatic dynamic being bourgeois

moralism, rather than the workings out of fate. The effect of the poem is not wholly

unlike Landon's earlier 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle'. Arnold himself remained

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* The Robing Room itself is symbolic of this political continuity of the past and present, owing to the fact that the monarch's chamber lies between the House of Lords and the House of Commons and, therefore, at the very heart of British politics.

unsure as to its merits, claiming Tennyson possessed a greater 'poetical sentiment' than he.[86] Indeed, while both poets bourgeoisified the Arthurian story, their respective success lies in the differences in the scale of their poetic conceptions. While Arnold reduced the medieval tale of grand passions into domiciliary verses, Tennyson raised the domestic into a national epic.

*   *   *   *   *

Tennyson's influence on later writers extended through narrative, style and genre. The dominant form of Arthurian literature throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century was poetic – often in a style consciously or unconsciously imitative of Tennyson – though there was some development towards Arthurian drama around the turn of the century (see pp. 57-64 below). What prose literature there was chiefly consisted of retellings of Malory, though these were almost always under the influence of Tennyson's moralistic and domesticated adaptation of the legend. Many writers showed their debt to Tennyson in their titles, among them: Edward Hamley, 'Sir Tray: an Arthurian idyl' [sic] (1873), Elinor Sweetman's 'Pastoral of Galahad' and 'Pastoral of Lancelot' (1899) and G. Constant Lounsbery's 'An Iseult Idyll' (1901).[87] Even the parodies left the reader with no doubt as to their satiric intent – lampoons of this time including William Edmondstoune Aytoun's 'La Mort d'Arthur: not by Alfred Tennyson' (1849), as well as *The Coming K—: a set of idyll lays* (1873) by Beeton, Dowty and Emerson, and *Arthur, or, the hididdle-diddles of the King*, by 'Our own Poet Laureate' (1859).[88]

Tennyson's influence was almost as strong on the pictorial arts. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was partly founded on the basis of the Round Table and much of their art was directly inspired by the 1842 lyrics.[89] William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones jointly proposed to establish an order of chivalry – the ritual for joining

was the recitation of Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad'.[90] Many individual paintings and even

sculptures and figures took their scenes directly from Tennyson's poetry, though they

often to claim Malory as source: William Holman Hunt's *The Lady of Shalott* (1886-

1905), George Frampton's *Enid the Fair* (1907) and Arthur Hughes' *Sir Galahad*

(1870, fig. 7), among others. Burne-Jones's *Merlin and Vivien* (1870-4) was based not

only on Tennyson's idyll but also on a conversation the painter held with the poet in

1858.[91] Indeed, the depiction of affective moments in history and literature which

characterises so many paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites and their ancillaries can be

seen as a conjunctive to Tennyson's poetic ethos.[92] Similarly, although musicologists

have tended to study the grander Arthurian works of Wagner and others,[93] it is also

notable that Tennyson inspired a surge in lighter Arthurian music in the mid-Victorian

period. Many shorter works for piano and voice were published for performance in

the drawing rooms of bourgeois England. Especially popular for musical setting was

Vivien's song, 'In love if love be love'.[94] And though of minor interest in themselves,

they serve as potent reminders of how Tennyson transformed a medieval legend

which had to be 'secreted from the fair sex' into a respectable epic that was welcomed

into middle-class homes.

Tennyson's *Idylls* were made available in numerous translations across Europe

and, in English, they were transmitted across the Empire, often with didactic intent.[95]

In the United States Tennyson largely defined the way in which the older Arthurian

myths were received. As Alan Lupack and Barbara Tepa Lupack have shown,

nineteenth and early twentieth-century American Arthuriana was largely written in

response to the *Idylls*, though James Russell Lowell's *The Vision of Sir Launfal*

(1848) preceded Tennyson's own version of the myth by a decade.[96] Many works

were obvious parodies, such as Edgar Fawcett's *The New King Arthur* (1885), Oscar

Fay Adams's *Post-Laureate Idyls and Other Poems* (1886) and, above all, Mark

Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), which formed

something of a coexistent paradigm in American literature. Other versions of the

Matter of Britain followed Tennyson more closely in producing domesticated versions

of the legend, though often with an element of democratisation, as evident in the

retellings of the legend for children, such as Sidney Lanier's influential *The Boy's

King Arthur* (1880).

Tennyson's conception of the myth was also evident in the utilisation of the

myth as moral pedagogy by William Forbush in his proto-Scouting movement, the

Knights of the Round Table. For Forbush and other American moralists the moral

dangers that beset adolescents could be countered by an adherence to the rules of the

nineteenth century's conception of chivalry. And, as if to emphasise the link between

Tennyson and his hierarchal organisation, not only was the *Idylls* required reading

matter for all youths within Forbush's movement but a boy could only progress

through the various hierarchies of the organisation (Page, Esquire, Knight) through

the recitation of large parts of the *Idylls*.[97] As an instance of transatlantic re-

transmission, when Robert Baden Powell founded the British Scouting movement, he

modelled them largely on Forbush's knights and also urged his Scouts to read stories

of chivalry, and the movement even commissioned a film that demonstrated the link

between Scouts and Arthur's knights called *Knights of the Square Table* (1917).[98]

Such was the power of the poetry, the success of its publication and the

importance of its sanctioning by the state (through Tennyson's Laureateship and the

poems' associations with the monarchy) that those poets and writers who did not find

their world-view within Tennyson's paradigm – among them Celticists, radicals and

socialists – were either incorporated into the myth or else were forced to abandon

their efforts to write Arthurian literature. William Morris, for instance, produced a

series of Arthurian poems between 1855 and 1858, which owed a debt of influence to

Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' and the 1842 poems.[99] Modern criticism has tended

to concentrate on the more radical features of Morris's poetry, emphasising 'The

Defence of Guinevere', with its 'extraordinarily modern [...] attitude to adultery' and

its attempt to 'radically exploit' the figure of Arthur 'as upholder of establishment

values.'[100] Yet Morris's radical/conservative tendencies in respect of the Arthurian

legend fluctuated continually. Although 'Guinevere' does present a defence of the

queen's adultery through richly textured images and emotions, another poem in the

1858 collection, 'Arthur's Tomb', partly inspired by Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting

of the same title (fig.1), adopts a far more conventional (and Tennysonian) attitude,

with Guinevere lamenting her role in the destruction of the kingdom and reviling

Lancelot for his part in Arthur's death.[*] The inability of Morris to reconcile his darker

view of the medieval with the romantic idealism that he often displayed led him to

abandon his planned epic on the Matter of Britain. What was also probably crucial to

this decision was Tennyson's obvious success in producing such a work. Morris did

not, of course, share the same authoritarian political impulses that the Poet Laureate

possessed and the double repellence of a narrative about medieval aristocrats and its

embourgeoisement in the *Idylls* forced Morris to look toward the Norse myths in

search of inspiration.

Algernon Swinburne has often been perceived as the antithesis of Tennyson,

his *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882) the poetic subversion of the *Idylls*.[101] Personal

correspondence certainly displays Swinburne's hostility to Tennyson and his

treatment of the story in 'The Last Tournament', which he saw as 'degraded and

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[*] However, 'Arthur's Tomb' was published in the year Tennyson finished 'Guinevere', the latter text
not being published until the following year (1859). Neither poem seems to have influenced the other,
rather Morris and Tennyson were working on the same story with a similar method.

debased'.[102] Yet the text with which Swinburne's *Tristram* seems to contrast most

directly is Arnold's earlier 'Tristram and Iseult'. Unlike Arnold, Swinburne was

uninterested in the medieval as a moral theatre, in which thoughtless passions have

dire consequences. There are no unfortunate orphans running about in the final verses

to warn the reader of the dangers of unbridled desire. And Arnold's other moral

centrepiece, Iseult of Brittany, is presented without sympathy:

> So bitter burned within the unchilded wife
> A virgin lust for vengeance, and such hate
> Wrought in her now the fervent work of hate.[103]

Instead, the passion of Tristram and Iseult of Ireland is the sole focus of this poem.

And, again unlike Arnold, it is their death which constitutes the poem's tragic

conclusion:

> No change or gleam or gloom of sun and rain,
> But all the time long the might of all the main
> Spread round them as round earth soft heaven is spread,
> And peace more strong than death round all the death.
> For death is of an hour, and after death
> Peace: nor aught that fear of fancy saith,
> Nor even for very love's own sake, shall strife
> Perplex again that perfect peace with life.[104]

Certainly, Swinburne's version of the Tristram story is antithetical to Arnold's

account – though perhaps in making the subject of his poem exclusively that of

Tristram and Iseult's love for each other, Swinburne is partly influenced by the

nineteenth-century's domestication of all things medieval. But the common

perception of his *Tristram* as forming an alternative to Tennyson's *Idylls* is less

convincing.

Following Swinburne's own estimation of his verse, Richard Barber has

written that it was composed in a unique 'verse-form constructed according to his own

theories'.[105] Yet there are Tennysonian resonances everywhere. In the passage quoted

above the soft alliteration, the repetitions and cadences strongly resemble Tennyson's

(cf. 'To make men worse by making my own sin known? / Or sin seem less, the sinner

seeming great', or, 'His honour rooted in dishonour stood, / And Faith unfaithful kept

him falsely true').[106] Swinburne's conception of the lovers' death as escape, couched

in the language of the elements - 'gleam or gloom of sun and rain' - echoes

Tennyson's description of Avalon as the 'island-valley [...] Where falls not hail, or

rain, or any snow'.[107] Indeed, the closeness of style between the *Idylls* and *Tristram* is

evident throughout: Swinburne's manner of relating the story through a series of set

pieces, rather than through narrative progression, resembles Tennyson's

fragmentation of the traditional Arthurian legend into similar self-contained passages.

Even the sea-imagery that is often celebrated in Swinburne's poem, finds its

predecessor in Tennyson's *Idylls*.[108]

Of course, Swinburne's verse is less stately than Tennyson's and there is no

denouncement of Tristram and Iseult's adultery to respond to the *Idylls'*

condemnation of the lovers in 'Guinevere'.[109] Yet it is remarkable how many

Tennysonian devices and stylistic mannerisms Swinburne adopted when producing

his poetic cycle. Indeed, the whole work appears, not so much as an antithesis of

Tennyson's *Idylls*, but as an ancillary or parallel – less moral in tone but derivative

both in style and also in its conception of the uses of the medieval as vehicle for

domestic tragedy. And when Swinburne returned to the Arthurian myth later in his

career, he did so with the 'Tale of Balen' (1896),[110] a straight-forward retelling of the

legend which 'involves no moral problems' and like Arnold's and Tennyson's verse

'fits into the pattern of family tragedy'.[111] Indeed, in its uncomplicated structure and

simple, though somewhat protracted, narration, it is typical of the second-rate

adaptations which proliferated throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. A generation after they had been written, readers appeared to have had little concept of the poets' differences, which are so commonly emphasised by modern critics. Thomas Hardy certainly displayed no discrimination between them in his preface to *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall* (1923); instead he declared that in his own work he had 'tried to avoid turning the rude personages of, say, the fifth-century into respectable Victorians, as was done by Tennyson, Swinburne, Arnold, etc.'[112]

However opposed to the Tennysonian paradigm Victorian writers were, their work could not help but be influenced by or subsumed within it. The extent of Tennyson's paradigmatic authority can be demonstrated by the relation of nineteenth-century Arthurian literary production to the publication history of Tennyson's poetry. During the *Idylls'* period of composition and publication in individual groups (two in 1857, two more added in 1859; four published in 1869; another two in 1872) the dominant poetic and artistic mode of other Arthurian cultural productions reflected Tennyson's style: they were chiefly lyrical poems or isolated episodes from Malory's *Morte Darthur*, such as the works of Rossetti, Morris and Owen Meredith (Edward Robert Bulwer-Lytton).[113] After the publication of the *Idylls* as a twelve-book epic, the nature of English Arthurian literature changed. Upon realising the full extent of Tennyson's tragic treatment of the legend, a tragedy that grows from malign rumours in the early poems to full-blown calamity in the final idylls, writers became duly preoccupied in their versions of the Matter of Britain with social and dynastic collapse. This is particularly evident in Arthurian drama of the 1890s (discussed below). Even the tendencies in visual representations of the myth altered from the Pre-Raphaelites' impressions of individual 'affective moments' in the legend towards tragic epic cycles – such as in the later work of Edward Burne-Jones or F.J.

Simmons's illustrated edition of the *Morte Darthur*, with its artwork by Aubrey

Beardsley (1893).[*][114]

This effect can be witnessed more generally. Since the accession of Henry VII

to the throne of England, representations of the Arthurian legend had been

predominantly celebratory – whether in pageants, masques, histories or literature.

Even in the early years of the Romantic period, filled as it was with burlesque satire,

Arthur was rarely seen in a less than exuberant guise. But after Tennyson, the story

became firmly fixed in the tragic genre, with Arthurian poetry, drama and visual art

all preoccupied concerned with Arthur's death, the destruction of the kingdom and the

ruination of an entire social system. This apocalyptic trend grew throughout the period

after Tennyson's death in 1892 and culminated in the Arthurian literature of the Great

War.

Arthurian literary production after Tennyson (1892-1914)

If Arthurian literature produced in Tennyson's lifetime was greatly influenced by the

Idylls, the years immediately following the poet's death in October 1892 witnessed

the total domination of the Tennysonian paradigm. Barely an Arthurian poem was

produced in Britain which veered away from the *Idylls'* domestic, tragic and moral

interpretation, while its narrative and themes continued to be replicated in prose,

drama, art galleries and architecture.

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[*] Compare, for instance, Rossetti's famous watercolour, *King Arthur's Tomb* (fig. 1; 1854) and *The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* by Edward Burne-Jones (fig 2; 1881-98). Both ostensibly narrate the same event: the mourning of Arthur, or an event that takes place after his death. The earlier painting's focus, however, is clearly not on Arthur, who is entombed beneath the lovers, Lancelot and Guinevere. The drama of the piece is centred upon them, with Lancelot crowding the upper section of the painting in his attempt to gain a kiss from a reluctant Guinevere. By contrast, it is the tragedy of Arthur's death that is being emphasised in Burne-Jones's work (and in the paintings of many other artists from the 1880s onward). There is no drama surrounding the king's dead body, which is laid out in a stately manner. Instead, the female figures circle his body, framing the audience's eye around the dead king.

Scholarship, too, was essentially Tennysonian in approach. The *Idylls* formed

something of an academic industry in the late nineteenth century. It was the subject of

numerous monographs, such as those by Henry Elsdale (1878), Albert Hamann (1887)

and Richard Jones (1895).[115] The earliest scholarly editions of the *Idylls* were made

by George Campbell Macaulay in 1892;[116] while M.W. MacCallum (1894) and S.

Humphrey Gurteen (1895) published book-length studies which presented the *Idylls*

as the pinnacle of Arthurian literary achievement – a sentiment repeated in many later

studies of the legend.[117] Even when scholars looked on the older literary tradition –

especially Malory – they did so through Tennyson's distorting lens.

In the Romantic revival, Robert Southey had perceived Malory's work to be a

cobbled-together miscellany of superior French romances. It was a view still held by

non-English editors in the late-nineteenth century, such as Malory's great German

editor, H. Oskar Sommer, who wrote of it in 1891:

> [T]ruth demands that we should not rate him too highly. To put it mildly, his
> work is very unequal – sometimes he excels, but often he falls beneath, oftener
> still, he servilely reproduced his originals. Nor can his selections of material
> be unreservedly praised.[118]

Yet for English scholars, post-*Idylls*, the *Morte Darthur* became a work of 'epic unity

and harmony', as Edward Strachey put it in 1891.[119] In 1912 George Saintsbury wrote

of Malory: 'that he, and only he in any language, makes of this vast assemblage of

stories one story, and one book'.[120] Whereas earlier writers understood it as

essentially a foreign story, created by the ancestors of the modern Welsh and

improved by the French romancers, the Victorians saw the *Morte* as 'our English

epic.'[121] In 1897 Saintsbury claimed that only Malory's 'English genius' was able to

synthesise the heterogeneous aspects of the Matter of Britain: 'Classical rhetoric,

French gallantry, Saxon religiosity and intense realisation of the other world, Oriental

extravagance to some extent, the "Celtic vague"'.[122] While Malory did certainly

Anglicise French romances, these scholars were not so much commenting on the

Morte as constructing it as an English epic *in the manner* of Tennyson's *Idylls*. They

were imbuing the literary qualities and cultural meanings of Tennyson's Victorian

Idylls into Malory's fifteenth-century *Morte*. As part of a historical impulse, they were

attempting to locate the bourgeois ideology of Tennyson's domesticated epic as

emerging from England's cultural past.*

Creative literary production, meanwhile, can be seen to flow in three distinct

courses after Tennyson's death. First there was the merely derivative: poems that

strove to replicate the *Idylls'* version of the legend, which made few alterations to the

stylistic, narrative or thematic structure of the Tennysonian paradigm. Second, there

were those works which attempted to extend this paradigm into new genres. There

was a surge in Arthurian drama in the mid-1890s, much of which sought to reproduce

the *Idylls* on stage. The plays were almost exclusively tragic and came replete with

poignant death scenes and mourning Bediveres. Third, there was the non-*Idylls*-based

Arthuriana. A large part of this corpus was concerned with Galahad, as derived from

Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad' (1842), rather than the later 'The Holy Grail' (1868) – this

body of literature is dealt with in the following chapter. From the middle of the

Edwardian period there was also an increased interest in tales ancillary to the

Arthurian core story. Particularly prominent were reworkings of the Tristram and

Iseult narrative in both drama and poetry, but writers were also drawn to tales of

Launfal, Parsifal, and Uther and Igraine. And while the increased attention paid to

non-*Idylls* Arthuriana suggested that writers were attempting to break free from

Tennyson's influence, Arthurian and ancillary literature remained domestic, often

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* In addition, the moralised adaptations of the *Morte* by J.T. Knowles and Sidney Lanier, as well as academic abridgements by Edward Strachey and his predecessors, certainly assisted in domesticating Malory's text – again making it more in line with Tennyson's epic.

poignantly tragic and, above all, idyllic – which were essentially the qualities of the

Tennysonian paradigm. As the dramatists brought the *Idylls* to new forms, the authors

who reworked Tristram, Launfal, Parsifal and others were merely appropriating a

wider set of narratives into the Tennysonian tradition.

Of the imitative writers little needs to be said. They were poets who wished to

reproduce the effects of the *Idylls* and the early lyrics, but who rarely possessed the

talents to do so. Often these largely-forgotten poets reworked Tennyson's verses into

nominally new forms – sometimes repeating the same lines in more or less the same

context. One example is Alfred Austin, the poet, novelist, critic and journalist of

extreme conservative bias, who succeeded Tennyson as Poet Laureate in 1896. Two

years later he produced an eulogy for his predecessor: 'The Passing of Merlin'.[*]

Austin's tribute begins with an epigraph from 'Merlin and the Gleam' (1889),

Tennyson's last Arthurian poem, and establishes the Merlin-Tennyson association in

the third stanza:

> Merlin has gone, Merlin who followed the Gleam,
> And made us follow it; the flying tale
> Of the Last Tournament, the Holy Grail,
> And Arthur's Passing, till the Enchanter's dream
> Dwells with us still awake, no visionary theme.[123]

Austin's grief at Tennyson's passing was alleviated, however, by the thought that

though the previous Poet Laureate was dead, 'never hath England lacked a voice to

sing / Her fairness and her fame, nor will she now'.[124]

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[*] Austin was not always an admirer of Tennyson's work, and his transition from hostile critic to devotee is illustrative of the latter's rise to pre-eminence in the Victorian cultural world. He had written in 1870 that 'Mr Tennyson is not a great poet, unquestionably not a poet of the first rank, all but unquestionably not a poet of the second rank and probably – though no contemporary perhaps can settle that – not even at the head of poets of the third rank, among whom he must ultimately take his place.' (Austin, *Poetry of the Period*, 4).

Austin seems to have intended that one of these replacement patriotic voices would be his own. And considering some of the poem's stanzas, contemporary readers may have believed that Tennyson had not so much died, but – like Merlin – had entered a long period of dotage, in which he endlessly repeats his earlier verse. To conclude his eulogy, Austin could find no better lines than Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur', though repeated with lesser effect:

> A wailing cometh from the shores that veil
> Avilion's island valley; on the mere,
> Looms through the mist and wet winds weeping blear
> A dusky barge, which, without oar or sail,
> Fades to the far-off fields where falls not snow nor hail. [...]
>
> And there He will be comforted; but we
> Must watch, like Bedivere, the dwindling light
> That slowly shrouds Him darkling from our sight.
> From the great deep to the great deep hath He
> Passed, and, if now He knows, is mute eternally.[125]

Indeed, such is the effect of Austin's collage of quotation that the whole thing appears as an unintended pastiche. Austin, it appears, was in earnest; his rehashing of Tennyson's lines was, perhaps, intended to signal Austin's mastery of Tennysonian verse.

Of course, not all of Tennyson-derived poetry was as lamentable as this. The Welsh poet T. Gwynn Jones based his great poem 'Ymadawiad Arthur' ('The Passing of Arthur') on the same verses which Austin mauled in his eulogy to the great Victorian poet. But, whereas Austin lessened the effect of Tennyson's verse when he imitated it in 'The Passing of Merlin', Jones transformed the final *Idyll* into a new literary edifice – one of the finest *Cymraeg* poems of the twentieth century. So successful was Jones's 'Ymadawiad Arthur' that it sparked a literary revival in Wales, which resulted in some of the finest *Cymraeg* poetry to be produced since the

fifteenth-century verse of Dafydd ap Gwilym. As discussed in chapter four, in taking

Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur' as his source, Jones appropriated what was, at the

time, a predominantly English narrative and transformed it into a Welsh symbol of

national renewal – Jones's *awdl* concluding, not with Arthur telling Bedivere to

'[c]omfort thyself; what comfort is in me?', but with the king's promise to return to

his people and to bring them '*anadl einioes y Genedl*' ('the breath of the nation').[126] It

proved a compelling promise for a generation of Welsh poets.

Another turn-of-the-century poet who continued to develop the Tennysonian

version of the Arthurian story was the Scottish John Davidson. His 'Last Ballad'

(1899) is the first post-Tennyson work to focus exclusively on Lancelot.* In this poem

Davidson took Lancelot away from the court into the wastelands of Arthur's kingdom,

where he tries to escape his 'noxious love' for the queen.[127] As in Tennyson's *Idylls*,

'The Last Ballad' is filled with the apocalyptic images of social destruction caused by

individuals' failure to harness private desires in order to serve the state. One of the

best modern Scottish retellings of Arthur (further discussed in chapter four), 'The Last

Ballad' proved influential on later versions of the story, particularly on T.S. Eliot's

The Waste Land (1922; see chapter three). Davidson's poem was also the first

published Arthurian work to make serious use of the ballad form since the sixteenth

century and probably inspired a number of subsequent ballad treatments on both sides

of the Atlantic, including those by G.K. Chesterton and Sidney Fowler Wright.[128]

One of the best known of these later ballads is John Masefield's 'The Ballad

of Sir Bors' (1913), a grim soliloquy spoken during Bors's quest for the Grail. Clearly

derived from Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad' (1842), this ballad was Masefield's first

published Arthurian work. Like Tennyson's, Masefield's poem is set during the quest

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* That Lancelot remained in the background of most retellings of the Arthurian narrative in the nineteenth century testifies to the dominance of Tennyson's over Malory's version of the story.

for the Holy Grail. But unlike the superhuman Galahad, Bors is physically wearied of

his task. Whereas Tennyson's Galahad is filled with the 'strength of ten', because he

is entirely spiritually sustained,[129] Bors is wearied; his horse 'spavined and ribbed';

his sword 'rotten with rust' and his rider longs to 'win some quiet rest, and a little

ease.'[130] And while Galahad ends with a declaration of spiritual indefatigability ('All-

armed I ride, whate'er betide, / Until I find the holy Grail'), Masefield's Sir Bors can

only pray for death:

> And the bright white birds of God will carry my soul to Christ,
> And the sight of the rose, the Rose, will pay for all the years of Hell.[131]

Bors here appears as a weary soldier still following, if seemingly futilely, a righteous

dream, which proved to be symbolic of how the Victorian version of the Arthurian

story continued into a twentieth century that would prove to be radically unsuitable

for such noble, Christian quests. It was a tension which Masefield – who always

described himself as a late-Victorian – would explore throughout his work and

particularly in his Arthurian writing.*

Yet while *Idylls*-influenced Arthurian poetry would continue to be written

until the Great War, the dominant form of Arthurian literary production in the years

following Tennyson's death was theatrical – though it was as Tennysonian as the

poetry of Austin and Davidson. As mentioned above, Tennyson had planned several

dramatic renditions of the Matter of Britain before settling on his epic structure, and

the dialogic form of the *Idylls*, with their lengthy speeches in iambic pentameter, were

easily translated onto the stage. These plays were almost exclusively concerned with

the downfall of the Arthurian kingdom, and borrowed heavily from the later *Idylls*,

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* Masefield published Arthurian poems, novels and plays throughout his career. Particularly important
are his collection of ballads, *Midsummer Night and Other Poems* (1927) and *Badon Parchments*
(1947), one of the earliest historical-novel treatments of the Arthurian story. They are discussed in
chapters five and six.

with 'Guinevere' and 'The Passing of Arthur' featuring most often, though 'Merlin and Vivian' and 'Lancelot and Elaine' (as well as the non-*Idylls* 'The Lady of Shalott') were prominent also.[132] While many plays borrowed lines, themes and characterisation from the *Idylls* others explicitly stated their derivation from Tennyson's poems. When, for instance, the Court Theatre staged Vera Leslie's *Guinevere* in 1903, its subtitle made clear that it was 'adapted from Tennyson's poem'.[133] The vogue for directly rendering individual *Idylls* for the stage continued into the twenties, with Sivori Levey, Ellden Mary Hill, Grace Calvert Holland and Winifred F. Allen all publishing plays written for both London and local parish audiences, often with a specifically Christian bias.[134]

The trend for staged versions of the Arthurian story began with the transatlantic commercial success of J. Comyns Carr's *King Arthur* (1895). Contemporary audiences, according to one reviewer, were so 'saturated with and steeped in the Tennysonian version of the legend' that they fully anticipated Carr's drama to be a staged production of the *Idylls*.[135] They were not, on the whole, disappointed. *King Arthur* is a well-constructed drama which rushes through many of the key scenes of the legend as they appear in the *Idylls*. Apart from the prologue, which is roughly analogous to 'The Coming of Arthur', the drama takes place in the final days of the Arthurian reign. The early preliminaries show the developing affair of Lancelot and Guinevere and the preparations for the quest of the Grail, which here serves only to weaken Arthur's strength of knights, while Mordred and Morgan, his mother, plot his downfall. After this the play moves through a series of pageant-like episodes from the later *Idylls*. The death of Elaine is narrated in sub-Tennysonian blank verse, quite obviously derived from 'Lancelot and Elaine' and 'The Lady of Shalott'. There follows a similarly bowdlerised version of Arthur's final speech to his

queen as it appears in 'Guinevere', though Carr's speech ends with denunciation of

her rather than forgiveness:

> Go, tell the world thy heart hath slain a heart
> That once had once been a King's. Yet that's not all,
> Thou too hast been a Queen whose soul shone clear,
> A star for all men's worship, and a lamp
> Set high in Heaven, whereby all frailer hearts
> Should steer their cause towards God; then, 'tis not I
> Whose life lies broken here, for at thy fall
> A shattered kingdom bleeds.[136]

Throughout this speech, as in Tennyson, Guinevere lies prostrate at Arthur's feet. And

at the very end of the play, after Arthur has been mortally wounded, as the stage

darkens and Arthur is taken from the stage, Merlin, rather than Bedivere, speaks the

final lines:

> The King that was, the King that yet shall be [...]
>   Look where the dawn
> Sweeps through a wider heaven, and on its wings
> By those three Queens of night his barge is borne
> To that sweet Isle of Avalon whose sleep
> Can heal all earthly wounds.[137]

To make the Tennysonian associations even more pronounced, the sets had been

designed by Edward Burne-Jones, Tennyson's most ardent and talented artistic

follower.*

Patriarchal, statist and with dramatic sympathy firmly located with Arthur as

both the head of government and the focus of this family tragedy, J. Comyns Carr's

King Arthur was the most successful and most influential of the Arthurian dramas. It

replicated and simplified the *Idylls*, harnessing its dialogue and symbols to the great

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* Burne-Jones, incidentally, did not like the play and designed the sets only as a favour for Henry
Irving, who staged Carr's *King Arthur*. Burne-Jones remembered the play for 'jingo bits about the sea
and England which Carr should be ashamed of' (Jerome V. Reel, Jnr, 'Sing a Song of Arthur', in *King
Arthur in Popular Culture*, 124).

swathes of Tennyson-inspired art that had been produced in the second half of the nineteenth century. The reviews were mostly appreciative,[138] though George Bernard Shaw was unsatisfied with the piece. Apart from deriding the play's incidental music by Arthur Sullivan and terming Carr a 'jobber', Shaw was particularly affronted by Arthur's speech to Guinevere. Describing it as an 'unpardonable scene', he went on:

> That vision of a fine figure of a woman, torn with sobs and remorse, stretched at the feet of a nobly superior and deeply wronged lord of creation, is no doubt still as popular with the men whose sentimental vanity it flatters as it was in the days of the *Idylls of the King*. But since then we have been learning that a woman is something more than a piece of sweetstuff to fatten a man's emotions.*

Indeed, at a time when the London stage was filled with considerations of 'the woman question' – and with dramatists such as Pinero, Ibsen, Wilde and, indeed, Shaw asking many of the questions – Carr's portrait of a prostrate and pathetic Guinevere does seem anachronistic. And as Arthurian drama stretched into the next century, through the work of F.B. Money Coutts, Ernest Rhys, Morely Steynor and Arthur Dillon, the whole Tennysonian paradigm began to appear increasingly out of date.[139] An element of stagnation had appeared which playwrights seemed unable to counter.

Occasionally some dramatist would offer a contradiction to the patriarchal structure of the corpus of Arthurian drama. In the same year as Carr produced *King Arthur*, Henry Newbolt published *Mordred: a tragedy*, which presented Arthur as a flawed king who contravenes his own rules of chivalry in concealing the fact that Mordred is his illegitimate son, which leads to the concluding calamity. In the final dialogue between Arthur and Guinevere, it is not the queen who is forced to ask for forgiveness, but Arthur. Although she had loved Lancelot for many years, she had

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* Shaw also lamented that the notable talents of Ellen Terry, who played Guinevere in Henry Irving's production, were wasted on such 'sham-feminine twaddle in blank verse': 'it was the old story of real women's parts condemned to figure as a mere artist's model in costume plays which, from the woman's point of view, are foolish flatteries written by gentleman for gentlemen'.

remained loyal to the king because of her respect for his high idealism. Yet when she

learns of his deceit, she too falls, later saying to the king:

> I scorned thee not
> For any fault of boyhood, but I heard
> A man, midway upon the road of life,
> A king, for justice throned, deliberate,
> Upholding lust and treason for the sake
> Of the old-time fellowship they claimed with him.
> I heard thee: love and hate that moment broke
> The dungeon-keep of duty.[140]

Newbolt's play, however, was an aberration – both in terms of the Tennysonian

paradigm and the author's own highly conservative politics.* Unlike Carr's play

which achieved great commercial success, Newbolt's *Mordred* was never performed

and is unlikely to have influenced any later dramatic treatment, and the author is now

chiefly remembered for his jingoist line 'Play up! play up! and play the game!'.[141]

Other playwrights who refused the patriarchal structure of Carr's adaptation of

the *Idylls* include Graham Hill and the Scottish dramatist, Martha Kinross. In

Guinevere (1906) Hill largely paraphrased Morris's 'Defence of Guinevere' as the

queen attempts to exonerate herself in front of Arthur's court:

> And yet I lie not when I say ye lie!
> Since first I came, my heart has ever roamed
> Loveless through Arthur's halls, and quite alone,
> While he [Lancelot] was near that loved me as his soul.

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* It is not only Guinevere who appears very different from her usual Victorian character. Mordred, too, is treated much more sympathetically than in other Victorian texts. Throughout the play Mordred perceives himself to be aggrieved – not only because of his unrecognised relationship to Arthur but also because he sees Arthur's idealism as tyranny:
> We do but crave
> For freedom; every current of the rime
> Sets toward a kindly faith and tend'rer laws;
> Only these vows oppress us, crying still
> 'Thou shalt not,' in the ear of lusty youth,
> To whom no voice should call but Nature's own. (V.i.)
This theme of oppression continues until the penultimate scene in which, despite the protests of his knights, Arthur slays Mordred, who with his dying breath cries 'Life! Life! One year of life – untyrannised' (V.ii).

> Love is not shame, nor lack of it a crime;
> I speak God's truth, and tell ye that ye lie![142]

Yet despite Hill's assertion that Guinevere is 'not guilty' the play, like Morris' poem, has very little to offer by way of defence other than to repeat the refrain 'And yet I lie not when I say ye lie'. Martha Kinross's *Tristram and Isoult* (1913), another blank-verse drama, is also sympathetic to Guinevere's position. The play begins with Guinevere and Isoult discussing their unhappy relationships, while watching the knights of Arthur's court engage in jousts. Yet it is the Cornish queen who becomes the feminist focus of this drama. As Isoult resists the violent Mark and brings the drama to its conclusion, through choosing to drink the poison in a last act of defiance, Guinevere is left to describe her fellow queen as 'fearless', but is unable to alter her own fate.[143]

Kinross's play was one of a large body of Tristram and Iseult dramas produced in the early part of the twentieth century. Antonia Williams, J. Comyns Carr, Thomas Herbert Lee, Maurice Baring, Michael Field (the pseudonym of Katherine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper) and Arthur Symons all produced such plays in the first decades of the century, with more appearing in the 1920s, including Thomas Hardy's *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall* (1923) and John Masefield's *Tristan and Isolt* (1927).[144] Verse renditions by G. Constant Lounsbery, Cyril Emra and Laurence Binyon all appeared before the First World War.[145] Perhaps part of the appeal of the Tristram and Iseult story, in comparison to the Arthurian, lay in the greater freedom with which writers could compose their own versions. The nineteenth century produced four distinct retellings of the legend – each with particular appeal. There was the moral-domestic tale of Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult*; the brief Arthurian version of Tennyson's 'The Last Tournament'; Swinburne's sensual and

Celticised *Tristram of Lyonesse*, as well as Wagner's music drama *Tristan und Isolde*

(1859).* In addition to these texts, there was the scholarly reconstruction of the early

Tristram story by French scholar Joseph Bédier, whose *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseult*

(1900) was translated by Hilaire Belloc in 1903.[146] This text supplied writers and

academics alike with an 'authoritative' version of the legend as it may have been

known to the authors of the earliest surviving Tristram literature (Thomas, Béroul,

Eilhart and Gottfried) and seems likely to have inspired the new vogue for the

Tristram story in England in the mid-Edwardian period.

The vogue for Tristram and Iseult drama suggests that writers were reacting

against the influence of Tennyson. Those dissatisfied with the dominance of the *Idylls*

paradigm also wrote on other tales ancillary to the Arthurian story. George Warwick

Deeping set his first novel, *Uther and Igraine* (1903), in the period immediately

preceding Arthur's reign, while other writers turned away from the usual Arthurian

cast and wrote of characters who were not prominent in the *Idylls*. T.E. Ellis took

Lanfal as his protagonist in his four-act drama of 1908 while Jessie Weston's 'Knights

of King Arthur's Court' (1896) concentrated on the role of Percival in the Grail quest,

as did R.C. Trevelyan in *The Birth of Parsival* (1905) and *The New Parsifal* (1914).[147]

There was also a developing trend for authors to divorce the Grail from its Arthurian

frame. Evelyn Underhill's *The Column of Dust* (1909) was the first of several novels

and novellas which transferred the Grail to modern rural and urban surroundings

(these are discussed in chapter three).[148]

While the vogue for producing non-Tennysonian Arthurian literature revealed

many twentieth-century authors' discontent with the dominance of the *Idylls*, none of

these works challenged the authority of the paradigm. They avoided the Tennysonian

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* Whether poets and dramatists chose English or German sources as their chief inspiration is usually
apparent in the name-form of their hero: 'Tristram' signifying English influence, 'Tristan' betraying a
Wagnerian bias.

story, rather than trying to rewrite or adapt it to suit contemporary social contexts. And throughout the period Tennyson's poetry had been sold and read in Edwardian and Georgian homes and numerous lesser poets and authors (often writing for children) had continued replicating the *Idylls* for new audiences. Those few writers who did dissent from the paradigm – Hill in his, rather limited, defence of Guinevere, or Kinross in her brief but sympathetic portrait of the queen – only managed to give voice to individual characters' resistance to a nineteenth-century plot. Guinevere may rail at her treatment at the hands of Arthur and his knights, but the narrative and ideological structure of Hill's and Kinross's plays remain conservative, patriarchal and overwhelmingly domestic.

Whereas in the nineteenth century the *Idylls* had been an epic treatment of liberal bourgeois England, which had striven to present 'all the lights and all the woes' of half a century, the Tennysonian literature of the early twentieth century was increasingly reactionary, harking back to a never-never land of Victorian idealism. The element of patriarchal chauvinism evident in the *Idylls* themselves had, in the hands of Carr and his successors, become the dominant theme in subsequent Arthurian drama and the legend as a whole had become an increasingly unwieldy edifice. And yet it would require a momentous act of history to dislodge the Tennysonian paradigm and the Victorian conception of the medieval: this was the Great War.

Chapter Two

That 'dim, weird battle in the west': Arthurian literary production and the Great War

Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* was one of the great cultural achievements of the Victorian age. Its influence was apparent everywhere and, in terms of the Arthurian story, it dominated subsequent literary production for decades. And although as a paradigm it seems to have grown stagnant in the Edwardian and Georgian years (its literary products being the 'uninspired beneficiaries of the Victorian momentum', in Nathan Comfort Starr's words), it remained a culturally persuasive and influential force: its authority only challenged by the outbreak of the Great War.[1]

The 1914-1918 conflict proved ruinous for the Tennysonian paradigm, as it did so many other monuments of Victorian, bourgeois culture. The story of Arthur itself was little employed by the wartime propagandists who sought to utilise chivalry and medieval iconography as part of the ideological war effort. The story of a British civilisation overwhelmed by Saxon hordes was hardly inspirational stuff, especially when depicted, as in the *Idylls*, as a form of internal collapse. The *Idylls*, in particular, were unsuitable as wartime reading. Tennyson's epic presented war as a wholly

destructive force. There is little martial glory in Tennyson's depiction of the 'last, dim, weird battle of the west' in which 'friend and foe were shadows in the mist, / And friend slew friend not knowing which he slew'; or in:

> Oaths, insults, filth and monstrous blasphemies,
> Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of the lungs
> In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
> Moans for the dying, and voices for the dead.[2]

And although there was a resurgence in interest in the Matter of Britain in the closing years of the war – chiefly with poets and artists registering their horror of modern warfare – the Tennysonian paradigm never fully recovered its pre-war dominance. The guns of Europe wrecked the Victorian Camelot.

Yet the Arthurian story was not entirely abandoned in these years, for many jingoists who rejected Arthur could turn to Galahad for patriotic inspiration. The cult of this 'pure knight' had been growing throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an alternative to the moral complexities of the *Idylls*. Throughout the Victorian age, Galahad and the Grail were ancillary, rather than essential, parts of the Arthurian story and before examining the ways in which this 'maiden knight' was utilised during the First World War, it is necessary to examine how the cult of Galahad developed in the previous century.

The cult of Galahad in the nineteenth century

When war broke out in August 1914, many patriotic poets and propagandists utilised Victorian notions of chivalry to persuade young men to enlist in what would, they assured them, be a short, glorious war.[3] Yet Arthur, Lancelot, Tristram and Perceval were seldom among those paraded heroes of the British past. This had little to do with their mythical, rather than historical, basis; after all, St George was the most

commonly evoked chivalric figure throughout the war. Rather, this absence was the direct result of the increased domestication of the legend in the years after Tennyson's death. From 1892 to the eve of war, poets and dramatists had steadily increased the domesticity of the *Idylls* – hardly a martial epic anyway – and the focus of most Arthurian works was placed solely on the marital infidelities of Guinevere and the mischievous plotting of Arthur's nephew/son, Mordred. Arthur was an aged cuckold, Lancelot was not heroic enough to drive back the Boche hordes, Tristram spent too much time swooning over Iseult to be an effective leader of men and no text of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had taken Gawain, the most obviously English knight, as its protagonist.

The jingoists, however, had an alternative in one of Arthur's knights – Galahad. Galahad and the Grail had not been essential components of the Arthurian story for many writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scarcely any dramatist had included Galahad in their Arthurian plays, focussed as they were almost exclusively on the love triangle of Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot. The 'maiden knight' had become an ancillary figure, with his own literary and artistic tradition, which was only intermittently incorporated into the larger Matter of Britain – even though, like the larger Arthurian story, it achieved popularity through Tennyson's verse.

It was not the Galahad of the *Idylls* that headmasters, poetasters, painters and moralists had encouraged the public (and particularly the young) to admire. Rather, it was Tennyson's 1842 poem, 'Sir Galahad', that ignited and maintained interest in Lancelot's illegitimate son. The moral complexities of Tennyson's mature Galahad of 'The Holy Grail' (1869) were of much less appeal than the knight who demonstrated that physical and martial strength follows causally from moral health:

> My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure.[4]

By 1914 this direct relationship would define the propagandists' chivalric ethos. It simplified the whole Arthurian story and during the war it temporarily replaced it, as it was free from any of the morally complicated issues which enriched Arthurian literary production throughout the nineteenth century. The story of Galahad was essentially a subsidiary paradigm – in its righteous simplicity it became a version of the Tennysonian paradigm fit for sermonising bishops, jingoists and sloganeers.

The most notable thing about Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad', in terms of the subsequent development of the cult of Galahad, is that Tennyson depicted the maiden knight in the midst of his quest for the Holy Grail, rather than at the point of achieving it. Had Tennyson portrayed Galahad accomplishing his ambition, the figure would have been of much less use to Victorian writers and artists. He would have been, as in the thirteenth-century *Queste del Saint Graal* or Malory's *Morte Darthur*, explicitly and exclusively bound up with the Grail story, along with its associations with the Eucharist, Catholicism and, even more dangerously in the 1840s and 50s, the Oxford Movement. Yet, although works such as Tennyson's 'The Holy Grail' and Robert Stephen Hawker's 'The Quest of the Sangrail' (1863) would treat Galahad exclusively in terms of the holy vessel, many – if not the majority – of nineteenth-century Galahad texts regarded the maiden knight independent of his Grail associations. Galahad became an emblem of questing youth, irrespective of whether that quest was for chivalric, spiritual, martial or moral purposes.

Presentations of Galahad in the nineteenth century were multifarious. For many, he was a spiritual ideal, removed from the earthly plane. For Tennyson in 'The Holy Grail', Galahad's single-minded pursuit of the Grail, tinged with Anglo-

Catholicism, lessened him as a suitable heroic principal, as did his total disregard for secular virtue.[5] In other works, his virtuousness became associated with a somewhat effeminate character. Representations of Galahad as a passive, feminine youth were common in the Pre-Raphaelite art of Gabriel Rossetti, Elizabeth Siddal and the young Burne-Jones (figs 3-5). In Davidson's 'The Last Ballad', Galahad's traditional epithet, 'the maiden knight', is largely dispensed with in favour of calling him, simply, a 'maiden'.[*] And the Galahad of Elinor Sweetman's 'Pastoral' (1899) is more interested in making himself floral garlands than in more typical knightly activity:

> Eleven at the Table Round
> With gemmy carcanets are crowned:
> The twelfth hath flowers of woodroffe wild
> Around his forehead bound.
> He cometh singing like the lark –
> He entereth gay with garlands green –
> 'Art shepherd-clown or chapel-clerk,
> O knight?' said Guinevere the queen
> To Galahad undefiled.[6]

Yet an effeminate Galahad was not ubiquitous in the nineteenth century. Kate Ramage in 1884 depicted an 'honest, manly, tender, true' knight, with hands that are '[r]ough […] and work soiled'.[7] Her muscular portrait was more in accord with the larger body of medievalist literature which sought to reconcile Galahad's spiritual idealism with more secular social issues – a trend that began with Charlotte M. Yonge's novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853).[8] Yonge's first novel was written in the midst of the Victorian cult of the hero: Thomas Carlyle had published his *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in Literature* in 1841 and Thomas Hughes would publish his Carlylean children's novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays* in 1857.[9] *The Heir of*

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[*] This effeminate Galahad perhaps explains why Galahad did not become a popular name for children born in the second half of the nineteenth century, while Arthur, Gareth and Lancelot all did. Perhaps the most famous (literary) bearer of this name was the ineffectual aged man-about-town, Sir Galahad, of P.G. Wodehouse's *Blandings* novels – an ignominious descendant.

Redclyffe concerns a robust, contemporary youth, Sir Guy Morville, who through

Christian magnanimity and the imitation of Galahad, his hero, manages to overcome

his single shortcoming – a passionate, destructive temper, which threatens to

overwhelm him at several points early on in the novel.[*] Through his imitation of

Galahad, the vigorous and masculine Morville is led to a virtuous life and dies a

suitably Christian death.

Yonge was a devout Anglican and ardent moralist, who encouraged virtue in

her readers through 'character and example, rather than by exhortation'.[10] In his

reading of the *Morte Darthur* and imitation of Sir Galahad, Morville is in many ways

Yonge's ideal reader. The author's biographer, Georgina Battiscombe, remarked that

it was Yonge's 'particular gift to make ordinary, everyday goodness appear the most

exciting thing in the world'.[11] By associating it with Galahad, Yonge raised

Morville's moral righteousness to the level of idealised chivalry. And Galahad

became, in *The Heir of Redclyffe*, a far more attractive model of virtue to England's

bourgeois readers than the ascetic Grail-quester of medieval legend, or the feminised

ideal of Elinor Sweetman and others. Yonge's novel was remarkably successful and

went through thirteen editions in fifteen years.[12] It was also a favourite of William

Morris and Edward Burne-Jones and inspired later Christian moralists to continue to

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[*] Guy Morville is, in fact surrounded by allusions to the Arthurian legend and chivalry. He is repeatedly described as 'a true knight' and also as 'a knight of the round table' and 'a chivalrous lover' (vol. II, 29, 67, 187). The *Morte Darthur* is his companion for three summers when a boy. To his friends he extols the book's virtues: '[t]he depth, the mystery, the allegory – the beautiful characters of some of the knights' in 'its two fat volumes' (vol. I, 176-7). He also composes 'a very boyish epic on King Arthur, beginning with a storm at Tintagel' (vol. II, 246). But it is the figure of Galahad who is of the greatest importance. He is first mentioned in a parlour game played among the residents of Redclyffe Hall. Each person had to name his or her favourite flower, virtue, and character in both history and fiction, as well as at which time they would like to have lived. Guy chooses 'Heather – Truth – King Charles – Sir Galahad – the present time' (vol. I, 176). Later in the novel a distinguished artist asks Guy to be the model for Galahad, kneeling before the Grail. (vol. II, 157-9). This last scene is of particular importance as by 1852 when Yonge wrote *The Heir of Redclyffe* William Dyce was the only artist to have made a painting of Galahad – his *Religion: the vision of Sir Galahad and his company* (1851), the first of the Arthurian frescoes to be completed for the Queen's Robing Room at the Palace at Westminster. The vogue for visual representations of Galahad would not begin until later in the decade.

relate the figure of Galahad to the contemporary world.[13] A.M. Grange's *A Modern Galahad* (1895) and J. Lockhart Haigh's *Sir Galahad of the Slums* (1907) were direct descendents of Yonge's novel, although their settings became increasingly more urban and squalid.[14] The sub-genre of the poor, urban Galahad was particularly popular in America, beginning with Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's short story, 'The Christmas of Sir Galahad' (1871).[15]

Of course, Galahad never really belonged to the poor – even in the form of didactic moral tales. This most Christian of knights was far more utilised in the public school than in the 'slums'. And, alongside Tennyson's 1842 poem, the most influential articulation of bourgeois-gentry Galahad was George Frederick Watts's 1862 painting, *Sir Galahad* (fig. 6), which achieved much wider appeal than had any earlier visual treatment of the legend.[16] By 1914 copies of the painting 'hung in nurseries and school rooms throughout England and the British Empire'.[17] It is a very different portrait of Galahad from the slight and feminine figures evident in Siddall's and Burne-Jones's paintings (figs 4 and 5), while eschewing the mystical and exotic elements of Rossetti's *Sir Galahad at the Ruined Chapel* (fig. 3). Instead, the scene shows a young knight, of noble appearance, resting his horse while he gazes into the distance in a contemplative mood. The ground on which he stands rises steadily in front of him, symbolising the hardships of the quest before him. And though he is at rest, the armour, the broad sword and the muscularity of the knight indicate that, while Galahad is still the embodiment of virtue, the task ahead of him is one of physical endurance, requiring bodily, as well as spiritual strength.

Watts's work influenced many later English artists who treated the Grail. Unlike the earlier Pre-Raphaelite paintings of Galahad, those by Arthur Hughes (1870; fig. 7) and Joseph Noël Paton (1879, 1885; figs 8 and 9) follow Watts in

portraying the difficulty of Galahad's quest, though both painters indulge in a Victorian appetite for angels, who assist the knight on his journey. The painting also achieved immediate success with critics.[18] The anonymous *Times* critic claimed that 'for stateliness, solemnity and imaginative suggestion the picture stands apart from everything in the [Royal Academy] exhibition.' He praised the sense of hidden drama in the piece: Galahad's contemplation 'of some wide waste spread below, peopled with adventure, and glorified with hopes of success in his quest for the Holy Grail'.[19]

Watt's painting found firm favour with educational establishments. Long before Harvard University acquired the original in 1943,[20] Eton's headmaster H.E. Luxmoore had repeatedly petitioned Watts to allow Eton to purchase the painting. This being impossible, Watts worked-up an earlier sketch and presented it to the school, where it was hung in the chapel in 1892.[21] Luxmoore gave prints of the work to favoured students and also declared that the painting was a useful 'peg whereon to hang an occasional little discourse [...] upon the dignity and beauty of purity and chivalry'.[22] He believed such notions were much better imparted through the medium of Watts's painting than through his own dry homilies. No longer the isolated, ascetic individual of medieval literature, the Victorian Galahad had become, through the work of Watts, Yonge and their successors, an exemplar for thousands to admire and imitate.

The success of Watts's *Sir Galahad* was founded on the hybrid nature of Victorian chivalry – a hybrid which this painting did much to define. Watts's painting carries no explicit reference to the Grail: although the young knight gazes upwards, there are no indications of the object of Galahad's quest. Indeed, Christian iconography is absent throughout the painting and explicit associations with Christianity remains only in the mind of the viewer. In 1894 M.W. MacCallum

defined the chivalry of the Middle Ages as 'a kind of compromise between the ascetic

theology of the medieval church and the unsanctified life of the world which the

church rejected as wholly bad'.[23] This was at no time truer than it was in the Victorian

period. The violent acquisitiveness that formed the economic base of the feudal

aristocracy now underpinned the economic exploitation of the British working classes

as well as the indigenous populaces of the Empire's numerous colonies. In neither

historical period could the tenets of Christianity be fully reconciled to the martial and

exploitative nature of feudal or capitalist prosperity.

The Victorian reinvention of Chivalry was just another means of justifying

these aberrations in a 'Christian' society. The behavioural code of Victorian chivalry

– like bourgeois liberalism and the gentlemanly ethos – was an intermediary between

the moral ethics Christianity demanded and the apparatuses of a secular, capitalist and

imperial society. In its emphasis on purity (but not on chastity), on endeavour (but not

on achievement), on self-discipline (but not on asceticism), chivalry was a far less

stringent moral system than Christianity, yet it still preserved a semblance of virtuous

living underpinned by a 'tradition' (wholly invented in the nineteenth century) which

purported to stretch back to the Middle Ages. Watts's ethically-Christian, religiously-

void *Sir Galahad* epitomised this notion of chivalry which influenced moralists up

until the First World War.

The cult of Galahad, begun with Tennyson's poem in 1842 and codified by

Watts in 1862, changed little in the remainder of the nineteenth century. At the

beginning of the twentieth, however, Galahad was assuming a more martial character.

He featured, for instance, in several memorials dedicated to the fallen soldiers of the

Anglo-Boer War.[24] In fact, the trend for Galahad memorials began, as did so much

Victorian Arthuriana, with Tennyson. Although the Poet Laureate had died in 1892 it

was not until 1899 that the Bishop of Ripon unveiled the stained glass window

designed by Burne-Jones at St Bartholomew's Church, Haslemere (1899; fig. 10),

which Tennyson had attended for many years. It was possibly the success of Burne-

Jones's stained glass which influenced the decision to adopt Galahad as a figure fit to

commemorate the war dead. [25] It was a trend that continued until the after the First

World War, when Galahad would once again be used to memorialise the fallen (see

page 97).

The most notable literary example of this martialisation is Erskine Childers's

early espionage thriller, *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903). The narrator, Carruthers,

begins the novel as a bored, foppish junior member of the Foreign Office, who idles

his hours away dreaming of the country house parties that he misses while suffering

the martyrdom that is Edwardian London in August. Yet by the novel's conclusion he

has emerged as a doughty defender of Britain's national defences, uncovering, with

help from his sailing companion Davies, a Prussian plot to invade the English coasts.

Both Carruthers and Davies reveal a native English heroism that belies their unlikely

appearance – whether London fop, or amateur sailor.

Carruthers, with the customary assurance of the gentry, only once doubts his

abilities to thwart the German's naval plans. In order to fortify his courage Carruthers

recalls the chivalric heroes of old, whom he had learnt of, no doubt, as part of his

public school education:

> I should have been a spiritless dog if I had not risen to [Davies's] mood. But in
> truth his cutting of the knot was at this juncture exactly what appealed to me
> [...] it imparted into our adventure a strain of crazy chivalry more suited to
> knights-errant of the Middle Ages than to sober modern youths – well, thank
> Heaven, I was not too sober, and still young enough to snatch at that fancy
> with an ardour of imagination, if not of character; perhaps, too, of character,
> for Galahads are not so common but that ordinary folk must needs draw
> courage from their example and put something of a blind trust in their tenfold
> strength.[26]

As Galahad inspired Guy Morville in Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe*, so does the maiden knight restore the courage of Carruthers on his latter-day quest. But the difference between Morville and Carruthers is marked. Whereas the imitation of Galahad in Yonge's novel brought about moral improvement in Morville, Carruthers is inspired only by Galahad's courageousness as a legendary brother-in-arms: this latter-day Galahad operates as a symbol of the intrepid adventurer's victory against the odds. By the Edwardian period, with the threat of a large-scale European war becoming increasingly apparent, Galahad was not being used by writers merely as a moral exemplar: he was already being prepared for war.

'The necessary supply of heroes must be maintained at all cost': Galahad and the Great War[27]

Three million men died in the service of Britain and Germany alone in the First World War. Millions of others fought, with millions more working hundreds of miles from the trenches, providing the industrial, mechanical and other militarist components which maintained the war-effort. Writers, along with politicians, schoolmasters, churchmen, industrialists and other spokesmen of establishment powers, glorified and encouraged these enormous strains on their countries' populaces. Through various propagandist strategies – invoking patriotism, communality, outrage, guilt – these advocates attempted to regulate collective and individual responses to the war. Medieval iconography – which in Britain was chiefly in the form of Victorian chivalry – was one such strategy. Considering this was the first mass-industrialised international war the world had seen, the image of the medieval knight may seem

incongruous. Yet such images and related literature proliferated on both sides of the trenches, though with widely differing results.

In Germany the image of the iron warrior was an expression of iron endurance, typifying 'the archetypal man of steel who was mentally and physically invulnerable'.[28] Much of the German medievalist propaganda centred on the early sixteenth-century knight, Götz von Berlichingen, made famous by Goethe's drama of 1773.[*] Götz's iron fist was an often-used symbol of German military ambition, which would crush all resistance in its grip. It also symbolised the unconquerability and indefatigability of the German people: Götz's iron, prosthetic fist symbolising a fusion of iron and man. It was used, like the many images of iron-clad warriors (see fig. 11 for an example), to integrate the contemporary German soldier with the industrial, mechanised nature of modern warfare – synthesising the man with the *matériel* of war. The German use of medieval knightly imagery was far more relevant to the experience of modern, attritional combat than was its British chivalric counterpart.

British reaction to German images of mailed fists was associated with the barbarism of the 'Hun'. Lloyd George, in his 'An Appeal to the Nation' speech of September 1914, and asked his audience:

> Have you read the Kaiser's speeches? [...] They are full of the glitter and bluster of German militarism – 'mailed fist' and 'shining armour'. Poor old

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[*] Götz von Berlichingen (c. 1480-1562), after entering the service of Frederick I, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach, and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, formed his private army around 1500. He lost his right hand at the siege of Landshut in 1508, but a prosthetic replacement enabled him to continue his mercenary wars for another twenty years. His iron hand is still on display at the Schloss Jagsthausen in Württemberg. Goethe's boisterous historical drama, *Götz von Berlichingen mit der eisernen Hand* ('with the iron fist'; 1773), popularised Götz's story and was partly based upon the knight's memoirs. Suitably for a figure much cited as an example of German resistance, Götz's most famous expression was his reply to the Bishop of Bamburg's demand for his surrender: 'Er kann mich im Arsche lecken!' (He can kiss my arse). During the Second World War the SS's 17th Panzergrenadier Division was given the title 'Götz von Berlichingen'. Their divisional symbol was an iron fist in a shield.

mailed fist. Its knuckles are getting a little bruised. Poor shining armour! The shine is being knocked out of it.[29]

British evocations of 'shining armour', by comparison, were less 'barbaric' and English chivalry was decidedly less militaristic than its German counterpart. The wartime use of chivalry comprised of a set of images and rhetorical devices, the purpose of which was to disguise the brutal realities of trench warfare. Images of crusading knights or St George slaying the dragon were commonly used in recruitment posters.[30] Soldiers, or 'latter-day knights', performed 'deeds' or 'feats of arms', which were described using a series of chivalric adjectives: 'valiant', 'gallant', 'courageous' and 'noble'. Even the first day of the battle of the Somme, in which twenty thousand British soldiers were killed with a further forty thousand wounded, was reported in *The Times* in terms of a medieval 'tumult'.[31] The common propagandist images of saintly knights in white armour, whether St George or Sir Galahad, did little – and were not intended – to relate the horrors of the Front to those back in Britain. Whereas the German image of the dehumanised iron warriors was an attempt to reconcile the soldier to the industrialised carnage of the trenches, the language and iconography of chivalry was a propagandist strategy of obscuration and denial.

Galahad was one of the most commonly evoked figures of chivalry during the war. Epigraphs from Tennyson's 1842 poem commonly appeared in notices of those killed in action.[32] The collected letters of one's dead son could be collected under the title, *A Galahad of the Trenches* (1919), and legions of dead soldiers, 'Knights of God' and Galahads all, could 'find the Grail ev'n in the fire of hell' of modern warfare.[33] Unlike the larger Arthurian story, which was fundamentally tragic and therefore was unsuited for wartime propaganda, Galahad's achievement of the Grail

was wholly victorious. He was also not as domesticated as the central Arthurian characters had become in the work of J. Comyns Carr and his successors, who had reduced the Matter of Britain into little more than a tale of the dénouement of an unfortunate love-triangle.

Christian propaganda was particularly interested in the figure of the maiden knight in the war years, as several scholars have demonstrated.[34] Chivalry – already a hybrid of Christian values and secular moral pragmatism – was an easier doctrine to espouse from the pulpit than the pacifist ideology which a serious reading of Christian scripture implies, and churches were eager to re-establish themselves in the minds and souls of the public after increased secularisation in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the Anglican *Quiver* of May 1916, Charles Brown wrote of the 'modern call to knighthood – to play our part with Christ in winning the world, righting its wrongs, healing its woes, destroying the works of the devil' and so on.[35] In the same issue, J.D. Jones published an article on 'Sir Galahad', which restated the Victorian equation between a moral, pure life and physical strength in arms: by remaining chaste and receiving Holy Communion, English soldiers would be able to defeat the devilish Germans.[36]

Trench warfare altered Galahad surprisingly little. In 1911 Arthur Winnington-Ingram, the Bishop of London (1901-1939) and medieval enthusiast, urged his flock to imitate Galahad in donning 'shining armour' and to look up to Heaven to ask for spiritual direction.[37] Four years later, in the midst of war, in a pamphlet entitled *Cleansing London*, the Bishop attacked the pimps who swarmed around the troops on leave, designating them 'villains more mischievous that German spies, who ought to share their fate, [as they] lie in wait to stain the chivalry of our boys'.[38] But Galahad, the incongruous Victorian, was not only utilised in religious

pamphleteering. Poets, politicians and journalists all made use of the maiden knight.

The Times repeatedly referred to him in their war reports. Perhaps reminded of

Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands*, one journalist writing a piece on coastal

defences gave it the headline 'A Fisher Galahad'. The article tells of a nameless man

of the East coast who had discovered a U-boat a few miles off-shore. Single-handedly

he attacks the German vessel, killing at least one sailor, though he is forced to

abandoned his assault when other submarines surface. But the journalist not only

wished to emphasise the 'great heart' of this unknown warrior, he was particularly

keen to state the man's Christian generosity. For, after discovering a German sailor

had gone overboard:

> Without stopping to deliberate he went over the side to rescue his erstwhile
> foe, and he brought him safely on board. What do the men who shelled our
> helpless 'E' boat's crew in the Baltic think of this?[39]

The purpose of this evocation of Galahad is, again, obscuration. Although the article

is ostensibly concerned with coastal security, the journalist chose to write of the moral

superiority of his 'Fisher Galahad' rather than of the establishment of effective means

of defending Britain's coast and breaking the German blockade, which was seriously

inhibiting Britain's war production. Where military strength was questionable, moral

strength became a perfectly good replacement for wartime propagandists.

Other newspaper articles published in *The Times* used Galahad as a way of

sanitising the brutalities of combat – the 'maiden knight' providing journalists with an

opportunity to present war as a spiritual experience. One correspondent, while

describing Rembrandt's sketch, 'Jacob's Dream', was moved to write:

> It is a poem of the exaltation of a young spirit that has fought and won, the
> glimpse into a spiritual world that comes now and again to finer spirits in early
> manhood. Sir Galahad had seen it, and how many have seen it in these four

thrilling years, who have left no record, but passed by the ladder to realise their dream.[40]

Another article from *The Times* echoed Charlotte Yonge's belief that the reading of good, adventurous and chivalrous books – particularly those relating to Galahad – would lead the young reader into becoming a gallant soldier of the trenches.[41] In peacetime, would-be Galahads could be inspired to enter 'into the dark places of our great cities' where their Grail would be the alleviation of the 'stale squalor of the slums' (as they did in the novels of A.M. Grange and J. Lockhart Leigh). In wartime, however, the Grail was to be found, not in Christian charity, but in fighting for one's country. As with all uses of Galahad, to fight for one's country was not written of in terms of the actualities of trench warfare, but in language reminiscent of the Muscular Chivalry movement of Hughes, Yonge and others:

> To-day the sun and the moon are darkened and the stars return not after the rain. But the young men are searching in the darkness, if haply they may find a light to lighten it: they are seeking – and they are not only seeking, but in the sweat of their brows and by the blood of their wounds they are making – an ideal of political Right.[42]

In all these journalistic examples Galahad remained unchanged from the Victorian conception. He was a moral exemplar, rather than a metaphor of militarism; moral purity, so their message went, would win out over the barbaric hordes – even if, militarily, the hordes were often in advance of Britain.

Poetic uses of Galahad and other notions of chivalry were similarly obscurantist, archaic and juvenile. In 1922 T.S. Eliot wrote that the popularity of much war verse lay in the fact that it 'appear[s] to represent a revolt against something that was very unpleasant and really paid a tribute to the nicest feelings of the upper middle-class British schoolboy'.[43] Indeed, the public schoolboy's cry of 'Play up!

play up! and play the game!', first uttered in Henry Newbolt's 'Vitai Lampada' of 1897,[44] was reworked by numerous writers during the war to articulate the upper-middle class's (sometimes imagined) response to the war.[*45] Much of this poetry emerged from the officer-class, who had been indoctrinated in the chivalric ethos at their public schools. Rupert Brooke, who had once written a dramatic treatment of the Arthurian story in the manner of Carr,[46] remains the best-known of these chivalric war poets. He wrote in 'The Dead' of 1914:

> Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our death,
> Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
> Honour has come back as a king, to earth,
> And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
> And Nobleness walks in our way again;
> And we have come into our heritage.[47]

With sentiments dutifully learnt at public school, this is patriotism and chivalry raised to an almost religious ecstasy.

But obscuration and nice feelings apart, this poetry – by both those who served at the front and those who performed the ideological work at home – had a political objective. Chivalry fought a double war during 1914-18: one against the 'Hun', the other against the reformers of their own country. In the words of David Cannadine, one of the aristocracy's most elegiac historians, the Great War:

> was their chance – to demonstrate conclusively that they were not the redundant reactionaries of radical propaganda, but the patriotic class of knightly crusaders and chivalric heroes, who would defend the national honour and the national interest in the hour of its greatest trial.[48]

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[*] Newbolt himself believed that the games mania of the public school was ultimately derived 'from tournaments and the chivalric rules of war' (*The Book of the Happy Warrior*, vii). Cricket, football and rugby were frequently evoked as metaphors of the English gentleman's carefree attitude to war, as in Jessie Pope's 'Cricket – 1915' (Roberts (ed.), *Out of the Dark*, 22):

> Our cricketers have gone 'on tour',
> To make their country's triumph sure.
> They'll take the Kaiser's middle wicket
> And smash it by clean British Cricket!

The theme of rejuvenation evident in Brooke's 'The Dead', was prominent in the

work of many contemporary poets, among them Robert Nichols, Julian Grenfell and

Charles Sorley.[49] War presented not only a chance to eradicate effeminacy, torpidity

and complacency in British society; it also offered the upper-middle classes an

opportunity to justify class hegemony. Threatened by the reforms of Lloyd George

before the war and terrorised by the thought of socialism, particularly after February

1917, chivalry proved an attractive myth to many of the upper-middle class because it

appeared to be an unchanging code of honour held by the ruling caste since the

Middle Ages. Poets who used the ideals of Galahad and chivalry had no desire to

accommodate the experience of mass-industrial warfare in their propaganda. It was

not so much a denial of modernity, as a denial of political reality. Even as late as the

1980s the public-school system, chivalry and the gentlemanly ethic were still being

touted as the reason why Britain had won the war and survived without a revolution.[50]

If chivalry, the ideological behavioural code of the upper-middle classes, could win

the war (or at least be presented as the underlying moral system in a victorious

'crusade') then the social system was, in its eyes, validated.

'But now I've said goodbye to Galahad': the end of Victorian chivalry and the
rebirth of Arthur

From 1916 there was a distinct drying up of chivalrous war poetry from the Front.

Many of the early war poets, among them Rupert Brooke and Julian Grenfell, were

now dead and new voices took their place in the numerous anthologies of poetry the

war years produced – including a few of working-class origin, such as Isaac

Rosenberg and Ivor Gurney, who because of their class had never been indoctrinated

in the chivalric ethos. And among the public-school officers, who formed the majority

of war poets, two years of trench warfare had largely purged them of a chivalrous

view of war. New officers who arrived at the Front espousing patriotism 'would soon

be told to cut it out';[51] and the notion of war as a noble activity became almost

exclusively confined to the jingoist establishment figures hundreds of miles from the

trenches.* Others who had written patriotic verses in the first few years of the conflict

– Robert Graves and Siegfried Owen being prominent among the officer class – now

recanted their former position. In 'Babylon' (1917), Graves placed Galahad along

with Robin Hood, Captain Kidd, Jack the Giant-Killer and other figures of childhood

imagination; Galahad has no place in the adult world that 'made a breach and battered

/ [the childhood home of] Babylon to bits'.[52] Herbert Read ferociously debunked

Wordworth's 'Happy Warrior' (a figure often used in chivalric poetry in the war) in

his Imagist poem of the same name:

> Bloody saliva
> dribbles down his shapeless jacket.
> I saw him stab and
> stab again
> a well-killed Boche.
> This is the happy warrior,
> this is he...[†53]

But it was Siegfried Sassoon who produced the most vehement rejection of

Galahad and the cult of Great War chivalry. In his *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*

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* Chivalry at the Front did not, however, die out completely. In 1918 the Canadian writer and officer Coningsby Dawson was still able to write in *The Glory of the Trenches* of the 'Arthurian' nurses, whom he perceived as 'great ladies, medieval in their saintliness, sharing the pollution of the battle with their champions.' And later, when reviewing John Don Passos's *Three Soldiers* (1921), Dawson wrote that the book was 'a dastardly denial of the splendid chivalry which carried many a youth to a soldier's death with the sure knowledge in his soul that he was a liberator.' See Fussell, 'The Fate of Chivalry'.

† Cf. Wordsworth's 'Character of the Happy Warrior' (1807): 'Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he / That every man in arms should wish to be? / It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought / Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought / Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought: / Whose high endeavours are an inward light / That makes the path before him always bright' (*Poetical Works*, 386-7, ll. 1-7)

(1927) Sassoon articulated the abandoning of the chivalric view of combat typical of his class around 1916. In one scene, George Sherston, Sassoon's protagonist and biographical analogue, visits the Cathedral at Amiens with the knightly-named Dick Tiltwood:

> [T]he background was solemn and beautiful. White columns soared into lilies of light, and the stained-glass windows harmonised with the chanting voices and the satisfying sounds of the organ. I glanced at Dick and thought what a young Galahad he looked (a Galahad who had just got his school colours for cricket).[54]

Yet this language of public-school chivalry soon disappears. Fifteen pages later Dick is killed, 'hit in the throat by a rifle bullet while out with the mining party', and Sherston abandons knightly epithets in favour of a grimly realist account of his experiences in the trenches. This episode is one of many instances in Sassoon's work in which the chivalric ethos is first articulated and then confronted with brutal reality. His war poetry frequently employs this strategy – often in a fiercer tone. In 'The Poet as Hero' (1917), for instance, Sassoon repented of his earlier patriotic verses:

> You are aware that I once sought the Grail,
> Riding in armour bright, serene and strong;
> [...]
> But now I've said goodbye to Galahad,
> And am no more the knight of dreams and show[55]

Instead, Sassoon's poetry goes on to chronicle the industrialised brutalities of war as well as showing how the war has brutalised his own personality – which is deliberately contrasted in 'The Poet as Hero' with the Galahad-ideal:

> For lust and senseless hated make me glad,
> And my killed friends are with me where I go.
> Wound for red wound I burn to smite their wrongs.[56]

In other poems Sassoon directed his attack at the promulgators of the chivalric idea of war. 'They' (1916) seems to have been written in response to the Bishop of London's chivalric pamphlets, which are also satirised in the George Sherston memoirs,[57] and others who would turn the war into a spiritual quest. Sassoon's Bishop says that the soldiers will not return home the same, 'for they'll have fought / In a just cause' and now possess a 'New right to breed an honourable race'.[58] '"We're none of us the same"', the troops reply:

> 'For George has lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind;
> Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;
> And Bert's gone syphilitic'

The only response the Bishop can make is to say '"The ways of God are strange"'.[59] In 'The Glory of Women' (1917) Sassoon again wrote of the chasm that separated those who served at the Front and those who chivalrised the experience at home. Always possessing a strong misogynistic streak, Sassoon heaps scorn on the mothers who 'believe / That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace'.[60] As he confronted the Bishop's belief in the nobleness of war with wounding, maiming, gas-induced blinding and sexual disease, so Sassoon confronted the mothers of 'Glory of Women' with images of son's faces 'trodden deeper the mud', while their mothers, 'dreaming by the fire', knit socks.[*61]

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[*] It is worth recalling when considering this poem that many propagandist pieces written at this time were centred on the role of the mother in war time. One example, quoted extensively in Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (189-90), was written by 'A Little Mother' and appeared originally as a letter in the *Morning Post* before being reprinted by the Wartime Propaganda Service: 'To the man who pathetically calls himself a 'common soldier', may I say that we women, who demand to be heard, will tolerate no such cry as 'Peace! Peace!' where there is no peace. [...] We women pass on the human ammunition of 'only sons' to fill up the gaps. [...] We would sooner our loveable, promising, rollicking boy stayed at school. We would have much preferred to have gone on in a light-hearted way with out amusements and out hobbies. But the bugle call came, and we have hung up the tennis racquet, we've fetched our laddie from school, we've put his cap away, and we have glanced lovingly over his last report which said 'Excellent' – we've wrapped them all in a Union Jack and locked them up, to be taken out only after the war to be looked at.' This article sold 75,000 copies in pamphlet form.

Sassoon's verse marks the point at which the Muscular Christian Galahad

ceased to be a viable cultural model for those who experienced war at first hand.

Indeed, such was the force of the rejection of Galahad by Sassoon, Graves and other

non-chivalric war poets that this 'maiden knight' was seldom apparent in post-war

Arthurian literature, despite the fact that the Grail narrative became perhaps the most

dominant aspect of the Arthurian story in the interwar period. Yet while the Muscular

Christian Galahad was largely rejected, many writers continued to use medievalist

archetypes to articulate their experiences of war. And one of the narratives writers

began to utilise was the story of Arthur, who had been absent throughout much of the

war, save for a few references to dead soldiers being worthy of a place among the

Knights of the Round Table.[62] Yet from around 1917 the tragic form that had kept

Arthur away from the propagandists began to resound with new war-weary artists and

writers. In particular, the commission to illustrate Arthur W. Pollard's juvenile

retelling of Malory (1917) seems to have enabled Arthur Rackham to articulate his

response to the horrors of modern warfare; and the apocalyptic imagery of

Tennyson's 'weird battle in the west' in 'The Passing of Arthur' found new resonance

with Wilfred Owen, while another poet, Benjamin Gilbert Brooks, rejected Tennyson

completely in fashioning his own account of the battle of Camlan.

Pollard's *The Romance of King Arthur* (1917), an abridgement for children in

the manner of Sidney Lanier (1880) and Howard Pyle (1903), typifies the

contradictory uses to which the Arthurian story – and medievalism more generally –

could be employed during the closing years of the war. Pollard's prose is full of the

Boys-Own heroism that championed Galahad and the cult of Muscular Chivalry

between 1914 and 1918. In his Preface, he wrote that in 'the days when the Arthurian

romances were coming into existence, violence, cruelty, and luxury was rampant', but

that the 'greatness of these evils called forth some great virtues to counter them'.

Pollard considered the virtues of the *Morte Darthur* to be fit for the contemporary

world:

> [I]t is penetrated to its very core by the special virtues of days in which men
> were content to live dangerously [...] carrying their lives in their hands and
> willing to lay them down lightly rather than break the rules of the fame or be
> faithless to word or friend.[63]

Concerning Arthur, Pollard was ambivalent. As 'a typical sportsman' Arthur is to be

praised, but as a king he is not: 'he is weak in his own life and weak in suffering the

outrages of his nephews'; he is willing 'to fight for an unjust cause, and does not

always obey the etiquette of chivalry'.[64] Yet if Pollard cannot condone Arthur it is

notable how far the cult of Galahad had declined in that, by 1917, when Pollard

sought to find a hero of 'much finer stuff' he turned, not to the 'maiden knight' who

had been ubiquitous in the first three years of the war, but to a newly-resuscitated

Lancelot, 'the most splendid study of a great gentleman in all our literature', as

Pollard called him.[65]

However, Pollard's cautious Muscular Chivalry is often at variance with the

illustrations which accompany his retelling of Malory, drawn and painted by Arthur

Rackham. Although many of his pictures are traditional in their presentation of

chivalric knights and distressed damsels, some of the illustrations evoke something of

the harrowing futility of Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur'. Certainly, Rackham

seems to have been little interested in depicting knightly warfare as a noble or

honourable pastime. Considering the lightness of much of his work for books such as

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1907) and *The Wind in the Willows* (1940), the

illustrations for this adaptation of Malory for children are at times remarkably brutal.

In one drawing (fig. 13) four knights, hung by the neck, swing from a large tree in

various states of decay. In another (fig. 14), far from the images of an dealised

Galahad riding upon a medieval plain seeking the light of the Grail of many wartime

propagandists, Rackham focuses the young reader's attention upon two very large

canons set to destroy the walls of the Tower of London. Artillery men, some clad in

armour, others not, scramble about the scene, preparing to fire the 'Great Guns'. Both

images are pictures of the contemporary war, ostensibly set in the medieval world –

and very far from the chivalry of the popular media and conservative, upper-middle

class poets. In another illustration, 'How Mordred was Slain by Arthur, and How by

Him Arthur was Hurt to the Death' (fig. 12), two knights stand upon a mound of

fallen iron-clad men and their horses. Arthur has driven a lance through his opponent,

Mordred, while Mordred is poised to bring down his raised sword upon his father's

head. The earth, the sky and the knights' armour is all a muddy, trench-like brown. As

with figures 13 and 14, Rackham's painting is far more like the German use of the

medieval to synthesise the soldier with the *matériel* of contemporary warfare. His

depictions of battle entirely belie Pollard's romanticism.

A similar break with the idealised chivalry of the wartime Galahad is apparent

in the work of Wilfred Owen. Although much of the medieval Matter of Britain had

been written in the wake of destructive civil war – the *Historia*, *Morte Darthur* and

the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* – it was to Tennyson that Owen and other writers

turned to in seeking to articulate their sense of the apocalypse.* Owen made frequent

allusions to Tennyson's verse throughout his short poetic career. His pre-war work is

particularly reliant on allusions to and borrowings from the Victorian poet; yet in the

early years of the war Owen seems to have abandoned Tennyson as a viable cultural

figure.[66] By 1917, however, Tennyson's poetry must have seemed newly relevant to

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* Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* (1889), written in the wake of the American
Civil War, with its industry-produced apolalyptic climax, seems to have been less influential in Britain
than in America.

Owen as several works of this year contain allusions to the Victorian's work,

including 'Cramped in that funnelled hole' (cf. 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'),

'Wild with all Regrets' (cf. 'Tears Idle Tears') and 'Futility' (cf. LVI, *In*

Memoriam).[67] Tennyson's 'Merlin and the Gleam' was also much in Owen's mind in

this year – quotations from it appearing in both his verse and correspondence.[68]

Owen's most substantial Arthurian poem, however, is 'Hospital Barge at Cérisy', one

of only five of Owen's poems to be published in his lifetime. It was composed late in

1917 while Owen was convalescing at Scarborough, where he had met Siegfried

Sassoon. He wrote the poem after a night spent reading Tennyson's 'The Passing of

Arthur', though the genesis for the poem was in existence as early as May that year.[*69]

The poem begins as a Georgian reverie, filled with childlike rhymes and rhythms:

> Budging the sluggard ripples of the Somme,
> A barge round old Cérisy slowly slewed.
> Softly her engines down the current screwed,
> And chuckled softly with contented hum,
> Till fairy tinklings struck their croonings dumb.[70]

Only the title and the significance of the river's name indicate that this poem is set in

wartime. Typically of much of the best Georgian verse, the second stanza presents a

sharp tonal break from this reverie: its haunting elegiac quality and its sombre

awareness of the monstrosity of recent history:

> One reading by that calm bank shaded eyes
> To watch her lessening westward quietly.
> Then, as she heaved the bend, her funnel screamed.

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* A passage contained in a letter to his mother, Susan Owen, dated May 17, 1917, is remarkably similar to Owen's final poem: 'I sailed in a steam-tug about 6 miles down the canal with another "inmate" [...] the scenery was such as I never saw or dreamed of since I read the *Fairie Queene* [sic]. Just as in the Winter when I woke up lying on the burning cold snow I fancied I must have died and been pitch-forked into the Wrong Place, so, yesterday, it was not more difficult to imagine that my dusky barge was winding in to Avalon, and the peace of Arthur, and where Lancelot heals him of his grievous wounds. But the Saxon is not broken, as we could very well hear last night' (*Collected Letters*, 457). Bar the mention of Lancelot (a mistake presumably corrected in Owen's reading of 'The Passing of Arthur'), the resulting poem, written around six months later, barely alters from Owen's image.

> And that long lamentation made him wise
> How unto Avalon, in agony,
> Kings passed into the dark barge which Merlin dreamed.[71]

The verse's first line implies that the narrator had been reading Malory, or more likely

Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur'. Whereas the language of the first verse is

essentially idyllic; the second stanza returns the reader to the war, to the casualties and

suffering of those on the hospital barge. The effect of the whole is to make the

mournful lines of 'The Passing of Arthur' seem much more relevant to the experience

of war than those poets and writers who had earlier invoked 'Sir Galahad':

> Then they saw how there hove a dusky barge,
> Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
> Beneath them; and descending they were ware
> That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
> Black-stoled, clack-hooded, like a dream – by these
> Three Queens with crowns of gold: and from them rose
> A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
> And, as it were one voice, an agony
> Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
> All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
> Or hath come, since the making of the world.[72]

After the war, these same lines would be evoked by a poem which would articulate

the experience of those of the generation that survived the war – a poem that proved

to be far more influential than Owen's 'Hospital Barge': Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

The reverence shown by Owen for Tennyson was not, however, matched in

Benjamin Gilbert Brooks's version of the Arthurian story. Brooks's 'Camelot' (1919,

composed 1917) is situated, like Rackham's illustrations, somewhere between the

trenches and Logres: Gawain resembles a NCO or at least a sergeant major with his

'clipped black moustache, short parrot nose,' while Lancelot's madness seems to have

been made analogous to 'shell-shock', his experience of the Grail quest reminding the

reader of familiar descriptions of trench warfare:

> Dusk brought a rattling hail. His knees
> Shook, and his bleeding face, ice-bit,
> Fled screaming through the raw mad wind that split
> His whole beer-coloured world to clod-like lumps.[73]

Brooks's 'Camelot' opens with a description of war among the '[d]ank fogs and foul mists', where the lances of 'a thousand knights and spearmen bold', pierce 'the grey torment of the storm-swept skies'.[74] And violence is prominent throughout the poem – bursting into scenes unexpected. Mark, for instance, slays Iseult as they sit 'at cards' with Arthur and Guinevere, and when the latter queen tells Gawain of Arthur's dire need and confesses her love for Lancelot, the traditional scene of repentance is rudely interrupted:

> Hot Gawaine rose upon her blabbering.
> 'Thou gilded sow, wouldst thou the Throne befoul
> With this vile ordure?' Towered his mace on high
> And smashed her skull like a poisoned fly.[75]

And Arthur – a 'doltish king', who dreams 'on his splendid sombre throne' while his kingdom is destroyed – meets his death, not on some funeral barge, for this poem is far from a Victorian elegy, but in the midst of a regicidal mob, led by Mordred:

> he towered aloft
> Shouting his challenge though the great hall, until
> Blow after fierce blow beat him to the ground ...
> When the red flames were dimmed, rank mist swirled all around.[76]

Violence does not so much drive the narrative of 'Camelot' but, rather, interrupts it at so points that it disfigures the traditional Malorian or Tennysonian story. The poem is full of extravagant imagery – 'crimson mauve flecked stream', a 'naked girl, alight / With lemon, limed with pink' and 'dim arcades and palaces built sheer / Against the stars' – much of which is oriental in flavour and clusters around

Guinevere who is here a Middle-Eastern queen, an offering brought by 'turban-crowned' horsemen to 'spare the wasting of their land' from Arthur's hordes.[77] Such exotic additions, like the poem's violence, greatly alter the usual story. Not since Bulwer-Lytton's *King Arthur* (1848) had the Arthurian story been subject to such a chaos of allusion – oriental, English, mystical, Arabian. Yet these alterations were not made in ignorance of the story. Rather these violent intrusions and disregard of the traditions of a conservative epic were the result of the disquiet felt by many by 1917.

When Brooks wrote 'Camelot' in April 1917 British resistance to the war was growing. Conscription was unpopular, vital supplies were becoming scarcer and the war of attrition seemed endless. Trade Union membership had doubled from four million to eight million during the war and work stoppages and strikes became frequent in 1917-18.[78] Brooks depicted his Arthurian world in the process of violent implosion. The warring, imperial nature of Arthur's kingship, evident in the first twenty-three lines of the poem, sowed the seed of the later collapse of the kingdom. Mordred and Mark's revolt is clearly perceived as a revolt against the immorality of the Arthurian reign. They 'purge the realm', speak out against 'the Kingdom's wrongs' and rail at the 'lust' that has become the 'Sole law'.[79]

Written two months after the decisive uprisings in Russia and a month after the forced abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, and with increased union militancy at home, Arthur's death at the hands of a mob ('Blow after fierce blow beat him to the ground') was an act laden with revolutionary symbolism – or acute anxiety. The poem does not condemn the regicides: the chanting of Arthur's knights at Mass is termed 'the myriad moan of gnats', and the simile of the aristocratic class as bloodthirsty parasites echoes throughout the poem. Arthur himself, as Mark and Mordred lead their revolt to his hall, is steeped in the decadence of his class, surrounded by '[w]hite slaves and tawny

silken cats stretched prone / O'er gorgeous Persian stuffs [...] Along the ebon stairs,

gold traceries / Wrought delicately'.[80] He is oblivious of the coming revolt and

remains impotent to prevent it when confronted. Hardly, then, is this Arthur the

'Blameless King' of Tennyson's *Idylls*; and from this point on the Tennysonian image

would be increasingly under threat from the writers who emerged from the war.

Memorials and memory: the influence of the Great War on later Arthurian literature

The First World War had a great influence on the Arthurian literary production that

succeeded it. Most immediately, there was the final flourish of the Victorian cult of

Galahad. Several memorials were erected in Britain which utilised the figure of

Galahad, in the same way he had been used throughout the war. Many were designed

by the firm of Morris and Company – though the pacifist William Morris and his chief

designer, Edward Burne-Jones, were both now dead. The influence of Watts's 'Sir

Galahad' can be seen in many of them.[81] Five Galahad memorials are found in

churches throughout the United Kingdom, usually dedicated to a particular soldier,

whose bereaved parents often commissioned the work.[82] Six more are found in public

schools – bastions of the upper-middle class which had cultivated the cult of Galahad

and Muscular Chivalry before the war and had patronised it throughout the war

years.[83] Yet in relation to the hundreds of memorials that were erected by schools,

town and civic councils and other establishments and individuals, the sum total of

eleven Galahad memorials is minute. Galahad, despite the barrage of propaganda

which was produced around him during the war, did not become a popular or populist

figure. Indeed, Galahad disappeared after the war and is almost entirely absent from

the numerous Grail texts, discussed in the next chapter, which proliferated in the 1920s and 30s.

Scholarship, too, had been affected by the war. The summary of the German literary canon given by Herbert Warren, Oxford Professor of Poetry during the Great War, in a lecture on 'Poetry and War' typifies the militarisation of 'Eng. Lit.' at this time:

> The Germans had got it into their heads to-day that they were, before all others, a nation of poets. How did they compare with the English? Put in naval language, they had one super-Dreadnought, the Goethe, a powerful ship, but hardly equal in guns or speed to the Shakespeare. They had two or three Dreadnoughts, the Lessing, the Schiller, and the swift and dangerous craft, largely fitted on French lines, the Heine, and a flotilla of minor vessels, but nothing like the number of variety of the English armament.[84]

The Great War resulted in the diminishing of the influence of German scholarship on English literary studies. It was now possible – desirable, even – to dismiss classic philology as 'Teutonic nonsense';[85] while figures such as Heinrich Zimmer, Wendelin Foerster and Wolfgang Golther, who had exerted a huge influence on pre-war Arthurian scholarship, were of much less importance after the war.[86] The little attention paid to Foerster – who edited the first complete edition of Chrétien's works (1884-99),[87] thus giving Chrétien studies a firm textual basis on which to build – was particularly noticeable.[*]

The diminution of the German scholars allowed a greater space for the theories of British, American and French critics – the most well known in the interwar period being Jessie L. Weston and E.K. Chambers, from Britain; Roger Sherman Loomis, A.C.L. Brown and J.D. Bruce, from America; and Eugène Vinaver and, later,

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[*] The American academic William A. Nitze was one of the few post-war scholars who deplored the critical fate of 'the late, quickly forgotten' Foerster ('Geoffrey of Monmouth's King Arthur', *Speculum*, 2.2: 318). French scholars were particularly embarrassed about the irrefutable fact that German medieval scholarship was far in advance of their own – especially with regard to French romance (Busby and Taylor, 'French Arthurian Scholarship', *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 101).

Jean Marx, from France. The war and the earlier political tensions in Europe had also

given rise to a greater sense of political nationalism in literary studies, manifest in

George Saintsbury's earlier-quoted 1912 description of Malory's pre-eminence over

foreign Arthurian writers. Jessie Weston, perhaps the most influential Arthurian

scholar in the post-war era (despite the fact that her academic career was largely over

by the time she published *From Ritual to Romance* in 1920), published two

propagandist pamphlets designed to promote the war effort in 1915. One, *Germany's*

Literary Debt to France (1915) claimed that Germany's claim to a great literary

culture was essentially fraudulent and that German culture owed its existence entirely

to adopted foreign models.[88] In another, *Germany's Crime against France* (1915),

Weston attacked the German atrocities in Belgium.[89] As discussed in chapter five, her

Arthurian scholarship was also motivated by a strong nationalist agenda, as were the

studies of many others who pursued the theories of the origins of Arthurian romance

in Celtic literature, including the English Alfred Nutt and the Welsh John Rhŷs and

Ernest Rhys.

But the effect of the war was not only felt in the nationalist expressions of

established academics: it was most manifest in those who came to read English at

universities after the war. Their reading and interpretation of literature became

irrevocably bound up with their wartime experiences. Robert Graves's words on

studying at Oxford in 1919, after four years spent as an officer in the Royal Welch

Fusiliers, were relevant to many writers who had fought:

> I thought of Beowulf lying wrapped in a blanket among his platoon of drunken
> thanes in the Gothland billet, Judith going for a *promenade* to Holofernes'
> staff-tent; and the *Brunanburgh* with its bayonet-and cosh fighting – all this
> came far closer to most of us than the drawing-room and deer-park atmosphere
> of the eighteenth-century.[90]

Graves's words are no less true of those who read the Arthurian story. Graves himself

wrote nothing on the Arthurian legend until the 1960s, but the influence of his

wartime experience still showed when he wrote an introduction to an abridgement of

the *Morte Darthur* by Keith Baines. Thinking of Arthur in decidedly military terms he

wrote that 'no strategic or tactical system can be deduced from them, except a

customary concealment of reserves under the shades of trees'.[91] He claimed that '[t]he

original Arthur' was 'a heroic British cavalry general named Arturius', and devoted

much space to discussing the importance of Arthur's cavalry. Particularly interesting

is his belief that without his having been a cavalryman the Norman aristocracy would

never have patronised the legend.[92] 'Chivalry', he declared, 'is now on the wane', but

he did not regret it.[93]

The idea of the historical Arthur as a cavalry leader was a popular notion from

the 1930s until the 1980s (see chapter six for discussion). This belief was initiated by

R.G. Collingwood, who served in Admiralty Intelligence during the war. In *Roman*

Britain (1936), Collingwood presented Arthur as a Romano-Briton heavy-cavalry

commander who defended 'a country sinking into Barbarism'. He envisaged Arthur as

holding the late Roman military office of *Comes Britanniarum*, employing his mobile

troops to defeat the Saxon infantry in a number of battles (as listed by Nennius) that

were spread throughout Britain.[94] But Collingwood's Arthur was not only far more

militaristic than previous 'historical' Arthurs, he was also a newly political

figurehead: he was 'the last of the Romans'; his victory ensured by his being

'intelligent enough [...] and vigorous enough' to protect the final vestiges of a dying

Empire.[95] As Stephen Knight has written, Collingwood presented an Arthur that

'validated at one blow the intelligence and will-power which are the central totems of

bourgeois individualism', as well as making the Roman Arthur into an analogue of the

imperial Englishman who, 'like the Romans before them, justified their exploitative

world-wide practices by the imperatives of "civilization" and a "peace" suitable to

their interests.'[*96]

The heroic individualism of Collingwood's historiographical Arthur is

matched in the heroism of the contemporary defender of Empire: T.E. Lawrence,

whose life and writings are surrounded by allusions and parallels to the Arthurian

story, and who became, in some senses, a modern-day Lancelot for a post-war society

starved of individual war heroes. The letters Lawrence wrote as an Oxford graduate

are filled with quotations from Tennyson's *Idylls* when describing the Arabian

desert.[97] He famously carried a copy of the *Morte Darthur* in his saddlebags

throughout his experience in the Arab Revolt (1916-18),[98] alluded to Malory several

times in his memoir, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) and also saw the nomadic

Bedouin as the equivalent of Arthur's knights, with their own codes of chivalry.[†99]

Some scholars have argued – persuasively – that *The Seven Pillars* is itself modelled

on the *Morte*,[100] though its denouement at the fetid hospital at Damascus more closely

resembles the conclusion of Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court*

(1889) than Malory's Camlan. Indeed, Lawrence's memoir suggests many of the

difficulties in using the Arthurian legend as a myth to make sense of the war: the book

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* By the time Graves adopted Collingwood's hypothesis, however, the idea of Arthur as a heavy cavalry commander was already being challenged. Kenneth Jackson wrote of Collingwood's theory in 1959: 'Nothing is certain about the historical Arthur, not even his existence; however, there are certain possibilities, even probabilities. There may have been a supreme British commander of genius in the late fifth century who bore the Roman-derived name of Arthur, though it would be wrong to deduce anything about his background from his name. There is little reason to think he held any definite sub-Roman office, whether *dux bellorum* or otherwise, and his supposed cavalry tactics are an illusion.' ('The Arthur of History', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, 10-11.

† Apart from direct references to Malory, themes of Arthurian largesse and heroism form a template for Lawrence's descriptions of his Arab companions: 'There entered a tall-strong figure, with a haggard face, passionate and tragic. This was Auda [...] His hospitality was sweeping; except to very hungry souls. His generosity kept him always poor, despite the profits of a hundred raids. He had married twenty-eight times, he had been wounded thirteen times; whilst the battles he provoked had seen all his tribesmen hurt and most of his relations killed. He himself had slain seventy five men, Arabs with his own hand in battle [...] Of the number of Turks he could give no account.' Such a list of kills would not be out of place in the *Historia Brittonum*, in which Arthur is said to have killed nine hundred and sixty men in a single charge.

is caught somewhere between a Boy's Own adventure of imperial derring-do ('purest

jingoism and Morning Postliness', he later wrote)[101] and the repugnance felt at such

an endeavour (its inherent imperial glory subverted by the infamous scenes of

homosexual rape, atrocity and the scenes at Damascus).[102]

Angus Calder has claimed that the fame of Lawrence's exploits in Arabia is

predicated on the fact that while there 'were lots of VCs' awarded to soldiers fighting

in France and Flanders, there were 'no epic heroes'.[103] In Lawrence there was a

modern-day knight of romance, whose experience of war – fought on horseback

across an expansive sandy peninsular, dressed in resplendent samite Arab dress (a

personal gift from Prince Feisal) – was a compelling alternative to the poetry of

Owen, Sassoon and Rosenberg, as well as the experiences of millions of young men

who had fought on the Western Front. Whereas the millions of entrenched troops had

been machine-expendable, the myth of Lawrence glorified individualism – the

tenacious genius capable of leading and uniting a foreign, disparate people through

sound British qualities.[*] While Germany and the USA had overtaken Britain

economically and militarily, Lawrence could still signify the justice of Britain's

imperial mission – even if he rejected it personally. In post-Great War Britain the

myth of Lawrence signified what Arthur had symbolised in medieval Britain; it was

only fitting that Lawrence should chronicle his own career in Malorian terms.

However, post-war Arthuriana was generally a much more sombre affair than

the medieval romanticism of Lawrence of Arabia's public persona. Laurence

Binyon's *Arthur: a tragedy*, for example, is as much a memorial to the dead of the

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[*] The American journalist Lowell Thomas, who described Lawrence as 'Britain's modern *Coeur de Lion*' and did much to initiate his fame, wrote in a contemporary account of Lawrence's officers: 'Each man had his own task and went his own way. Each was a free-lance and conducted himself with much the same freedom as did knights of old' (James, *Golden Warrior*, 279).

First World War as is his most famous poem, the Remembrance Day favourite, 'For

the Fallen' (1914):

> The day goes to the night,
> And I to darkness, with my toil undone,
> Yet something, surely, something shall remain.
> A seed is sown in Britain, Guenevere;
> And whether men wait for a hundred years
> Or for a thousand, they shall find it flower
> In youth unborn. The young have gone before me,
> The maid Elaine, Gareth, and Gaheris – hearts
> Without reproach, poured out. But now I know
> The tender and passionate spirit that burned in them.
> To dare all and endure all, lives and moves,
> And though the dark comes down upon our waste,
> Lives ever, like the sun above all storms;
> This old world shall behold it shine again
> To prove what splendour men have power to shape
> From mere mortality.[104]

In an unusual conclusion to the story, these last words of Arthur are spoken, not to

Bedivere, but to Guinevere, to whom the king is reconciled. Distraught, the queen is

comforted by Lynned, a nun, whose words end this mournful play:

> Love, only love, that knows no measure, love
> That understands all sorrows and all sins,
> Love that alone changes the hearts of men,
> And gives to the last heart-beat, only love
> Suffices. Come we apart and pray awhile
> For the noble and great spirits passed from us.[105]

First performed at the Old Vic in 1923 with incidental music by Edward Elgar,

Binyon's *Arthur* was one of the last, and perhaps the finest, of the Tennysonian plays.

Binyon, however, had been born in the midst of the Victorian era (1869), and was

well into middle age when he wrote this play. Few younger poets were interested in

maintaining the Tennysonian tradition, or would turn to the *Idylls*, as Binyon had

done, when they came to retell the Arthurian story.

Siegfried Sassoon, as already discussed, subverted the Galahad-ideal which was central to so much wartime propaganda in his *Memoirs of George Sherston* (1928-37). John Masefield, already the author of one Arthurian poem, 'The Ballad of Sir Bors' (1910), would turn to the Matter of Britain in a more martial mood in the mid 1920s. His *Midsummer Night and Other Tales in Verse* (1927) is a startlingly violent series of ballads which retell the story of Arthur from his birth to death, and which are clearly influenced by Masefield's experience of war as an ambulanceman at the Front. Far from the simple ballad-form of Masefield's poems lies the work of David Jones. Yet his modernist masterpiece, *In Parenthesis* (1937), was another attempt to articulate the author's experience of war through the medium of the Arthurian story. Like Masefield, Jones drew on a wide range of Celtic and English versions of the Matter of Britain, but unlike Masefield, Jones did not so much retell the narrative of Arthur as relay the experiences of a London-Welsh battalion via a complex series of allusions and quotations from various Arthurian and other medieval tales. Moreover, whereas the Great War propagandists, as well Binyon, Lawrence, Sassoon and Owen, were all writing either within, or in reaction to, the Tennysonian paradigm or the cult of Galahad, Masefield and Jones attempted to reconfigure the entire Arthurian story – to rewrite the Arthurian story anew and without any Tennysonian influence. Such an effort took time: in Jones's case it took nearly nineteen years, while Masefield struggled throughout his career to rework the Matter of Britain into a truly British epic. Masefield's and Jones's Arthuriads, however, are discussed in chapter five, as they are infused with many elements which are not solely concerned with the Great War – chief among these being the desire to create a new British (that is Anglo-Celtic) identity, the collapse of economic liberalism in the late

1920s as a result of the Great Slump (1929-33), and Britain's diminution as a world power.

As for the Tennysonian paradigm, it was already embattled at the conclusion to the war. During the 1920s it was subject to a series of erosive forces, which largely saw the *Idylls* as an antiquated expression of a bygone world of religious and social values. Of course, Tennyson's influence did not suddenly disappear – the *Idylls* continued to have effect on Arthurian literature until the Second World War – but its domination was steadily worn away, as new writers gained ascendancy over their Victorian predecessor.

Yet the flourish of new versions of the Arthurian story that appeared in the post-war years did not only challenge Tennyson's dominance – they altered the very make up of Arthurian literary production in England. No longer operating in a paradigmatic state, since the 1920s the reproduction of the Arthurian legend has been a far less dogmatic enterprise that it was in medieval or Victorian England. Instead, what emerged in these years was a new form of Arthurian literary production – one typified by trends, rather than paradigms, and with certain writers influencing, rather than dominating, subsequent authors. These literary movements have usually been diverse and contradictory and have failed to possess the synthetic qualities of Tennyson's *Idylls*, or Geoffrey's or Malory's Arthuriads. Indeed, as the Arthurian story became subject to a greater number of extreme political and social forces than it had known in the nineteenth century, no single post-war text was able to encompass an entire world view, as Tennyson's *Idylls* had done. In the twentieth century an Arthurian paradigm would seem to be impossible.

The first major trend to emerge after the Great War was a rejuvenated interest in the Holy Grail. It was an interest dynamised by the scholarship of Jessie L. Weston

and a literary movement epitomised by T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, a text which represented a bridge between the dogmatic, Tennysonian paradigm and the new, emancipated Arthurian legend. Like the nineteenth-century cult of Galahad, the Grail was largely separate from the Arthurian corpus and it could be dealt with briefly, without writers having to refashion the entire narrative cycle. This made the Grail story more responsive to contemporary changes in society. Moreover, both the scholarship and literature concerned with the Grail steadily became less Anglocentric – with Celtic myths, Buddhist texts and pre-Christian religions all occupying important positions within the newly-reconfigured Grail story. Its authors, meanwhile, while all working in England during the 1920s and 30s, were American, Irish and Welsh, as well as English. This eclectic body of literature demonstrated the new ways in which the Arthurian story (or at least a certain part of it) could respond to a very different world from that of the nineteenth century. This modern Grail legend is the subject of the next chapter.

Illustrations I

Above (fig. 1) Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Arthur's Tomb – the last meeting of Lancelot and Guinevere* (1854).
Below (fig. 2), detail from Edward Burne Jones, *The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* (1881-98).
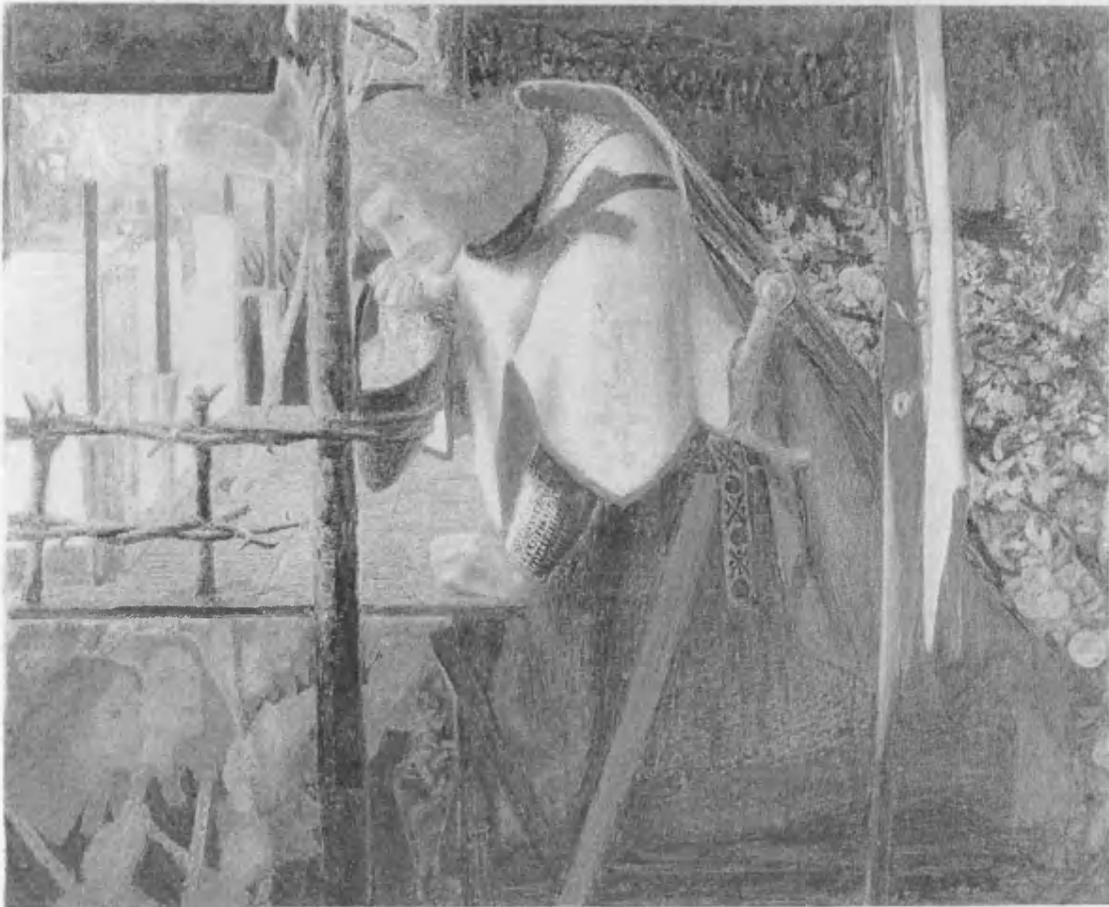
Above (fig. 3), Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Sir Galahad at the Ruined Chapel* 1857. Left (fig. 4), Elizabeth Siddall, *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (1855-57). Below (fig. 5), Edward Burne-Jones, *Sir Galahad* (1858).

Fig. 6, George Frederick Watts, *Sir Galahad* (1862).

Above (fig. 7), Arthur Hughes, *Sir Galahad* (1870). Below left (fig. 8), Joseph Noël Paton, *Sir Galahad* (1879). Below right (fig. 9), Joseph Noël Paton, *Sir Galahad and the Angel* (1885).

Fig. 10: Tennyson Memorial Window, St Bartholomew's Church, Haslemere, designed by Edward Burne-Jones (1899). The text on the scroll is from Tennyson's 'The Holy Grail', ll. 464-5, 476-7.

Below is the plaque which is mounted beneath the window.

IN MEMORY OF
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON POET LAUREATE
In thankfulness for the music of his words
And for that yet more excellent gift whereby
Being himself schooled by love and sorrow
He had power to confirm in the hearts of many
Their faith in the things which are not seen
Their hope of immortality
IN PRAISE OF GOD THE INSPIRER OF PROPHET AND
OF POET THIS WINDOW IS DEDICATED
BY SOME FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS IN HASLEMERE

i galahad saw the grail
the holy grail descend
upon the shrine

and in the strength of this
i rode shattering all evil
customs everywhere

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

AND IN MEMORY OF
POET LAUREATE 1850-1892

Above (fig. 11), an example of German Iron Warrior propaganda (1915).

Clockwise from right: three illustrations from Alfred W. Pollard's *The Romance of King Arthur* (1917), by Arthur Rackham: 'How Mordred was Slain by Arthur, and How by Him Arthur was Hurt to the Death' (fig. 12); 'Sir Beaumains Espied upon Great Trees how there Hung Full Goodly Armed Knights by the Neck' (fig. 13); 'Sir Mordred Went and Laid a Mighty Siege About the Tower of London, and Shot Great Guns' (fig 14).

Chapter Three

'Here in the heart of waste and wilderness': Jessie L. Weston, T.S. Eliot and the Holy Grail

The *Idylls* never recovered their pre-war dominance. Had there been a latter-day Wace

or Layamon who would have reconciled the *Idylls* to a new age, as the older poets had

adapted Geoffrey's *Historia* for later generations – had some poet who was

sympathetic to King Arthur and Tennyson, such as Wilfred Owen or Rupert Brooke,

survived the war – subsequent Arthurian literature may have been different. As it was

there were no *Brut*s to Tennyson's epic and this paradigm faded into Victorian

nostalgia or, worse, ridicule.

Instead, Arthurian literature in the years following the Great War was more

imaginative and more original than it had been since the Arthurian Revival of the

Romantic period. And like the Arthurian literature of the Romantic period it was

scholars who led the way. The literary work of T.S. Eliot, Arthur Machen, Virginia

Woolf, Mary Butts and John Cowper Powys was all built upon the academic

endeavours of such scholars as Alfred Nutt, A.E. Waite, J.D. Bruce and, above all,

Jessie Weston. Their theories on the origins of the Arthurian story – and the Grail

legend, in particular – were new and contentious; in their arguments with each other they were invariably dismissive and combative. The bitterness to which some of these critics occasionally descended demonstrated that the medieval stories could still matter to a contemporary world, and that the Grail was not merely a 'peg' from which public-school headmasters might hang a homily about purity and duty.

In hindsight, the fact that it was the story of the Grail which would re-ignite interest in the Arthurian story is perfectly understandable. Galahad had been one of the most evident propaganda figures during the war – that post-war writers would take up his story and transform it is to be expected. Added to this is the fact that the most exciting scholarship to emerge from the pre-war scholars was primarily concerned with the Grail. The diminishing appeal of Christianity in Britain was another factor – much of the literary interest in the Grail was concerned with fashioning new, or refashioning existing, belief systems. But the biggest factor in explaining why writers chose the Grail story, rather than the larger Arthurian legend, was that the Grail story was, simply, much shorter. Post-war poets and novelists did not attempt to reconfigure the whole Arthurian story – such a task took Tennyson decades (as it probably did Geoffrey and Malory). Those who did come to rewrite the whole Arthurian story in later years– Charles Williams, David Jones and John Masefield – spent many years reading and cogitating on the legend before they unveiled their epics. The Grail, by comparison, offered a more concise narrative, more malleable to writers' immediate concerns and anxieties.

Before examining the Grail scholarship which led to much of this literature, it is worth noting one major difference in Grail literature before and after the war. Since the inception of England's interest in the Arthurian story, with Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, the Matter of Britain has always been intimately and anxiously

associated with governmental power – whether monarch-praising chronicles, kingly pageants or pictorial adornments of Westminster Palace. Such intimacy had required a certain regulation of the Arthurian story: such ideological utility had to be maintained. Only in periods of crisis – epitomised by the fifteenth-century popular ballads and the anti-papist condemnation of the mid-sixteenth century – was the Arthurian story unregulated by such powers. In the 1920s the Grail became patronised by all reading classes. The Grail story became the subject of crime novels (such as Charles Williams's novel *War in Heaven*, 1930) and the popular fiction of Arthur Machen and George Moore. Galahad and the Grail became popular names for racehorses: Prince Galahad, Sir Galahad, King of the Grail, Silver Grail, Holy Grail. Less grandly, Galahad was also a popular name for some prize-winning dogs.[1]

More seriously, questing knights were no longer the symbols of the conservative bourgeoisie. Although the Tory Lord Chancellor could describe the Liberal peer William Lygon as 'the Sir Galahad of the Free Trade movement, without a stain upon his purity', the victorious Labour party of 1924 could also appropriate the legend.[2] In one election rally Ramsey MacDonald claimed that a socialist Britain was 'the Holy Grail' of the Labour party; it would be achieved, he said, 'by knights like Keir Hardie'.[3] No longer was the Grail a symbol of imperial endeavour and elitist institutions; now it was a value in the context of democracy and plurality.

Jessie Weston and early Grail scholarship

There were a multitude of Grails evident in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Christian Grails and Pagan Grails; Western Grails and Eastern Grails. Their origins were found in Celtic mythology, in ecclesiastic imagination, even in the rites and rituals of Cathars, Templars and Tarot-card readers.[4] Four physical Grails were

unearthed: one in Nanteos was put on display in 1876, another in Glastonbury in 1906, with a further two being dug up in Palestine in the 1930s – all found their believers and critics.[5] But perhaps the most influential of all Grails for writers of the post-war generation was that of Jessie L. Weston. Her Ritualist account of the Grail (pre-Christian and pre-Celtic in origin) proved persuasive for many poets and novelists who sought to reinvent the Arthurian story in the 1920s and 30s – most famously, though perhaps erroneously, T.S. Eliot. Weston's critical writings demonstrate, more eloquently than any other scholar's corpus, how late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century academia freed itself from the influence of Malory and Tennyson.

The daughter of a successful tea merchant, Weston (1850-1928) received a cosmopolitan nineteenth-century upbringing, studying music at the Hildesheim conservatory in Germany, taking art classes at Crystal Palace and studying with Gaston Paris, the medieval scholar, in France.[6] The continentalism, scope and eclecticism of her learning, as well as her independence from traditional English higher education (which, as a young woman in the 1870s, she was excluded from anyway), meant that Weston was never beholden to the English literary or critical archetypes which influenced many of her male Oxbridge-educated contemporaries. Although she was engaged in academic scholarship for most of her life, it was not until 1894, when she was forty-three, that she began to publish the first of twenty books and numerous articles, which were often controversial and at odds with conventional English scholarship.

Weston was never wholly satisfied with the dominance of Malory and Tennyson in contemporary English conceptions of the Arthurian story. Of the *Morte Darthur* and the *Idylls* she had written, in 1909: 'in spite of their charm of style, in

spite of the halo of religious mysticism in which they have striven to enwrap their characters, we lay them down with a feeling of dissatisfaction.'[7] Following the criticism of H. Oskar Sommer and other German medievalists (and unlike the English Strachey and Saintsbury), she thought that Malory's redaction of the French romance tradition – which she described as a '*réchauffée*' – was often poor in its choice of sources and the way in which he handled them.[8] One of her most impressive endeavours was a seven-volume series of translations which she called *Arthurian Romances Unrepresented in Malory's 'Morte D'Arthur'* (1898-1907).[*9]

In the mid 1900s, when Weston turned to the study of the origins of the Grail in earnest, two distinct theories had emerged that dominated British and continental Arthurian scholarship. One proposed a Christian origin, the other an origin in Celtic myth. As with so much of early medieval scholarship, the German critics led the way in the Christian-origin theory – Wendelin Foerster and Wolfgang Golther being the most prominent – with the American J.D. Bruce being perhaps the most forceful of the theory's English-language proponents.[10] These held that the Grail was essentially Christian in origin and that the 'personal invention' of writers such as Chrétien and Robert de Boron 'was the most important factor in the creation of these romances.'[11] Even if the Grail's source lay in the dim mist of Celtic antiquity, its origins were of much less importance than the meaning which the French romancers inscribed it with. This view, as Richard Barber put it more recently, holds that the Grail 'is a product of a certain time and a certain place [Western Christian Europe in the mid-twelfth to mid-thirteenth centuries], and the most powerful argument for this is the way in which the major romances were written within a surprisingly short time-span.'[12] These

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[*] Weston's earliest scholarship is largely Germanic in orientation; indeed, she strove to make German romances well known in Britain. However, her relationship with German scholarship deteriorated in the years before the Great War – her later position being quite hostile to her former influences. This was a pattern typical of scholarship in the early twentieth century.

scholars poured scorn on those critics who sought the Grail in earlier Celtic literature, terming them 'Keltomanen'.[*][13]

The Keltomanen, or the Celticists, were initially led in England by Alfred Nutt, an early mentor of Jessie Weston and publisher of many of her works. Nutt's primary contribution to Arthurian studies was his *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail* (1888), which attempted to illuminate the importance of the Celtic tradition in the formation of later romances. Unlike Foerster, Golther and Bruce, Nutt seems to have felt little attraction towards the French Grail romances in themselves. Rather, his interests were in the roots and beginnings of the legend – origins which he felt were overwhelmingly Celtic. Although he was not the first scholar to speculate on such a relationship,[14] he was the first to construct an extended thesis on how the French romances were produced as a result of their authors' misunderstanding of their Celtic materials. He can be seen to have steered contemporary scholarship to a Darwinian understanding of romance production: in Nutt's thesis evolution, rather than individual literary invention, was the Grail story's primary force.

For Nutt a common oral tradition stretched across the whole Celtic fringe of Western Europe. This tradition could be discerned through medieval Irish and Welsh texts which had been translated and published in the nineteenth century.[15] Particularly important were the translations from the Irish by the German scholar Kuno Meyer and those from the Welsh by Charlotte Guest. Indeed, in his role as publisher Nutt was closely involved with the dissemination of both scholars' work.[16] Nutt found analogues of the Grail in the numerous cauldrons of plenty and of rebirth contained in Meyer and Guest's translations of Irish and Welsh myths – such as those in the Tuatha

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[*] They also distanced themselves from a second group of Christian-Grail scholars. Led by A.E. Waite and heavily involved with occult rituals, these scholars pursued the study of the Grail texts in search of mystical experience and esoteric knowledge. Bruce described Waite's theories in *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, as 'fantastic' and unworthy of scholarly consideration.

de Danann legend and the story of Bran in the Second Branch of the *Mabinogion* –
while later Celticists, such as A.C.L. Brown, Roger Sherman Loomis and Dorothy
Kempe, searched for ever-more exotic parallels.[17] According to Nutt, these symbols
and narratives were then conveyed to Anglo-Norman audiences by bilingual poets
who subsequently exported it to France and the rest of Europe, where it was
increasingly subject to Christian ideology.

Celtic rather than French, Pagan rather than Christian: Nutt's views on the
origins of the Grail were contentious and were refuted by the Christian-origin
theorists. Bruce flatly denied them.[18] The great German medievalist, Heinrich
Zimmer, warned Celticists who possessed no knowledge of Welsh, Irish or Breton
from dabbling in the early literature (most of the Celticists worked exclusively from
translations).[19] And Elise Bensel wrote that the 'zeal' with which Nutt and the other
Celticists desired to prove their theories meant that 'they sometimes jump at
conclusions not sufficiently borne out by the facts'.[20] There was also, of course, a
strong element of national pride in stating that the origins of the Grail were
fundamentally British in origin – even if that concept of Britishness was an
anachronism. For now Nutt and his fellow English critics (along with a few Welsh
scholars, such as John Rhŷs) were able to reject most of the claims of their
continental, chiefly German, contemporaries.

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It was towards the Celtic-origin theory that Weston was initially drawn, partly
because of her friendship with Nutt and partly because of her early studies with
Gaston Paris, who had independently arrived at a similar opinion of the Grail's
origins.[21] Yet Weston did not merely continue the work of Nutt and Paris; she formed
a new theory of the origins of the Grail romances. She declared that the German

scholars were 'radically unsound' in their Christian bias, but she also thought that the

roots of the Grail story went back much further than Celticists had previously

thought.[22] Weston believed that while the romancers of the twelfth century had altered

the pagan elements of their Celtic sources, the Celtic materials were themselves

records of much earlier, pre-Celtic ritual, the meaning of which the Welsh and Irish

bards never actually understood. The Grail legends, she wrote in *From Ritual to*

Romance (1920), are 'the confused record of a ritual, once popular, later surviving

under conditions of strict secrecy' in occult practices.[23]

Weston believed that the competing Christian- / Celtic-origin theories were in

fundamental disagreement with each other due to the fact that 'the Grail legend

consists of a congeries of widely differing elements – elements which at first sight

appear hopelessly incongruous'.[24] She identified the 'main features' of the Grail

legend as: 'the Waste Land, the Fisher King, the Hidden Castle with its solemn Feast,

and mysterious Feeding Vessel, the Bleeding Lance and Cup'.[25] Weston claimed that

to find all of these features (all of which are not present in any single Grail romance,

nor in the Celtic prototypes which Nutt, and others, had identified) she was required

to look beyond the Christian and the Celtic sources and into the field of comparative

anthropology.

Each of the 'main features', she held, could be found in the nature rites as

adumbrated in J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915). The Grail legend, she

believed, was a remnant of a Mystery cult centred on a 'dying god' figure, similar to

that of Adonis or Tammuz. In such a cult, as Frazer wrote, the people believed

> that the king's life or spirit is so sympathetically bound up with the prosperity
> of the whole country, that if he fell ill or grew senile the cattle would sicken
> and cease to multiply, the crops would rot in the fields, and men would perish
> of widespread disease. Hence, in their opinion, the only way of averting these
> calamities is to put the king to death while he is still hale and hearty, in order

that the divine spirit which he has inherited from his predecessors may be transmitted in turn by him to his successor while it is still in full vigour.[26]

Weston thought that the figure of the Fisher King of the Grail story, as ruler of the Waste Land, is a version of this dying god. Whereas in Frazer's scheme the weak king requires death to restore the land, the task of the quester in the Grail romances is to heal and aid the king.[*] 'He is not merely a deeply symbolic figure,' Weston wrote, 'but the essential centre of the whole cult, a being semi-divine, semi-human, standing between his people and land, and the unseen forces which control their destiny.'[27]

In Weston's opinion, the Fisher King was himself the protagonist of the ritual: 'the very heart and centre of the whole mystery'.[28] This mystery's association with the Arthurian legend was a later addition of the Celtic and Christian storytellers. The lance and the cup are not themselves directly concerned with the ritual. They are 'Life' symbols, representing the male and female genitals and signifying the forces of sexual reproduction.[29] Thus the whole ritual that underlies the Grail romances is a quest for fertility – couched in sexual symbols. The Grail story is a narrative of renewal, where the division between spiritual and earthly is unknown – the Fisher King is bound to the health of the land in a mythic union and the effects of healing the King are wholly concerned with the physical good of the land (food and children). The restoration of the Fisher King brings about the total regeneration of the kingdom.

Weston first delivered this theory in a paper given to the Folk-lore Society in 1906.[†] But it was only after *From Ritual to Romance* was published that Weston's

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[*] This major difference between Frazer's killing of the god/king and the healing of the Fisher King is never wholly resolved by Weston.

[†] This paper was titled 'The Grail and the Rites of Adonis' and is a lucid account of Weston's early thesis. As her Ritualist account of the origins of the Grail developed, Weston added new details – including a discussion of the relevance of the Tarot cards (*From Ritual to Romance*, 77-80). Most important in her development of the Ritual thesis was her search for a specific source of the Grail legend. Weston was not content to attribute the healing of the Fisher King and his land to a generic Mystery cult. She associates the sexual wounding of the King to the figures of Attis and Adonis (the first castrated himself; the second was gored to death in the groin). And in the last third of *From Ritual*

Ritualist thesis found a popular audience. Many scholars praised it. Jane Harrison

wrote that '[t]he more I read it, the more conviction grows'; F.M. Cornford wrote that

'the argument is self-evident, once stated' and Edwin Sidney Hartland claimed that it

'solved what had been a problem for 700 years'.[30] Other critics, however, remained

sceptical. Bruce devoted a chapter of his *Evolution of Arthurian Romance* to pouring

scorn on Weston's Ritualist account of the Grail.[31] One reviewer writing in the

sympathetic journal, *Folk-lore*, praised its originality of thought, although had 'reason

to doubt' whether Weston was correct in reducing the Grail story's many elements,

formed over several hundred years of literary production, into one single

explanation.[*32] Roger Sherman Loomis in his 1927 study, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian*

Romance, initially supported Weston's findings and stated that 'the evidence is so

palpable that one need not be either an initiate or a specialist in primitive religion to

feel its force'.[33] But in his later work he eschewed 'Weston's ingenious hypothesis'

due to its 'lack of valid and clearly pertinent evidence'.[34] Modern scholarship, on the

whole, has disparaged Weston's results.[35]

In many ways, the cultural importance of Weston's theory is more the result of

its popularity with contemporary poets and authors than due to her precarious

influence on other scholars.[†] *From Ritual to Romance*'s publication in 1920 coincided

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to Romance Weston traces how these figures were worshipped by Naassenes, a Christian Gnostic group of whom little is known, and how cults similar to that of the Naassenes were brought to Celtic Britain. Centuries later, the Grail legend arose, which was later Christianised by later writers. 'The Grail and the Rites of Adonis' was printed in *Folk-lore*, 19 (1907); Janet Grayson included the essay in her appendix to 'In Quest of Jessie Weston', 63-80. Another scholar, the American William A. Nitze, had argued that the origins of the Grail had derived from a similar Ritual cult, though he believed that the specific cult was Eleusian in form. See his 'The Fisher King in the Grail Romances', *PMLA* 24 (1909): 365-418.

[*] Cf. Weston: 'no theory of the origin of the story can be considered really and permanently satisfactory, unless it can offer an explanation of the story as a whole' (*The Quest of the Holy Grail*, 72).

[†] It must be stated, however, that Weston achieved an eminent position as a medieval scholar. She was certainly the most famous of all Arthurian critics in the early twentieth century. Apart from winning numerous prizes, she was also asked to write the majority of the Arthurian literature entries in the seminal eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1911). These entries made little concession to

with the turning away from the Tennysonian paradigm – and with it the cultural monuments which the *Idylls* symbolised for many writers. The securities of Victorian culture had been weakened by the war. Artists were now challenging traditional forms and notions of what were suitable subjects for art; novelists were subverting the conventions of the nineteenth-century realist novel; poets were abandoning established poetic structures for *vers libre*; while writers such as T.S. Eliot were attempting to articulate, in Edmund Wilson's words, a 'whole world of strained nerves and shattered institutions'.[36]

The appeal of *From Ritual to Romance* for poets and novelists of the twenties and thirties lay in the stock of powerful images Weston's book made available for a non-specialist audience. Writers found in Weston's work – as they did in Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jane Harrison's feminist anthropological studies of cultural evolution – a new set of potent symbols: the waste land, the Fisher King, the symbols of the phallic lance and the vaginal cup. Above all Weston provided her readers with a myth of cultural and social regeneration – a myth that resonated strongly in the post-war years. In many ways *From Ritual to Romance* is as much a monument of modernism and twentieth-century culture as is *The Waste Land, Ulysses* (1922), *The Waves* (1931) or *The Cantos* (1917-70). And its importance as a modernist work can be seen only through appreciation of its incoherent jumble of symbols and meanings, assembled roughly together through the promise of re-creation and renewal.

In several ways, Weston's scholarship was itself a form of cultural rejuvenation. After Weston, the Grail was emancipated from the Public School ethos and poets and novelists were no longer compelled to reproduce the Victorian literary concept of the Grail as a Christian-humanist object, the cultural uses of which were

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conservative views of the Arthurian story and outlined her controversial opinions on the Grail and other matters, given as accepted scholarly fact.

essentially imperial, class-conscious and militaristic. Without her scholarship, the Grail may have gone the way of Galahad – confined to the dustbin of culture, no longer of use even to substandard patriotic versifiers. It is worth noting that despite Galahad's ubiquity from the mid nineteenth-century to the close of the First World War, he is barely mentioned in any of the literary texts of the 1920s and 30s. It is one of the most interesting features of this literary period, that the Grail story is a heroic narrative without its most famous hero.

With its preoccupation with anthropology, Celticism and ritualism *From Ritual to Romance* was in many ways the antithesis of Tennyson's humanist paradigm. Indeed, whereas the *Idylls* were preoccupied with the notion of social and moral collapse, Weston's scholarship was explicitly concerned with renewal and rebirth. For a brief time, it became almost as influential as the *Idylls* had been in the second half of the nineteenth century.

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and the influence of *From Ritual to Romance*

In terms of its Arthurian content, Eliot's *The Waste Land* forms something of a bridge between Tennyson's *Idylls* and the radical new symbolism of Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. The Grail literature of the 1920s and 30s – and *The Waste Land* most of all – represent a crisis in the Arthurian tradition: a struggle between a complicated literary inheritance and a desire to write the Grail story anew. Eliot's poem demonstrated how a post-war writer could still make use of the Arthurian legend – or at least the Grail story – through recourse to fertility rituals, sexual symbols and the motif of the barren waste land. Yet *The Waste Land* does not represent a total overhaul of the legend. The *Idylls of the King* did not suddenly cease to influence post-war writers; Tennyson was still read, or was at least remembered from youth.

Many of the *Idylls'* preoccupations and concerns with domesticity, war, internal and national collapse were still evident in Eliot's work, though few critics and later writers would recognise them as Tennysonian in origin.

The Waste Land's influence over subsequent Arthurian literature is disproportionate to its actual Arthurian content. Its references to the legend are slight and buried within a welter of allusions to Chaucer, Ovid, Spenser, the Psalms, Marvell, Shakespeare, Homer, Goldsmith, Dante, popular songs, Baudelaire, the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ulysses*. There is a quotation from Paul Verlaine's 1886 poem 'Parsifal', a few allusions to the Tristan and Isolde story in the form of quotations from Wagner's opera, two indirect references to the Fisher King, one of which is made clearer by the notes that Eliot wrote to accompany the poem, and a reference to an 'empty chapel, only the wind's home', which the notes suggest is the Chapel Perilous.[*37] The main indebtedness to the Arthurian story is Eliot's use of the symbol of the waste land. The motif is evident throughout the poem: in its title, in the sense of sterility that permeates every image and every character, from the shrivelled, ancient sibyl of the poem's classical epigraph, to 'the young man carbuncular' of the modern city.[38] The question of which sources influenced Eliot in fashioning his waste land is worth pursuing.

Interpretations of the poem usually centre on the meaning of the waste land. They can be roughly divided into two camps. First, there are those that perceive the text to be a twentieth-century Grail romance, with an internal schema that allows the reader to understand the poem as a coherent and fully-explicable text. These explications tend to see *From Ritual to Romance* as the 'key' to the work and they generally express the idea that the poem's meaning is almost exclusively concerned

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[*] There are, however, no Arthurian characters, bar the Fisher King, nor is the Grail itself apparent at any point in the poem.

with a spiritual quest. For these the waste land is a symbol of the lack of religious

values in the modern world. Second, there are those that hold that there is no such

'centre' to Eliot's poem; that it is, as Eliot later wrote of it, a series of disjointed

rhythmic grumblings which cannot and ought not to be organised into a unified

whole.[39] Essential to both groups of interpreters lies the precarious position of *From*

Ritual to Romance as the dominant 'source' of the poem. Famously, Eliot wrote in the

notes which accompany *The Waste Land*:

> Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of
> the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend
> [...] Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston's book will elucidate the
> difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it
> (apart from the great interest of the book itself) to any who think such
> elucidation of the poem worth the trouble.[40]

But almost equally famous was Eliot's later comment that he regretted sending 'so

many enquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail'.[41] It

seems that which Eliot one believes leads to a reading of *The Waste Land* as either

fully explicable or utterly incoherent. The decision to perceive the text one way or the

other is often predicated on ideological grounds, or due to academic disciplinary

politics.

There is little doubt that Weston's work did influence Eliot in his use of the

Fisher King and waste land symbols. But its impact on the text has been overstated by

many interpreters of the poem.[*] It is certain that the notes to the poem (which Eliot

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[*] Some recent scholars have suggested that Eliot may have only partly read Weston's study; another
has claimed that the pages of Eliot's copy of *From Ritual to Romance* were never cut and that his
reference to Weston's book may have been nothing more than a literary hoax (Morton, 'Eight Decades
on and I think I Spy T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land*', *The Scotsman*). Eliot certainly refused to write an
introduction to a planned reprint of Weston's study, claiming it would be 'inappropriate' for him to do
so (Grayson, 'In Quest of Jessie Weston', 50, n. 67). It is also possible that, though *From Ritual to
Romance* still remains the most likely source for Eliot's use of the Fisher King, Eliot's acquaintance
with Weston's theories may have been gathered from other sources, such as reviews of Weston's work
or her entry on the Holy Grail for the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which includes
summaries of several medieval romances, brief discussion of the Fisher King's role, as well as a

provided in order to bring *The Waste Land* to a publishable length) are more

Arthurian than is the text itself.[42] Ezra Pound, who edited *The Waste Land* and whose

contribution to the final draft was substantial, never commented on the Grail theme of

Eliot's poem, nor did he ever refer to Weston's book as the source of the text he did

much to create. Likewise, the original, much longer draft of the poem reveals little

about the relationship between *The Waste Land* and *From Ritual to Romance.*[*]

Indeed, regarding the evidence of the manuscript, Eliot appears to have seen *The*

Waste Land as a series of fragments, the interrelatedness of which was not apparent –

and certainly not within any discernable Grail-quest scheme.[43]

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For many critics the pursuit to elucidate the poem was the chief attraction of *The*

Waste Land. The explications of the poem have proven as influential on subsequent

literature as the text itself and, so, are worthy of examination in their own right.

The majority of the initial reviews were unconcerned with the possibility of

the poem's Grail context. Whether they were hostile or appreciative, reviewers most

often commented on the sense of incoherence and disparity created in the poem and

did not search for a unifying meaning. Several critics found *The Waste Land*

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synopsis of Weston's own Ritualist theory of the Grail's origins and their relationship to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. In addition, she writes that the earliest Grail romance 'exhibits a marked affinity with the characteristic features of the Adonis or Tammuz worship; we have a castle on the sea-shore, a dead body on a bier, the identity of which is never revealed, mourned over with solemn rites; a wasted country, whose desolation is mysteriously connected with the dead man; and which is restored to fruitfulness when the quester asks the meaning of the marvels he beholds (the two features of the weeping women and the wasted land being retained in versions where they have no significance); finally the mysterious food-providing, self-acting talisman of a common feast—one and all of these features may be explained as survivals of the Adonis ritual.'

* The original draft of *The Waste Land* (that is, the fragments of verses seen by Pound and Vivien Eliot, the poet's first wife) was published in 1971 and edited by Valerie, Eliot's second wife. The MSS do little to shed light on Eliot's plan for the poem with regard to either Weston or the Grail. The many substantial cuts which Pound made (the largest cuts are the 53 lines on a night on the town in Boston; 70 lines describing the morning activities of a society lady; 84 lines concerning an ill-fated sea-voyage) omit nothing that could be seen as derived from Weston. In the draft version of the poem's first section, 'The Burial of the Dead', there is a line referring to the 'king fishing', which is crossed out and replaced with the 'fisher King'. Both are omitted in the final version where the lines concerning the Fisher King are less obvious in their allusions to the narrator's fishing 'in the dull canal' or 'sat upon the shore' (ll.189, 421).

unfathomable and duly damned it, such as J.C. Squire, who after reading it through

several times was 'still unable to make head or tail of it'.[44] The enthusiastic review in

the *TLS* (which was written before *The Waste Land* appeared with its notes) claimed

that Eliot's poem was 'a collection of flashes' which strives for 'no effect of

heterogeneity'.[45] 'Flashes of lightening' was used to describe Eliot's method in Helen

McAfee's review in the American journal, *Atlantic*. She praised the poem's depiction

of post-war society as a 'waste land' and lauded its 'striking dramatization of this

depth and bitterness.'[46] Another American critic, Elinor Wylie, praised the poem for

its 'extremity of tragic emotion' which was expressed in a series of disparate voices,

'not carefully and elaborately trained in close harmony, but coming as a confused and

frightening and beautiful murmur out of the bowels of the earth'.[47] Summarising the

sense of heterogeneity and disconnectedness of the text, its abandonment of narrative

structure or 'meaning', John Crowe Ransom wrote that it was 'one of the most

insubordinate poems in the language'.[48]

Other reviewers, however, were more interested in reading *The Waste Land* as

a solvable 'puzzle'.[49] The most important of these reviewers was the young Edmund

Wilson writing in *The Dial*. Wilson began his essay by giving a synopsis of the Grail

story, as taken from a hurried reading of *From Ritual to Romance*, and explains the

significance of the waste land therein.[50] The Grail quest, he held, was the unifying

motif of *The Waste Land*, drawing together all the fragmentary and seemingly

unconnected elements in a whole. It is a reading that for Weston-centric critics has

barely changed in eighty years. In 1931 Wilson expanded his Westonian reading of

the poem in his *Axel's Castle*.[51] A year later F.R. Leavis codified what would be the

reponse of many academics to the poem in his seminal *New Bearings in English*

Poetry, which again reduced Imagist fragments into a thematic coherence. Wilson's

and Leavis's ideas have been replicated and expanded by numerous critics, among

them Cleanth Brooks, Grover Smith, Helen Gardner and George Williamson.[52]

In Weston-centred readings, the system of symbols Weston presented in *From*

Ritual to Romance (waste land, Fisher King, Lance and Cup) were perceived as an

interpretive structure for the poem – Brooks described it as 'scaffolding'; Williamson

called it 'a subsumptive myth'.[53] In these critics' works, *The Waste Land* emerges as a

portrait of disintegration and impotence, a description of a ruined world, 'where once

a fertility ritual may have been effectively enacted' to restore the land to health.[54]

Whereas the earlier reviewers saw *The Waste Land* as a 'complete expression of the

poet's vision of modern life', which was very much an expression of social collapse,

the later Weston-centric explicators saw the poem as primarily a contrast between a

rich, spiritual past and a spiritually-void modern sterility.[55] They emphasised the

religious content of Eliot's poem to a much larger degree than did the non-Weston

interpreters of *The Waste Land*. F.L. Lucas, who heartily disliked the poem, claimed

that 'Miss Weston is clearly a theosophist' (she was not), and claimed that Eliot's

poem 'might be a theosophical tract. The sick king and the waste land symbolise, we

gather, the sick soul and the desolation of this material life.'[56] Wilson called the waste

land 'the concrete image of a spiritual drouth'.[57] Everett A. Gillis put it simply: it is

the portrayal of 'the decline of religious values in the world'.[58]

Cleanth Brooks saw Eliot's poem as primarily a religious commentary on

contemporary agnosticism. His 1939 essay, '*The Waste Land*: critique of myth' was a

remarkable reading of *The Waste Land*'s use of Weston's symbolism, which managed

to transform a fundamentally agnostic text into an explicitly Christian poem. Brooks

began by rehearsing the standard summary of *From Ritual to Romance*, before

demonstrating how Eliot's poem utilised Weston's symbols. Brooks revealed, as he

elucidated the poem section by section, a coherent meaning to the text. This meaning,

Brooks claimed, is not concerned with 'despair and disillusionment', or social

collapse, or 'strained nerves and shattered institutions' as earlier critics had believed.[59]

Rather, '[t]he "Christian" material is at the centre, but the poet never deals with it

directly. The theme of resurrection is made on the surface in terms of the fertility

rites; the words which the thunder speaks are Sanskrit words.'[60]

From Ritual to Romance had examined the medieval Grail legend in light of a

Darwinian methodology of cultural evolution: Weston had read the Christian

romances as later deposits of earlier Celtic and, ultimately, pre-Celtic Gnostic myths.

What earlier scholars had thought of as fundamentally Christian iconography, Weston

tried to demonstrate as antecedent to it. Brooks reverses the evolutionary process of

Weston's methodology and tries to place the Christian message in an avowedly

agnostic text. Brooks' essay was written a decade after Eliot's conversion to the

Anglo-Catholic Church in 1928. At the time of writing The Waste Land he held no

firm Christian belief; indeed, he was considering becoming a Buddhist.[61] The 'hidden

Christian centre' of The Waste Land is not hidden because Eliot wished to avoid

'clichés', as Brooks contends,[62] but because Eliot was, quite simply, not a Christian.

Brooks' argument appears little more than wishful thinking on the part of a

conservative American Christian critic.

By 1939, then, the perception of The Waste Land as an utterly spiritual poem,

based on Westonian symbolism, was complete. Arthurian scholars, by and large, have

accepted the Weston-centred reading of Eliot's poem and have emphasised the text as

a chronicle of contemporary religious doubts, maintaining that The Waste Land,

commonly regarded as the greatest poem of the twentieth century, is fundamentally an

Arthurian poem.[63] Yet it is possible to continue to read Eliot's poem as Arthurian in

origin (or at least in part) without resorting to such a firm Weston-centric reading. Nor

is *The Waste Land*'s use of Grail symbolism wholly concerned with religious

signification.

'Doth all that haunts the waste and wild mourn?' the influence of the *Idylls* on

The Waste Land

The search for alternative sources of the waste land has yielded a variety of

possibilities. Malory, St. Augustine's *Confessions* (c. 397), the King James *Apocrypha*

(1611), Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900) and even Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*

(1818) have all been proffered for consideration.[64] The waste land motif, however,

was a relatively common symbol in poetry from the mid-nineteenth century on both

sides of the Atlantic.

Edwin Arnold's 'Hagar in the Wilderness' of 1853 is one of the first to make

use of this motif in the Victorian period. It begins:

> A weary waste of blank and barren land,
> A lonely, lonely sea of shifting sand, [...]
> And not a breath to cool, -- and not a breeze
> To stir one feather of the drooping trees;
> Only the desert wind with hungry moan.[65]

The poem is a Christian allegory, derived in narrative and imagery from Genesis,

verses 16 and 21. Those who suffer in the desert unjustly will be eternally rewarded,

is the text's plain moral message ('Though bitter disappointment, baffled strife, /

Leave ye but laggards in the race of life; / Hope on!').[66]

Other uses of the waste land, however, are exclusively secular. One instance of

the motif can be found in one of William Morris's 'Northern' poems, which begins:

> O hearken, ye who speak the English tongue,

> How in a waste land ages long ago,
> The very heart of the North bloomed into song
> After long brooding o'er this tale of woe.[67]

The American satirist, poet and critic, Ambrose Bierce wrote in 'Sires and Sons'

(1909) of how 'Wild wanton luxury lays waste the land' and how then 'dies the State!

– and, in its carcass found, / The millionaires all maggot-like abound'.[68]

Contemporary Arthurian poetry may also have inspired Eliot. As Robert Ian Scott has

shown, Madison Cawein's 1913 poem, 'Waste Land', pre-empts much of Eliot's use

of the motif:

> The cricket's cry and the locust's whir,
> And the note of a bird's distress,
> With the rasping sound of the grasshopper,
> Clung to the loneliness
> Like burrs to a trailing dress.[69]

Another possible Arthurian influence on *The Waste Land* is 'The Last Ballad' (1899)

by John Davidson, a poet whom the young Eliot much admired.[70] Its descriptions of

the waste land as 'scalding deserts' and 'apanages of despair' bear some resemblance

to Eliot's later depictions in 'What the Thunder Said'.[71] Once again, the waste land is

a secular symbol of threatened social collapse.

Such are some of the possibilities of Eliot's source for the waste land. Yet

despite the fact that it has not been discussed before, one source looms larger than all

the others: Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Although Tennyson and other Victorian

writers were not alluded to in his notes to *The Waste Land*, they were very much at

the forefront of Eliot's mind during the gestation of the poem. For three years (1916-

18) Eliot had given tutorial classes on Tennyson and other Victorian poets at Southall

for the University of London and at the time of writing *The Waste Land*, he delivered

twenty-five lectures on Victorian literature at Sydenham, London.[72]

Eliot's creative and critical relationship with Tennyson was complex. His

Harvard poetry, like that of many of his contemporaries, continually echoes

Tennyson's verse.[73] Eliot's early professional criticism was reserved towards the

Victorian's poetry, moving to a more appreciate view by the mid-nineteen thirties.* Of

the Arthurian epic the more mature Eliot wrote in 1936 that in choosing the

descriptive title *Idylls* 'Tennyson perhaps showed an appreciation of his limitations.

For his poems are always descriptive, and always picturesque; they are never really

narrative.'[74] In many ways it was a statement of poetic affinity: like Tennyson, Eliot

was a poet of description, whose 'flashes of lightening' revealed 'the wreck of the

storm' of post-war Europe.[75] Similarly, his work was imagistic, constructed out of

impressions rather than narrative. Certainly when Eliot did turn to narrative in his

later verse dramas, the success was not equal to that of his poetry. Also, both poets'

work, especially *The Waste Land* and the *Idylls*, can be considered as essentially

dialogic. But there was another sense of correspondence between the two, as further

suggested in Eliot's 1936 essay. Tennyson was, Eliot held, a poet of shallowness – the

pre-eminent chronicler of the decrepitude (literary, spiritual, moral, intellectual) of his

day. Eliot believed he had been born in 'an age that succeeds his own in shallowness'

and he became the twentieth century's foremost recorder of this 'shallowness'.[76]

The affinities between Tennyson's and Eliot's waste lands are most clear in

'The Passing of Arthur' and 'What the Thunder Said', the concluding poems to both

writers' epics. Tennyson's waste land is realised in the final battle at Camlan, which

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* In 1921 Eliot compared Tennyson unfavourably with the Metaphysical Poets, citing him as an example of Eliot's theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility'. In an essay written at the close of the decade, Eliot admitted that Tennyson was a 'great' poet, but one who often has to 'force' his 'effect' upon the reader. Here the comparison was to Dante. By 1936 Eliot's view was more generous: 'Tennyson is a great poet, for reasons that are perfectly clear.' He appreciated Tennyson's poetic 'ear' (he said it was the finest since Milton's), his skill in constructing verse forms and fashioning new metres, and his originality. See Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets' (1921), 'Dante' (1929) and 'Tennyson' (1936) in *Selected Essays*, 281-91 (287-8); 237-79 (248); 328-39 (328-331).

sees the total collapse of the Arthurian imperium. On the eve of battle Arthur asks the

wind 'doth all that haunts the waste and wild / Mourn, knowing it will go along with

me?'[77] The battle itself takes place upon 'the waste sand by the waste sea', where

Arthur hears the 'great voice that shakes the world, / And wastes the narrow realm

whereon we move, / And beats upon the faces of the dead'.[78] And there is this

description of Arthur' being taken onto the dusky barge, attended by the Three

Queens, which possesses a very similar tone to Eliot's 'What the Thunder Said':

> And from them rose
> A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
> And, as it were one voice, an agony
> Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
> All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
> Or hath come, since the making of the world.[79]

Eliot's description of the waste land shares a similar lexicon to Tennyson's

'The Passing of Arthur': 'dust', 'bones', 'rock', 'graves' and 'tombs', 'agony',

'lamentation', 'dead', 'death' and 'dying', 'murmur's, 'mutters' and 'rumours'.[80]

There are ruined gardens;[81] devastated cities among hills and mountains;[82] 'voices'

continually cry out from the gloom,[83] and dark, hooded figures surround the

landscape.[84] But the closeness of the two poems is not just vocabular and the depth of

their intimacy cannot be perceived from a few brief images. Tennyson's descriptions

of the waste land go to the heart of Eliot's poem. Both 'The Passing of Arthur' and

'What the Thunder Said' are conclusions to what are primarily dialogic poems: but

both final sections revert to imagistic accounts of actual and physical waste lands,

symbolic of the social collapse they feared or perceived in their own, contemporary

societies.

Tennyson's ruined kingdom is haunted by the voices of the dead and dying,[85]

just as Eliot's waste land has been narrated throughout by dead or dead-in-life

characters. Both poets place a ruined chapel in the midst of their waste lands, which

offer brief but ultimately empty refuge. In 'The Passing of Arthur' Bedivere bears the

mortally wounded king to a chapel on the battle field.[86] Lit by moonlight, Arthur rests

among 'a broken chancel with a broken cross, / That stood on a dark strait of barren

land'.[87] In *The Waste Land*, there is the corresponding description:

> In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
> Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
> There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
> It has no windows and the door swings,[88]

The similarity to Tennyson's ruined chapel is striking. And, without a Grail chapel –

even a ruined one – it is difficult to support the thesis that *The Waste Land* is some

sort of transfigured Grail quest with a discernable (if disappointed) conclusion at the

Chapel Perilous. Both chapels are situated next to water – Tennyson's lies between a

lake and the ocean. The first receives Excalibur; the second removes Arthur from the

world.[89] These two waters receive both the man and instrument of government

(Excalibur), extinguishing the Arthurian kingdom, but bringing also a distant hope of

Arthur's return and the promise of societal renewal: 'The old order changeth, yielding

place to new, / And God fulfils himself in many ways, / Lest one good custom should

corrupt the world'.[90] Eliot's chapel lies near the water of the Ganges, which, as Eliot

often tells the reader, signifies death.[91] But with the rain and thunder of the storm,

there is some glimpse of hope for Eliot's waste land too.[92]

If the relationship between these two poems is established, it is imperative to

discern the nature of the Tennysonian waste land from which Eliot, consciously or

unconsciously, derived his barren imagery. Tennyson's references to the waste land

are numerous; their significance is overwhelmingly concerned with social and

national collapse. Never does it appear linked to the spiritual health of the Arthurian

kingdom.[*] Instead, the waste land serves as a frequent description of the country that

has been devastated by war and civil strife ('The Coming of Arthur', 'The Holy

Grail'),[93] which Arthur promises to restore to habitation ('Gareth and Lynette',

'Geraint and Enid').[94] The waste land remains a memory of the earlier strife

throughout the *Idylls*. In 'The Coming of Arthur', the kings says that the land is

'[v]ext with waste dreams';[95] in 'Merlin and Vivien', the wily damsel was orphaned

upon the 'sad-sounding wastes of Lyonesse': her vengefulness will lead the land to

another waste land.[96]

But there is a second significance to this motif: the waste land is symbolic of

public and private disharmony, domestic discord and the gradual moral decline at

court. As the *Idylls* progress to their tragic denouement, both senses become

intertwined. The earliest fusion of the motif's significations occurs in 'Geraint and

Enid', which is replete with images of the waste land.[97] Driven into self-exile from the

Arthurian court because of Geraint's mistrust of his wife's fidelity, the absence of

domestic harmony (precipitated by rumours of Guinevere's adultery) results in their

adventures through 'the heart of waste and wilderness', filled with bitter images and

encounters.[98] The poem concludes with Arthur sending forth the forces of civilisation:

> The blameless King [...] sent a thousand men
> To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
> Cleared the dark places and let in the law,
> And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land.[99]

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[*] It is indicative that although the symbol is apparent throughout the *Idylls* the waste land is absent in 'Balin and Balan', the episode in which 'the dolorous blow' is traditionally dealt to King Pellam, laying his kingdom to waste (cf. *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, 56-7). Tennyson, however, includes no such significance. And in 'The Holy Grail' the two references to the waste land are neither magical nor are they tied to the quest of Grail in any way.

Yet 'Geraint and Enid' ends with a premonition of the wasting of the whole Arthurian

world in the conclusion to the *Idylls*, with Geraint taking Enid once more from

Arthur's court in fear of the rumours of Guinevere's adultery.[100]

The double meaning in the motif also features heavily in 'Lancelot and

Elaine', during Lancelot's journeys through the 'waste marches' and 'desolate

isles'.[101] He is driven to these 'wastes and solitudes' in his madness, brought on by his

guilty lust for Guinevere.[102] Madness comes upon him once more in 'The Holy Grail',

when he again flees to the 'waste fields'.[103] And in 'Guinevere', after the lovers'

adultery has been discovered, the queen flees to the nunnery:

> she to Almesbury
> All night long by glimmering waste and weald,
> And heard the Spirits of the waste and weald
> Moan as she fled.[104]

The waste lands are the moral and geographical outlands to which the knights and

ladies of Arthur's court go when they cannot reconcile personal desires with public

duty; when private sins threaten to become social tragedies. These wastes are haunted

by the memories of savagery and symbolise the ensuing collapse of civilisation, as

brought about in 'The Passing of Arthur'.

The *Idylls'* preoccupation with domestic and internal discord and their impact

on civilisation is also recognisable in Eliot's poem, though, of course, Eliot's *The*

Waste Land constructs the domestic-public interrelationship with little of the

didacticism Tennyson brought to his Victorian epic. The majority of the 'characters'

of *The Waste Land*, whether contemporary or historical, are found in relationships

which are dysfunctional or sterile. Among the historical or literary relationships there

are the adulterous lovers Tristan and Isolde; the suicides, Anthony and Cleopatra; the

illicit affair of Elizabeth and Leicester.[105] Among the present-day inhabitants of the

waste land, there are the uncommunicative, nameless couple who argue in 'A Game

of Chess';[106] Lil and her friend, who sit in an East End pub discussing Lil's failing

marriage, pregnancy, bad teeth and abortion. There is also the ugly affair between the

typist and 'the young man carbuncular', described in disgusted tones,[107] and the later

sexual encounter between a couple out at Moorgate ('I raised my knees / Supine on

the floor of a narrow canoe [...] After the event / He wept. He promised "a new start".

/ I made no comment. What should I resent?').[108] The transformation of the familial

into the horrific continues in 'What the Thunder Said': there are murmurs of 'maternal

lamentation' that 'sound high in the air';[109] the only suggestion of children in this

sterile waste land comes in the description of 'bats with baby faces in the violet

light'.[110] And, with its allusion to a father's insane grief for his murdered dead son,

and the ensuing bloody revenge, the third from last line, drawn from Thomas Kyd's

The Spanish Tragedy (1592) – 'Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe' –

reinforces the impression that the focus of much of the waste land is on the

cataclysmic interaction between the domestic and the larger societal spheres.

*   *   *   *   *

That no critic emphasised the Victorian basis of Eliot's poem severely affected later

readings of the poem. It was a neglect which allowed an undue importance to be

placed on the role of Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* in making sense of Eliot's

disparate and fragmentary verses. As divorced from its proper literary-historical

context, *The Waste Land* was also able to be read as a primarily religious, rather than

societal, text. This is not to suggest that the *Idylls of the King* is the 'key' to *The*

Waste Land; nor should Tennyson's influence be seen as a replacement for Weston's

From Ritual to Romance. It is still likely, if we consider Eliot's reference to Weston's

work to be sincere, that *From Ritual to Romance* remains one of the most important

influences on Eliot's poem and perhaps the most likely candidate for the creative

impulse for the writing of *The Waste Land*. Nonetheless, due to the similarities in

vocabulary, theme and image, there seems little doubt that Eliot's reading of the *Idylls*

tempered Eliot's use of the waste land motif.

The associations between Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Tennyson's *Idylls* are

not restricted to a few barren images, or the sharing of a similar lexicon. Its depiction

of the waste and barrenness of contemporary society is bound up with a very

Tennysonian concept of the impact of the private morality on public health. Both

Eliot's and Tennyson's poems construct their Waste Lands almost exclusively around

themes of domestic discord, which lead to larger catastrophes. And in *The Waste

Land*'s acute anxiety over this relationship – the central theme of so many Victorian

novels and other literary works – Eliot's work appears to be much more nineteenth

century in its cultural orientation than is commonly supposed. And although the style

of Eliot's poetry (its concern with urban squalor, its details of degradation, its

ostentatious display of learning, its difficulty) is archetypally modernist, its central

theme (the upper-middle class's extreme social anxiety over the collapse of society,

its institutions, values and belief systems) is staunchly Victorian. It is no accident that

the original title of *The Waste Land* was taken from a Victorian novel, its epigraph

from an Edwardian novella.*

Also, by understanding Eliot's use of Tennyson, we are much closer to the

early critics who saw the poem as an articulation of the chaos and disintegration of

Europe and America in the years following the war:

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* The original title was 'He Do the Police in Different Voices', taken from Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864). The epigraph to this draft of the poem was from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902): 'Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision – he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath – The horror! the horror'. This was later replaced by a passage from Petronius's *Satyricon* (First Century A.D.).

[Eliot] is speaking not only for a personal distress, but for the starvation of a whole civilization – for people grinding at barren office-routine in the cells of gigantic cities, drying up their soul in eternal toil whose products never bring them profit, where their pleasures are so vulgar and so feeble that they are almost sadder than their pains.[111]

As the twenties progressed and the politics of the thirties loomed larger, *The Waste Land* was no longer seen as a dystopian, fragmentary recoil to the horrors of post-war life. As new writers and intellectuals sought to make sense of the 'immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history' (to use Eliot's words) Eliot's poem became a battle ground for the competing ideological systems that would seek to make the futility and anarchy intelligible.[112] It is unsurprising that those critics who sought to make *The Waste Land* coherent and narratively sensible were all exponents of these newly appealing political systems. Edmund Wilson, the first critic to see a sense of coherence in Eliot's poem, was a liberal Marxist; Leavis, who codified later Weston-centric readings of *The Waste Land*, was one of the great system-builders of the day, the exponent of the Life Force; Brooks, the most systematic of all Eliot's explicators, was a reactionary conservative Christian. Eliot himself found spiritual solace in the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England and political solace in right-wing reactionism.

Whether Marxist, conservative or Christian reactionary, the interpreters of *The Waste Land* were as influential upon later writers as Eliot himself. Indeed, for many readers, *The Waste Land* became virtually synonymous with *From Ritual to Romance*; while writers like Mary Butts, who self-consciously reworked *The Waste Land* in her novel *Armed with Madness* (1928), seemed to have understood Eliot's work as wholly centred on the Westonian Grail. Nonetheless, although *The Waste Land* became, in the hands of its explicators, the most influential of the 'Grail' texts of the twentieth

century, it was not the only influence on other writers who would rewrite the story of

the sacred vessel.

'The very spring of our culture': the Grail in later interwar fiction

For Eliot the Grail story was a dead end.* None of his later work, written after his

conversion to Anglo-Catholicism, expressed any interest in the Grail or to related

motifs or narratives. Yet Eliot became, in many ways, the Tennyson of his generation,

his influence over later writers being almost equal to that of his Victorian predecessor.

So imitated was Eliot's *The Waste Land* that, as Brian Howard noted, '[i]t became

such a plague that the moment the eye encountered, in a newly arrived poem, the

words "stone", "dust" or "dry" one reached for the waste-paper basket'.[†][113] Most of

these forgotten or destroyed works were unconcerned with the waste land as an

Arthurian motif and so do not concern us here; nor do the great American novels

which also derived much of their symbolism from Eliot's poem – among them

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Hemmingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926),

Faulkner's *Soldier's Pay* (1925) and Steinbeck's *The Winter of Our Discontent*

(1961).[114]

In Britain, those who continued to produce literature which consciously

derived its narratives, symbols or motifs from the Grail story wrote in the shadow of

The Waste Land and its critics who interpreted the text as a latter-day Grail-romance.

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* Tennyson, however, remained a lasting influence on Eliot's poetry. *The Four Quartets* (1943) are particularly redolent of Tennyson's verse, especially *In Memoriam* (1850). Eliot borrowed some of his most important symbols from Tennyson, such as 'the figured leaf' ('Burnt Norton', II, l. 11; *In Memoriam*, XLIII, l. 11). He derived whole passages from his predecessor's work (cf. Norton', II, ll. 1-15, and 'Maud', ll. 102-7, 571-98). And in his use of abstract theological discourse, Tennyson's similar employment in *In Memoriam* seems to have been an influential model for Eliot while composing his own reflections on mortality, eternity and the passing of time.

† Brian Howard was the basis for Anthony Blanche in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1944). Blanche, a homosexual aesthete, recites *The Waste Land* during his undergraduate days at Oxford, while standing on a balcony with a megaphone: '"*I, Tiresias, have foresuffered all,*" he sobbed to them from the Venetian arches' while the undergraduate 'throng was on its way to the river' (34).

Responses to Eliot's agnostic, sterile and calamitous text were varied. Some extended

the assimilation of Weston's theories into contemporary literature, or sought to

reconcile the Victorian and modern versions of the story. Others responded to the

non-Christian emphasis that Weston and Eliot had placed upon the myth by asserting

a virulent Christian tradition, which perceived the Grail as a channel to mystic

experience. But in the main authors reflected the conflict between the competing

theories surrounding the Grail (Ritualist, Christian, Celtic, Pagan). The ambivalence

of the Grail became its chief attraction for many writers; authors including Mary

Butts, John Cowper Powys and Naomi Mitchison all utilised the Grail as a powerful

symbol of contemporary social uncertainties and anxieties. By the end of the 1920s,

despite Eliot's indebtedness to the waste land of the *Idylls*, Tennyson's paradigm

would appear stripped of all cultural currency.

The Waste Land was not the only text published in 1922 which was concerned

with the Grail story. A hostile attack on contemporary materialism, as well as a

refutation of the Pagan-Ritual accounts of the origins of the Grail, Arthur Machen's

The Secret Glory was first written in 1913, but it was only when the author was

enjoying a popular revival was he able to publish it. Set in a roughly contemporary

environment, Machen's novel tells the story of Ambrose Meyrick, 'a miserable little

humbug' from South Wales, who suffers various torments at his public school,

Lupton.[115] He inherits the Grail from its aged Welsh keeper midway through the

novel, before avenging himself on his former tormentors and travelling to the Holy

Land where he is crucified, an event which brings him closer to the Grail. The Grail is

here an ancient relic of Celtic Christianity which has the power to transport the holy to

mystical realms. The Celtic basis of the Grail owes less to the scholarly research of

Alfred Nutt (who understood the vessel in pagan, rather than Christian terms) and

more to Machen's experiments with the occult and various Christian mystical cults.*

The Secret Glory is a double narrative, at once a grail romance and an

untraditional school story. It is in the school parts of the novel that Machen

demonstrates the most obvious clash between the nineteenth-century and modern

(mystical, spiritual) understandings of the medieval. They come in the form of

Meyrick's conflict with his chief tormentor, Horbury – his uncle and the bursar of

Lupton School. Meyrick's passions are medieval: he first incurs the wrath of his uncle

when he is late returning to school after spending a day admiring the gothic

architecture of the nearby Seldon Abbey. Being a school where the masters are

'nothing more or less than bloated schoolboys', Meyrick is severely beaten by his

uncle for such an impudent interest.[116] Meyrick's elevation to the spiritual plain,

however, appears to validate such a 'genuine' appreciation of the medieval.

Meyrick's uncle Horbury is similarly consumed with an enthusiasm for

medievalism, but of the nineteenth-century Neo-Gothic type. He appears as a

malevolent portrait of one of the many other nineteenth-century public school

headmasters who sought to employ Muscular Chivalry as a means of educating upper-

middle class schoolboys. Horbury spends his evenings imagining the school (with

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* Machen (1863-1947) was an avowed anti-materialist throughout his life. His early work was influenced by the decadent movement of the 1890s and constitutes a series of lurid tales on Gothic or fantastic themes. *The Three Impostors* (1895) is commonly regarded as his best work of this period. At the turn of the century, following a period of sustained clinical depression brought on by the death of his first wife, Amy Hogg, Machen recast himself as a champion of mysticism and spirituality, which can be seen, in part, as a new means of combating the economic and scientific materialism which he saw as the ruination of contemporary society. He believed that the function of literature was to convey a sense of spiritual ecstasy. Legends of the Grail, Machen believed, were based on vague recollections of the rites of the Celtic Church. These ideas feature heavily in *The Secret Glory*, which was written around the same time as he published essays on Grail origins in Alfred Douglas' *The Academy*. Mark Valentine's biography *Arthur Machen* (1995) is a useful introduction.

himself as headmaster) transformed into resplendent Victorian Gothic.* Unlike

Meyrick's mystic love of architecture and holy vessels, Horbury's vision is purely

materialistic: the transformation of the school's buildings into 'red brick French

thirteenth century, with Venetian detail, much admired' is done purely in order to

increase school, and personal, revenues. There is something wholly inauthentic about

all his dreams: he garners ecclesiastic support; designs an impressive list of 'old

boys', including Walter Raleigh; and orders anything preceding the Gothic revival to

be 'boarded up and used as a gardener's shed'.†[117] Presumably, the reader is meant to

nod sagely when the uncle's career is abruptly ended with unfounded allegations of

indecent behaviour – rumours which apparently begin with the Grail itself, now in the

keeping of the increasingly vengeful Ambrose Meyrick. The increasingly sadistic tone

of the latter half of the novel was common to several other Grail novels at this time,

including Charles Williams's *War in Heaven* (1930) and Sherard Vines's *Return,*

Belphegor! (1932).

Machen wrote several other essays and stories on the Grail, most notably *The*

Great Return (1915), which, following the discovery of purportedly true Grails in

Wales and Glastonbury, describes in an anecdotal style of reportage how the Grail

appeared in a Welsh village, where it healed the sick and united the Anglican and

Nonconformist congregations in a mystical Celtic Mass.[118] An influence on Machen's

views of the Grail was his friend and fellow mystic, A.E. Waite, who introduced

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* As a further signifier of the bursar's love of all things medievalist, Horbury also occupies himself
away from classes in annotating Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur' for a selection of 'English
literature for Lower Forms' (20-1).
† As part of his materialist plans for Lupton School, the bursar intends to encourage many more 'rich
Jews' to enrol. For the 'rich Jew who desired to send his son to an English Public School was, in nine
cases out of ten, anxious to do so precisely because he wanted to sink his son's connection with Jewry
in oblivion [...] the more Jews the better' (24-5). Clearly aligned to the forces of materialism, and in
opposition to Meyrick's and Machen's mysticism, the presence of the rich Jews in *The Secret Glory* is
the first hint at the growth in anti-Semitism that became a staple part of much of the Grail literature of
the 1920s and 30s, especially in Mary Butts's *Armed With Madness* (1928) and Charles Williams's
War in Heaven (1930).

Machen to the various Christian-mystical sects with which he was associated.[*] In

1903 they collaborated on a verse drama, 'The Hidden Sacrament of the Holy

Grail'.[119] Apart from this play, Waite's only other fictional contribution to the Grail

legend was a religious epic, *The Book of the Holy Grail* (1921), which charted his

own mystical experiences in blank verse interspersed with short lyrics.

More influential than his poetry was Waite's scholarship on the Grail. His

research was far more controversial than his mystical verses, which belong 'firmly to

the vein of late Victorian religious poetry.'[120] Born in New York, but brought up in

London, Waite was raised in 'genteel poverty alleviated by fervent devotion to the

Roman Catholic church'.[121] The mysteries of Sacramental Christianity would remain

central to much of Waite's life and criticism. He intensely disliked Weston's ritual

theory of the Grail's origin (his attacks on her became increasingly personal and

misogynistic), while academic scholars found his mystic understanding of the Grail

utterly 'fantastic'.[122] Waite's scholarship took his readers into the realms of

heightened Christianity: into hidden Catholic sects which maintained the secrets of

esoteric knowledge which, as is often the case with esoteric writers, Waite did not

reveal.

Another adherent of Waite's esoteric writings was Charles Williams. Williams

joined Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross in 1917. After reading Waite's *The*

Hidden Church of the Holy Grail (1909), Williams sent Waite a copy of *War in*

Heaven (1930), Williams's first foray into the Grail legend.[123] Although more famous

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[*] Waite, Machen and Evelyn Underhill, who wrote a contemporary-set Grail novel, *The Column of Dust* (1909), which is dedicated to Machen and concerns a young clerk, Constance Tyrell, who keeps the Grail in her London flat, were all members of the Order of the Golden Dawn. The Order came to be subject to a number of scandals in the years immediately before the Great War. Waite formed The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross in 1915, which was more overtly Christian in orientation than the Order of the Golden Dawn had been. Charles Williams joined in 1917. Waite also joined The Quest Society, whose members included W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Underhill and John Masefield. See Francis King, *Ritual Magic in England* (1970), 112; Grayson, 'In Quest of Jessie Weston', 37, and Barber, *The Holy Grail*, 295-6.

for his later *Taliessin through Logres* (1938) and *The Region of Summer Stars* (1944),

Williams's early 'spiritual shocker', as he termed it, has much to commend it. It is a

well-paced thriller which begins as a sensationalist crime story, a style that could not

be more different from the lofty tone of nineteenth-century Grail poetry:

> The telephone bell was ringing wildly, but without result, since there was no-one in the room but the corpse.[124]

The corpse is that of a victim of a black magic ritual perpetuated by Gregory

Persimmons, a publisher of occult books. Throughout the course of the novel

Persimmons, along with a Grail scholar, Sir Giles Tumulty,[*] a Greek merchant and a

mysterious Jew, attempts to wrestle control of the Grail for diabolical purposes. Much

of the novel is taken up with lurid descriptions of their Black Magic rituals, and

Satanic attempts to murder, possess another's soul and to destroy the Grail. This

Black Magic is opposed by three figures who roughly correspond to Galahad,

Perceval and Bors: the Archdeacon, Kenneth Mornington and the Duke of Ridings.

For each of these latter-day knights, the Grail is revealed according to their innate

capacity to perceive the nature of vessel. The Catholic duke sees it as a sacred relic of

his Church; while Mornington, the poet, understands it through the literature of

'Hawker, and Tennyson, John, Malory and the mediævals'.[†125] Williams, however,

leaves the reader in no doubt that although glimpses of the Grail can be perceived by

many, it is the Archdeacon's understanding of the Grail which is the most true. For

him the Grail is a channel linking the material world, the sacraments and history to

Divine Nature itself.[126]

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[*] The title of Giles Tumulty's latest work of Grail scholarship is *Historical Vestiges of Sacred Vessels in Folklore*, a work that sounds suspiciously like a description of the work of the Celticist and Folklorist, Alfred Nutt.

[†] During the veneration of the Grail, he sees 'the chivalry of England riding upon a quest', and to describe it he repeats the lines from Tennyson's 'The Holy Grail': 'And down the long beam stole the Holy Graal, / Rose-red with beatings in it' (136).

The novel reaches its denouement with the arrival of Prester John, a rare,

though not unique figure in the traditional story, probably suggested by Waite's *The*

Hidden Church of the Holy Grail.[127] He defeats Persimmons and his accomplices and

then holds a Mass, wherein the glory of the Grail is revealed for those who maintained

the good fight against the Satanic forces. At the Mass the Archdeacon, like Galahad,

passes into Heaven:

> The archdeacon stood up suddenly in his stall; then he came sedately from it,
> and turned in the middle of the chancel to face the three who watched. He
> smiled at them, and made a motion of farewell with his hand [...] as he set
> foot on the first [steps of the altar he] sank gently to the ground.[128]

This spiritual shocker, which began as a crime thriller, ends in a beatific vision of the

Grail and the assumption into Heaven of a quiet, unassuming man, who throughout

the novel has a psalm quietly on his lips ('His mercy endureth for ever').[129] The

difference from the nineteenth-century warring, questing Galahad is pronounced. The

Archdeacon achieves victory through faith, not might of arms, while Grail scholars

are mocked or resisted throughout the novel.

The strength of Machen's, Waite's and Williams's resistance to the nineteenth

century's version of the Grail as an Anglican / Humanist symbol was grounded in the

fact that each of these writers had found an alternative vision of the vessel. Machen,

Waite and Williams were all interested in the Grail as a mystical object, whether

Celtic, Catholic or Anglo-Catholic in orientation. It may also be relevant, when

considering their resistance to traditional English interpretations of the Grail, that

none of them were from the usual English upper-middle class, which provided nearly

all of the Arthurian writers of the Victorian period. Machen was Welsh; Waite a

naturalised American and Williams was from a working-class North London suburb.

For English writers who were of Tennyson's class and lacked a confirmed religious

belief, the problem of how to treat the story of the Grail was more problematic, its solution less readily definable.

In *Peronnik the Fool* (1921), the Anglo-Irish gentry writer George Moore favoured a hybrid approach to the Grail. Unlike the work of most other interwar Grail writers, Moore set his novel not in the contemporary world but in the medieval past – his source being a Breton tale collected by Émile Souvestre in 1841 and known in English through Andrew Lang's *Lilac Book of Fairy Tales* (1910).[*130] The tale concerns the adventures of a simple cowherd, called Peronnik, who must journey to the Castle Kerglas to obtain the Gold Basin, which has the power to supply limitless food, cure sickness and restore the dead to life, and the Diamond Lance, which is able to slay all whom it touches. When he achieves this quest Peronnik is able to free his village from the drought it has been suffering for several years. Joining the King of Brittany, the cowherd then drives out the French from Nantes, and goes on to defeat the French at Anjou, Poitou and Normandy, before travelling to the Holy Land, where he defeats the Saracens, forces their king to be baptised and marries his daughter.

Moore Christianised this Celtic tale and also added several distinctly Westonian elements. Peronnik manages to achieve his quest through a mixture of prayer, wood-lore and empathy with the natural world.[131] While the Golden Basin is essentially a Celtic vessel of plenty, familiar enough to any reader of the *Mabinogion*, when used in conjunction with the Lance it becomes a restorative power that can rejuvenate a waste land that Moore configures in distinctly Westonian terms. The land is infertile because of the drought – the cattle are dying, the people are starving – caused by the sorceress who has cursed the land, while the villagers' faith in God

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[*] It is unlikely that 'Peronnik l'idiot' is a particularly ancient Breton tale. In 1899 W. Newell wrote that 'It has little similarity to genuine Breton folk-tales, and it is scarcely to be doubted that the account we have is only a literary recast, answering to the inventions of Hersart de la Villemarqué' ('The Legend of the Holy Grail. VI', 278).

begins to waver as no knight is able to achieve the quest of the Basin and Spear.[132]

Peronnik, despised as the village fool and needed as the village's saviour, is a version

of the Frazerian scapegoat.[133] Sir Giles, who helps Peronnik on his quest, but cannot

achieve it on his own, due to his being wounded in the knee, is an echo of the

wounded king. When Peronnik returns to the village he throws the spear into the air

and the villagers sing for rain, which comes and restores the land, bringing a 'second

springtime', before he travels on, feeding the starving people of Brittany with the

Basin, while routing its enemies with the lance.[134]

Medieval, Christian, Celtic and Westonian, Moore's *Peronnik the Fool* is a

hotchpotch of different Grails (though interestingly the Golden Basin is never

described as the Grail) and seems uncertain as how to synthesise them into a coherent

whole. Nonetheless, written only a year after *From Ritual to Romance* appeared,

Peronnik the Fool demonstrates how quickly Weston's ideas were disseminated and

appropriated by contemporary writers.[*]

Moore's *Peronnik* is unusual for the period in that it is set in a roughly

medieval world. Written at the start of the next decade, Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*

(1931) is more typical of the post-war forays into the Grail story as it is situated in a

roughly contemporary environment, stretching from the mid-nineteenth to the first

decades of the twentieth century. And although Woolf's most experimental novel

does not allude to the Grail directly it can still be seen, in part, as an attempt to

reconcile Tennysonian and Westonian accounts of the Grail. The novel traces the

intertwined lives of six characters – Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Jinny and Louis

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[*] T.S. Eliot was apparently outraged to learn that, while the American journal, *The Dial*, had offered $150 for *The Waste Land*, the Irish novelist, George Moore had been offered £100 (roughly three times the amount) for *Peronnik the Fool* (Valerie Eliot, 'Introduction', to *The Waste Land: a facsimile and transcript of the original drafts*, xxiv). Moore's story appeared in *The Dial* in November, 1921; Eliot's *The Waste Land* appeared exactly one year later. That Moore, Eliot and Machen would publish three very different accounts of the Grail legend in a period of 12 months is indicative of the cultural importance of the Grail at this time.

– in a series of interior monologues. These are interspersed with italicised passages

which record the passing of time through charting the ascent and descent of the sun,

the passing of the seasons and the rise and fall of the waves.

Linking these voices is Percival, whose thoughts are not recorded in the novel.

Percival has been perceived in many different ways by critics: Jane Garrity has

described him as an 'archaic hero-mother', tied to the interwar process of feminising

imperial ideals, J.W. Graham saw the figure as a 'hero of youth, illusion,

unconsciousness and action', and Michael Tratner has claimed that in Percival Woolf

'compressed [...] all the political concerns she devoted her life to opposing:

militarism, imperialism, male chauvinism, and acquisitive individualism.'[135] It is in

Percival's association with the Grail knight of nineteenth-century medievalism that

Woolf's character is able to combine these disparate views – though the relationship

between the two has not hitherto been examined. Percival first appears at the boys'

public school where he is captain of the cricket team.[136] He leads a purely physical

existence – rowing, riding and hunting as well as playing cricket. And it is to his

physicality that the other characters are drawn, adoring 'his magnificence'. It is

predicted at school that Percival 'will certainly attempt some forlorn enterprise and

die in battle'.[137] And die he does, halfway through the novel when serving in India.

But his death is needless, not part of any heroic conflict, but caused by his horse

which throws him to the ground. Percival represents youth, physicality, military

endeavour and Empire. Bernard describes him as 'our captain'; Louis calls him 'a

medieval commander'.[138] He closely resembles that other Grail knight of the

nineteenth-century public school – Galahad. But added to this portrait is a more

sensual, more creative force, derived from the sexual-nature symbolism Weston

understood to be the heart of the Grail problem and which, no doubt, Woolf was aware of.

Most of the characters are sexually drawn to Percival at some point in the novel.[139] This sexual magnetism is related to a sense of paganism that surrounds Percival. Neville, watching him at school, sees Percival as 'remote from us all in a pagan universe', filled with 'pagan indifference' at the Christian ceremonies which are celebrated around him.[140] He is intimately associated with nature; a purely physical, unreflective presence, to whom Rhoda offers a sacrifice of flowers.[141] Whereas Eliot and later writers (Butts and Powys in particular) presented their texts as a riot of disparate quotation relating to the nature of the Grail, Woolf, as befits a novel of memory and harmony, presents Percival as a symbolic synthesis of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Percival is the past: as a 'conventional' hero, a representative of 'decency' and duty to one's country, he is at one with Alcibiades, Ajax and Hector and the medieval knights.[142] Yet as a memory he is also the means through which Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Jinny and Louis are able to identify the past, and identify each other, though their own differences – sexual, gendered, professional, temperamental – would otherwise divide them.[143] Percival joins the present to the past.

By overlaying the nineteenth century's public-school hero with the modernist symbolism of Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, Woolf managed to achieve, in what is the most Eliot-inspired of her novels, a satisfying conclusion to *The Waste Land*'s complex inheritance from the nineteenth century.[*] Eliot expressed his Victorian waste

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[*] One of the characters of *The Waves*, Louis, bares a striking resemblance to Eliot. Unlike the other characters, Louis is not English, but Australian by birth. Constantly mindful of his colonial, commercial background, Louis forms a reverence for English traditions (47) and forever seeks a sense of order in life. Louis is employed in the area of imperial finance (Eliot worked for the shipping insurers, Lloyds), while writing his poetry at night in his attic. Cautious, bony, intelligent, formidable, Louis possesses a 'sordid imagination. His heroes wore bowler-hats and talked about selling pianos for

land through fragmentary, incoherent verses – the nineteenth-century influence behind

which being barely perceptible to his contemporary readers. Woolf, however, used the

figure of Percival, the oldest of the Grail knights, to link the Victorian world view

with the post-war twentieth century. While the motif of the waste land is a symbol of

disharmony and lack of meaning, Woolf's Victorian/Westonian Percival is a sign of

unity and recognition (even though Percival is absent for most of the novel). Other

writers, however, did not seem to strive for such a conclusive synthesis to the problem

of the Grail. Instead, many were content to articulate the disparity of the Grail and the

irreconcilability of the various theories of what this vessel actually meant.

Mary Butts's *Armed with Madness* (1928) appears to be the first Grail novel to

emerge from an avowedly agnostic author.[*] It is a country-house novel populated by a

community of Bright Young Things who 'live fast and are always having

adventures'.[144] Its plot concerns the numerous mysteries surrounding a jade cup,

which is found at the bottom of a dried up well and is possibly the true Grail. The

drought which has caused the well to dry up is symbolic of the sterility of modern life

and, like much of the novel, derives quite obviously from Eliot's *The Waste Land* and

Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. Butts sums up the sterility of modern life just

before the 'Grail' is brought to the surface:

> [E]verywhere there was a sense of broken continuity, a dis-ease. The end of an
> age, the beginning of another. Revaluation of values. Phrases that meant
> something if you could mean them. [...] There was something wrong with all
> of them or with their world. [...] Shove it off on the war; but that did not
> help.[145]

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tenners. Through his landscape the tram squealed; the factory poured its acrid fumes. He haunted mean
streets and towns where women lay drunk, naked, on counterpanes on Christmas day. His words falling
from a shot-tower hit the water and up it spurted' (199-200).
[*] She would become an Anglo-Catholic in the mid 1930s.

The appearance of the cup – which is fetched out of the well with a spear, in a further reference to Weston – offers some promise of hope to this waste land. When the cup and the lance are reunited rain appears to replenish the parched earth. But, as in *The Waste Land*, water also brings death: a boat carrying twenty three Danish sailors is wrecked upon the coast during the storm, drowning its entire crew.[*]

These forces of possible regeneration are represented by the various persons staying at Gaunt House: Scylla Taverner and her brother, Felix, and their friend, Ross. These are joined by the homosexual lovers Clarence and Picus, and an American expatriate, Carson, who functions as the chief Grail-quester in the novel.[†] Like Williams's *War in Heaven*, published two years later, these forces of regeneration are contrasted with figures representing less spiritual interests. There are the 'swarming' tourists who want 'to see something off the regulation road' and threaten to invade the tranquillity of the Bright Young Things' Devon estate.[146] There is Mr. Tracy, the cup's original owner, who attempts to regain it from Picus, his son, who had stolen it at the start of the novel. He represents a repugnant materialism, and mutters 'Prupperty: prupperty: prupperty' as he plans to take back the cup.[147] And lastly, there is Phily, a 'slick young animal' with a 'vulgar accent'.[148] The narrative tone is particularly disgusted by the presence of this man 'from the gutter' who does business with Jews.[149] Presumably, the Grail is only for bohemian types of the upper-middle class.

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[*] Cf. *The Waste Land*, IV 'Death By Water', in which Phlebus the Phoenician is drowned in a storm (ll. 312-21). Eliot's poetry is also quoted at several points in the novel, as part of a web of numerous allusions to high and low culture, including, among others, Celtic legends, Negro Spirituals, lines from Ovid, Ira Gershwin and Jane Harrison's studies of cultural anthropology. Butts believed she was working 'on a parallel' with Eliot, though she was working on the positive side of the Grail story, while Eliot concentrated on the negative aspects of the waste land. Eliot, who refused to write an introduction to her first novel, does not seem to have liked her work. See 'Selections from the Journal of Mary Butts' (1966), 172.

[†] Carson is a mixture of the foolish Percival and the stereotype of the dumb-American tourist ('"God! What a beautiful place [...] This is the England we think of. Hardy's country isn't it?"', 11).

For Butts, the Grail was 'the very spring of our culture', 'the most wonderful thing to think about in the world'.[150] She was familiar with the work of many of the chief Grail scholars of the day – Weston, Nutt and Waite are alluded to at several points – and her knowledge of their work clearly influences the way that the Grail is presented in her novel.[151] Unlike the fiction of Machen, Waite and Williams, Butts's Grail has no definite origin or meaning. Indeed, it may not be the Grail at all. It appears, at various points in the novel, as the real 'Sanc-Grail', a Celtic Mass cup and even as an Indian 'poison-cup'; it is frequently used as an ashtray and once as a glass for whisky and soda.[*152] Towards the end of the novel, Picus, a bisexual mischievous Puck-like figure with an Oedipus complex, reveals that he planted the cup, which he stole from his father, in the well as a means of attracting the sexual attentions of another guest at the country house. There is no denouement to this novel. The 'Grail' is simply thrown back into the well and the novel ends with Clarence being cured of his psychopathic gay angst, brought on by the affair Picus, his lover, conducts with Scylla. *Armed with Madness*, then, is as confused and as perplexing in its attitude to the Grail as is the scholarship on which the book is founded.

This reactionary novel, which Virginia Woolf turned down for the Hogarth Press, with its suggestions of anti-Semitism (which are more evident in its 1932 sequel, *The Death of Felicity Taverner*),[153] has found favour with a growing number of academics.[154] The same could not be said for John Cowper Powys's Grail novel, *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932), perhaps the most scholarly of all Grail fictions published in the first half of the twentieth century. Interest in Powys's work peaked in

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* At an early point in the novel the guests at Gaunt House discuss the Grail and its associations for them (29-30). Felix and Clarence mention Tennyson and 'his temperance knights'. Both feel that the *Idylls* represent the 'Keltic Twilight', which Felix describes as 'a false way of telling about something that exists' and which 'inspired those awful pre-Raphaelite pictures [...] the world's worst art.' Others mention 'a mass said at Corbenic', Wagner and 'the female spirit of life'. Scylla says: 'Quod inferius sicut superius est', which Butts possibly took from Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* (1911), 35.

the 1970s, when *A Glastonbury Romance* was endorsed by the 'Tolkien generation',

but seems to have been in decline ever since.[155]

Powys's work is a huge novel, set in contemporary Glastonbury and its

environs. It possesses a Dickensian cast of characters – there are nearly fifty of them,

representing a spectrum of social classes from a marquis and a captain of industry to

Nonconformist preachers, brothel keepers, vagrants and socialist agitators.[156] Much of

its plot, which is as diverse as its characters, concerns the various conflicts between

Philip Crow, the industrial entrepreneur of Glastonbury, and John Geard, a

nonconformist preacher known as Bloody Jonnie due to his predilection for invoking

the blood of Christ in his sermons. While Crow wishes to industrialise Glastonbury,

Geard sets about planning to transform the town into a centre of a new religion

centred on the Grail, as well as supporting the town's conglomerate of Communists,

Mensheviks and Anarchists. The disagreements between these two men draw in all

the other conflicts in the novel: materialism/ spiritualism, capitalism/socialism,

sensuality/prudishness, and the old and the new.

With its large list of characters, its detailed descriptions, its precise

geographical location, its concerns with social problems and the impact of industry

and materialism on the inhabitants of Glastonbury, Powys's novel appears to be very

much in the vein of the Classic Realist novel. Yet its concern with esoteric spiritual

experience, along with its mystical passages and sometimes fantastical elements,

means that *A Glastonbury Romance* resists such easy pigeon-holing. The advocation

of a working commune would appear to align the book with the socialist novel; its

destruction in a flood – which brings with it spiritual revelation for Bloody Jonnie as

he is drowned – seems to lead away from any such categorisation.[157] Powys's novel is

a textualisation of the clash between nineteenth- and twentieth-century forms,

meanings and ideologies.

A Glastonbury Romance is, like others in this chapter, virtually unrecognisable

in its scope and theme from the nineteenth century's understanding of the Grail. Like

Butts's *Armed with Madness*, it is in many ways an 'answer' to *The Waste Land* in the

sense that while Eliot wrote of the barrenness of modern life, Powys attempts to bring

the rejuvenating, though death-bringing, waters to Glastonbury. As with many of the

Grail texts of the 1920s and 30s, *A Glastonbury Romance* is concerned with themes of

sexual attraction, sensuality, tourism, industry, materialism, history and literary and

cultural heritage. Yet for Powys there seems to be little sense of the 'dis-ease' or the

spiritual barrenness of the contemporary world. Neither is there any dislocation

between past and present. Everything in this wide-ranging novel is drawn together by

the Grail, 'the poetry of our race', as Powys described it.[158]

From Ritual to Romance is by far the biggest influence on Powys's

understanding of the Grail. But like *Armed with Madness*, Powys's novel frequently

cites the work of past and contemporary Grail scholars, among them Charlotte Guest,

John Rhŷs and Roger Sherman Loomis and Frederick Bligh Bond.[*][159] Powys does not

just present these conflicting notions of the Grail's origins, as Butts did, but puts

forward a unifying hypothesis of the Grail's meaning which, like Weston's

conjecture, is pre-Christian and pre-Celtic in origin:

> Christians had one name for this Power, the ancient heathen inhabitants of this
> place had another, and a quite different one. Everyone who came to this spot
> seemed to draw something from it, attracted by a magnetism too powerful for
> anyone to resist. But as different people approached it they changed its
> chemistry, though not its essence, by their own identity, so that upon none of

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[*] Bond was a scholar and an archaeologist who used spiritual mediums to guide his discoveries. In *The Gate of Remembrance* (1918), Bond related his discovery of numerous finds at Glastonbury through a series of spiritual experiments. Like Powys, Bond believed that Glastonbury had been a centre of spirituality for the various peoples and cultures of Britain for millennia.

them it had the same psychic. [...] Older than Christianity, older than the Druids, older than the gods of the Neolithic men, the many named Mystery had been handed down to subsequent generations by three psychic channels; by the channel of popular renown, by the channel of inspired poetry, and by the channel of individual experience.[160]

Central to Powys's hypothesis is Glastonbury itself. It is, in Powys's view, a centre of a mystical, spiritual power which has been experienced by its many historical inhabitants. 'Generations of mankind, aeons of past races, have – by their concentrated will – made Glastonbury miraculous'.[*161] Like the shifting people of Glastonbury, this force is evolving and appears in various manifestations. The Grail is symbolic of this mystical power; its multiple presentations (food-providing platter, Eucharistic chalice, regenerative cauldron and so on) are symptomatic of the evolving nature of the spiritual force.

Perhaps the Grail, then, if properly understood, is a means of reconciling contradictory belief systems, as well as the nature or natures of the Grail. Powys presented history as a continuous struggle between creative, mystical forces and destructive materialist ones.[†] His hypothesis for stringing together all the divergent Grail theories of the twentieth century is essentially comparative and reductivist. Whereas Frazerian anthropology (which Weston adapted in her Grail studies) demonstrated that by comparing the features of various belief systems the 'truth' of Christianity is eroded, Powys sought to show how the various interrelations of divergent ideologies could be perceived to persuade a modern reader that there was some spiritual truth left in contemporary mysticism and amongst the debris of dead religions. Powys's Grail, then, was far from a symbol of religious or social decay;

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[*] There are other such 'reservoirs' of 'world magic' at the great religious 'centres' of the world, including Jerusalem, Rome, Mecca and Lhasa (285).
[†] Machen, Waite and Williams, who charted a similar struggle between the forces of spiritualism and materialism, seem likely to have been an influence here.

rather he presented it as a unifying motif of Britain's historical, multi-ethnic spiritual past.

Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance* was, in many ways, the conclusion to the Grail texts of the 1920s and 30s as it marked the reintroduction of the Grail story into the larger Arthurian corpus. Unlike other texts discussed in this chapter (as well as many of the nineteenth century), Powys's novel, by virtue of its size and geographical location, draws in many elements of the Arthurian story. And it is Malory's *Morte Darthur* that forms the dominant version of the legend, not Tennyson's *Idylls*.[162] Seemingly unknown to Eliot, ignored by other writers and derided by the Grail scholars who examined only the earlier romance material, the *Morte Darthur* is re-enacted amongst the characters of *A Glastonbury Romance*, through a series of analogies and allusions. For instance, Philip Crow's plans for industrialising Wookey Hole Caves are termed a 'Dolorous Blow' to the land.[163] Bloody Jonnie functions as both Merlin and the Fisher King: he brings about the modern quest for the Grail; his near-seducer is named Nimuë; his death at the close of the novel restores the land. The 'roles' each character plays, however, are fluid and never absolute. Sam Dekker, for instance (who resembles the young Powys to some degree), quite consciously resembles several Arthurian characters, as Dhira B. Mahoney notes: 'Sam Dekker, [...] having an affair with a married woman, is clearly a Lancelot figure, but when he takes a vow of celibacy to serve Christ and abjures the woman, he is Galahad or perhaps Percival leaving Blanchefleur, and when he sees a vision of the Grail, he is pierced in the vitals, like the Fisher King'.*[164]

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* In addition to the 'roles' each character fulfils in *A Glastonbury Romance*, the geography of Powys's novel also corresponds to the Arthurian legend: the Waste Land is situated on the outskirts of the town (318); the tomb of Joseph of Arimethea and the grave of Arthur are located nearby (118-9); Chalice Hill, a local landmark, was the 'real' site of Carbonek, the Grail castle (246); Excalibur lies somewhere near (121); the chantry in which Lancelot died also lies in a preserved ruin (797-8). Even Mother Legge's brothel is called Camelot by the locals (498).

Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance* is the first post-war retelling of the Grail

story that made consistent reference to the Arthurian story, rather than just brief

allusion. All of the important Arthurian works of the 1930s and 40s – David Jones's

In Parenthesis (1937), Charles Williams's Taliessin-cycle (1938-44), T.H. White's

The Once and Future King (1938-58) – would include the Grail in their retellings of

the story of Arthur. But *A Glastonbury Romance* marks another shift in Arthurian

literature of the twentieth century, as it is part of an important body of Arthurian

writing which was consciously produced as British, rather than English, literature.

Along with the work of Jones and Williams, as well as John Masefield's *Midsummer*

Night and Other Tales (1927), Powys's novel is part of a conception of the Arthurian

story which is distinctly Anglo-Celtic. Powys assembled his Arthurian knowledge

from many sources, many of which are Welsh – as is one scholarly character, Owen

Evans the antiquarian. The novell's epigraph is taken from a Welsh Triad, translated

by John Rhŷs. And the whole pre-Christian, pre-Celtic history of the Grail, as

presented in the novel, is an inclusive notion of British heritage. Powys's later

Arthurian novels, *Morwyn; or, the vengeance of God* (1937) and *Porius: a romance of*

the Dark Ages (1951), would continue to develop the idea of the Matter of Britain as

an Anglo-Celtic story.*

Conclusion

The Grail scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries freed the

way for writers to explore the Grail story in new directions. Whether Ritualist,

Christian or Celtic, the diverse origin theories provided modern writers with new

approaches to a traditional narrative. Yet, because of its disparate and often

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* Powys, who was of Welsh-Norfolk ancestry, returned to Britain in the 1930s after spending most of his life as a lecturer in the United States. He settled in Blaenau-Ffestiniog, North Wales, where he rediscovered his Welsh 'roots' and wrote his later fiction.

contradictory hypotheses, no new paradigm was formed out of the scholarship and

literature which emerged from the 1920s and 30s. Clearly Weston's Ritualist theory

was the most influential, yet it was archetypal, rather than paradigmatic. And the

reasons for this were various.

To begin with, Weston's hypothesis did not inspire or convince everyone –

numerous scholars resisted her theories, while Christian writers such as Williams,

Machen and Waite rejected her pagan, anthropological reading of the Grail. Unlike

Tennyson's *Idylls*, the Westonian trend did not seek to locate itself within an evolving

cultural tradition, but instead it ignored all literary developments after Chrétien,

labelling them as corruptions. The Westonian archetype was also used by authors who

consciously wanted to differentiate themselves from earlier critical and literary

versions of the Grail story. Moreover, it was concerned only with a specific

component of the Arthurian story – the Grail being almost always divorced from its

larger Arthurian frame. And finally, the heterogeneity of the Grail texts produced in

the 1920s and 30s precluded any paradigmatic formation: there were modernist verse,

mystical novellas, potboilers and Anglo-Celtic prose epics; writers emerged from the

working class and the gentry alike; and, though all these works were produced in

England, their authors were American, Irish and Welsh, as well as English; while in

the field of scholarship, they hailed from all over Europe. Whereas Arthurian

literature in the nineteenth century had predominantly been a nationalist affair, after

the Great War it became ever more international; and the paradigmatic formation of

English Arthurian literature could never survive such a transition.

Weston's Ritualist account of the Grail was the first of the twentieth century's

major Arthurian trends – a stimulating and imitable version of the Grail myth which

inspired many, but not all. There would be other such trends – the historical novel, the

feminist retelling, the Anglo-Celtic revisions – but few would have the immediate impact of Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. One movement which has largely been ignored in critical accounts of the modern Arthurian story is the growth of interest in the legend in Wales and Cornwall. While seemingly localised and regional, the Celtic Arthur has played a major role in the development of a British Arthurian tradition in the twentieth century. Indeed, after the 1920s the Arthurian story – like the Grail – would no longer be a purely English narrative.

Chapter Four

That 'cleaves to cairn and cromlech still': the Arthurian story in Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall and Wales

Though the Grail legend attracted a wide number of writers in England during the 1920s and 30s, this cultural vibrancy was not extended to the Arthurian story more generally. Indeed, even with the reinventions of the Grail story, English writers (scholars aside) played a relatively small part. T.S. Eliot was, of course, an American, as was A.E. Waite (a native of New York). Arthur Machen came from Monmouthshire in south-east Wales and John Cowper Powys, half Welsh by birth, elected in later life to identify himself fully with the Celtic peninsula. The Irish writers George Moore and James Joyce, in 'Araby' (1914; see below), had also employed the Grail myth. Only Virginia Woolf and Mary Butts can truly be seen as English authors. And though Charles Williams, a Londoner, seems to have paid little attention to the Welsh origins of his surname, the protagonist in his major Arthurian work, the Taliessin-cycle (1938-44), would be taken from the Celtic, rather than Anglo-French, tradition.

In England the deterioration of Tennyson's literary standing in the post-war years resulted in the decline of the Arthurian story generally. By the late 1920s the *Idylls* were being criticised for their sententiousness, their over-use of allegory, their 'departure from the spirit of the old stories' and for Tennyson's failure to possess 'that universal interest in human nature' which, apparently, marks out a great writer.[1] In an essay written in 1929, A.C. Bradley summed up attitudes to Tennyson deftly: 'To care for his poetry is to be old-fashioned, and to belittle it is to be in the movement.'[*] Of course there were still many 'old-fashioned' readers and Arthurian literature of the 1920s still contained many minor works which were derived from the *Idylls* – its influence was particularly noticeable in plays written for the amateur theatre, for instance.[2] But many other writers rejected Tennyson completely. The work of Evelyn Waugh, who was certainly 'in the movement', amply demonstrates the contemporary aversion to the nineteenth-century poet.

Waugh's fiction often lampoons the Victorians' taste for medievalism, especially in architecture – examples include Llanabba Castle in *Decline and Fall* (1928) and Hetton Abbey in *A Handful of Dust* (1934).[3] Waugh was also fond of allusions to the Arthurian legends, often derived from the *Idylls* and always made with facetious intent.[4] The twinned themes of Victorian Gothic and the Arthurian legend are most prominent in *A Handful of Dust*. The novel's protagonist, Tony Last, is the proud owner of Hetton Abbey, described in one fictional guidebook as 'formerly one of the notable houses of the county, [which] was entirely rebuilt in 1864 in the Gothic style and is now devoid of interest.'[5] The house is not, as Tony admits, 'altogether

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[*] Bradley continued: 'the antipathy to these defects seems in some cases to have so atrophied the power of enjoyment that Tennyson's weakest poems and his best meet with the same indifference or contempt, and a reader will remain unmoved by lines which, if he were ignorant of their authorship, he would hail with delight' (61). Certainly many readers of Eliot's *The Waste Land* praised the modern poet for his descriptions of the aridity of modern life, when, more properly, they ought to have been hailing with delight the applicability of Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur' to post-war Britain.

amenable to modern ideas of comfort', but its 'general aspect and atmosphere' – 'the

line of its battlements against the sky; the central clock tower where quarterly chimes

disturbed all but the heaviest sleepers; the ecclesiastical gloom of the great hall' –

delight its owner.[6] Each bedroom of Hetton is named from Malory; there is Yseult,

Elaine, Mordred, Merlin, Gawaine, Bedivere, Lancelot, Perceval, Tristram and

Galahad, where the bed is so uncomfortable that it is reserved for the most unwelcome

of guests. Tony's own room is Morgan le Fay; Brenda, his wife, sleeps in Guinevere.

Like the Arthur of the *Idylls*, Tony's 'whole Gothic world [...] come[s] to

grief' when he discovers his wife's infidelity with a man named Beaver, who, if

Brenda is equated with Arthur's queen, makes a very poor Lancelot.[7] In despair, Tony

abandons Hetton and England in search of a lost city in South America:

> He had a clear picture of it in his mind. It was Gothic in character, all vanes
> and pinnacles, gargoyles, battlements, groining and tracery, pavilions and
> terraces, a transfigured Hetton, pennons and banners floating on the sweet
> breeze, everything luminous and translucent.[8]

Of course, Tony does not find this tropical Camelot. Instead, after a bout of fever he is

rescued and held captive by the mysterious Mr. Todd, an illiterate European who is

the chieftain of a tribe of native South Americans. Here, held under the threat of

death, Tony is forced to endlessly re-read the works of Dickens (another eminent

literary Victorian whom Waugh despised for his sentimentality).

Waugh took the title of his novel from Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[*] In the

interpretive accounts of that poem appearing in the 1930s, one of Eliot's chief poetic

devices was the juxtaposition of an intellectually and spiritually fertile past with a

meaningless, sterile present. Although Waugh was constructing his own novel on the

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[*] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 27-30: 'I will show you something different from either / Your shadow at morning striding behind you / Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; / I will show you fear in a handful of dust.'

sense of emptiness evident in *The Waste Land*, he was not (at least in this novel)

employing the Arthurian myth to contrast the present sterility with past fecundity. *A*

Handful of Dust portrays the present as no more spiritually impoverished than the past

– or at least the nineteenth century. Although Guy Crouchback would reverentially

call upon the crusader knight, Sir Roger of Waybroke, in Waugh's later *Sword of*

Honour (1965), to pray for him and 'our endangered kingdom' before venturing into

the Second World War, the moral seriousness of medieval Catholicism (which was

invoked by other Catholic and Anglo-Catholic writers including David Jones,

Saunders Lewis and the older Eliot) was not available to Waugh at this time.[*9] The

Arthurian myth as Waugh knew it – that of Tennyson's *Idylls* – was but another

symbol of the moral vacuousness and cultural fraudulence of the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries.

The Grail had not been reoriented in this way. Divorced from the *Idylls* and

imbued with powerful anthropological and ideological signification, through the

scholarship of Weston, Nutt and others, the Grail became a counterpoint to the

spiritual or social 'drought' which writers perceived everywhere in the 1920s and 30s

and which Waugh saw as especially evident in the Tennysonian Arthurian story. As

with the Grail myth, the Arthurian story would later be dynamised by a series of

creative scholars, many of whom would present it as a Celtic cultural construct.

Indeed the British writers who would treat the story with reverence in the 30s and 40s

would be producing Arthurian literature from a decidedly Anglo-Celtic perspective.

But before considering this hybrid production, it is worth examining the literature

which was being produced in Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall and Wales during the first

half of the twentieth century – texts which have been ignored in most accounts of the

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[*] Indeed, Guy Crouchback's quest for twentieth-century chivalry proves to be as elusive and as ultimately futile as Tony Last's attempt to discover the South American Camelot.

Arthurian legend in the twentieth-century. Indeed, even at the time of its production,

the eminent English scholar E.K. Chambers wrote, concerning Celtic peoples'

relationship to the mythic king: 'the flames which once burnt around the memory of

Arthur have long ago sunk into grey ashes. He wakes no national passions now.'[10]

How wrong he was.

An ambivalent hero: the Arthurian legend in Ireland and Scotland

Unlike England, the Celtic nations had never possessed a paradigmatic structure of

Arthurian literary production. Welsh interest in the legend was too spasmodic, too

dependent on the nation's cultural and political self-confidence to produce a

sustained, authoritative tradition; while Cornish Arthuriana had always been too

regionally-specific to require a dogmatic literary form. Interest in Arthur in Scotland

and Ireland, meanwhile, has always been ephemeral and peripheral – a trend which

continued into the modern period. For, while both countries produced a number of

accomplished and experimental Arthurian texts, their quantity is not large. This

historical ambivalence towards Arthur is partly a result of the Arthurian story being

used in the medieval period as a means of historically legitimatising English colonial

ambition towards the Gaelic countries – particularly Scotland.

The quantity of Irish retellings of the legend is especially small. What does

exist is paradoxically characterised by the absence of Arthur himself, in what is best

described as an anti-colonial-Oedipal trope. Yeats's 'Time and the Witch Vivien'

(1889) is the earliest example. This brief poem tells of Vivien's numerous wily

schemes ('war plots, peace plots, love plots') and of how she defeated Merlin ('for

young girls wits are better / Than old men's any day'), before describing how she was

eventually defeated by Time himself.[11] Although Yeats presumably drew Vivien from

the *Idylls*, apart from the mention of Merlin, there is nothing here to locate her within the wider (English) Arthurian story. All Yeats did was to extract a character, a few brief themes and then recast them in a wholly different manner. Such would be the pattern in all Irish retellings.

George Moore's *Peronnik the Fool* (1921), discussed in the last chapter, was more daring in its use of the Grail than was Yeats's treatment of Vivien. Rather than employing the usual assortment of knights, Moore's hero is a cowherd, whose peasant sympathy with the land allows him to achieve his quest. Moore also employed the Ritualist theories of Weston, along with a Breton folk-tale, rather than the traditional Tennysonian or Malorian sources. Once again, Arthur is absent from this tale. Another novel which took as its central concern an Arthurian theme, but which avoided mention of the king himself, was Padraic Colum's children's tale *The Boy Apprenticed to an Enchanter* (1920). An Irish nationalist of militant persuasions, Colum was never likely to write a typically English-derivative Arthurian story. Set in Ireland, chiefly on the West Coast, Colum's novel concerns Eean, the apprentice of the title, who is sold by his poverty-stricken family to Zablun, a wicked Enchanter whose feats include the destruction of the tower of Babylon. Zablun is a cruel master to Eean, who escapes and begs Merlin (who has previously abandoned sorcery for the love of Vivien) to assist him.[*] Merlin, in a brief return to the magical world, helps Eean in defeating his former master. Preoccupied as it is with Eean's rebellion against

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[*] Merlin's relationship with Vivien shows strong affinity with Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites: 'He was two score years of age, and she was five years less than a score. Nevertheless he thought it better to watch her dancing with bright green leaves in her red hair than to know all that would bring him from being a lesser to being a great Enchanter. Of the maidens and great ladies he had seen, some, he told her, were like light, and some were like flowers, and some were like a flame of fire. But she, he said, was like the wind. And he thought no more upon the King of the Isle of Britain, nor on the great work he was to do for him, and he spent his days in watching Vivien, and in listening to Vivien, and in making magic things for Vivien's delight' (90). Vivien, as in the traditional version of the story, does imprison Merlin, but only out of a jealous anxiety that he will forsake her for his duties to the 'King of the Isle of Britain'. When Merlin assures her that he will not abandon her, Vivien releases him and together they live contented. This version of the story Colum claimed to have derived from the fishermen of Western Ireland.

an oppressive, imperial master, Colum's novel is difficult to read without associating

it with contemporary Irish separatism. The exclusion of Arthur (Merlin's feudal lord

is known only by the title 'King of the Isle of Britain') is but another instance of anti-

authoritarianism.[12]

Colum's friend James Joyce also displayed modern Ireland's characteristic

ambivalence towards the Arthurian story. Several scholars have examined his short

story, 'Araby' (1914), in terms of its possible indebtedness to medieval romance; it

has even been considered in terms of its relation to the Grail, with the anonymous

adolescent protagonist corresponding to Chrétien's Perceval.[13] *Finnegans Wake*

(1939) makes many allusions to the Arthurian story, mainly in the form of the

Tristram and Iseult myth, derived from Bedier's scholarly version and Wagner's 1859

opera.[14] The work is ostensibly set in the Dublin suburb of Chapelizod (Chapel of

Isolde), and the daughter of the house is often corresponded with Iseult herself (with

HCE, her father, sometimes casting himself into the role of Tristram, 'violer

d'amores').[15] While allusions to the Tristram story dominate the references to the

'Arthurian' myth, Malory is also present in a series of, seemingly incidental, parodies:

'melodi of malodi, she lalage of lyonesse, and him, her knave arrant'; 'the merthe

dirther!'; 'camelot prince of dinurk'; 'outraciously enviolated by a mierelin

roundtableturning'; 'Then old Hunphydunphyville'll be blasted to bumboards by the

youthful herald who would once you were. He'd be our chosen one in the matter of

Brittas more than anarthur'.[16] Unlike *Ulysses*, however, there is no controlling myth,

or 'scaffolding', in *Finnegans Wake* and the Tristram legend does not correspond to

the role of Homer's *Odyssey* in structuring Joyce's last work.[17]

As interesting as Joyce's use of the Tristram legend in *Finnegans Wake* is the

absence of any Arthurian theme or motif in *Ulysses*. Joyce's 1922 work is customarily

discussed as both a hyper-realist account of one day in an Everyman-figure's life (June 16, 1904), but also as an 'encyclopaedia' of European culture since the Hellenic birth of Western civilisation.[18] Yet *Ulysses*, despite its plethora of allusion, myth and symbolism, makes not one recognisable reference to the Arthurian story – one of the most persistent and most recognisable of trans-European legends. Joyce's omission of the Arthurian story, as well as the rather obscure association in 'Araby' and the complex system of allusion in *Finnegans Wake*, is another instance of the equivocal attitude to Arthur evinced in Irish literature in the modern period. Its themes, characters and motifs have proved irresistible to writers, but its overall framework (along with Arthur himself) has been repeatedly rejected. It is ironic that T.H. White, an Englishman, would compose perhaps the most well-known twentieth-century Arthurian epic while living in Ireland.

In Scotland literary attitudes have been equally ambivalent. John Davidson's 'The Last Ballad' (1899) was written firmly within the Tennysonian paradigm, but other Scottish writers, while tending to remain within the Tennyson-Malory axis, have been more resistant to the *Idylls*' dominance. Martha Kinross's *Tristram and Isoult* (1913) was one of the large number of Tristram and Iseult dramas produced in the early part of the twentieth century. Critics have justly praised Kinross's successful and bold feminist treatment of the traditional story, in which Guinevere, too, plays a prominent part (see chapter one for discussion of both texts).[19] The various manifestations of patriarchal oppression evident in Tennyson's *Idylls*, and exacerbated in the misogynistic dramatic adaptations of J. Comyns Carr and his successors, is firmly resisted in Kinross' play. That it should appear from the hand of a Scottish writer is all the more fitting given that Scotland gave birth to some of the most

determinedly anti-Arthurian writing produced in the later Middle Ages (see introduction).

Another Scottish Arthurian drama was produced in 1944 by James Bridie. His 'Lancelot' is no less remarkable than Kinross's feminist *Tristram and Isoult*. Like Kinross, Bridie was not beholden to any idealised vision of Camelot. While Lancelot is certainly his hero, he portrays him as a complex figure, more at home with the peasants and Elaine than at Arthur's court, which is here characterised by malevolent politics of self-advancement. Bridie also presents Arthur as a misogynist, who is helpless to resist the intrigues of the court and is at one point memorably described as an 'etherised Blimp'.[20] The women of the court are far more modern than their antiquated male counterparts: Nimuë frequently interrupts Merlin's grand designs with spurious asides; Guenevere cuts through the overblown chivalric language of the court and is thoroughly discourteous to medieval religion, saying of King Pelles – he 'is a limping old fool and a superstitious old madman [...] He is so dazed with the sound of church bells and besotted with incense that he doesn't know the truth from lies.'[21] Bridie wrote another play at this time, the comic 'Holy Isle', featuring King Lot and Queen Morgause of Orkney as they fail to colonise an island of anarchists. Though Arthur is mentioned at several points, he is never present in this play, and the drama's focus is firmly on the northern figures of the Arthurian legend.

In short, the versions of the Arthurian story produced in Ireland and Scotland in the first half of the twentieth century – while small in number – were usually antagonistic to the English, Tennysonian-Malorian Arthur. Yet neither Irish nor Scottish culture was sufficiently immersed in the Arthurian story to derive much political utility out of the myth. The case in Cornwall and Wales, however, was very different.

The chough rises: the Cornish Arthurian renaissance

The ambivalence evident in Irish and Scottish treatments of the Arthurian legend was

hardly apparent in Cornish literature during the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. Of course, Cornwall had possessed associations with the Arthurian legend

for centuries.[*] Arthur was a regional folk hero throughout the medieval period, though

by the sixteenth century writers such as Richard Carew were rejecting Arthur as a

symbol of Cornish independence in favour of a more integrated sense of Englishness

(which had no room for a chieftain resisting Saxon incursion).[22] Thereafter, Arthur

was only intermittently the subject of Cornish literature, though he may have

continued to operate as a folkloric figure for much longer. Yet by the mid nineteenth

century poets such as George Woodley, Thomas Hogg and Robert Stephen Hawker,

as well as antiquarians such as H.J. Whitfield, Robert Hunt and the earlier William

Hals, had once more begun to examine and explore literary possibilities of the

Cornish Arthurian legend.[23]

    The crucial event in the Cornish Arthurian revival (which lasted until the

advent of the Second World War) was the collapse of Cornwall's industrial

infrastructure in the second half of the nineteenth century.[†] With the price of tin at its

lowest in a hundred years, mass unemployment and the closure of the majority of

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[*] 'Culhwch ac Olwen' (c. 1050) is the earliest extant text to make explicit reference to Arthur's association with Cornwall, citing Kelli Wig (thought to be modern day Callington) as one of Arthur's strongholds (Gantz edition, 167). Geoffrey of Monmouth gave Cornwall a crucial role in the Arthurian legend: first, by situating the begetting of Arthur – wherein Uther, aided by Merlin, seduces Igerna, the Duchess of Cornwall – at Tintagel; and second, by choosing to place Arthur's final battle near the river 'Camblam' (modern day Camel), in north Cornwall (Thorpe edition, 205-8, 259-61). Numerous other writers, including Hermann of Tournai, John of Cornwall, Béroul and John Leland testify to the continuing association between Arthur and Cornwall up until the sixteenth century.

[†] In 1854 Cornwall's copper-ore production peaked at 164,000 tons; by 1913 this figure was reduced to 420 tons. In 1871 tin production was almost at 17,000 tons; by 1913 this was reduced by over half. In the 1850s over one quarter of the Cornish labour force (36,500 men, women and children) worked in the mines; in 1911 the figure was 7,600 (now nearly all men), or about 6 percent of the workforce. In every decade between the 1860s and the 1900s, some twenty percent of the male working population departed overseas (a figure three times that of the rest of England and Wales). See Ronald Perry, 'Cornwall's Mining Collapse Revisited', *Cornish History*, August, 2001.

Cornwall's mines, the region entered a severe depression, interspersed with periods of famine and mass depopulation.[24] It was during this period that Arthur emerged as a major cultural figure for depression-struck Cornwall.

The Revivalist Arthur was a figurehead for two different responses to the collapse of Cornwall's economy and industrial identity – one ideological, the other material. The ideological response can be characterised by the growth of ethnonationalism and regional separatism, which greatly accelerated in the early years of twentieth century. It was articulated in the establishment of the Cornish language movement, an increased interest in Cornwall's Celtic past and the creation of the *Gorseth Kernow*, the focal point for much of the Celtic identity politics which scholars and patriots promoted. The second – more material – response to Cornwall's economic collapse is most obviously rooted in the huge rise in tourism which swept over Cornwall in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Powered by the railways, Cornwall proved immensely successful as a British holiday resort, with its attractive climate, dramatic coastal landscape and pleasantly-packaged mythic history. Arthur was the symbol for both: the patriots and nationalists adopted him as the emblem of Cornish Celtic pride, while the tourism magnates found Arthur to be the perfect advertisement for this most un-English of England's counties.

A major inspiration for the patriotic Arthur was Robert Stephen Hawker, the eccentric vicar of Morwenstowe and a close friend of Tennyson, who only began working on the *Idylls* in earnest after visiting Hawker in 1848; the vicar showing him round the peninsula as well as furnishing him with several books on the legend.[25] Tennyson even considered Hawker's 'The Quest of the Sangreal' (1863) to be superior to his own version of the legend.[26]

Hawker's 'Sangreal' is of vital importance in the Cornish Arthurian tradition because it established the Grail as the central motif in subsequent retellings of the story – a motif that would grow in ideological significance in the next century. At the centre of Hawker's poem lies Arthur's farewell speech to the knights of the Round Table as they prepare to set out in search of the Grail. Rather than regretting the passing of his fellowship (as in Malory and Tennyson), Arthur encourages the quest for the Grail. For him, the search for the Grail will bring atonement for his reign, which has been 'too much athirst for fame: too fond of blood'.[27] It will be the last great deed of his imperium before Cornwall is swamped by the Saxons. He tells his knights that the Sangreal will bring them and 'native Cornwall' to everlasting glory:

> 'Ha! Sirs – ye seek a noble crest to-day,
> To win and wear the starry Sangreal,
> The link that binds to God a lonely land.'[28]

Arthur's speech – which has no precedent in the English tradition – established the quest for the Grail as the supreme symbol of Celtic achievement. 'The link that binds God to a lonely land' is not just typical of Victorian Arthurian hyperbole, but a declaration of Cornwall's uniqueness within the Christian world. After Hawker, almost all Cornish poets who treated the legend took the achievement of the Grail to be the vital element in the Arthurian story.

The Cornish patriotism evident in Hawker's 'Sangreal' was exaggerated in several later Grail-centric Arthurian texts. In her hymn 'Angelice' (1926), Katherine Lee Jenner wrote of Cornwall as a 'Holy Motherland', whose most famed 'sons' – Arthur's knights who achieve the Grail – are depicted as a nation of Christian martyrs fighting a hopeless battle against heathen Saxons.[29] The Cornish achievement of the Grail is also at the centre of B.D. Vere's five–act drama, *King Arthur* (1930). But the

Grail is not the only means of configuring Cornwall as a Christian Promised Land –

the play opens with the child Jesus holidaying in Tintagel, admiring Cornwall's

mountains, vales and moors. Jesus, however, yearns to return to the East, leaving

others (Arthur's knights) to complete the sanctification of Cornwall.[30] The meaning of

the Grail is profound in these texts. It is, in many ways, an equivalent to the medieval

stories of the founding of Britain by Brutus (another story that is related to the

Arthurian story in Britain). The Grail's intimate association with Cornwall – '[t]he

link that binds to God a lonely land' – does not only configure it as a Christian

province, but furnishes the land with a unique Christian identity, with a prominent

position in the divine plan.

Apart from the Grail, the other central symbol of the Cornish Arthur is, of

course, the chough, in which the soul of Arthur is said to reside (there is a similar

legend surrounding the raven). Although the chough appears in many forms in the

twentieth century, it was Robert Morton Nance who exploited it to its greatest extent.

He retold the legend in his short play, *An Balores* ('The Chough', 1932), which

concludes with a call to preserve the Cornish spirit and language (*Kernewek*):

Myghtern Arthur, dre dha voth,
 Pan us gansa dha balores,
Re bo gans tus Kernow Goth
 Bys vynytha bew dha spyrys.

Yeth Hernow, re-be hyneth
 A'y growth yn enewores,
Ena a-dhassergh ynweth
 Maga few avel palores.

Nyns-yu marow Myghtern Arthur!

[O, King Arthur, grant that all
 Who shall take thy chough as token,
May sit upon thy spirit call
 To keep Cornwall's faith unbroken.

So again our Cornish tongue
That has lain so long a-dying,
Shall rise up as strong and young
As is e'er a chough that's flying.

King Arthur is not dead!][31]

Nance, though born in Cardiff, was one of the most prominent Cornish scholars of his day and did much to promote the teaching of *Kernewek*, which had died out as a community language in the eighteenth century.[32] He also established, with Henry Jenner, the Federation of Old Cornwall societies, dedicated to the advancement of the native language, taking the chough as their symbol.[33] But Arthur's most important integration into the Cornish ethnonationalist movement occurred in 1931, when Arthur and the chough were adopted as the symbols of the Cornish Gorsedd (*Gorseth Kernow*), which was once again the work of Nance and Jenner.

'Gorsedd',[*] meaning 'great seat', is a congress of druids and bards, which exists to promote literary scholarship and the creation and performance of poetry and music. Born of the nationalist and republican dreams of a largely expatriate Welsh community living in London at the turn of the eighteenth century, the first *Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain* (Gorsedd of the Bards of the Island of Britain) was held in Primrose Hill in 1792.[34] For patriots like Nance and Jenner the establishment of a Cornish *Gorseth* had obvious appeal: it would be a focal point of Cornish political, social and cultural life, and would symbolise entry into the Celtic (Brythonic) fraternity. Brittany had founded its own Gorsedd (Breton: *Goursez*) as early as 1899. At the Cardiff Eisteddfod of that year an Arthurian ceremony was held to symbolise the unity of the bards of Wales and Brittany. A sword representing Excalibur, split into two shards, was re-united by Archdruid Hwfa Môn (the head of the Gorsedd).

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[*] 'Gorsedd', though a Welsh word, is the accepted spelling in the OED, while the seemingly anglicised 'Gorseth' is a Cornish variant.

This act, he said, was a symbol of the 'spiritual unity [...] between the Welsh and Breton nations'.[35] The Bretons were then admitted as Bards of the Gorsedd of the Isles of Britain, and so the Breton *Goursez Vreizh* was established.[*] Thus Cornwall was lagging behind its fellow Brythonic-Celtic 'nations'. But by 1928 Jenner's and Nance's industry had paid off and the *Gorseth Kernow* was inaugurated in order '(1) to promote the study of literature, art, music and history; (2) to promote the study and use of the Cornish language; (3) to maintain and nurture links with other Celtic cultures; (4) to provide a forum and encouragement to all who work to further these aims'.[36]

The distinguishing feature of the ceremonies of the Cornish *Gorseth* is its affinity with the Arthurian legend. At the conclusion to the *Gorseth*'s ritual, Cornwall's Chief Bard announces '*An als whath Arthur a wyth, yn corf Palores yn few*' ('Still Arthur watches our shore, in the guise of a chough there flown').[37] The assembled bards then claim '*Nyns yu Myghtern Arthur*' ('King Arthur is not dead') and lean forward to touch the sword that represents *Calespur* (Excalibur), upon which they swear fealty to Cornwall. The ceremony ends with the singing of 'Bro Goth Agan Tasow' ('Land of my Fathers'),[†] the last verse of which reiterates the idea of Cornwall as a land of Christianity, Arthur and the Grail:

> *Gwlascor Myghtern Arthur, an Syns kens, ha'n Gral*
> *Moy kerys genen nyns yu tyreth aral,*
> *Ynnos-sy pup carn, nans, meneth ha chy*
> *A gows yn Kernewek dhyn-ny.*
>
> *Kernow bys vyken!*

---

[*] However, the Breton *Goursez* was kept secret for fear the French government should regard it as a manifestation of Breton nationalism. The first public *Goursez* was not held until 1903. The Welsh Gorsedd remains the primary assembly of British (Celtic) bards, with the Breton and Cornish meetings being regional subsidiaries.

[†] 'Bro Goth Agan Tasow', the anthem of Cornwall, is sung to the same tune as the Welsh national anthem, 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau. The Breton anthem, 'Bro Gozh ma Zadoù' also uses the same tune.

[Kingdom of Arthur, the Saints and the Grail
More loved by us is no other land
In thee every cairn, valley, hill and house
Speaks in Cornish to us.

Cornwall for ever!][38]

Cornwall in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then, had seen

the transformation of Arthur from a forgotten regional hero into a figurehead of

Cornish patriotism, an emblem of the Cornish-language movement and a symbol of

Cornwall's distinct Celtic identity. Such an ethnonationalist ideology would seem to

be very different from the Arthur of the tourist trade. Yet, if the language movement

and ethnonationalism evident in the work of such people as Jenner and Nance was an

attempt, in part, to fill the void in the communal Cornish identity following the

collapse of its traditional industries, tourism was the major means of reinvigorating

Cornwall's economy. And if Arthur had been adopted as the emblem of the new

ideology, he was also adopted as the symbol of economic readjustment.

In 1877 the Cornish journalist and Celticist E. Whitfield Crofts wrote that 'to

many Englishmen Cornwall is practically synonymous with all that is dull, barren,

ugly and horrible.'[39] However, after the destruction of its mining industry, Cornwall

began to be marketed as one of England's premier holiday destinations – the

expansion of railways providing access for many affluent English tourists. In many

ways, Tintagel is symbolic of Cornwall's transition from a primarily industrial region

to one dependent on tourism. In the mid nineteenth century it was the site of a

successful tin mine, but, like so many others, this was closed in 1873, after which

Tintagel was reinvented as one of Cornwall's most inviting spots, its chief attraction

of course being its castle's ancient association with King Arthur.[40]

The growth of the tourist's Arthur quickly spread. In 1884 Dinah Craik

published her account of her travels through Cornwall which included several

Arthurian digressions (usually adapted from Tennyson or Malory).[41] Only six years

later the Cornish folklorist Margaret A. Courtney was complaining of the numerous

guide books which took visitors on tours of 'Arthurian' Cornwall, pointing out many

sites which had no connection whatsoever with the legend. To illustrate, Courtney

wrote of the visitors to Land's End who 'express themselves disappointed that none of

the country people in that district know anything of King Arthur.'[42] One of these

guide books was published in 1922 by Great Western Railway, written by

'Lyonesse'.[43] So well had Arthur served G.W.R.'s expansion into Cornwall that they

named many of their locomotives after figures from the legend: Chough, Excalibur,

Guinevere, King Arthur, Merlin, Sir Lancelot, Tintagel (all Duke 4-4-0 class, built

1895-6), Avalon, Lyonesse, Pendragon and Camelot (Bulldog 4-4-0 class, built

1900).[44]

The Tourist's Arthur has continued to grow healthily into the modern day.

Guidebooks to local Arthurian sites abound, often written in pseudo-spiritual tones.[45]

The economy of Tintagel village still obviously relies on its closely cultivated

associations with Arthur. The nineteenth-century King Arthur's Castle Hotel (which

was the subject of a 1938 novel by the American writer Mary Ellen Chase) has been

joined by the King Arthur's Arms and several themed cafes.[46] In addition, there are

numerous Arthurian gift shops, which sell 'replicas' of Excalibur, Amethyst Merlins

and plastic Lancelots among the usual 'Celtica'. Even the local taxicab firm is called

'Camelot Taxis'. Many critics have complained about the commercialisation of

Arthur. 'English twinkie' was the opinion of one amused American scholar;[47] Ronald

Duncan, less amused, deplored 'the commercial exploitation' of the Arthurian story,

saying that it is the twentieth century's typical achievement to 'turn a poem into a

bazaar; Isolde into an ashtray'.[48] Isolde ashtrays, along with 'Guinevere car stickers',

were also disapproved of by *The Times* in the 1980s. But at least *The Times* found a

welcome element of self-parody in the King Arthur's Arms lunchtime offer on

'Excaliburgers'.[49]

However, the distinction between the tourist and the patriotic Arthurs is not

always clear. In 1927 Henry Jenner, one of the chief nationalist propagandists of

Cornwall's Arthurian heritage, dismissed Tintagal as a tourist trap with 'singularly

little history and not much romance attached to it'. 'Historically and romantically', he

summed up, 'Tintagel Castle is rather a fraud.'[50] Yet in an earlier essay on possible

Arthurian place names in Cornwall, Jenner had been much more positive in extending

the Cornish claim to the historical Arthur.[51] The *Gorseth Kernow*'s adoption of

Arthurian rituals in 1930 corresponded with Cornwall's hosting of the International

Arthurian Congress. With various members of the Congress attending the *Gorseth*,

including the American Celticist Roger Sherman Loomis, it seems likely that the

Gorseth's decision to adopt its Arthurian regalia was a means of attracting academic

visitors in the same way that Tintagel's tradesmen encouraged the more general

tourist.[*52]

The most complex involvement between the touristic and patriotic Arthurs

took place, predictably, at Tintagel, during the late 1920s and early 30s. In 1928, the

millionaire Frederick Thomas Glasscock bought what was then known as Treverna

House in the village of Tintagel. He began rebuilding it as 'King Arthur's Hall',

which was completed in 1930. This Hall was the home of the Fellowship of the Order

of the Round Table, a neo-chivalric organisation 'based on loyalty, devotion and

respect', which became so popular (at its peak it possessed 17,000 members) that

Glasscock had to commission another building to house his Fellowship.[53] The result

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[*] Jenner himself gave a paper at the conference, which reiterated his 1927 essay on the fraudulence of Tintagel's Arthurian associations. The American *Time* magazine, which reported on the Congress at Truro, commented that Jenner's findings were 'annoying to Tintagel tradesmen' (Sep. 8, 1930).

was 'The Hall of Chivalry', completed in 1933. From the outside its great stone façade looks like any provincial hotel (fig. 15). Inside, however, Glasscock's building is one of the last great Arthurian follies. It is constructed from over fifty different types of Cornish stone, and was built entirely by local craftsmen. It contains a huge granite throne for Arthur and Guinevere, two round tables, one crafted from wood, the other from granite (fig. 17). Several William Hatherell Pre-Raphaelite paintings depicting the life of Arthur, taken from Malory, hang in the front room of the Hall; they are complemented by seventy-two very fine examples of twentieth-century stained glass designed by Veronica Whall, a pupil of William Morris. Glasscock also amassed an excellent Arthurian literature collection.[54]

Glasscock's aims were not to design a tourist trap.[55] His Fellowship was a serious order, which was based upon the Freemasons (of which Glasscock was a member), with a heavy dose of William Forbush's Knights of King Arthur thrown in (but unlike Forbush's proto-scouting movement, the Fellowship was not exclusively a children's order).[*] It was a non-denominational organisation which sought to re-establish chivalry as an everyday ethical code. The Fellowship and the Halls of Chivalry were epicentres of a much larger series of philanthropic endeavours which Glasscock began at Tintagel. His years in the area were spent creating employment for the local workers, in building working men's clubs, tennis clubs, providing accommodation for scouting and guide groups.[56] The Hall of Chivalry was a microcosm representing the economic rejuvenation of Cornwall (the stones which built the Hall were quarried from all over the region), but one that was rooted in

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[*] Duxbrey and Williams quote one contemporary member of the Fellowship's experience of the knighting ceremony: 'The new knight would be suitably attired for the ceremony while those already knighted wore robes of blue or red according to their rank, whether knights of the sword or sceptre. The principles of the Order were read from a scroll, prayers were said, oaths made. The ceremony started in semi-darkness until the sword Excalibur was drawn from the scabbard with great flourish and Glasscock (in the role of King Arthur) struck the new knight on the shoulder, giving him [or her] his name: Sir Galahad, perhaps, Sir Lancelot or Sir Bedivere' (King Arthur Country, 31-2).

Cornwall's history – both industrial (quarrying) and mythological (Arthur). Strangely, following Glasscock's death in 1934 (he had been recruiting for his Arthurian Fellowship in America, and suffered a heart attack on the home voyage) the Fellowship was wound up and finally closed two years later. As befitting his Order's origins, the main Hall was bought by the Freemasons of Tintagel in the 1960s. In 1993 the Hall reopened and has attracted over two million visitors; the Fellowship was also re-instigated and currently has around three hundred members worldwide.[57] Although Glasscock attempted to provide an alternative to tourism at Tintagel, but one that still had material benefits (unlike the establishment of the *Gorseth*, for instance), it was tourism, ultimately, which appropriated the Halls of Chivalry.

The difference between the Arthur of the nationalists and the Arthur of the tourists is a finer one than is commonly portrayed. Both conceptions rely on a presentation of Cornwall as somehow different (geographically, ethnically, mythologically) from England – either as a reason for political independence or as a holiday attraction for the tourism market. And attracting foreign consumers/supporters (whether holidaymakers or academics) is integral to both causes' success. In each manifestation of Arthur during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Arthur has figured as Redeemer, whether of nationalist hopes, *Kernewek* revival, or economic recovery. And though the Arthurian revival declined at the start of the Second World War, Arthur remains an important figure in the Cornish economy and crucial to the hopes of Celtic separatists.[*]

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[*] Chapter six includes a brief look at contemporary political and literary manifestations of the Cornish Arthur.

Revival and rebirth: the early twentieth-century Arthurian Legend in Wales

Like Cornwall, Wales has ancient associations with the Arthurian legend. And like its

Cornish equivalent, Welsh Arthurian literature is not an unbroken tradition, with

fixed, stable meanings, but is rather a series of cultural reinventions – a process which

continues to the present day. But unlike the Cornish version of the legend in the

twentieth century, the Welsh is largely unmarked by any consideration of, or demands

made by the tourist industry. Indeed, whereas the visitor to north Cornwall can feel

quickly overwhelmed by the commercialisation of the myth, the tourist in Wales will

find it difficult to discover much in the way of Arthurian attractions.

There are, of course, many places etymologically or literarily associated with

the legend – the most obvious being Caerleon, which became Arthur's chief city in

Geoffrey's *Historia*.[58] Wace repeated Geoffrey's descriptions of Caerleon's

geography, churches, learning and material wealth in his *Brut*: thus producing the

French prototype for the many plenary courts described in Arthurian romance. Wace

also added the statement that 'Caerleon was a good place then; it has deteriorated

since.'[59] And in describing Caerleon, Layamon's *Brut* followed Wace closely, but

expanded on Wace's idea of the city's deterioration, adding a sense of magic which is

largely alien in his source:

> Yet never since Arthur's visit has the town ever flourished,
> Nor is it ever going to between now and Doomsday.
> Some books declare as certainty that the city was bewitched,
> And it is very obvious that this is quite likely.[60]

Writers and artists continued to associate the remains of Caerleon's Roman amphitheatre with the actual Round Table up until the nineteenth century).[*] But despite possessing at least as great a literary pedigree, Caerleon hardly matches Tintagel in terms of commercially exploiting its Arthurian associations.[†] But then Wales – its climes hardly as inviting as southern Cornwall – was never established as a premier tourist destination, and had little need at the start of the twentieth century to enthrone Arthur as means of attracting holiday makers.

Indeed, in 1900 the buoyant Welsh economy hardly needed to entice new industries. Heavy industry – particularly the coalfields of the south – brought greater wages, more employment and more opportunities than Wales had possessed for centuries. As a result of a century of Nonconformism, its population was literate and educated; the country possessed a network of locally-administered secondary schools; and a royal charter granted in 1893 led to the establishment of a federation of university colleges, forming the University of Wales.[61] It had also defined itself as a Liberal nation,[‡] with an emerging nationalist movement in the 'half-cultural half-political' organisation of 'Cymru Fydd' (Young Wales), which would greatly inspire

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[*] Up until the excavation project of 1926-7, all that was visible of the remains at Caerleon was a circular mound – which proved as evocative to some writers as did the more dramatic excavations which can be witnessed today. John Churchyard, in his *Worthiness of Wales* (1587), wrote extensively on Caerleon's Arthurian associations (29-34) and said of the Roman remains: ' In Arthur's time a table round / Was there whereat he sate, / As yet a plot of goodly ground / Sets forth that rare estate' (30). Fig. 18 shows a nineteenth-century lithograph depicting the circular mound as Arthur's Round Table.

[†] In fact, Caerleon is presently attempting to realise its economic potential in identifying itself as the Welsh Camelot. On July 12, 2006, the town's Arts Centre inaugurated what is planned to be an annual Arthurian festival, promoting Caerleon's centricity to the medieval story. At the conclusion of this festival is the 'coronation' of 'Arthur' and 'Guinevere'. The Ffrwm Arts Centre also holds a permanent exhibition of modern Arthurian sculpture which, it is hoped, will encourage visitors to perceive Caerleon as Britain's premier Arthurian site. As with so much nineteenth-century Arthuriana, Tennyson is once again present in the town's Arthurian heritage. Visitors to the local Hanbury Arms are directed to the 'Tennyson Window', at which the poet laureate apparently sat while visiting Caerleon in 1856, drawing inspiration for his *Idylls of the King* whilst staring at the attractive prospect of the winding river Usk (see figs 18 and 19). The *Idylls* contain several descriptions of Caerleon's surroundings, particularly in 'Geraint and Enid'.

[‡] In the 1892 general election 33 out of the 34 constituencies were won by the Liberal Party. The only non-Liberal seat – that of radical Merthyr Tydfil – was occupied by Keir Hardie of the Labour Representation Committee.

the young Lloyd George, destined to become Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1908 and Prime Minister in 1916.[62] With economic prosperity and a communal identity rooted in Liberalism and Nonconformism, Wales in 1900 was very different to contemporary Cornwall. Whereas the Arthurian revival in Cornwall had been a reaction to the destruction of its economy and regional identity; in Wales the Arthurian renaissance was the product of national confidence. This fundamental difference separates the two peninsulas' versions of Arthur – and which prohibits any reading of a unified 'Celtic' Arthur in the last century.

The Welsh Arthurian Revival, which corresponded the larger Welsh Literary Revival, can be said to begin at the end of the nineteenth century and continued in a vibrant form until the outbreak of the Great War, after which it became less vigorous and gradually died out by the 1930s. Its greatest moment occurred at the 1902 Eisteddfod at Bangor, where the Chair of Poetry, the most prestigious prize of the festival, was awarded to T. Gwynn Jones for his *awdl*,[*] 'Ymadawiad Arthur' ('The Passing of Arthur'), often thought to be 'the single most important poem of the literary revival'.[63] It marked a major change in Welsh-language literary production, influencing a generation of poets, and defined the pre-war Welsh identification with Arthur. Before Jones's poem achieved its success, Welsh interest in Arthur was largely confined to a few antiquarian works such as Marie Trevelyan's folkloric study, *The Land of Arthur* (1895), Owen Morien Morgan's eccentric *The Light of Britannia* (1897) or the *Mabinogion*-inflected Celticism of the Anglo-Welsh poet, Ernest Rhys – all of which were in English.[64] After Jones won the chair, the Arthur of the Welsh was Romantic (a fashion which came late to Wales), nationalist and was produced almost exclusively in *Cymraeg*.

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[*] An *awdl* is a long poem written in *cynghanedd* (a complex system of alliteration and internal rhyme), and using at least one of the twenty-four strict bardic metres. The Chair, the Eisteddfod's most prestigious prize, is generally awarded to the best *awdl* at the Eisteddfod.

'Ymadawiad Arthur' was a revolutionary poem. The usual subject matter of

the nineteenth-century Eisteddfod was Biblical, theological or moral; much of it was

concerned with promoting the image of a 'God-fearing, Queen-loving, Empire-

supporting, self-improving, earnest and wholesomely patriotic people'.[65] Mostly

written by Nonconformist ministers, the poetry of the second half of the nineteenth

century represents one of the lowest points in Welsh cultural history.[66] The choice of

the Arthurian story as an Eisteddfod subject was an indication that Welsh culture was

expanding beyond its nineteenth-century Nonconformist boundaries.[67] As early as

1890 the Welsh scholar John Rhŷs had advocated the adoption of the *Mabinogion* and

the Welsh Arthurian romances as suitable subjects for the Eisteddfod poetry,[*] but it

was not until T. Gwynn Jones took up the story of Arthur in 1902 that Welsh culture

found a poet to match Rhŷs's ideals.[†68]

Perhaps surprisingly, given the fact that Jones was a scholar of medieval

Welsh literature (holding several academic posts at several Welsh university

colleges),[69] 'Ymadawiad Arthur' is not a poem based on native sources. Rather, like

so much contemporary English Arthurian poetry, its dominant source is Tennyson's

Idylls of the King – specifically 'The Passing of Arthur', of which Jones's poem is

largely a translation. And yet, despite its obvious indebtedness to Tennyson, Jones's

'Ymadawiad Arthur' marks a point of departure from the English model, realising in

the course of poem a separate Welsh tradition. The first half of the work largely

follows Tennyson, with Bedwyr (Bedivere) attending the dying king before he

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[*] John Rhŷs, the first Professor of Celtic Studies Jesus College, Oxford (1877-1907), was a tireless educationalist and social reformer. One of the major pre-war figures in Arthurian scholarship, his best known work is his *Studies on the Arthurian Legend* (1891), which was a major influence on Nutt, Weston and Loomis, as well as Welsh writers and scholars, such as T. Gwynn Jones. His work is discussed in the following chapter.

[†] T. Gwynn Jones was not the only writer at this time to follow Rhŷs's proposal for Arthurian-themed literature. The Rhiangerdd (translation) winner at the 1901 Merthyr Tydfil Eisteddfod was 'Cilwich ac Olwen' by Testyn, and in the same year that Jones won the Chair for 'Ymadawiad Arthur' at the Bangor Eisteddfod (1902), Silyn (Robert Silyn Roberts) won the Crown, a secondary prize, for his 'Trystan ac Esyllt'.

eventually throws the sword into the water (as in the usual tale, Bedwyr fears that without the sword the kingdom will not be able to withstand the onslaughts of the Saxons). Returning to the wounded king, Bedwyr is told of a time of treachery and wretchedness under an enemy, when '*A o gof ein maes i gyd / A 'n gwir, anghofir hefyd*' ('Our land will be forgotten / And our truth also forgotten'). But Arthur also promises to return to his *bro*, or homeland:[*]

> *A chân fy nghloch, yn fy nghledd*
> *Ga faelaf, dygaf eilwaith*
> *Glod yn ôl i 'n gwlad a 'n iaith.*
>
> [And my bell will sound, I will grasp
> My weapon, I will bring forth a second time
> Praise for our country and language.][70]

It is here that Jones's poem differs most obviously from 'The Passing of Arthur'. Tennyson's Arthur had explicitly warned Bedivere against such a false hope in his return, saying that '[t]he old order changeth, yielding place to new [...] Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?'[71] Tennyson's Arthur would not return – Victorian England was at the zenith of its power and had no need of a promise of national renewal.[†] The Victorian stoicism of Tennyson's Arthur is very far from the tone Jones's poem – the Welsh Arthur is too aware of the '*[d]an lyn dry 'n drueni*' ('wretchedness under an enemy') to advocate such acceptance of the wiles of fate. The focus of both poems is very different too. Although the earlier form of Tennyson's poem (the 'Morte d'Arthur') was composed as an articulation of the

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[*] '*Bro*' signifies a local region, as opposed to '*gwlad*', or country, nation.

[†] Tennyson's Arthur makes only passing reference to his fabled return: 'I have lived my life, and that which I have done / May He within himself make pure! but thou, / If thou shouldst never see my face again, / Pray for my soul.' ('The Passing of Arthur', ll. 412-5). In the earlier 'The Epic' (1842), the nineteenth-century narrator, after hearing Everard Hall's recitation of the 'Morte d'Arthur', dreams of Arthur's return in the guise of 'a modern gentleman / Of stateliest port'; and all the people cry 'Arthur is come again: he cannot die' (ll. 294-6). Tennyson, of course, removed the poetic frame of 'The Epic' when the 'Morte d'Arthur' became 'The Passing of Arthur' in the *Idylls*, re-emphasising the point that high-Victorian England had little need for a myth of returned greatness: it was already globally dominant.

poet's own sense of grief at the death of Arthur Hallam, 'The Passing of Arthur', as

its name suggests, is firmly focalised on the king himself. In Jones's *awdl*, the focus is

firmly on Sir Bedwyr. He begins the poem as a subject of personal grief, mourning the

loss of his king:

> *i minnau*
> *Hoffed fu gynt, - ni pheidiaf ag yntau;*
> *Ynghŷd y buom yng nghadau, - ynghŷd*
> *Iawn ein diehgyd yn ennyd angau!*

> ['He has been
> So dear [to me] – I will not part from him!
> Together we fought in battle – together
> To go in the moment of death would be right!][72]

Later in the poem he becomes the Everyman figure, the eternal Welshman 'faced with

an uncertain future'.[73] Representing the historical people of Wales, as well as the

contemporary, Bedwyr is told that he is to carry on the fight, that he must '*Bydd*

ddewr a glân, / Baidd dioddef' ('Be brave and pure / suffer the waiting').[74] And at the

conclusion to the poem Bedwyr, though 'sad and silent', goes off to the battle again.

But he goes remembering the words of the mysterious song which has filled

the air as Arthur departs for *Ynys Afallon* (the Isle of Avalon). The three stanzas of

this song are perhaps the most famous in twentieth-century *Cymraeg* literature:

> *Draw dros y don mae dirion nad ery*
> *Cwyn yn ei thir, ac yno ni thery*
> *Na haint na henaint fyth mo'r rhai hynny*
> *A ddêl i'w phur, rydd awel, a phery*
> *   Pob calon yn heiny a llon,*
> *Ynys Afallon ei hun sy felly.*

> *Yn yr fro ddedwydd mae hen freuddwydion*
> *A fu'n esmwythno ofn oesau meithion;*
> *Byw yno byth mae pob hen obeithion,*
> *Yno, mae cynnydd uchel amcanion;*
> *   Ni ddaw fyth i ddeifio hon golli ffydd,*
> *Na thro cywilydd, na thorri calon.*

Yno, mae tân pob awen a gano,
Grym, hyder, awch pob gŵr a ymdrecho,
Sylfaen yw byth i'r sawl fynn obeithio;
    Ni heneiddiwn tra'n noddo – mae gwiw foes
Ac anadl einioes y Genedl yno!

[Yonder across the waves is a tender land where
No cry remains on her soil, and there does not dwell
Disease nor age to afflict those
Who come to her pure, free air and she makes
    Every heart here agile and gay,
It is the isle of Avalon which is thus.

In the happy land are old dreams
Which comforted fear for long ages
There forever lives every old hope
There, high aims multiply
    Never will this one lose faith
Nor feel shame, nor break hearts.

There is the fire of every Muse that sang
The power, confidence, desire of each man who tried,
She brings energy to the one who needs revival
A strong foundation for he who will hope
    We will not grow old while she shelters us
And the breath of life of the nation is there!][75]

The first verse is a vision of tranquility, in which *Afallon* becomes a Welsh *Tir na*

n'Og, the Island of Youth, offering peace and rest for those exhausted in the attempt

to keep Wales free.[*] In the second verse, the idea of *Ynys Afallon* becomes more

political. Here, *Afallon* has become the living memory of Wales – containing the

hopes and dreams of the Welsh nation, where (in contrast to the Wales of treachery,

which Arthur has earlier predicted) faith is upheld and treason is unknown. In the

third verse, *Afallon* becomes a storehouse for the Welsh nation – where the soul of

Wales resides eternally. It also contains the seeds of the revival of which 'Ymadawiad

Arthur' is a major part. Here, *Afallon* is not only the subject of this poem; it is also the

inspiration for the entire twentieth-century Welsh renaissance, bringing energy to its

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[*] This affinity with the Irish legend, though unusual, is not without precedent. John Rhŷs had quoted an anonymous Latin description of Avalon in his *Arthurian Legend* (1891, p. 335) which mentions the island containing an eternal spring, an abundance of flowers and the absence of age and disease. Considering Rhŷs's influence on the Welsh revival, it is probable that Jones's conception of Afallon was largely drawn from Rhŷs's scholarship.

poets, housing their nationalist and cultural aspirations. In Jones's imagination, *Afallon* is not just the resting place for an undead hero while he waits to return; it has become the spiritual home of the nation, a storehouse of Welsh identity and nationalist ambition.

So great was Jones's reputation during his lifetime that it was written in 1918 that Lloyd George would one day be spoken of as 'Prif Weinidog o Gymru a fu byw yn oes T. Gywnn Jones' ('a Welsh Prime Minister in the age of T. Gwynn Jones').[76] Certainly his influence on Welsh poetry is not to be underestimated, especially in terms of Arthurian literature. In the years following his victory at the 1902 Eisteddfod, J. Machreth Rees (1904), John Dyfnallt Owen (1907), D. Tecwyn Evans (1915), Pardarn Besrudd (1918), D. Cledlyn Davies (1923), William Morris (1934) and David Jones (1936) all won prominent Eisteddfod prizes for poems on Arthurian themes.[77] 'Elphin' (Robert Arthur Griffith, 1902), Tegla Davies (1922) and Tom Parry-Jones (1944) were the authors of some of the most prominent non-Eisteddfod retellings of the legend; while Frank Harold Lee's popular version of Malory, *The Children's King Arthur* (1935) was translated into Welsh in 1953.[78] T. Gwynn Jones himself published three versions of 'Ymadawiad Arthur' (1902, 1910, 1925), each time making substantial changes to the diction.[79] He also wrote scholarly works on the legend in 1926 and 1930.[80] Yet no work achieved the same level of success as 'Ymadawiad Arthur' and in later years, after all the initial Romantic promise of Jones's 1902 poem, an element of cynicism crept into the Arthurian story as it was retold by the *Cymraeg* writers. Again the this trend is typified in Jones's work.

Jones wrote several other Arthurian poem, all published in 1923: 'Arthur Gawr' ('Arthur's Outcry'), 'Ogof Arthur' ('Arthur's Cave') and 'Atro Arthur' ('Arthur's Return'), a 38-line satire seemingly directed at Lloyd George. The poem

begins with '*[a] gwaldwr tal*' ('a tall countryman'), presumably Arthur, returning to

Wales, whereupon he overhears a '*gŵr mawr*' ('a great man' or politician) addressing

a large assembly '*mewn estron iaith*' ('in a foreign language'). [81] Lamenting bitterly

the loss of *Cymraeg* in modern Wales (though patriotically the people still sing 'Hen

Wlad fy Nhadau', which promises that *Cymraeg* will never die), the '*gwaldwr*'

returns to his boat and sails back to *Afallon*, from where he will not return again. The

last lines seem to be a deliberate parody of the song Bedwyr hears as Arthur sails into

Ynys Afallon in 'Ymadawiad Arthur':

> *A chlywn gynghanedd brydferth a chwerthin*
> *A nwyfus gainc gan wefusau gwin*
>
> *'Druan gwŷr! nid oes grudd o naddant*
> *A ddeil ar beth ond addoli'r bunt!'*
>
> [And I heard beautiful *cynghanedd* and laughter
> And a passionate tune from lips of wine.
>
> 'Poor men! Not one of them
> Will stick to anything but worshipping the pound!'][82]

'Atro Arthur' is a slight poem, but it nonetheless expresses the same sense of

disillusion which is evident in Jones's later work – particularly the poems which deal

with Jones's idea of *Ynys Afallon*: 'Tir na n'og' (1916), a lyrical play based on the

Irish otherworld which so keenly influences *Ynys Afallon*; 'Madog' (1918), which

chronicles the eponymous medieval hero's attempt to discover America;

'Broséliàwnd' (1922), in which Merlin refuses earthly existence to escape into a

magical forest; and 'Argoed' (1927), which tells of how Roman invaders destroy a

community of Celts living in Gaul.[83] As this sequence of poems progressed, the idea

of *Afallon* as a tender, restorative land diminished. In 'Broséliàwnd', for instance,

Merlin's imagined forest is an escape from the world, not a means of restoring it, as in

'Ymadawiad Arthur':

Bad dim o aberth boddi ymwybod
A 'i gymar, ing, yng nghwsg y mawr angof?
Ai gwell yw gwybod trwy golli gobaith
Na thagu anobaith ag anwybod?
Pen a bai gof, oni pheidiai gofid?

[What sacrifice is it to drown the consciousness
And its partner, agony, in the sleep of forgetfulness?
Is it better to know by losing hope
Than to stifle hopelessness with unknowing?
If there were no memory, would not worry cease?][84]

This is an existential despair raised to national and nationalist level. Merlin enters the

imaginary world of Broséliàwnd, and abandons the concerns and 'ing' ('agony') of

the real world.

The last poem to deal explicitly with the idea of *Ynys Afallon* is 'Argoed'. The

poem begins (and ends) with a nostalgic remembrance of a Celtic community:

Argoed, Argoed y mannau dirgel...
Ble 'r oedd dy fryniau, dy hafnau dyfnion,
Dy drofâu ty wyll, dy drefri tawel.

[Argoed, Argoed of the secret places...
Your hills, your sunken glades, where were they,
Your winding glooms and quiet towns?][85]

Such an idyllic nostalgia, however, is only possible because of the self-destruction the

Celts of Argoed choose when faced with Roman colonisation. When the invaders

demand tribute, the people of Argoed refuse and they lay waste to their own land,

'*Rhyw wast o ludw lle bu fforest lydon*' ('A desolation of ashes, where once were wild

woods').[86] This poem marks the last, and most bleak, version of *Ynys Afallon*. In

'Ymadawiad Arthur', this mythic land would house all that was best of the Celtic

people, and would eventually restore the nation; *Tir na n'Og* would at least accept the

dead and reward them with the riches of peace; for Merlin, Broséliàwnd was only a

refuge from the world, which seems to have had no ability to revive modern Wales;

but the significance of 'Argoed' is difficult to establish: the community's death wish

in the face of colonisation is fundamentally futile. 'Argoed' has become nothing more

than a memory – and a fragmented one at that – vaguely recalled from 'the

unremembering depths'.[87] The poem's negative Romanticism certainly shows the

collapse in the Welsh revival's hopes, and marks the end of *Ynys Afallon* as a viable

cultural myth for twentieth-century Wales. After the Great War, Wales became a very

different place – one characterised by unemployment, depopulation and depression. If

Arthur had been the country's symbol between 1900 and 1914, he was largely, though

not wholly, rejected by the poets and novelists of the interwar years.

An unstable hero: the later twentieth-century Arthur in Wales

There are many reasons why the Arthurian legend did not retain its dominant position

in Welsh culture after the Great War. The official status of Arthurian poetry as a

subject for the Eisteddfod may have proved stifling for its development. More

importantly, Arthur had emerged in Wales as a symbol of national self-confidence;

but post-war Wales had little to celebrate: its economy was devastated by the slump in

coal and steel prices, agriculture was ravaged by the depression and unemployment by

1930 was at 27 percent (rising to 60 percent in some areas).[88] Meanwhile, the earlier

totems of communal identity – Nonconformism, Liberalism and, in large parts of the

country, *Cymraeg* – were declining in importance. Moreover, interest in the myth was

almost wholly restricted (outside of scholarship) to writing in *Cymraeg*. The

burgeoning English-language literature of the early twentieth century never took to

Arthur in the same way as Welsh-speaking poets had done. In the industrial south

there was much less need of Arthur: here, social realism was a more suitable cultural

form than Romantic medievalism. Even in the *Cymraeg*-speaking heartland there was

a movement away from T. Gwynn Jones's Romanticism in favour of a more realistic response to contemporary society.

For many, nationalism was no longer the province of dreaming bards, but had become the province of harder-headed campaigners, such as Saunders Lewis, who as well as being a more material poet than Jones was also the founder of Plaid Cymru, the nationalist party of Wales. In his most famous work, 'Y Dilyw' ('The Deluge'), Lewis openly derided Jones's Romantic vision of *Afallon*, juxtaposing it with the brutal materialism of contemporary warfare. Taking Jones's most famous line – '*Draw dros y don mae bro dirion*' ('Across the waves is a tender land') – Lewis twisted it into a new, uglier form: '*A thros y don daw swn tanciau'n crynhoi*' ('And across the waves comes the sound of tanks gathering').[89] Yet the Romantic energies which fuelled the earlier Arthurian poetry were not entirely expelled by Lewis and other post-war writers. Rather these energies were fed into another national redeemer figure – Owain Glyndŵr, the fifteenth-century leader of Wales's last national rebellion against English colonialism – who as both prince and social bandit was much better equipped to deal with the political vagaries of post-war Wales.[*90]

The work of R.S. Thomas symbolises the position of Arthur in Wales after the literary revival. Deeply unromantic, Thomas's image of Wales could not be further from the utopian vision of T. Gwynn Jones's *Ynys Afallon*. In several of his poems Arthur appears as a symbol of a mythological past which wholly oppresses the contemporary Welsh. Thomas frequently wrote of how the people of Wales were 'bred on legends'; how they possessed no sense of the present, choosing instead to live in a past which is 'brittle with relics.'[91] As a signifier of 'a dead culture', Arthur

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[*] In post-war Wales, Arthur was often a 'safe' political figure to invoke, but Glyndŵr has consistently been seen as '*trwbwl*', bringing with him 'an aura of rebellion and danger.' (Henken, *National Redeemer*, 192-4). Glyndŵr, a far more political figure than Arthur, proved a much better inspiration for the Welsh nationalist movement of the twentieth century.

functions in post-Second World War Wales in a manner similar to how the Grail

functioned in England during the 1920s and 30s.[92] Like the English Grail, the

Arthurian story in Thomas's retelling has become twisted, mean and sterile in its

modern setting – such as in 'Border Blues' (1958), in which Thomas transposed the

story of 'Culhwch ac Olwen' into a contemporary rural community on the border with

England:

> Are there none to marry?
> There is still an Olwen teasing a smile
> Of bright flowers out of the grass,
> Olwen in nylons. Quick, quick,
> Marry her someone. But Arthur leers
> And turns again to the cramped kitchen
> Where the old mother sits with her sons and daughters
> At the round table. Ysbaddaden Penkawr's
> Cunning was childish measured with her.[93]

The border setting of this poem is crucial to Thomas's portrayal: the decrepit Arthur,

once the champion of Celtic resistance to the Saxon invasion, now jostles with 'the

ladies from the council houses: / Blue eyes and Birmingham yellow / Hair, and the

ritual murder of vowels'.[94] Arthur, his myth useless to the twentieth century, is just

one of the 'sham ghosts' of the brittle, unhealthy past full of 'dead heroes and dead

saints'.[95]

'Border Blues' rejects Arthur as a viable myth for contemporary Wales; but

another poem, 'A Welshman to any Tourist' (1955), presents Arthur as choosing to

reject the modern Welsh:

> The hills are fine, of course, [...]
> And packed with caverns,
> One being Arthur's dormitory;
> He and his knights are the bright ore
> That seams our history,
> But shame has kept them late in bed.[96]

There is no return from *Ynys Afallon* in these lines – such a romantic conception could never exist in Thomas's verse. And although Arthur and his knights are here configured as the 'bright ore' in the nation's history (rather than the dull portrait of 'Border Blues'), 'A Welshman to any Tourist' maintains the impossibility of the Arthurian legend as a viable historic or mythic model for the second half of the twentieth century – the Wales that has 'nothing vast to offer you', as the opening line bleakly puts it.

Thomas's poetry is unusual in that his verses articulate the uselessness of the Arthurian legend, whereas this uselessness is usually manifest in ignoring Arthur altogether. But then, Thomas was Wales's bleakest poet, whose prolific output was, paradoxically, often based on the themes of sterility and the unproductive. Perhaps it was not a poet, but a prose writer, who was best able to communicate the position of Arthur in the second half of the twentieth century. Glyn Jones's *The Island of Apples* (1965) is amongst the richest Arthurian works to appear in Britain since the Second World War; certainly, it is the best of his own novels.[97] Like much of Jones's work, *The Island of Apples* is a story about children and is in many ways also a children's book.

The novel be gins with Dewi, the book's adolescent narrator, discovering the near-drowned figure of Karl Anthony floating down the river. With initials corresponding to King Arthur and with an entry that would not be out of place in a medieval romance, even a Grail romance,* Karl's entry into Dewi's life symbolises a shift from the mundane reality of semi-urban, petit-bourgeois life into a world of chivalry, adventure and escape. Despite the fact that the novel is structured around a series of deaths (those of Dewi's father, mother, headmaster and finally, perhaps,

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* Jones was presumably thinking of the entry of the sword in the stone which heralds the arrival of Galahad in Malory's 'The Noble Tale of the Sankgreal'.

Karl), the tone of the book is lively, while its narrative is constructed out a series of

tall stories: some told by Karl concerning his adventures abroad, others acted out

among the streets and farms of Ystrad valley. Karl offers Dewi an exciting

adolescence – their adventures (particularly those concerning Growler, the boys'

headmaster) frequently centre on the defeat of the adult world. Yet Karl himself is

never quite an adolescent, never quite real. Blond, tall and well-dressed, wearing a red

satin sash across his waist, complemented by a pair of silver earrings and a golden,

snake-handled dagger, Karl is at once a knight of romance, a dandy and a gypsy. He is

also a child of Europe, having lived in France, Slovenia, Venice, Amsterdam,

Germany, 'or perhaps it was Austria, or Poland, or the Balkans' – Dewi, as ever in his

descriptions of Karl, is unsure.[98]

The Arthurian symbolism of the novel was not always integral to the work. At

the planning stage Karl was originally known by the rather less romantic name of

'Roger' and the Arthurian title was also a late development: early possibilities being

'Black and Purple' (the colours of the local school) and 'Goodbye Brewery Square'

(where Dewi lives).[99] But the finished work calls clear attention to an Arthurian

heritage. Aside from Karl's initials, the title of the novel refers to Avalon, which had

been identified as the Island of Apples since at least William of Malmesbury's *De

Regum Gestis Anglorum* (c. 1125).[100] The novel's epigraph – '*Ynys Afallon ei hun sy

felly*' ('The Island of Afallon is thus') – is taken from T. Gwynn Jones's 'Ymadawiad

Arthur'. And then there is that other figure of Arthurian romance present in the novel:

Myrddin Tŷ-Coch, the odd-job boy who works for Dewi's aunt in Abergarth (here

clearly Carmarthen).

Jones presumably knew of Myrddin's associations with Carmarthen: the name

itself is said (erroneously) to derive from the place name Caer-fyrddin (Carmarthen),

while Geoffrey of Monmouth has Vortigern discover the illegitimate 'Merlinus'

outside Carmarthen's town wall.[101] Myrddin is also linked to the Island of Apples in

the early Welsh poem 'Yr Afalleneu' ('The Apple Trees'), where he appears as a man

driven mad by the misfortunes of war. Jones's Myrddin retains his demented character

in *The Island of Apples*, where it is coupled with the element of licentiousness that he

had acquired over centuries. While Karl is largely uninterested in women, Myrddin is

'always on about girls and babies and that'.*[102] In Dewi's mind, this fascination is

explicitly related to Myrddin's 'base' nature – especially his frequent associated with

excrement:

> I could see Myrddin the odd-job boy wheeling a loaded muck-barrow out of
> the stable across to the dung-heap in the corner. About sixteen Myrddin was, I
> think, he was very strong and half daft, and filthy now through forking horse-
> muck, his boots and his khaki trousers covered with old mud and dung.[103]

There is nothing romantic about Myrddin: he exists in complete antithesis to the

chivalric Karl. In Dewi's presentation of him as 'strong and half daft' he resembles

the crazed Myrddin of 'Yr Afalleneu'. Even his mysterious birth is reduced to a

bestial event:

> He told me years ago he was a bastard, before I was sure what a bastard was
> [...] Born in a cowshed, he'd been, he said, his mother gave birth to him the
> same minute as the cow dropped her calf in the next stall.†[104]

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* There is little by way of female presence in this novel. Women, chiefly in the form of mothers and
aunties, are generally little more than obstacles to Dewi's adventures. Karl does at one point refer to a
fiancée – a foreign princess, whose family he once rescued from revolution. For Karl, his engagement
to a beautiful girl is but a romantic motif, included to cap a story of cunning adventure. It is also
possible that Karl's mentioning of an even limited romantic attachment is an attempt to preclude any
reading of Karl and Dewi's relationship as homosexual (the four or five year age gap between the boys
perhaps being of additional authorial concern).
† Myrddin remains a 'filthy' presence throughout the novel. Later, when Dewi is about to escape with
Karl, Myrddin tells him another story of his birth – this time his mother 'dropped' him while she was
cleaning a fanlight in a Carmarthen pub.

Dewi rejects Myrddin as a companion, while continually rejoicing in his

friendship with Karl. Yet both Arthurian characters possess similar traits – they are

about the same age (four or five years older than Dewi), share a penchant for tall

stories, are radically at variance with their surroundings and both choose to isolate

themselves from their communities. And while Karl brings a certain romanticism to

his and Dewi's exploits, their relationship is still associated (though less obtrusively

conveyed) with the same sense of dirt which surrounds Myrddin. When both Dewi's

mother and father have died and he is sent to live with Karl at 'Academy House' his

aunt asks him how he is faring:

> I said it was great in Academy House – but I didn't tell her anything about the
> sort of indoor camping life we had organised by now up there under the roof –
> living by ourselves and hardly ever seeing the Powells; making nearly all our
> own food, over our ankles sometimes by the bosh in scraps and potato
> peelings; fighting the dizzy flies that were so thick they made the room look
> like the air above a gnatty brook; [...] waking up every morning at one time
> dotted all over with masses of red flea-marks until we bought special powder
> for the bedclothes.[105]

There is something disturbing here – the fleas, the isolation, the dirt; later in the novel

Dewi mentions with equal indifference a 'swollen ankle-pad of a boil in the middle of

my cheek' and a 'cake-like' sore which covers his stomach.[106] His life with Karl is

described with such enthusiasm that Dewi's narration hardly reveals the extent of the

squalor they live in. Again, Karl is providing Dewi with an escapist fantasy – a

chivalric gloss to the grim reality of their existence.

Contributing to the sense of fantasy is Dewi's narration, which is always

vague and elusive where it regards Karl: 'Rees called him a boy, but I thought he was

a man'; '[h]e looked thin, and high, and not real, about two or three feet taller than

Growler. He seemed to belong lovely in the firelight and he gave me a feeling of glory

just to look at him'.[107] 'He had some sort of foreign accent, he sounded like a

Frenchman, or a North-Walian, or a German perhaps, but not guttural at all.'[108] So

elusive are Dewi's descriptions that Karl may be nothing more than a romantic

figment of Dewi's imagination, a psychological consolation for all the losses he

suffers in the course of the novel (losses which Dewi's narration never dwells on, or

for which he never expresses grief). This sense of escapism is brought to its most

heightened state in the conclusion to the novel – a denouement which owes a

particular debt to 'Ymadawiad Arthur'.[*]

As Dewi and Karl run away from Ystrad, fleeing from the ensuing police (who

suspect Karl of the murder of Growler, the headmaster), they steal a yacht, 'as lovely

and graceful and light as a great snowy sea-bird, called *Tir na n'Og*'.[109] The boat's

name alludes to both T. Gwynn Jones's conception of *Afallon*, as well as his later

poem of the same title and the Irish legend. Like Bedwyr, Dewi stands upon the shore

staring out into the estuary as Karl brings the yacht closer. Dewi, again like Bedwyr,

expresses his sense of dependence on Karl, not because of some feudal bond, but

because of an adolescent's intimacy:

> Without Karl I didn't feel as though I lived at all, not even existed, all my
> thoughts were of him, I couldn't imagine my life if I were not able to turn to
> him for strength and courage.[110]

As Karl draws closer to the shore, Dewi sees that he is pursued by another boat, 'a

small black steamer', its darkness contrasting with the *Tir na n'Og*, painted 'dove

grey and white'.[111] The yacht, through Karl's mismanagement (his first in the novel),

loses its mast. Seeing his friend in trouble, Dewi swims out to the boat. But it is too

late; Karl is thrown into the sea, and the current drags him out:

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[*] Glyn Jones read Welsh.

> when the lightening stopped, I caught sight of Karl floating rapidly on the current, his body rising and falling on the surface of the water as the flood carried him on towards the sea. Soon he would be past me, and gone for ever into the darkness. [...]
> 'Karl, Karl! Don't leave me. Karl! Karl!'[112]

Dewi has already told the reader that Karl has already died once, in Spain; miraculously recovering after the death certificate had been signed.[113] Yet after Karl is swept into the sea, there is little opportunity to believe that he will come again – at least not to Dewi, who remains bereft and screaming, too young to be told to 'be a man, suffer the waiting', as Bedwyr was told in 'Ymadawiad Arthur'.[114]

Like the Arthurian myth, Karl cannot be claimed by Dewi – or Wales, for that matter – for long. Throughout the novel he remained apart from his Welsh surroundings: he was a child of Europe who found Ystrad utterly oppressive. That the novel is concerned with and wholly narrated from the perspective of an adolescent boy is fitting for a novel that draws its symbolism from the Welsh Arthurian tradition. Although the novel's epigraph ('The Island of Afallon is thus') may, in the context of the novel, refer to the experience of Dewi's romantic adolescence, the fact that it is taken from the first and most escapist verse of T. Gwynn Jones's poem – ignoring the later political and spiritual ramifications of the song that Sir Bedwyr listens to – is itself of importance. Like the epigraph, Karl only ever offers Dewi a brief time of romantic escapism. Although he embodied myth, told tales and created legends, he was never able to offer Dewi a way out of adolescence.

<p style="text-align:center">*　　*　　*　　*　　*</p>

In many ways Karl symbolises the Welsh Arthurian tradition: at once elusive and escapist, its dominant form seems perpetually adolescent. For there is a recurring pattern in Wales's relationship with the Arthurian story in which interest in the story

is rarely sustained over a long period of time. Rather, Welsh Arthurian literary production can be characterised by a series of fits and starts – short, brief developments, culminating in a few notable texts before interest in the legend quickly dies out. As David Jones described it in 1942, 'the tradition of Arthur is a subterranean one; it emerges to have significance, sometimes here, now there.'[115] The legend was of intermittent interest in the centuries before Geoffrey's *Historia*; and again around the middle of the thirteenth century. It excited certain London-Welsh scholars at the turn of the nineteenth century, but over forty years passed until the five Welsh Arthurian romances were finally published – and then they were edited by a remarkable Englishwoman, Charlotte Guest. The Arthurian revival of the early twentieth century is another instance of the 'boom and bust' nature of Wales's literary relationship with the Arthurian myth – Wales's political and cultural make-up being too historically fragile to support and develop a legend which other nations (and chiefly England) had effectively manipulated as a myth of permanence and imperial greatness.

As such, both T. Gwynn Jones's 'Ymadawiad Arthur', with its promise of revival, and Glyn Jones's *The Island of Apples*, with its sense of the collapse of hope and romance, conform to the traditional position of Arthur in Wales. Although they are, in their own ways, remarkable texts, neither could have hoped to have inspired a long-lasting tradition – much less an English-style paradigm. Instead, as is so often the way with Arthurian literary production within the British Isles, the Welsh literature of the twentieth century flowed into the English tradition, enriching it with a few choice Celtic flavours. But whereas in previous centuries there was a certain sense of appropriation about this movement (at least it has been perceived in this way

by later critics), the Arthurian literature of the 1930s and 40s was a distinctly Anglo-Welsh product. This British Arthur is discussed in the next chapter.

Above (fig. 15), Glasscock's 1933 'The Hall of King Arthur'. The figure above the entrance shows the boy Arthur pulling the sword from the stone. Below left (fig. 16), looking towards the ruins of Tintagel Castle. Below right (fig. 17), King Arthur's Granite Throne, the centrepiece of Glasscock's Halls of Chivalry.

KING ARTHUR'S ROUND TABLE.

Above (fig. 18), an anonymous engraving (1861) showing the pre-excavated remains of Britain's most complete Roman amphitheatre, which John Churchyard in 1587 claimed was 'a deepe and large round peece of groud [that] shewes yet where Arthur sate'. Below left (fig. 19), the 'Tennyson Window', at the Hanbury Arms, where the poet laureate apparently enjoyed the attractive prospect of the Usk coursing its way through the meadows of Caerleon. Below right (fig. 20), photograph (c. 1900) of the Hanbury Arms and Usk.

Hanbury Arms, Caerleon

Fig. 21. David Jones, *Illustration to the Arthurian Legend: The Four Queens Find Launcelot Sleeping* (1941)
This sketch illustrates a passage from Malory in which Lancelot is abducted by four queens. Lancelot, however, lies dreaming of his love, Queen Guinevere, who appears as a swan (bottom right of picture). Lancelot wears a German helmet of the type Jones knew from the 1914–18 war.
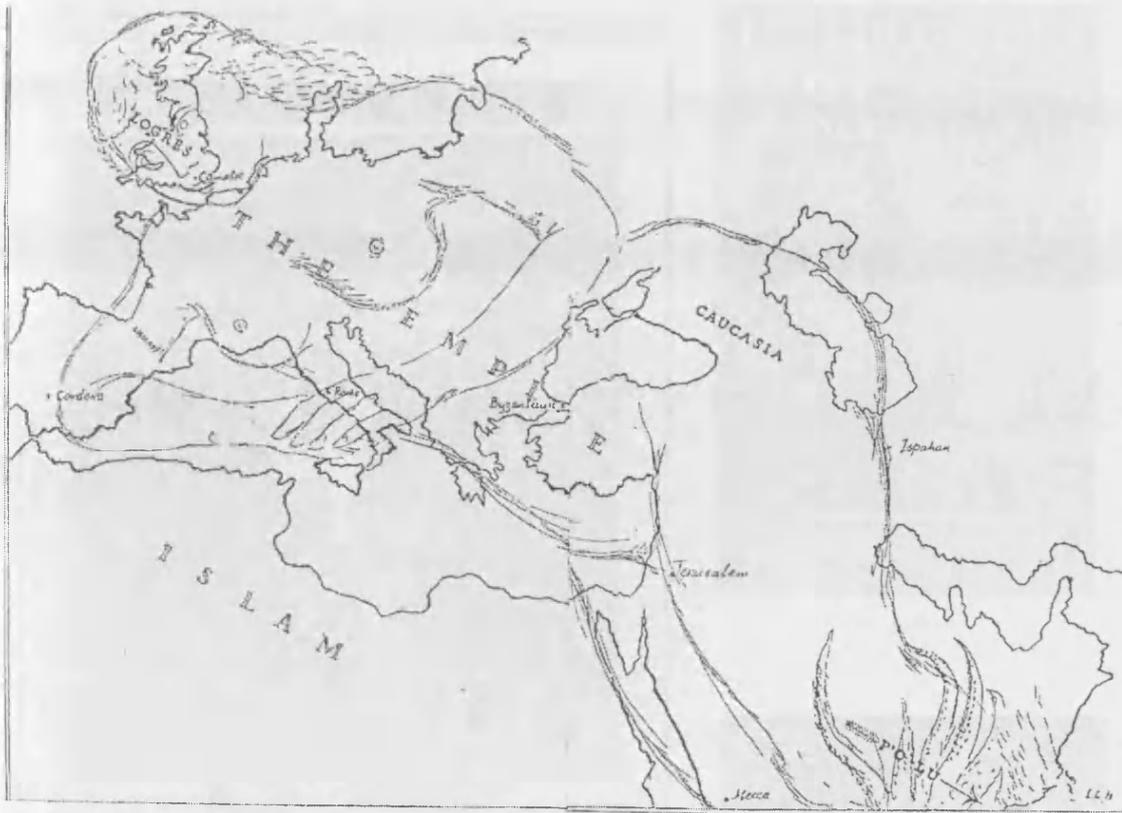
Above (fig. 22), the frontispiece to Charles Williams's *Taliessin through Logres* (1938), showing the religious-geography of Taliessin-cycle's poetry.

Below (fig.23), four illustrations for T.H. White's *The Witch in the Wood* (1939). From left to right: Sir Palomides, Four knights at Bedegraine, Queen Morgause and the castle at Orkney.
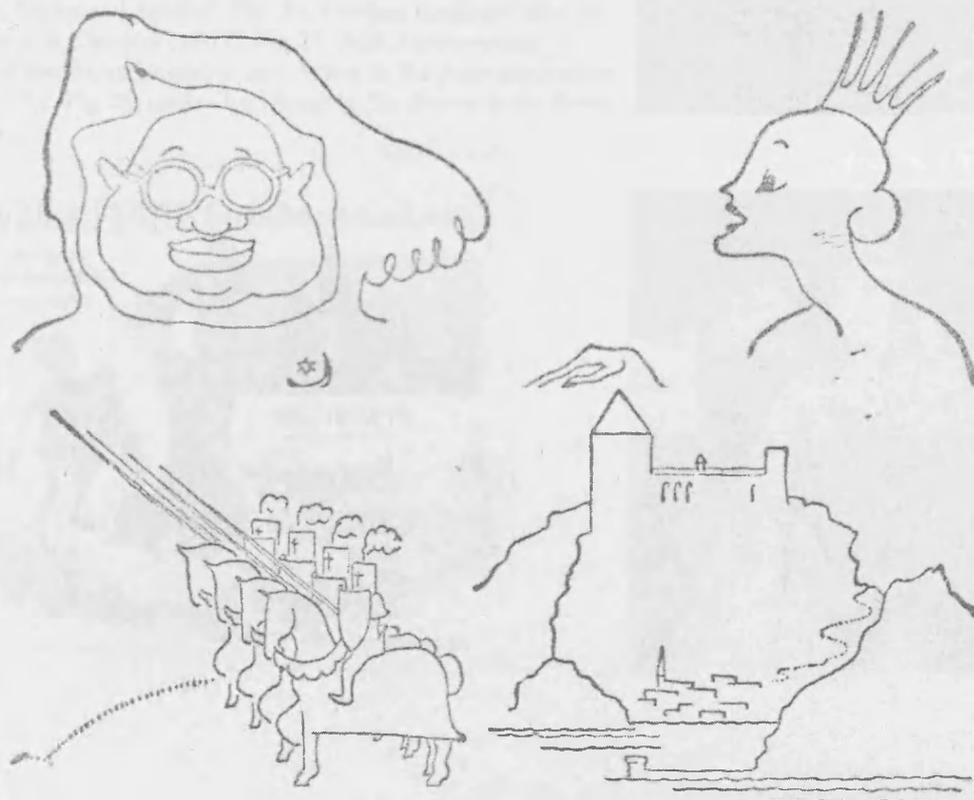
Clockwise from top: Fig. 24, advertising poster for the film version of Lerner and Loewe's *Camelot* (1967). Fig. 25, the French release of MGM's *The Knights of the Round Table* (1953), starring Ava Gardner, as an imperious Guinevere, and Robert Taylor as Lancelot. Fig. 26, Vanessa Redgrave as Guenever in *Camelot* (1967). Fig 27, Julie Andrews and Richard Burton as Guenever and Arthur in the stage production of *Camelot*. Fig 28, poster for Disney's *The Sword in the Stone* (1963).

Chapter Five

'The dread Pendragon: Britain's King of Kings': towards an Anglo-Celtic conception of the Arthurian story

The writers discussed in this chapter – Ernest Rhys, John Masefield, David Jones and

Charles Williams – were ambitious. Unlike many of the authors already considered,

they were not content merely to rewrite certain sections of the Arthurian legend, such

as the Grail story, or the Coming or the Passing of Arthur. Instead, these writers –

notably all poets – sought to recast the entire Arthurian story. They also saw the

Arthurian legend as somehow 'essential' to Britain's cultural and political identity.

Unlike many Grail writers, who presented the Grail as pertinent only to England

(Butts), Cornwall (Hawker) or Wales (Machen), Rhys, Masefield, Jones and Williams

were all concerned with remaking the legend into a unified, Anglo-Celtic myth.

There are three identifiable reasons why these writers chose to reconfigure the

Arthurian story as an Anglo-Celtic construct. First, with the exception of Ernest Rhys,

the work of most of these poets was undertaken between the two world wars. In this

period, Britain, like Malory's Lancelot in the 'Tale of the Sankgreal', seemed to be

suffering from an 'instability of purpose':[1] unable to identify its role in global affairs,

its statesmen's colonial policies seemingly unaware that the world had moved on from 1914, its domestic policies similarly ignorant, or unwilling, to consider the needs of a discontented populace. For Masefield, Williams and Jones, the Arthurian story was a means of establishing a new British identity. They ignored, or reacted violently to, Tennyson's *Idylls*: bypassing the nineteenth-century bourgeois epic just at the moment when the Great Slump of 1929-33, the rise of fascism and the economic advances of Stalinist communism seemed to be signalling the decisive fall of Liberalism.[2] Instead, works such as *Midsummer Night and Other Tales in Verse* (Masefield, 1927), *In Parenthesis* (Jones, 1937) and *Taliessin through Logres* (Williams, 1938) were seeking to build newly-forged links with the feudal past, whether literarily, politically or religiously. In addition, both David Jones and Charles Williams held highly conservative views:[*] their construction of a continuum with a largely mythic feudal past aligns them politically with other Catholic or Anglo-Catholic intellectuals of the period, such as T.S. Eliot (who was an influence on both Jones and Williams), who advocated a return to an 'organic' model of social, hierarchal cohesiveness, in which class differences were recognised but accepted as 'natural'.[†]

Second, Anglo-Celtic identity seems to have been personally significant for these writers. Rhys and Jones were Anglo-Welsh; both were born in London to

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[*] David Jones's and Charles Williams's political views contrast sharply with those of John Masefield who, although of well-established bourgeois stock and who later became a somewhat slavish Poet Laureate, always identified himself as 'common man', refusing a knighthood on several occasions and who became, under his wife's influence, a supporter of women's suffrage. Masefield had also been a pacifist in the years before 1914; during the war he served with the Red Cross in the Dardanelles, as well as writing *Gallipoli* (1916), a government-commissioned work which nevertheless gave 'graphic insight into the life of the common soldier, in both its horror and heroism' (Gervais, 'Masefield, John Edward', *Oxford DNB*). The older Ernest Rhys, apart from a brief youthful flirtation with Fabianism, seems to have possessed no strong political affiliations.

[†] Of course, such conservative authoritarian social models were not only the province of Anglo-American, or Anglo-Celtic, reactionary critics. They were institutionally enacted in several Catholic European states, notably: István Bethlen's Hungary (1921-31), before it embraced German Fascism; the Portugal of Oliveira Salazar's *Estado Nova* ('New State'; 1933-74), and the Austria of Engelbert Dollfuß and Kurt Schuschnigg (1933-38), before German annexation in 1938. See Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 113-4.

English-born mothers and Welsh fathers. Their parents taught them only English, though in later life both learnt *Cymraeg* as part of their self-elected Welsh inheritance. Their Arthurian works reveal many of the complexities and contradictions in their national identities. But, while Rhys's prolific outpourings were essentially hampered by his self-contradictory allegiances, Jones yoked the complications of his English-Welsh identity into a series of powerful modernist texts.[*] Masefield and Williams, however, were English-born; and their reasons for adopting Celtic materials in their Arthurian works are more elusive. While both had links with Wales (Masefield hailed from the English side of the Welsh Marches; Williams's surname suggests a Welsh inheritance), their fusion of English and Celtic sources lay in motives more personal, aesthetic and (in Williams's case) religious.

The final cause of the Anglo-Celtic nature of these writers' major works lay in contemporary Arthurian scholarship. Not only were Rhys, Jones and Williams scholars in their own right (while Masefield's papers contain lecture notes on Malory),[†] but their Anglo-Celtic works are heavily indebted to contemporary academic debates concerning the Celtic origins of medieval Arthurian romance. These debates, which sometimes descended into personal arguments between opposed critics, are the defining feature of academic literature of the period, as has already been seen in Grail scholarship in chapter three.[‡]

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[*] Another Arthurian writer, John Cowper Powys (see chapter three), shared similar allegiances to both Wales and England. However, his three Arthurian works – *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932), *Morwyn* (1937) and *Porius* (1951) – represent a shift from a British to a decidedly Welsh (or historic Celtic) viewpoint, rather than continuing to explore a concept of an Anglo-Celtic Matter of Britain.

[†] Though none, interestingly, attended university. All could be described as emerging from upper-working or lower-middle class families who could not afford, or would not expect at this time, to send their sons into further education.

[‡] Approximately, the Celtic debate can be said to have begun in 1891, with the publication of John Rhŷs's *Arthurian Studies*, and concluded in 1959, with the publication of Roger Sherman Loomis's edited collection of essays, *Arthurian Literature of the Middle Ages*, which is discussed in the following chapter.

These poets also proved to be perceptive and original readers of Malory

(another branch of scholarship which made advances in this period – see below),

while the *Morte Darthur* provided the counterpoint to early Welsh romances and Irish

legends.[*] All rejected a Tennysonian reading of the fifteenth-century romance: Rhys,

who twice edited Malory, read the *Morte* with a definite Welsh bias; Williams

understood the text exclusively in light of a highly personal mythology of the Grail;

while Masefield and Jones saw Malory's Arthuriad not only as a great work of

literature, but as a literary monument that was directly relevant to the twentieth

century – understanding the *Morte Darthur*, written in a time of civil strife, as a

means of articulating their own experiences of the Great War.

The resulting work by these Anglo-Celtic poets was very different from that

produced in Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall and Wales. It rejected insularity, regionalism

or local nationalism in favour of a more expansive national identity, or identities. But

neither was it like the English Arthurian literature still being produced (in ever-

decreasing quantities) by those relics of the pre-war years, still essentially

repackaging the *Idylls* in ever-less suitable forms. But before examining their

material, it will be helpful to examine the scholarship which so influenced their work.

'The spell of pure romance': Scholarship and the Anglo-Celtic Arthur

The work of W.P. Ker, considered by some to be the 'most considerable mind to

engage in academic studies in English Literature in Great Britain', embodies the

transition between nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship.[3] The brilliant burst

of editing and criticism of Arthurian literature by amateur scholars in the Romantic

period, including (but not limited to) Sharon Turner, Joseph Ritson, Robert Southey

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[*] The Scots and Irish were largely left out of this Anglo-Celtic reconfiguration of the Arthurian story, despite the fact that the heroic tales and mythology of Ireland assumed great importance through the work of Rhŷs, Nutt and Loomis (as discussed below).

(in England), William Owen Pughe and Iolo Morganwg (in Wales), Walter Scott and

James Pinkerton (in Scotland), had been replaced by lesser critics of the Victorian

Age, with only Charlotte Guest and Matthew Arnold resembling their forbears.[4] At

the conclusion of the nineteenth century, British Arthurian scholarship was mainly the

prerogative of such men as George Saintsbury and Edward Strachey – learned, erudite

and unquestionably dilettante, whose opinions of Malory were discussed in the first

chapter.* While Ker never wrote a work exclusively on the Arthurian legend, *Epic and

Romance* (1898), *The Dark Ages* (1904) and *Medieval English Literature* (1912) each

contained insights into the Arthurian legend.

Ker was a Scotsman, though he spent his academic life entirely in Cardiff,

London and Oxford,[5] and his scholarly work rejects the Anglocentricity of most of his

contemporaries. He continually expressed what he thought to be the indebtedness of

English culture to Celtic sources, whether in the form of direct literary transmission,

Irish monks bringing Latin to Saxon England, or through the influence of that most

cited, yet least knowable entity: the 'Celtic Spirit'.[6] While working almost exclusively

from translations, Ker was eager to praise early Welsh literature. He stated, for

instance, that the dialogue recorded in the *Mabinogion* was so good that it was not

until Malory that English literature caught up.[7] He believed that the three Welsh

romances (*Geraint, Peredur* and *Owain*) were undoubtedly Celtic in origin, being

inflected by (rather than derived from) French romance.[8] Ker also believed that the

aesthetic pleasure of Chrétien's romances 'was due to the Welsh' originals, which

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* Abroad, things were better: M.W. MacCallum in Australia was perhaps the most interesting of
English-language scholars (though the incomparable German scholar H. Oskar Sommer wrote his most
influential work in English), Gaston Paris and M. Loth in France were producing accounts of
Chrétien's sources, while Sommer, Wendelin Foerster and Heinrich Zimmer in Germany attested to the
brilliance of German education. Ker, although a polyglot, was firmly British in his erudition. His
Arthurian successors, however, would follow the continental critics closely.

were so novel to twelfth-century France that its romancers were 'generally content if

they could get the matter in the right order.'[9]

A general picture of the development of Arthurian literature emerges from

Ker's work: the genesis of the Arthurian story was Welsh; its transmission to twelfth-

century France was conducted by the bards of Wales, or else through the literary

dissemination of Welsh texts; the French romancers, particularly Chrétien, adapted

them, adding 'strength' and 'beauty' as they did so; until the later prose romancers

added many layers of 'chivalric conventional ornament'.[10] 'In these prose romances',

Ker believed, 'and even more in Malory's English rendering of his "French book", is

to be heard the indescribable plaintive melody, the sigh of the wind over the

enchanted ground, the spell of pure Romance.'[11] Paradoxically, Ker's idea of 'pure

romance' is essentially a hybrid genre: a mixture of the 'Celtic Spirit', French

aesthetic judgement and the mastery of a fifteenth-century English prose writer.

Ker was the last major Arthurian scholar to be unaffected by the schism which

would characterise British (and international) academic discussions of the legend for

the next half century. As with the earlier disagreements concerning the origins of the

Holy Grail, this much larger debate concerned the extent to which Arthurian literature

more generally was indebted to Celtic influence. Again, on the one side there were the

Celticists, who can be placed into two generations: the first comprising figures such as

John Rhŷs, Alfred Nutt and Jessie Weston; the second made up of critics – most

prominently American critics – such as A.C.L. Brown, William A. Nitze and, above

all, Roger Sherman Loomis, who described himself as the most 'pertinacious – and

some might say pugnacious – champion of the theory.'[12] These writers held, in

various forms, that the genesis of Arthurian romance was almost entirely the product

of Celtic legend, which was transmitted either through Welsh bards or, as became the

dominant view, through Breton *conteurs*. Their interest in the legend rarely extended much later than Chrétien, possibly stretching to the early thirteenth-century Vulgate cycle. Malory was rarely approached, except to be labelled as 'quaint', 'clumsy and fumbling'.[13] Similarly, the Celticists thought little of Geoffrey's *Historia* (published twice in 1929),[14] as it played no part, so they claimed, in the genesis of Arthurian romance. For although the text was translated, reducted, abridged and transmitted across Europe, the Celticists implied that it was unimportant.[15]

Yet the field of the Celticists was actually quite diverse. John Rhŷs's *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* (1891) was the first introduction into English of the Celtic origins debate which had been raging on the continent for some time.* Rhŷs's inaugural work was intended 'to make Welsh literature help shed light on the Arthurian legend', and shows a definite bias towards Welsh sources, as does the work of W. Lewis Jones, Alfred Nutt and Jessie L. Weston.[16] Although only Welsh manuscripts contain pre-Galfridian Arthurian literature, many other scholars concentrated on Irish or Breton folklore.[17] Indeed, for many scholars, the origins of Arthurian literature lay in a common oral tradition that stretched across the whole Celtic fringe of Western Europe.

The second group in this schismatic divide was not constituted of an identifiable group with a unified approach to Arthurian criticism, like the Celticists. Rather, they were united only in their opposition to, and often dismissal of, the 'Celtomaniacs'. They include such eminent figures as E.K. Chambers and Eugène Vinaver, in England, and J.D. Bruce, Gordon Hall Gerould and J.S.P. Tatlock, in America. Again the field is diverse: Chambers, Tatlock and Gerould expounded the theory that Geoffrey's *Historia* was the most influential of Arthurian works – its

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* Rhŷs's *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* also introduced the views of Gaston Paris, France's pre-eminent Celticist, into English-language scholarship, as well as summarising the contrasting, largely anti-Celticist, views of the German scholars, Heinrich Zimmer and Wendelin Foerster.

production in the late 1130s having a direct impact on the growth of French romance later that century.[18] Chambers claimed that '[n]o work of imagination, save the *Aeneid*, has done more to shape the legend of a people' than that written by the 'learned and unscrupulous old canon of St George's in Oxford'.[19] Vinaver, although his scholarship covered the entire oeuvre of Arthurian romance, is now chiefly remembered for his editing of the Winchester MS and claiming that the *Morte* is not a single text, but a compilation of eight wholly separate romances.[*20] His work represented the culmination of early Malory studies which began with G.L. Kittredge (who initiated the question of the author's identity in 1897),[21] and included H. Oskar Sommer, Vida D. Scudder, E.K. Chambers and R.H. Wilson.[22] However, it was J.D. Bruce who was the most ardent of the anti-Celticists. He believed the finds of the Celticists to 'have been greatly exaggerated'; described the work of John Rhŷs as 'fantastic to the last degree', and stated that Jessie Weston's postulation of a twelfth-century Gawain-saga (see below) was the result of her suffering from 'a Gawain complex'.[23] While he certainly acknowledged Arthurian literature's indebtedness to the Welsh tradition, Bruce was the prime exponent of the theory that where French romance was not indebted to the *Historia*, its narrative and meaning were largely the product of Chrétien's imagination.[24] His *Evolution of Arthurian Romance* (1922) was the primary text book of pre-Malorian Arthurian literature until it was superseded by Loomis's 1959 collection *Arthurian Literature of the Middle Ages*.[25]

The criticisms of certain anti-Celticists can be seen to emerge from the Celticists' perceived lack of reverence for assured masterpieces of Arthurian literature. The search for sources, few of which were readily apparent, was an unnecessary deviation for scholars such as Chambers and Bruce. Even Loomis noted

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[*] In many ways Vinaver's division of *Le Morte Darthur* into eight separate romances divided post-World War Two scholarship to the same extent as the Celtic-origins theory did in the pre-war years.

that the Celticists indulged in 'flight[s] from the masterpiece[s].'[26] For the anti-

Celticists, an objective critical methodology – rooted in a belief in the sanctity of the

text as the only way to analyse Arthurian literature – meant that they could never

reconcile themselves to the far more radical and essentially extra-textual approaches

of Weston and Loomis.

Indeed, much of the criticism made of the Celticists arose out of the

unconventionality of their scholarship. The work of Weston and Loomis barely

correlates to the then-dominant forms of critical discourse. Their literary/mythic

associations, dynamised by the anthropology of James Frazer, span centuries and

cultures. They commonly jump from a French prose romance in the thirteenth century

to a Welsh mnemonic triad from the ninth century, the meaning of which has been

forgotten; or else from a Breton lay, 'reconstructed' in the nineteenth century, to an

Italian sculpture made in 1099. These jumps across time and culture are often made

by way of a Mithraic or Gnostic ritual, an Eleusinian Mystery, or evidence from the

Rig-veda.[27] Their work was constructed out of multilingual learning which spanned

centuries – even millennia. To their conservative contemporaries their methods

seemed to consist of no logical rationale, their radical associations seemingly based in

no recognisable sense of cause and effect.

Loomis himself felt it was necessary in 1958 to admit that much of his work of

the 20s and 30s was fundamentally flawed.[28] He also turned to his fellow Celticists in

a censorious mood. In particular he criticised his 'good friend', A.C.L. Brown, for his

conjectural approach in *The Origin of the Grail Legend* (1943), quoting from that

work:

> It is nowhere said [in Chrétien's *Lancelot*] that Arthur is prisoner in a
> Dolorous Tower; but if we are to suppose that he is not truly at Camelot but is
> lying wounded in an enchanted palace at the outskirts of the land of the dead

and is subject to attacks by giants from a Dolorous Tower, it will explain the puzzles of the romance.[29]

Brown rejected Chrétien's text in order to thrust forward a theory that the romance cannot begin to support. Brown ignored what the text says in order to claim that the romance was comprised of Irish and Welsh journeys to Fairyland, coupled with Aeneas's descent into Hades. His work is full of such conjectures and inventions, and was roundly denounced in the reviews. And although an extreme example, Brown's *The Origins of the Grail Legend* was indicative of a body of work that was often (in Loomis's own words) built 'on the sands of guesswork; vague resemblances, and pure imagination.'[*30]

Why did the Celticists hold these views? Certainly they believed that they were correct in placing the Celtic traditions at the starting point of the Arthurian story, but their methodologies showed only the difficulty in proving Celtic pre-eminence. Other reasons for the Celticists' adherence to origin theories in Irish, Welsh or Breton culture can often be seen in personal, as much as intellectual, situations. Weston's love of Wagner drew her to Bayreuth, where she first met Nutt, who encouraged her to write on the Arthurian romances.[31] Loomis, while studying at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in the early twentieth century, was tutored by John Rhŷs. In such affection did he hold his old tutor that, many years later, he claimed that it was 'embarrassing to

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[*] Occasionally, the speculative and conjectural approaches of the Celticists were employed by non-Celtic scholars. One notable example was C.B. Lewis, whose *Classical Mythology and Arthurian Romance* (1932) took the vaguely anthropologist approach of the Celticists, but turned to Classical Greece and Rome, rather than to Wales, Ireland or Brittany, for the sources of Chrétien's romances. Vinaver's review (*Medium Ævum*, October, 1934: 204-9) speaks of the methodological flaws in many such works:

> Whenever the 'source' does not fit in with the text under discussion he imagines that the story was altered by some unknown intermediary. In this way anything can be derived from anything, as long as the critic can rely on his imagination to supply all the links. (207)

Vinaver summed up by stating that those, like himself, who 'recognize the paramount importance of the story of the classical tradition in medieval France will deplore the fact that Mr. Lewis has taken upon himself the defence of such a good cause. He has certainly done it much more harm than good.' (209)

call to attention to defects' in Rhŷs's work. Of course, he did anyway.[32] The

willingness to believe in the ease of transmission may also have been affected by the

Celticists' peculiarly European (or, in Loomis's case, transatlantic) education and

scholarship. Weston was a consummate continentalist: she lived in Paris, was

educated across Europe (medieval studies in France, music instruction in Germany,

art classes at Crystal Palace) and her scholarship is a travelogue of Europe's finest

libraries.[33] Nutt was the son of a German immigrant, similarly educated in London

and France, and later serving his business apprenticeship in Leipzig, Berlin and

Paris.[34] Rhŷs, too, travelled extensively, studying in Oxford, Paris, Heidelberg,

Leipzig and Göttingen, as well as completing several lecture tours of America.[35] And

Loomis was an American who came to know Europe – indeed the world – before the

Great War. Born in Yokohama, Japan, of missionary parents, his studies at graduate

level were taken at Oxford, coupled with extensive travels throughout Europe in

search of medieval sculpture and illuminations.[*36] Is there any wonder that these

scholars – their studies aided by good incomes and modern transport – came to

believe so assuredly in Welsh bards (usually Bleheris) or Breton *conteurs* travelling to

Anglo-Norman courts, thence to France, even to monasteries, libraries, and palaces?

There was also a definite sense of nationalism in the works of British Celticist

scholars. John Rhŷs possessed an obvious 'nationalistic commitment' to Wales in his

writings on the Arthurian legend,[37] as well as in his sponsorship of the *Cymraeg*

revival, in which he emphasised the importance of the Arthurian story – manifested in

T. Gwynn Jones's 'Ymadawiad Arthur' (see chapter four). But nationalist concerns

were also evident in the first generation of English scholars who studied early Celtic

literature. Alfred Nutt, one of the earliest Celticists, was certainly patriotically

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[*] Like Weston with German opera, Loomis came to study the Arthurian legend through a passion for art history.

motivated in his promotion of the importance of Celtic materials in the origins of the Arthurian story. In a Presidential Address to the Folk-lore Society of England (which he founded), Nutt claimed that the 'Celtic Spirit' which had informed the Arthurian legend was 'not yet dried up'. Yet this 'fairy creed, this ancient source of inspiration, of symbolic interpretation of man's relation to nature' was not to be found in modern Irish or Welsh literature. Rather, this spirit, 'wholly unaffected by classical culture', resided in 'English literature, with its mixture of Teutonic and Celtic blood.'[*38] Non-British scholars certainly realised the patriotic motives of Nutt's Celtic scholarship. For instance, Elise Bensel, a Dutch scholar writing in the 1920s, claimed that Nutt's work was founded on 'some sort of national feeling and not on the basis of scientific investigation'.[39]

The work of Nutt's protégée, Jessie Weston, was similarly imbued with 'national feeling', which was not just manifest in her wartime anti-German propaganda.[40] Before Weston became known primarily as a Grail scholar, much of her work was concerned with the hypothetical 'Geste of Syr Gawayne', purportedly written by the Welsh figure 'Bleheris' (a figure mentioned in Chrétien, Wauchier and Giraldus Cambresis). Bleheris's 'grand conte', Weston held, contained the narratives of many later romances, including the fourteenth-century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Chrétien's twelfth-century *Perceval*.[41] Most importantly, this Geste predated the emergence of French romance, therefore making Arthurian romance an originally British, rather than French, affair. The fact that Bleheris was (as she fully admitted) a Welshman did little to alter Weston's perception of Gawain, Bleheris's

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[*] At the time of writing (1897), Nutt's view of the English and English culture as hybridised flew in the face of most Victorian historiography and literary scholarship. Many English historians of the nineteenth century had been concerned with the notion of English (Teutonic) racial superiority. They conceived of the Saxon invasion as total annihilation of the existing British inhabitants of England. Interracial hybridisation was anathema, 'being expressed in terms of dilution, contamination and mongrelisation'. (Higham, *King Arthur*, 256). But Nutt presented the English and especially English culture as essentially formed of a mixture of the Celt and the German.

protagonist, as the 'typical English hero.' Without comment from Weston, the Welsh 'Gawain-epic' became an English 'Geste'.[42]

Bar one or two Celticists, critics generally found Weston's hypothesis untenable.[43] Bruce, predictably, damned it.[44] But Weston's idea was appealing not only to scholars but to contemporary poets and authors also. In 1907 Weston called upon modern authors to take up the story of Gawain. For if readers would reject 'Malory's libel' and ignore Tennyson's *Idylls* (which Weston disliked for their French influences),

> Then, perhaps, we may have a demand for his real story, and it may be possible once more to rejoice the hearts of our English folk with a restored modern rendering of the *Geste of Syr Gawayne*, even as Bleheris told it well nigh a thousand years ago.[45]

Gawain, however, failed to ignite the interest of contemporary writers. In fact, though the English romances relating to him, including *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, had been available since 1839, no author took Gawain as their protagonist until the 1960s (see chapter six).[46] Indeed, when Weston was working on her theory of 'The Geste of Syr Gawayne' – chiefly between 1897 and 1907 – the Tennysonian paradigm was at its zenith and few authors did anything but replicate the *Idylls*. Nonetheless the British nationalism that Nutt and Weston fed into the scholarship of this time is reproduced by the Anglo-Celtic writers who took up the Arthurian story in the interwar period – particularly David Jones and John Masefield.[*]

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Although Rhys, Masefield, Jones and Williams would each cite the work of professional Arthurian scholars in their retellings of the Arthurian legend, the

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[*] The second generation of Celticists, being chiefly American, were decidedly less political in British terms.

influence of the Celticists cannot be measured in terms of the quantity of literary or mythic source material they provided. Rather, their influence can be discerned in the fact that they produced an intellectual environment in which Celtic literature was raised to the level of the canonical English Arthuriads – essentially, those of Malory and Tennyson. This proved to be their lasting and greatest achievement.

The schism between the Celticists and those who were opposed to their thinking and methods was never resolved. The debate over the origins of the legend died out (often with the scholars),[*] or was replaced by Vinaver's hypothesis concerning *Le Morte Darthur* as an eight-book compilation. In 1959 Loomis published his most important work, *Arthurian Literature of the Middle Ages*, which was not an attempt to synthesis the dying embers of the debate, but instead presented the views of both Celticists and non-Celticists (as well as many newer debates and critical views unconcerned with the origins debate) in one volume. That work is discussed in the next chapter; the focus of this chapter turns to how the creative writers made use of the critical schism, as Eliot, Butts, Woolf and others had utilised the scholarly debates of the Grail in the 20s and 30s.

Early Anglo-Celtic writing: Ernest Rhys and John Masefield

Ernest Rhys was one of the most prolific authors of Arthurian literature in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He twice edited the *Morte Darthur* (1886 and 1892); wrote a long narrative account of 'The Story of Balin and Balan' (1897); included five Welsh-inspired Arthurian poems in his *Welsh Ballads* (1898); published twenty-four lyrics based on Malory in *Lays of the Round Table* (1905); and also wrote three plays: *Gwenevere* (1905), *Enid* (1908) and *The Masque of the Grail* (also

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[*] By the start of the Second World War only a few stalwarts remained – and those chiefly in America – notably R.S. Loomis and A.C.L. Brown. Jessie Weston, Alfred Nutt and John Rhŷs had by this time passed away, their learned tomes already being relegated to dusty shelves.

1908).[47] Yet despite its quantity, Rhys's Arthurian work never established him as a major poet. Instead, Rhys is chiefly remembered as an editor, being particularly famed for his overseeing of J.M. Dent's 'Everyman's Library' series.[48]

Nonetheless, Rhys was the first Anglo-Welsh Arthurian writer of the modern period. He was born in Islington in 1859, the son of a Welsh father and an English mother. Like many expatriate Welshmen of the time, his father had Anglicised his Welsh surname to Rees, though his son (like the Cardiganshire-born John Rhŷs) reverted to the original spelling as an adult.[49] His parents spoke to him only in English, though he later claimed to have learnt Welsh 'on the sly' from their Carmarthenshire maid – his furtive description indicating the poor esteem in which *Cymraeg* was held by aspirational Welsh petit-bourgeois.[50] His youth was spent in west Wales and in the north of England, where for ten years he worked as a mining engineer. In 1886 Rhys, then twenty-seven, left Newcastle for London, determined to become a full-time writer. His first 'break' occurred when 'two prosperous-looking men in top hats' arrived at his rooms to ask Rhys whether he would edit a series of prose writers for the northern publishing company named Walter Scott.[51] With rent overdue and with few publications to support him, Rhys, who had no intentions of pursuing a career as an editor, accepted. He selected *Le Morte Darthur* as his first undertaking and chose 'Camelot' as the title of the series.*

The choice of Malory was important, for the Arthurian story represented for Rhys a means of articulating the complexities of his Anglo-Welsh identity. Growing up in Carmarthen, 'Merlin's Town', he heard 'wild traditions' of the seer, whilst playing in 'Merlin's Grave' (presumably a disused lead mine) or 'Merlin's Oak' on 'Merlin's Hill'. His first literary introduction to the legend occurred in his

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* In his second volume of memoirs, *Wales England Wed* (1940), Rhys claimed that the publishers had only asked him to edit their series because they had confused him with another Rhys – the already eminent John Rhŷs – the Arthurian scholar and Professor of Celtic at Oxford (86-7).

grandfather's bookshop where he read a 'curious' chapbook called *The Prophecies of Merlin*.[52] In Newcastle he discovered Malory and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 'whose pages became almost a part of myself', he later wrote.[53] In his scholarship, Rhys tried to bring together these two separate Arthurs – one English, the other Welsh. In his 1886 edition of Malory, Rhys prefaced the text with a lengthy discussion of the early Welsh traditions.[54] In his second edition of 1892 Rhys addressed the authorship question and (following H. Oskar Sommer's scholarship) stated that the tradition that Malory 'was a Welshman is so agreeable to one's feelings about him as a worker in half-English, half-Welsh romance, that it is hard, for a Welshman at any rate, to refuse it credit.'[*55] A year earlier, John Rhŷs had similarly given enthusiastic support to Malory's 'Welsh' origins.[56]

It is worth noting that Ernest Rhys did not categorically state that Malory was a Welshman, only that it was hard for a Welshman not to credit the theory.[†] Indeed Rhys, though his work continually expresses the desire to write an Arthurian epic to reflect his Anglo-Welsh sentiments, was never truly able to synthesise the English Malorian and Welsh *Mabinogion* traditions – a situation that is best reflected in his

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[*] In his critical apparatus for his 1889-91 edition of the *Morte* Sommer had included a quotation from John Bale's sixteenth-century *Scriptorium Illustriam Maioris Britanniae*, which had mentioned that Malory was '*Britannus natione*', which may mean Welsh or, more probably, British (see Bale, in Parins, *Malory: The Critical Heritage*, 54-5). Bale's notion of '*Britannus natione*', as well as his assertion that 'Mailoria' is a Welsh place name (presumably Maelor in north-east Wales), had been enough to convince the author of the entry on Caxton in the 1748 *Biographia Britannica* that 'Malory was a Welshman', and probably 'a Welsh priest' (vol. II, 1245).

[†] Kittredge's article 'Who Was Sir Thomas Malory?' (1896) conclusively disproved Malory's Welsh-origins hypothesis. Vinaver, in his book-length study *Malory* (1929), describes the hypothesis as 'untenable' (126), as has, more recently. Richard R. Griffith, in 'The Authorship Question Reconsidered', in *Aspects of Malory* (1981). Both Vinaver and Griffith, however, have noted a Welsh bias to parts of the *Morte*: 'to do justice to the Welsh elements in the *Morte Darthur*, it is important to note some facts which, inconclusive though they are, may suggest a distant connexion between our author and Wales. [...] Comparison of the *Morte Darthur* with its French sources has shown me that of all the countries of the legendary England which he describes Malory is most partial to Wales. He often introduces Welsh knights against his source which he otherwise follows very carefully' (Vinaver, *Malory*, 126-7). After citing several of these examples, Vinaver stated that Malory's alterations 'are few and personal; they reflect his own outlook and his own interpretations of the stories. If, therefore, he insists on introducing Wales and Welsh knights contrary to his French sources it is for some yet undiscovered reason' (127). Griffith has noted more Welsh changes to Malory's sources, which he sees as indicative of Malory coming from the Welsh-English border (164).

two collections of Arthurian verse, *Welsh Ballads* (1897) and *Lays of the Round Table* (1905).

Many of Rhys's *Lays* are little more than versified passages of the *Morte*. Some are allusive, such as 'True Love' and 'The Flower and the Leaf', which are based on Malory's dithyramb to May and lovers; or 'The Ring of True Love', a love lyric founded on the *Morte*'s tale of Sir Gareth. Some are retellings of lesser known parts of the *Morte Darthur*, such as 'Alice La Belle Pilgrim' (taken from Malory's account of the Alixandre L'Orphelin story), or were inspired by a certain event or character in the *Morte*, such as 'The Song of Dagonet' and 'The Sermon of the Gentlewoman'. What emerges from the *Lays* is not a coherent cycle of Malory-based Arthurian lyrics, but a series of imitations, written with affection and familiarity.

Unfortunately Rhys was not a poet to compare with Malory as a writer of prose. Take for instance the following passage from Malory and its corresponding verse 'Arthur's Grave', from the *Lays*:

> Yet som men say in many parts of Inglonde that Kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of Oure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wynne the Holy Crosse.
> Yet I woll nat say that hit shall be so; but rather I wolde sey, here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff. And many men say that there ys wrytten upon the tumbe thys:

> *HIC IACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS.* [57]

> Some men do say King Arthur is not dead,
>   But by the will of our Lord Jesu sleeps,
>   Yet to awake, deathless, and reassure us:
> And therefore is it, that grave where he is laid
>   This legend hath, that still his kingdom keeps:
>   *Arthurus Rex Quondam, Rexque Futurus* [58]

The purpose of Rhys's verse is elusive. Malory's treatment of the death of Arthur is not one of his rhetorically 'great' passages: he appears to be more interested in the

fate of Lancelot and Guinevere than of Arthur, of whose end he treats briefly; and the idea of 'Arthur's Grave', which occupied modern poets since Thomas Warton in the eighteenth century,[59] is much better encapsulated in the early Welsh tradition – or even in Tennyson – than in the *Morte*. Yet Malory's passage contains two notable points: the Latin leonine hexameter[*] (the rhythm and the internal rhyme structure of which Rhys destroys through the removal of the first two words); and Malory's elusive, suggestive, 'here in thys worlde he chaunged his lyff', which Rhys fails to deal with at all. But if Rhys's omissions are somewhat inept, his additions are possibly worse. He removes Malory's mention of the belief that Arthur would return to 'wynne the Holy Crosse' and replaces it with Arthur's intention 'to awake, deathless, and reassure us'. To 'reassure us' is much weaker than the original. Additionally, it is unclear who is the 'us' meant to signify – perhaps the modern-day Welsh? By the time this poem was published T. Gwynn Jones had already won the Chair at the Eisteddfod for his 'Ymadawiad Arthur' (1902), which had promised the Welsh much more than mere reassurance. The 'us' also seems inadequate for the contemporary English, whom Tennyson had shown sixty years earlier to have no need of Arthur's return ('lest one good custom should corrupt the world'). Perhaps the 'us' was the Anglo-Celtic, the British, who, for their political differences, could be offered nothing more concrete than reassurance.

If Rhys's Malorian *Lays* are not successful due to reasons both aesthetic and cultural, his earlier collection of Arthurian poems in *Welsh Ballads* (1898) demonstrate similar failings, though from a Welsh, rather than English perspective. 'King Arthur's Sleep' is a typical ballad of that collection. The poem's origins lay in a

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[*] An internally rhyming six-stress form popular in Latin poetry of the Middle Ages, often used as a mnemonic device, or as a one-line proverb. Malory's leonine hexameter was probably not of his own invention, being also present in the conclusion to the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*. It was presumably a well-known tag throughout the period.

legend of Arthur's return concerning a young man travelling to Bala in North Wales.[60]

During his journey 'Davie' discovers a tomb wherein the undead Arthur sleeps. The

King does not awaken and Davie is told that the day of Arthur's return is still 'far

distant'.[61] Instead, Rhys's poem concludes with the narrator stating that 'long I sought

/ For King Arthur's Hall, – and seeking, / Yet must wander, finding nought. / Yet we

want the day of waking!'[62] It is a speech that symbolises Rhys's quest to produce an

Arthurian epic. Never does Rhys consider what Arthur's awakening might entail. That

the king lies in Wales suggests that his arising will be significant only for the Welsh,

yet the verses never attach any significance to Arthur's return – whether cultural,

political or even narratorial. Again the contrast with Jones's 'Ymadawiad Arthur'

(written four years hence) is obvious. Ultimately Rhys was too Welsh in his cultural

sympathies to accord with the English Tennysonian reading of the Arthurian story;

but was too English to assume the Welsh nationalism of contemporaries such as T.

Gwynn Jones.*

Rhys, whose most famous poem begins 'Wales England wed, so I was bred',

could never have articulated the complicated nationalist politics of the Arthurian story

effectively.[63] He saw himself primarily as a transmitter of Welsh culture into

England;[64] and he was the only prominent Welsh member of the 'Celtic Twilight'

movement, which was much better represented by monoglot English speakers such as

W.B. Yeats in Ireland and William Sharp in Scotland, than polyglot Anglo-

Welshmen. Late in life Rhys wrote:

> Yeats' imagination of Ireland set me wondering whether I could to give to
> Wales, country of the Druids and the *Mabinogion*, her new deliverance. But I
> was complicated in ways he was not. A Londoner born, as well as a Welshman

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* Rhys's plays similarly move between the Welsh and English traditions. The largely sympathetic J.
Kimberley Roberts has written in his study of Rhys that, like the poems, 'his intentions' in these plays
'seem much more interesting that his achievements' (*Ernest Rhys*, 41).

in exile, I suffered from the mixed sympathies that are bound to affect a man of mixed race.[65]

But Wales was to have no literary Dublin, certainly not one based among the London Welsh.

*   *   *   *   *

Rhys, apart from being a poet, editor and translator, was also a supporter of many younger poets. One with whom he was particularly impressed was John Masefield, another prolific author of Arthurian literature. He produced two plays (*Tristan and Isolt*, 1927; 'When Good King Arthur', c. 1922-1932), an historical novel (*Badon Parchments*, 1947) and over fifty poems and prose fragments.[66] His most important Arthurian work is *Midsummer Night and Other Tales in Verse* (1927), a collection of twenty-two poems, written in ballad form, which roughly chronicle the events of Arthur's life.

Masefield, who became the longest serving Poet Laureate (1930-67) after Tennyson, was born in Ledbury, Herefordshire, near the Welsh border and Rhys, at least, considered him as an Anglo-Welsh poet.[*] Yet other than his birthplace's proximity to Wales, Masefield seems to have had no notable Welsh connections, though much of his writing – and most importantly, his Arthurian writing – shows clear affinities with early Welsh literature and displays a concern with an idea of Britishness more generally. His interest in the Arthurian story probably began in childhood: Herefordshire has several links to the legend and Masefield's classic children's novel, *The Midnight Folk* (1927), which includes an Arthurian scene, is set in a fictional county similar to his own.[67] Masefield's literary interest in the legend began while he was living in New York at the end of the nineteenth century, where he

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[*] Rhys wrote that Masefield's name 'almost suggested a coupling of the Welsh word "*maes*" and its English equivalent "a field"' (*Wales England Wed*, 160).

had spent several years living as a 'hobo' after abandoning his career in the Merchant

Navy. It was towards the end of this period that Masefield entered a New York

bookshop – Pratt's on Sixth Avenue – and purchased the first volume of Malory's

Morte Darthur. He later wrote in his memoir, *So Long to Learn* (1952):

> I was at once enchanted by Malory [...] This was a story that gave a great deal
> of significance to many parts of England. This was (as I supposed) our
> contribution to epic, and a mine from which poets could take their fables
> forever. Certainly it was something about which my ignorance had to be
> lessened. I soon added to my books a complete Malory, and a copy of the
> *Mabinogion*. *[68]

The *Mabinogion* was to be a counterpoint to the English Malory, and Masefield's

understanding of the Arthurian tradition developed into a distinctly Anglo-Celtic

conception – a 'fully British tradition' as he later described it.[69] It was an

understanding that was informed, no doubt, by the fact that the edition of Malory he

purchased in Pratt's Bookstore was none other than that by Ernest Rhys. Next

Masefield read Thomas Love Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829), another

consummately Anglo-Celtic work of Arthuriana, which presumably was the

inspiration for his first work on the legend, the non-extant 'Tale of Elphin'.[70] Only

after completing this work did he produce the Tennysonian 'The Ballad of Sir Bors'

(1913; discussed in chapter one).

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* Like Rhys's *Wales England Wed*, Masefield's memoir, *So Long to Learn*, contains many references to the Arthurian legend – both poets perceiving their personal identities as somehow predicated in the legends of the mythic British King. For both writers the legend – and Malory in particular – marked turning points in their lives. Rhys's editing of the *Morte* was his first commission, while Masefield's discovery of Malory symbolised the discovery of his poetic vocation. Masefield commemorated his discovery of Malory in verse, as well as prose. In 'My Library, Volume One' he wrote:

> What spirit guided me to Volume One,
> The Story of King Arthur? So it fell
> That summer morning on Sixth Avenue
> I had gone shopping better than I knew,
> Returning friend to Bors and Lionel,
> Cousin to Tristan and Romance's son. (ll. 9-14; Dodd's edition. 196).

Throughout his life Masefield was reported to have kept a copy of the *Morte* by his bedside table (Dodds, Introduction, 3)

The poems of *Midsummer Night* draw on an eclectic range of sources, including Classical and Northern mythology, historical research, Malory and early Welsh material, as well as his own imagination. In these ballads he designed the foundations of an epic that was filled with analogues to British history. 'Badon Hill', for instance, reworks the traditional Welsh account of Arthur's battle against the Saxons, first mentioned by Nennius. The Saxons, or 'pirates' as Masefield calls them, are led by 'Loki the Dragon Killer', of Northern mythology, who with '[f]ive thousand raiders in a hundred ships' plans 'to put Britain in eclipse'.[71] Observing the fleet of long ships at anchor, Arthur, described as a 'cub of hell' by the invaders (though he may as well be called Sir Francis Drake), sends in fireships, which destroy the fleet and set the Saxons to flight.[72] Thus seeing their opponents in disarray, the Britons then attack and repulse the invasion. 'All Britons know the stories that are told / Of Arthur's battle', writes Masefield – indeed, though they tend to associate the tale with the defeat of the Spanish Armada off Gravelines, rather than with Arthur.[73]

In the following poem, 'The Sailing of Hell Race', Masefield adapts the early Welsh poem, 'Preiddau Annwn' ('The Spoils of Annwn'). Here Arthur has secured his realm against invasion and desires new adventures. They sail west '[t]o seas where never a ship had broken foam' until they reach a 'granite coast', a 'dockyard of the dead'.[74] What has up until now been a reasonably close adaptation of the Welsh original becomes overlaid with Dantean tones – for past this desolate harbour lies Hell itself, marked by a warning to those who would pass:

> Return, before the key turns in the locks,
> Return, and do not dare
> Death beyond death, the Cities of Despair.[75]

Arthur and his warriors pass through three cities: one of lust and avarice, another of unthinking war, where '[b]abes starved and women maddened; men slew', and a final city of death and despair.[76] As in the Welsh original, Arthur is unable to contend with the last of these devilries and he flees Annwn with only a remnant of his host.

Like many of the poems in the *Midsummer Night* sequence, 'The Sailing of Hell Race' is directly concerned with the horror of war. In the opinion of his friend Robert Graves, Masefield had suffered greatly during the war.[77] Although a pacifist, he served with the British Red Cross and undertook propagandist work for the Government, including a series of lectures in America to help explain the British war effort; he also produced an account of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, which gave 'a graphic insight into the life of the common soldier, in both its horror and its heroism.'[78] The poems of *Midsummer Night* reflect the anxieties and experiences of a man torn between pacifism and propaganda and offer a remarkably violent retelling of the Arthurian story.

Exactly half of the twenty-two poems in the collection are directly concerned with war or violence.[*] In some, such as 'The Fight on the Wall', Masefield presented violence through a simple ballad form that conveyed a sense of immediacy which Tennyson and his imitators had lacked:

> Lancelot, closing, gripped him gamely
> And struck him stark
>
> And swung him as a child before him

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[*] These are 'The Begetting of Arthur' (Uther's battles against pirates; his later slaying); 'The Taking of Morgause' (abduction); 'The Begetting of Mordred' (Morgause attempts to espy Arthur's battle plans, and when this fails she seduces him, begetting Mordred in the process, which will cause the final downfall of the kingdom); 'Badon Hill' (Arthur's famed victory over the Northern 'pirates'); 'The Fight on the Hill' (Lancelot's battle with Arthur's knights after his affair with Gwenivere is discovered – a particularly violent poem); 'The Breaking of the Links' (ends with the invasion of Britain); 'Arthur in the Ruins' (the king debates whether to pursue Mordred to the death); 'The Fight at Camlan' (Arthur's final battle); 'The Fight on the Beach' (the king's death and slaying of Mordred, his son); 'The Old Tale of the Begetting of Arthur' (Uther's slaying of Ygraine's husband); 'The Old Tale of the Breaking of the Links' (Lancelot's bloody rescue of the doomed Gwenivere).

As guard to Kurslin's axe,
Which struck Sir Lovel fair and tore him
As cards tear flax.

Lovel fell back and burst upon his slayer
But Kurslin thrust him clear.[79]

In other poems Masefield combined his ballad forms with a rough iambic pentameter

in order to depict larger battle scenes, such as the fight at Camlan between the Celtic

confederacy and the invading Saxons:

Owain's horse was sped.
He snatched Breuse's javelin as the stallion fell,
He speared Breuse through beneath the shoulder stay,
Addersfang cracked his helmet like a shell;
He grappled Addersfang as Breuse fell dead.[80]

Masefield's verse never possessed the stateliness of Tennyson's Arthurian epic. He

strove always to write for what he deemed the 'common man' ('Not the ruler for me,

but the ranker' as he put it in 'A Consecration').[81] Nonetheless, Masefield's poems are

not all 'smote, smash, swing and thrust': at times he was able to write dramatic,

character-driven verse, as in 'The Fight on the Beach', wherein Arthur, his kingdom

ruined, offers Mordred one last opportunity of peace, only to be rejected:

'Bastard,' they called me; but the bastard's nerve
Came nearer Kingdom's conquest that they dreamt.
I fail; my one endeavour is my last.

I spit upon your fatherhood and you.[82]

'Thirty years' anguish [...] made by your idle lust', are Mordred's final words, as he

lies dying from his father's final act.[83] War and the desolation of war hang heavy in

these poems.[84]

Midsummer Night is also preoccupied with the causes of the kingdom's

downfall. Some poems are simple narrative accounts, such as 'The Breaking of the

Links', which tells of the disintegration of the fellowship of the Round Table; others

are post-Camlan 'confessions', in which Arthur and members of his court admit their

responsibilities and failings to the state. In the sequence's title poem, a modern-day

narrator stumbles upon the sleeping Arthur and his court. Unlike Rhys, who presented

the same scene in 'King Arthur's Sleep', Masefield has his court awaken; but, again,

they plan no return. Instead, a series of speeches follow in which the members of the

fellowship claim responsibility for the downfall of the Round Table. Arthur blames

himself for incestuously fathering Mordred; Gwenivere blames her affair with

'Lancelot the Bright', which in this version produces a son, Lacheu (who in the Welsh

tradition was Arthur's son), who was killed by pirates.[85] Lancelot, the heir to the

kingdom, being Arthur's cousin, also repents of his affair. Gwenivach, Gwenivere's

sister and Mordred's lover, admits that she too conspired against the queen: 'Ready to

stab her at the slightest chance / Stab to the life. / I stabbed her to the heart in her

estate; / Disaster was my blow's inheritance.'[86] Mordred speaks last and tells them

that his

> was the hand that smote the royal seat,
> Mine was the moving darkness that made cloud;
> You were but nerves; I, Mordred, was the spine.[87]

This bleak poem ends with the court, largely repentant, returning to sleep. In another

work of this year, the children's classic, *The Midnight Folk* (1927), Masefield

presented another version of the post-Camlan court. Here Kay Harker, the novel's

child protagonist, visits Arthur, who now lives in Fairyland, where he meets Lancelot

who tells him that he and Guinevere 'are re-making what we undid'; even Vivien, that

villainous arch-temptress, is now engaged in giving out toys to 'all the friendless little children'.[88] In this children's tale, the repentance of Arthur, Lancelot and Gwenivere in 'Midsummer Night', has turned to redemption.

The first poem in the *Midsummer Night* sequence is less forgiving of the mistakes of rulers. In 'The Begetting of Arthur' Uther, of Roman descent, attempts to form a union between the native British kings to fight off the Saxons. The most powerful of these chieftains, Merchyon of Cornwall, refuses to join this Celtic alliance, saying 'I will not mingle in remote affairs, / I can mind mine, let others look to theirs [...] Your schemes are childish and your fears are tales'.[89] Masefield then alters Malory's description of begetting of Arthur in a manner typical of Victorian writers: Uther does not rape Ygern, but rather the unmarried lovers elope. They spend one night together in the forest before they are discovered by Merchyon, Ygern's father, who stabs Uther while he sleeps (the whole passage is similar to Mark's discovery of Tristram and Isolde) and the pregnant Ygern is taken back to Tintagel.

A post-Empire theme runs throughout this poem. Rome has collapsed; the broken communities refuse to unite effectively and remain distrustful of each other, while fearing the rise of a new power to replace the old. Merchyon, both pragmatic and craven, dreams of a return to the Roman age of civilisation:

> perhaps the Romans plan
> To recommence their empire, for in truth
> Taxes and tribute and conscripted youth
> Are playthings dear to Rome.
> But you, my Roman [meaning Uther], come to the wrong man.[90]

Merchyon's self-delusion as to the actual political situation (no one else believes in Rome's return) and the cynical belief in his own power reflects the misplaced belief held by conservatives and imperialists in interwar Britain that the country would

return to its pre-1914 eminence. For Merchyon and post-war conservatives alike, the dream of Empire still held strong, though as a political and economic institution it was virtually bankrupt. Perhaps it was because of his critique of these views that Masefield was the first writer, apart from Welsh or Cornish nationalists (often working in regional languages), who treated the Celtic Arthurian story with any political seriousness. As he would demonstrate in *Badon Parchments* (1947), Masefield realised the almost unique position the Arthurian story held in the British literary canon as containing the germs of a post-empire narrative – a narrative that would become a means of articulating Britain's place in the second half of the twentieth century.[*]

The bleakness of Masefield's collection, however, is offset by the final poem in the sequence, 'Fulfilment', a post-Arthurian coda, in which a northern pirate, Cwichelm, is engaged in a long and bloody struggle with Sir Constans, a lingering member of the Romano-Britons, whom the pirates have driven into the 'western wastes'.[91] One night, lost and 'half-drowned', Cwichelm arrives at the house of Constans, who, being obliged by Celtic customs of courtesy, allows him refuge. During the night Cwichelm is told in a dream that he must take Constans's son and kill him, for otherwise their 'bloods will mingle.'[92] This fear of racial hybridisation (common enough in nineteenth-century historiography and which would become increasingly pertinent in 1930s Europe) causes Cwichelm to abduct the Celtic child, later giving him to one of his soldiers, saying 'Go, hack the little bastard limb from limb'.[93] However, in a classic fairytale motif, the soldier relents and the child grows

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[*] Masefield's *Badon Parchments* (1947) appears to have been instrumental in reconfiguring the Arthurian story into a historical novel. This subgenre would achieve immense popularity through writers such as Rosemary Sutcliffe and Mary Stewart – see the following chapter. Much of Masefield's novel is concerned with the Celtic federation's indecisiveness, along with petty interests, appeasement and commitment to outdated tactics, when faced with the Saxon threat. Its relevance to Britain in the context of the Second World War is even more explicit than *Midsummer Night*'s basis in the Great War.

up a foundling. Twenty years later, Cwichelm discovers the truth and again orders

him to be killed; but again his plans are thwarted and the 'foundling' marries

Cwichelm's daughter. Hybridisation is complete. This poem, indeed Masefield's own

whole Arthurian oeuvre, is not only Anglo-Celtic; it is a work fundamentally opposed

to notions of racial exclusivity within the British mainland.*

For Masefield, the return of Arthur meant the building of a 'lasting beauty left

unbuilt / Because of all our follies and our guilt.'[94] In *Midsummer Night* Masefield

attempted to configure the Arthurian story as the essential myth of a united Britain:

the 'fibres of the country's soul', as Arthur says in the title poem.[95] Written in the

aftermath of the bloodiest conflict the world had yet known, it was a story that posited

a cultural identity for contemporary Britain, as well as offering its leaders some timely

precedents.

'That landscape spoke "with a grimly voice"': David Jones's *In Parenthesis*

Like Masefield, David Jones was concerned with forging a British identity out of

post-Great War society, but their situations were very different. Masefield was an

Englishman who adopted Welsh literature, Jones was an Anglo-Welshman who

understood the Arthurian legend as part of his national heritage; Masefield was a self-

consciously popular poet, Jones was – equally consciously – a modernist; after his

Laureateship was granted, Masefield was rarely acclaimed by his contemporaries;

Jones received commendations from Eliot, Auden, Yeats, Stravinsky and many

others.[96] Moreover, Masefield's *Midsummer Night* is an attempt at an Arthurian epic

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* In Masefield's mixture of Teutonic, Celtic, Classical and Malorian literature there is no mention of Irish myths, which occupied many of the scholarly works of the Celticist scholars. In contrast, in 'The Taking of Morgause', Masefield's interest is exclusively on the Scottish figures Lot and Morgause. The latter appears in several other poems in the sequence, most notably 'The Begetting of Mordred'. In *The Once and Future King*, T.H. White would also be interested in the 'Orkney faction', as he called them, though for distinctly different ideological purposes (as discussed in the next chapter).

which is preoccupied with the First World War; Jones's *In Parenthesis* (1937) is 'a

book about War' which is concerned with the Arthurian story.[97]

Jones (1895-1974) professed himself to be 'a Londoner, of Welsh and English

parentage, of Protestant upbringing, of Catholic subscription'.[98] Like Ernest Rhys, a

fellow member of the *Cymry Llundain*, it was from his father that he took his partly

Welsh identity. He was raised an 'English monoglot', though acquired a knowledge of

Cymraeg in adult life.[99] In 1923 he converted to Catholicism under the auspices of

Eric Gill, in whose Catholic-Marxist community he lived for much of the 1920s and

30s. Until the publication of *In Parenthesis* in 1937, Jones was chiefly known as a

visual artist. Influenced by Futurism and religious iconography, Jones's work became

increasingly idiosyncratic and his paintings and drawings of Arthurian subjects are

perhaps the most innovative and beautiful to be produced in the last century (fig. 21)

All of his literary works were heavily influenced by his experience in the Great War:

he served as a private with the London-Welsh Battalion (the 15th) of the Royal Welch

Fusiliers (a particularly literary regiment, which – at officer level – included Siegfried

Sassoon and Robert Graves).

Like Sassoon's subversion of Galahad, the medieval romanticism of T.E.

Lawrence and the bourgeois individualism at the ideological centre of R.G.

Collingwood's historical *dux bellorum*, the version of the Arthurian legend which

emerges from Jones's *In Parenthesis* would be unthinkable without the Great War.

Jones's interest in and use of the Arthurian story (which he understood as historical,

Celtic and Malorian) was located in the self-destruction of Arthur's kingdom, in the

idea of fellowship, which he saw as a mythic parallel of his own experiences as a

private soldier in France, and as means of articulating the identity of a united Britain.

In Parenthesis, Jones's major work and the only one to be completed to his

satisfaction, has been regarded by many to be the greatest literary work the war

produced in English, and one of the major artistic works of the twentieth century.[100]

In Parenthesis is divided into seven parts, each covering a month of the War:

from December 1915, when the London-Welsh Battalion prepare to leave for overseas

duty, to July 1, 1916, the first day of the battle of the Somme, when 'B' Company, the

focal point of the text, begin their attack on Mametz wood. Many of the Company's

troops are killed in this advance, though John Ball, a fictionalised portrait of the

author, is only wounded in the thigh (as, historically, was Jones and, mythologically,

the Fisher King). The text's focus is not so much on the atrocities of war – though

there are some powerful descriptions – but on the comradeship of the soldiers, which

Jones articulated through Cockney-Welsh dialogue and the mythic parallels which

Jones found to be evident during his experiences. The two most important of these

mythic analogues are the *Gododdin*, a sixth-century account of a raid by 300 northern

Celts on the Saxons of Deira, of which only three survive; the other is that of Arthur.

The allusions to the Arthurian story are various, made 'both superficially and

more subtly.'[101] Some are seemingly incidental: one soldier is ironically known as

'Dai de la Cote male taile', because of his oversized greatcoat; another is called

Lance-Corporal Aneirin Merddyn Lewis.[102] Some quotations from Malory are made

simply for the purpose of describing life behind the trenches, such as the opening of

Part 4: 'So thus he [John Ball] sorrowed till it was day and heard the foules sing, then

somewhat he was comforted.'[103] Other references have greater significance. The

whole battlefield is configured as the Waste Land – whether 'King Pellam's Launde'

of Malory or Eliot's twentieth-century dead land, where a new Dolorous Stroke has

ravaged the kingdom.* Jones thought that Malory described the landscape and the

situation best: it spoke 'with a grimly voice'.[104] Similarly Mametz wood is configured

as the Forest Perilous, where Merlin has lived, crazed after the battle of Arderydd, and

in which Lancelot 'ran want-wit in a shirt for the queen's unreason'.[105] Other

references are ennobling, most notably in the climactic seventh part when John Ball's

comrades are shot down and killed, the troops falling into the earth like others who

have 'fructif[ied] the land': Tristram, Lamorack, Alisand le Orphelin, Beaumains,

Balin and Balan and Peredur.[106] They die in a second Camlan, one in which

'[p]roperly organized chemists can let make more riving power than ever Twrch

Trwyth', the raving giant boar which nearly destroys Celtic Britain in *Culhwch ac

Olwen*.†

Whereas Ernest Rhys had seen himself as divided as both English and Welsh –

a man of 'mixed races'; Jones professed to be whole: a Briton.[107] The Arthurian

legend was of vital importance to his identity as 'there is no other tradition at all

equally the common property of all the inhabitants of Britain'.[108] One of the greatest

sections of *In Parenthesis* is Dai Greatcoat's speech in part four, wherein he

mythologises the Welsh's martial past – whether fighting for his own people's

freedom in glorious defeats, or embattled in other nations' wars. It begins:

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* The poem contains many references to Malory's and Eliot's Waste Land. One of the most notable
references to Eliot's poem occurs in Part 3 of the text, which parodies the conclusion to the
conversation of the two Cockney ladies of 'A Game of Chess' ('Goodnight Bill. Goonight Lou.
Goonight May. Goonight. / Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight. / Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies,
good night, good night', ll. 169-71). Jones, with his customary concern with the London-Welsh identity
of 'B' Company, writes:
>   Good night Parrot
>   Good night Bess.
>   Good night good night – buck up – he gets nasty later on.
>   Good night, bon swores 'walads, Nos dawch. Jac-y-dandi
>   Night Night. (29)

† Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 155. Jones probably knew that Twrch Trwyth was a symbol of great
destructiveness for medieval Welsh writers. Guest's notes on the boar, contained in the *Mabinogion*
(275-7), contain the numerous references to Twrch Trwyth in Welsh literature, including this
description by Lewis Glyn Cothi: 'He would destroy the towns and wrath, wounds, and violence; he
would tear down all the towers like the Twrch Trwyth.'

> This Dai adjusts his slipping straps, wraps close his misfit outsize greatcoat –
> he articulates his English with an alien care.
>> My fathers were with the Black Prince of Wales [...]
> I was with Abel when his brother found him,
> under the green tree.
> I built a shit-house for Artaxerxes.
> I was the spear in Balin's hand
>> That made waste King Pellam's land.[109]

He was present at Badon Hill; witnessed Arthur, 'The Bear of the Island',[*] break the land 'in his huge pride, and / over-reach of his imperium; saw the 'repulsive lips' of 'Lord Agravaine' urge Arthur's court to doom, he fought at Camlan and was 'the adder in the little bush / whose hibernation-end / undid, / unmade victorious toil.'[110] This eternal Welshman also marched with Roland in Charlemagne's wars, was present at the defeat of the *Gododdin* and was even 'in Michael's trench when bright Lucifer bulged his / primal salient out.'[111] The theme of this section, Jones's note informs the reader, is 'the repeated spoliation of the Island by means of foreign entanglement and expeditionary forces across the channel'.[112] History provides its own examples; the Arthurian story has plenty of instances: Arthur losing almost all his company in 'Preiddeu Annwn'; or in Malory, where the king is forced to follow the urging of Agravaine, and then of Gawain, who force him to pursue Lancelot to France, which enables Mordred to usurp the throne and destroy the kingdom. The Welsh tradition has many other recurrences of this motif.[†] The present Great War is another equally destructive and pointless expeditionary war, which will spoil the land once more.

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[*] There is a Welsh folk connection between Arthur and *Arth* (bear). Most scholars and writers reject this connection in favour of the Latin *Artorius*.

[†] On this point Jones writes: 'reflecting, no doubt, the re-disposition of troops in the late Roman age, to support the claims of rival candidates to the Purple, and to stem the increasing barbarian presence at different frontiers' (*In Parenthesis*, n. 37 (K), 209).

Jones's use of the Arthurian legend, then, is concerned with the land and its

people, not just its kings and princes, or its nineteenth-century inheritors, the

bourgeoisie. Unlike Collingwood and Lawrence, Jones's use of the myth is never

concerned with the individual.[113] Like Masefield's poetry, *In Parenthesis* is concerned

with the comradeship of the private soldiers, rather than officers and the chivalry of

the gentleman-class. This is particularly noticeable in the longest Arthurian section:

the beginning of Part 6, in which the troops of 'B' Company prepare for the major

offensive at Mametz wood. The title of the part, along with one of its epigraphs, is

taken from Malory, connoting the military carnage which will ensue in Part 7.* In an

accompanying note, Jones asserts that the opening section of the final book of Malory,

the 'Morte Darthur' itself, in which Mordred and Agravaine plot the downfall of

Lancelot and thus the entire kingdom, was of importance to the composition of Part

6.[114] It begins with Private Saunders returning from Headquarter Company, where he

has heard of the order to attack Mametz wood the following day:

> He gave them the latest as he had heard tell of the devising of this battle ...
> and in what manner it should be. He said that there was a hell of a stink at
> Division – so he heard from the Liaison Officer's groom – as to the ruling of
> this battle [...] how it was going to be a first clarst bollocks and murthering of
> Christen men and reckoned [...] for now, he says [...] is this noble fellowship
> wholly mischiefed.†

Although this passage consciously imitates the narrative and language of the opening

of the *Morte*, the 'mischiefed' destruction of the fellowship is not concerned with the

officers of H.Q. – the 'blubbin'' general and other 'proper crawler[s]'.[115]

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* These are: 'Pavilions and Captains of Hundreds' (title); 'And bade him to be ready and stiff him and garnish him...and laid a mighty siege about...and threw many great engines...and short great guns...and great purveyance were made on both parties' (epigraph) (134, 135).
† Cf. Malory: "'Alas," seyde Sir Gawaine and Sir Gareth [of their brothers' plotting], "now ys thys realme holy destroyed and myscheved, and the noble felyshyp of the Rounde Table shall be disparbeled." (*Morte*, 647).

Rather, Jones uses Malory to signify and mythologise the fellowship of the ranks: '[f]or such breakings away and dissolving of comradeship and token of division are of great anguish when men sense how they stand so perilous and transitory in this world.'[116] This is a poem about War, common soldiers and 'of ordinary things [...] Of how they would meet and in what good places afterwards. Of the dissimilar merits of Welshness and Cockneys [...] Of how you really couldn't very well carry more than one book at a time in your pack [...] Of whether they three would be together for the Duration, and how you hoped so very much indeed.'[117] In comparison, the officers stand apart, defined not by their idealised notions of chivalry (compare Sassoon's *Sherston* trilogy) but by their inhumanity. Rarely are their voices 'heard' in the poem;[*] and, on the rare occasions where they are, their characterisation borders on the grotesque. On the morning of the attack on Mametz wood they appear 'at leisure and well-dressed and all at ease', 'as if thriving on the nitrous air' and talk 'of the admirable salads of Mrs. Curtis-Smythe'.[118] All the time the soldiers lie on the lope of the trenches awaiting the order to attack – 'the comrade next to you screamed so after [...] it was impossible to catch anymore the burthen of this white-man talk.'[119] The officers' notion of gentlemanly disinterestedness, learned at public schools, is so abhorrent that John Ball perceives them as racially different: the reference to Kipling's 'white-man's burden' having obvious connotations. With such alienation between soldier and officer, no wonder Private Watcyn, when being told of his

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[*] In many ways this difficult work (it is neither verse, nor prose, Jones simply referred to it as 'this writing') ought to be considered written for oral performance. Many of Jones's notes refer to pronunciation: '[p]ronounce all French place-names as in English' (n. 5, 192); '[i]n such words of Welsh derivation as I have used the accent falls on the penultimate syllable' (n. 6, 192); '5.9' is to be read 'five nine, not five *point* nine', as this is what was said 'in the ranks' (n. 39, 211).

promotion to corporal due to bravery, deliberately gets drunk and fails to attend to

parade in order to be reduced back to private.[*120]

Paul Fussell's claim that *In Parenthesis* is a fundamentally dishonest book

which glorifies war through associating it with the chivalry of medieval romance

seems wide of the mark.[121] The Arthurian legend operates as a myth of comradeship

which is relevant exclusively to 'the ranker' and not the 'ruler' (to use Masefield's

words). Otherwise it is a symbol of destruction (Camlan; the stupidity of Agravaine /

contemporary officers) or, more creatively, the means of articulating the 'British'

identity of Jones and his comrades. Similarly, Jones's use of the Arthurian story

contrasts sharply with the right-wing ideology that some critics have perceived as

apparent in his writings. Elizabeth Ward claimed in 1983 that his poetry has

underlying affinities with fascism – particularly in Jones's view of history, which was

partly derived from Spengler – though other scholars have disputed this.[122] He was a

naturally conservative man; and, despite working-class origins, thought of himself as

'chivalric and royalist'.[123] He opposed socialism: when discharged by the army in

1918 he considered joining the international brigades fighting for the counter-

revolutionaries in the Russian Civil War (1919-22).[124] After his conversion to

Catholicism, he, like many Catholic-conservatives, sided with Franco.[125] He was also

sympathetic to Hitler's attempt to rejuvenate post-war Germany, though he did find its

barbarism repugnant.[†] He saw the story of Charlemagne (whom he parallels with

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[*] Descriptions of officers are uniformly derogatory in *In Parenthesis*: 'A bleeding brass hat'; 'The bastard'll have us all blown up – softly, and consider his plenary powers, it's that cissy from Brigade, the one wat powders' (40); when the Brigadier is shot, one soldier says 'It's only right he should be up with the boys the fire-eating old bastard' (173).

[†] 'God, he's [Hitler is] nearly right, but this *hate* thing mars the whole thing' (Jones, letter to Grisewood, 1938, quoted in Dilworth, 'David Jones and Fascism', 152). See also a largely appreciative critique of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (which he compares to the thoughts and politics of several '[s]incere and idealistic' Catholic intellectuals) and Nazi Germany's imperialism written for *The Tablet* (1939). While this has never been published in full – Grisewood thought it too controversial to be included in *Epoch and Artist* – Dilworth, in 'David Jones and Fascism', has quoted substantial portions of it, including this apologia: 'What it boils down to is that there is much in both Fascist and Nazi

Arthur throughout his work) as having particular relevance to contemporary society, perceiving him as a Franco-German saviour of Christian civilisation and wrote of Europe's 'bewildered' state that '[i]t is, conceivably, for a baptized Führership that we may yet have cause to pray.'[126] Nonetheless, Jones's use of the Arthurian legend seems to be effectively separated from his right-wing politics. Indeed, *In Parenthesis* is one of the very few Arthurian texts of any century to be focused on the lower-classes – its symbolism and motifs fully aligned to working-class experience. While Jones's politics certainly seem to be informed by those uneasy parallels between fascism and much Catholic writing in the 1920s and 30s, it is to another writer that we must turn in order to witness the role Catholic-conservatism (or 'clerical fascism') would play in shaping Arthurian literature of the 1930s: Charles Williams.[127]

Charles Williams's Taliessin-cycle: restoring the Grail

Charles Williams's major Arthurian work, the unfinished Taliessin-cycle, two parts of which were published as *Taliessin through Logres* (1938) and *Region of the Summer Stars* (1944), is perhaps the most acclaimed retelling of the legend since Tennyson's *Idylls*. Richard Barber has described the cycle as 'one of the great works of Arthurian literature'; C.S. Lewis claimed that it was 'among the two or three most valuable books of verse published in the century'; John Heath Stubbs claimed that Williams was as original and as modern as T.S. Eliot; and David Llewellyn Dodds has described his two volumes as 'the major imaginative work about the Grail of the twentieth century – certainly in English, probably in any language'.[128] While Rhys had produced two lyric-cycles on the legend, Masefield, a sequence of narrative

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revolutions that demand our understanding and sympathy. They represent, for all their alarming characteristics, an heroic attempt to cope with certain admitted corruptions in our civilization. Even the terrible aspects of these regimes, the brutality and suppression of individual freedom, must at least be considered in relation to the nature and malignancy of the particular conditions and evils that those regimes set out to correct' (149).

ballads, and Jones had tried to reconfigure the myth's symbolic meaning, Williams attempted to do all three. His Taliessin-cycle is a series of thirty-four poems – some lyrics, some narratorial, some symbolic – which retold the entire story of Arthur from the establishment of his kingdom to its tragic denouement. Although the work is unfinished it is still possible to understand the major features of his Arthuriad, due the 'scheme' for the sequence Williams published in the 'Preface' to *Region*, along with C.S. Lewis's subsequent ordering of the poems (based on Williams's intentions).[*]

Like Rhys and Jones, Williams was born in London. Of all the works discussed in this chapter, the Taliessin-cycle is the least directly concerned in the establishment of a British, or Anglo-Celtic identity. Nonetheless, Malory and the *Mabinogion* are the largest influences upon his work and Williams was very familiar with the work of the Celticists, especially Brown, Nitze and Weston (though he dismissed their arguments concerned with the non-Christian origins of the legend).[†][129]

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[*] C.S. Lewis – his authority grounded in Williams's own explanations of his work in written and oral forms (they were good friends) – ordered the thirty-four poems of *Taliessin* and *Region* in his study of the cycle, *Arthurian Torso* (1948), p. 96. The order of the poems (omitting the two 'Preludes' to each volume) is as follows: 'The Calling of Taliessin' (from *Region*), 'The Calling of Arthur', 'The Vision of Empire', 'Taliessin's Return to Logres', 'Mount Badon', 'The Crowning of Arthur', 'Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn', 'Bors to Elayne: the fish of Broceliande', 'Taliessin in the School of the Poets', 'Taliessin on the Death of Virgil', 'The Coming of Palomides', 'Lamorach and the Queen Morgause of Orkney', 'Bors to Elayne: on the king's coins', 'The Star of Percivale', 'The Ascent of the Spear', 'The Sister of Percivale' (all from *Taliessin*), 'The Founding of the Company', 'Taliessin in the Rose Garden', 'The Departure of Dindrane', 'The Queen's Servant' (*Region*), 'The Son of Lancelot', 'Palomides before his Christening', 'The Coming of Galahad', 'The Departure of Merlin', 'The Death of Palomides', 'Percivale at Carbonek' (*Taliessin*), 'The Meditation of Mordred' (*Region*), 'The Last Voyage' (*Taliessin*), 'The Prayers of the Pope' (*Region*), and 'Taliessin at Lancelot's Mass' (*Taliessin*). Most scholars accept this order; for discussion and disagreement see Alice Mary Hadfield's *An Introduction to Charles Williams* (1959), 147; and Glen Cavaliero's *Poet of Theology* (1938), 98.
[†] The Celtic-origins hypothesis of the Grail is clearly alluded to in one poem of the cycle: 'The Meditation of Mordred'. Here Mordred, already challenging his father's supremacy, says:

> My father dwelled on the thought of the Grail for his luck,
> but I can manage without such fairy mechanism.
> If it does prove to be, which is no likely thought,
> I will send my own dozen knights to pull it is.

> My cooks would be glad of such a cauldron of Ceridwen (ll. 37-41).

Mordred, though, is wrong. In the supra-Christian ideology of the Taliessin-cycle all images are fundamentally Christian. Those who see the Grail as some Celtic vessel of enchantment or, like Mordred, as some 'domestic appliance' are of limited understanding.

His interest in Arthur seems to have begun around 1913 when he first read A.E.

Waite's *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal* (1909).[130] Soon after, Williams began

to keep a 'commonplace book' in which he recorded hundreds of notes on the

Arthurian legend, many of which made their way into his cycle.[131] Waite's Grail study

also drew Williams into occult mysticism: he was already an impassioned member of

the Anglo-Catholic Church and in 1917 he joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden

Dawn (other members included fellow-Arthurian writers Waite and Arthur Machen,

as well as W.B. Yeats and Aleister Crowley) and continued to be fascinated by occult

religion and magic throughout his life.[132]

The major feature of the Taliessin-cycle is its attempt to establish the

centricity of the Grail quest in the larger story of Arthur, to make the achievement of

the Grail 'the central matter of the Matter of Britain'.[133] As discussed in chapter three,

the Grail had become increasingly detached from the larger Arthurian story since

Tennyson had relegated its importance in the *Idylls*. In the twentieth century the Grail

became more estranged from the Arthurian corpus and many works had set the sacred

vessel in the contemporary world, with little or no reference to Arthur. Williams

himself wrote one such novel in 1930, *War in Heaven*, in which the Grail comes into

the possession of a demonic publisher who threatens the world with destruction.[134] In

contrast, writers producing contemporary Arthurian literature never included the Grail

in their works. Masefield and David Jones never wrote on it; neither did James Bridie

in Scotland, nor T. Gwynn Jones in Wales. As shown in chapter four, only Cornish

writers of this period sought to make the Grail central to their accounts of Arthur.

Nonetheless, Williams, as a devout Christian with a penchant for rituals both Catholic

and occult, believed that the Grail ought to be at the centre of any retelling of the

Arthurian story.

In the 'Preface' to *Region* Williams outlined 'the general argument of the series' as 'the expectation of the return of Our Lord by means of the Grail and of the establishment of the kingdom of Logres (or Britain) to this end by the powers of Empire and Broceliande.'[135] Here, Logres is not just the Britain of Arthur, but 'Britain regarded as a province of the Empire with its centre at Byzantium'.[136] This Empire is not political: it represents, geographically, Christendom and, symbolically, the workings of Christ in the world. Logres is spiritual Britain; or rather, it is Britain's destiny to become Logres. It is this spiritual Britain which Arthur, as an authoritarian leader, establishes in the cycle. Broceliande, on the other hand, is a 'sea-forest' which lies outside the Empire, beyond Logres, and its role is as a spiritual store-house for Christian Britain (as in T. Gwynn Jones's *Ynys Afallon*). Following the collapse of Logres, due to the degeneracy of its court and the unsuitability of Arthur as king, it is Broceliande which prepares the way for Britain's partial salvation: the achievement of the Grail. Within this narrative and symbolic structure Williams subsumes the entire Arthurian story: every event and character in the traditional story is reconfigured as a cause for either the downfall of Logres, or its salvation with the Grail. In this way, although Malory and the *Mabinogion* are the text's major sources, it is the Didot *Perceval* (c. 1200-10) that most closely forms an analogue for the Taliessin-cycle. For, like Robert de Boron's amplification of Chrétien's *Percival*, Williams's Arthuriad encompasses Eurasia and temporally covers the Fall of Man to the onset of the Dark Ages.

Another analogue for the Taliessin-cycle is the *Queste del Saint Graal* (c. 1225), which Williams knew in a translation published by Dent.[137] It is often stated by Williams's admirers that his Arthuriad is an intensely religious work, which is wholly estranged from political considerations.[138] This is something of a false reading. For in

the same way that the *Queste* relentlessly pursues the supersession of the medieval ideology of the *chevalièrie seculiere* with *la celestiale* – replacing the dynastic and courtly politics of Geoffrey and Chrétien with the politics of monastic imperial expansion[139] – Williams's Taliessin-cycle attempts to assert the dominance of Christian 'metatphysics' over the humanist *Idylls*, a work which Williams came to dislike.* This Christian 'metaphysics', while no doubt reflecting the author's devout religious beliefs, is also deeply reactionary and bears resemblance to the 'clerical fascism' that was apparent in several European states and which was advocated by numerous Catholic and Anglo-Catholic intellectuals in Britain.[140] It can be discerned in the Taliessin-cycle in several ways.

First there is the nature of the Empire, which is not only geographical but political. Williams elucidated the meaning of the Empire in several works, including an illustration by Lynton Lamb (a book designer at Oxford University Press, where Williams worked as an editor), used as the frontispiece of the first volume of the Taliessin-cycle. The image (fig. 22) is that of a reclining female figure, with each province corresponding to various parts her body: Logres is the head and Camelot ('London-in-Logres') its mouth; Gaul is the breasts of the body; Italy represents the hands celebrating Mass; Jerusalem is the womb; Byzantium is the navel – the centre of the Empire.[141] In his notebook Williams defined the Empire as '(a) all Creation [...] (b) Unfallen Man; (c) a proper social order (d) the true physical body.'[142] When

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* Williams found most versions of the legend 'unsatisfactory' ('Malory and the Grail Legend', *Image of the City*, 187). Malory, he believed, had 'never quite fulfilled the hints of profound meaning which are scattered through him', and did not 'seem to trouble to work out the possibilities of relation' of the 'many hints in his images' (*Arthurian Torso*, 97; 'Note' to *Taliessin*, 96-7). But it was Tennyson whom Williams turned to most often in a critical mood. He found the *Idylls* too domestic and modern – too much 'like Pickwick' he is reported to have said in conversation (*Arthurian Torso*, 94) – and while they contained great verse, he felt they lacked 'an adequate metaphysic', the Victorian replacing the Christian basis of the legend with a devotion to 'conduct'. He continued: 'Conduct without any adequate end, duty without interior and eternal significance, morals without metaphysics – these are the guardian angels of the Victorian chivalry and of the King. [...] The weakness therefore of the Victorian age, as of the *Idylls*, is in its concern with conduct but its failure artistically to suggest and adequate significance in conduct' ('Preface', *Victorian Book of Verse*, v-vi).

all of Europe is working in unison the body is whole. But the body rarely does work

in this way, for there is an antithesis to the Christian Empire: the infernal region of

P'o-Lu, the tentacles of which can be seen on the bottom right of Lamb's illustration.

From here originates the disorder that challenges and almost overcomes the Byzantine

Empire. The forces of P'o-Lu are manifest in the various forms of barbarianism which

overpower the Empire at the end of the sequence: Mordred's rebellion, the invasion of

Attila the Hun and the threat of Islam, among others. Williams described these forces

of destruction as 'the beastliest and chillest in blasphemy'.[143] One does not have to be

a disciple of Edward Said to perceive in Williams's work a dichotomy between the

West and its alarming Eastern 'Other'. Indeed, Williams seems to have considered the

world's political geography as divided between Christendom and barbarism, which

for this poet constituted atheism, communism, Asia, the antipodes, Attila the Hun,

Islam and marital infidelity as one large negative force.

Williams's 'Vision of the Empire' connotes a world of Christian order

opposed to barbaric, Eastern disorder. Many of the poems in the Taliessin-cycle are

given over to describing how Logres ought to be ordered as a Christian theocracy, the

most important of which are 'The Calling of Arthur' and 'Sir Bors to Elayne: on the

King's coins'. The first begins with Merlin meeting Arthur and telling the would-be

king that it is his duty to establish Logres, to make way for the coming of the Grail.

To do this he must overthrow the lord of London, King Cradlemas (a redaction of the

eleven kings Malory's Arthur must conquer). Cradlemas is not a barbarian, 'but the

last feeble, fragile, and sinister representative of [Pagan] Roman civilization.'[144] Like

Nero, he wears an emerald for a monocle and covers his aged face with a mask

'gilded with a maiden's motionless smile'.[145] Feeble and effeminate (the latter

perhaps a signifier for homosexuality), he is a useless autocrat: he sits amidst

cushions, peering 'at the pedlars of wealth that stand plausibly by', while his subjects

die in '[t]he waste of snow' that 'covers the waste of thorn'.[146] For them he feels a

useless, hypocritical pity, being forced to polish his monocle, which becomes 'misty

with tears for the poor'.[147] His people, however, are discontent; symbolically, they put

down their 'mallet and scythe' and take up the 'hammer and sickle'.[148] Into this

unstable, revolutionary fervour Arthur steps: he marches into London, pulls off

Cradlemas's female mask and slays him 'in his litter'.[149] In doing so he established

within Logres 'a proper social order', which Williams defined as masculine, Christian

and violent. It has the additional function of putting down a far more radical, notably

communist revolt.

Williams's portrait of Cradlemas may owe something to caricatures of

contemporary British politicians.* What is certain is that many on the Catholic right

felt that Britain was in need of a radical shift away from the uncertain policies of

various interwar governments. Many prayed – as David Jones had – for a 'baptised

führership'. T.S. Eliot – like Williams, an Anglo-Catholic – is perhaps the best known

of these right-wing Christian intellectuals. He saw contemporary society as 'worm-

eaten with Liberalism' and wished to see it return to traditional forms of 'control and

balance', which for him could only derive from religion.[150] He advocated a return to

'a largely rural society run by a few "great families" and a small elite of theological

intellectuals much like himself.'[151] Most strangely of all, he called for 'the revival and

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* Although it may be inconsequential, it is worth noting that the infirm, short-sighted and monocle-wearing Cradlemas bears similarity to the three Prime Ministers of the interwar period: Stanley Baldwin (P.M. 1923-4, 1924-9, 1935-7) was notoriously myopic, which caused much amusement for foreign journalists ('Sinking Stanley', Time, November 10, 1930: 17); Ramsay Macdonald (P.M. 1924, 1929-31, 1931-5) became increasingly infirm in his last premiership of a coalition government; and the early career of Neville Chamberlain (P.M. 1937-41) was dwarfed by the political reputations of his father and brother, Joseph and Austen Chamberlain. Both were famed as industrialist-patricians, who rose high in the Tory party, and both wore monocles. Chamberlain also happened to be the most centralist of conservative Prime Ministers: several of the Acts of Parliament he forced through improved conditions for the working-classes and paved the way for the establishment of the Welfare State of the 1940s. These Acts made him unpopular with Conservatives. It is possible that this 'concern for the poor' correlates to Cradlemas's pity for his subjects.

expansion of monastic teaching orders', the function of which would be to resist the

all-encroaching barbarism.[152] Although such a conservative idyll would require a lot

of 'discipline, inconvenience and discomfort' for those not privileged enough to be

either rich or intellectual, Eliot assured his readers that it was the best of all options as

'here or hereafter the alternative to hell is purgatory'.[153]

In one editorial for the *Criterion*, the conservative literary magazine he edited

for many years, Eliot claimed that 'politics had become too important to be left to

politicians' and wrote that it was time that 'intelligent men' like himself became

'amateur economists'.[154] Williams turned Eliot's ideas into poetry in 'On the King's

Coins'.* The poem begins in the early years of Arthur's reign. The king has been

ordering his kingdom, creating 'organization', 'law', 'ration and rule'.[155] He has also,

reviving the Roman custom, established a mint on the Thames and strikes his own

coins, stamped with images of his own head and dragons, the symbol of his dynasty.

'Kay, the king's steward, wise in economics' praises the monetary system whereby

the expanse of trade creates a realm of commerce much wider than that established by

warfare. Because of money, streams have been bridged, mountains tunnelled, roads

established.[†156] A classic liberal, he says of the coins:

> The poor have choice of purchase, the rich of rents,
> and events move now in a smoother control
> than the swords of lords or the orisons of nuns.
> Money is the medium of exchange.[157]

But others are 'darkened' by the rise of the coins. Stating that they are idolatrous,

Taliessin says to Arthur: 'We have taught our images to be free; are we glad? / are we

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* In fact the poets were friends and shared a mutual liking for the other's work. Literary borrowing is apparent too: the most obvious example being *Burnt Norton*'s 'still point of the world's turning' (l. 62), which Eliot admitted taking from Williams's 1932 novel, *The Greater Trumps* (Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 97-8).
† Perhaps Williams saw Kay's name as suggestive of the most famed liberal economist of the day – J.M. Keynes.

glad to have brought convenient heresy to Logres?'[*][158] Bors too, another of Arthur's

Round Table, rejects liberal Camelot, saying 'man only earns, and pays, / the house

outside the City burns but the house within is enslaved. / What without coinage or

with coinage can be saved?'[159]

Williams is here telescoping the transition from feudal to capitalist economy.

But neither Bors's nor Taliessins's criticisms are grounded in their perception of

social evils; rather they deplore Arthur's 'organization' for diverging from the

historical-spiritual role of Logres as a mythic theocracy. Rejecting Arthur's Logres,

Bors flees Camelot to return to his wife, seeing in her 'the sole figure of the organic

salvation of our good'.[160] And who is this 'organic' good – a lady who distributes

bread to the poor, an act which re-enacts the Eucharist, symbolising the interaction of

the heavenly and the spiritual (the abiding concern of the Taliessin-cycle). While of

course the images of the bread and the coins are primarily symbolic of Logres's shift

from the religious to a more secular state, the poem as a whole still smacks of the

idealistic notions of conservative intellectuals who desired a return to an imagined

'organic', feudal society.

'On the King's Coins' is also typical of another feature of interest: the position

of women within this mythic theocracy. Between 'The Crowning of Arthur', which

marks the beginning of his reign, and 'The Coming of Galahad', which marks the

beginning of the Grail quest, there is a central set of poems which are predominantly

concerned with love and lovers. Usually these poems are focused on one knight of the

Round Table and his lady – not unlike Tennyson's *Idylls*. Each represents

symbolically a different form of love: Bors and Elayne reflect the idealised

contentment of married love, while Taliessin and Blanchefleur reflect chaste love: he

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[*] It may be relevant to note that the subtitle of Eliot's *After Strange Gods* was *A Primer in Modern Heresy*.

is the king's poet, she a nun. Then there is Palomides's worship of Iseult, which

represents the working of the Christian faith on earth. This Muslim knight arrives at

King Mark's perceiving the world (in Williams's Christian ideology) imperfectly: he

understands the world through mathematics ('Gospels trigonometrical'; 'the

measurement of man / that Euclid and Archimedes showed'). He then sees Iseult's

outstretched hand:

> Blessed (I sang) the Cornish queen;
> for till to-day no eyes have seen
> how curves of golden life define
> straightness of a perfect line,
> till the queen's blessed arm became
> a rigid bar of golden flame
> where well might Archimedes prove
> the doctrine of Euclidean love,
> and draw his demonstrations right
> against the unmathematical night
> of ignorance and indolence![161]

Because of his his passion for Iseult, Palomedes increasingly debases his chivalry:

becoming hateful, dishonest and committing unlawful violence. Yet eventually,

through his degradation, Palomedes comes to accept Christian Grace and is Baptised,

finally finding contentment, not in the 'triple angles, triple sides', which Williams

sees as the Islamic intellect, nor in the 'blissful nakedness' of Iseult's arm, but in the

Christian faith.

The role of women in Williams's work is Beatrician. They are objects of

contemplation, worshiped by Taliessin, Bors and Palomedes in order to experience

transcendental or revelatory visions. They are never given a voice, but are instead

narrated by their lovers. The same is even true of the figures who represent the inverse

of the Beatrician ideal: Morgause and Guinevere, who lead their lovers – and the

kingdom – into destruction. Lamorack says of his lover, Morgause (who, like

Guinevere, is not only another man's wife, but a queen – and therefore his superior,

too): 'the queen's hewn eyelids bruised my bones'; 'her hand discharged catastrophe;

I was thrown / before it.'[162] And though there are no poems devoted to Lancelot and

Guinevere (though Williams, had he lived, would presumably have included them),

several focus primarily on him: how he is 'bewildered by the smell of adoration, /

[and] roars round Guinevere's lordly body', how he descends into madness and

lycanthropy.[163] Whatever Guinever – like Elayne, Iseult, Blachefleur and Morgause –

feels or thinks remains silent in patriarchal Logres.*

The other major aspect of Williams's cycle is Taliessin, who is the poet's

major character interpolation (rarely had the sixth-century Welsh bard been associated

with Arthur up until this point) and represents the poet's chief indebtedness to Welsh

traditions.† He is the major focal point of Williams's ideal religious order and social

governance – Arthur's reign, while authoritative, masculine and Christian in 'The

Calling of Arthur', descends into economic liberalism and personal arrogance in the

later poems. He asks, in 'The Crowning of Arthur', is '[t]he king for the kingdom, or

the kingdom made for the king?'[164] Taliessin, as a poet-theologian-governor, knows

that Logres is made for the exaltation of Christ.

Williams drew Taliessin from several sources, including the episode from the

Hanes Taliesin included in Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion*.‡ This prose and

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* Williams's major source for the various Beatrician ideals was, of course, Dante. At the same time he was writing *Region of the Summer Stars* Williams was also working on a study of the *Divine Comedy* (c. 1308-21): *The Figure of Beatrice* (1943). This work elucidates much of the symbolic significance of the poems of love in the Taliessin-cycle.

† There are some incidental features also taken from Welsh sources – such as the battle at Mount Badon (Nennius) and the fact that Arthur has a son ('The Coming of Galahad', *Taliessin*, ll. 19-21), who is unnamed in the cycle, but is called Lacheu in the Welsh tradition. Llacheu never made it into the French, and therefore English, versions of the legend.

‡ The unusual spelling of 'Taliessin' (it is usually spelt with only one 's') probably derived from Tennyson's 'The Holy Grail' (1869), in which the bard is mentioned as Arthur's greatest poet: 'Taliessin is our fullest throat of song' (l. 300). Tennyson himself probably took this spelling from William Skene (1868), who presumably altered the spelling of Taliesin when translating *The Book of*

verse narrative, familiar enough to English readers, does not associate Taliesin with King Arthur, save to mention that both figures lived at the same time.[165] More knowledge of Taliesin could have been gleaned from the work of John Rhŷs, J. Gwenogvryn Evans and John Morris Jones – though again none of these editions seem particularly concerned with Taliesin's folkloric association with Arthur.[*] Most important of all was the Welsh Romantic scholar and poet Iolo Morganwg, who in the eighteenth century recorded many traditions about Taliesin, including some which described him as Arthur's chief poet. Iolo's findings bear similarity to Williams's portrait of the great Celtic bard:

> *Taliesin Ben Beirdd a wnaeth Eglwys Llanhenwg yng Nhaerlliôn [sic] ar Wysg, er côf am ei Dâd a elwid Henwg Sant a fu yn Rhyfain gyda Chystenin Fenigaid yn crychu Garmon Sant a Blieddan Sant; ynys Prydain i wellhau Crêd ag adnewyddu Bedydd ynynys Prydain.*

[Taleisin Chief Poet built the church of Llanhenwg in Caerleon on Usk, in memory of his father, who was called Henwg Sant and who had been in Rome with Constantine the Blessed to send St Garman and St Blieddan to Britain to strengthen the Faith and to renew Baptism in Britain.][166]

> *Ac Urien ai dygodd Lys Arthur ynghaerllion ar Wysg, lle gaelwyd arn gampau, a gwybodau, a chyferddonau gystal ag y gwnaed ef yn farchog am dafodawn o'r ford gronn. A Thaliesin yn Ben Beirdd y Ford gronn.*

[And Urien took him to the court of Arthur in Caerleon on Usk, where he was seen to have feats, knowledge, and charms so good that he was made a knight and arbiter of the round table. And Taliesin was Chief Bard of the Round table.][167]

Taliesin into English in order to keep the voiced 's' sound of Welsh pronunciation, rather than have English readers saying the unvoiced 'Taliezin'.

[*] Taliesin scholarship, though obviously a much smaller area, was no less controversial a subject in the first third of the twentieth century than contemporary debates concerning the Arthurian legend. J. Gwenogvryn Evans, who published both a diplomatic edition of poems attributed to Taliesin (1910), as well as English translations (1915), was as vitriolic as (though, alas, less accurate than) Joseph Ritson in the nineteenth century. He pre-empted refutations of his thesis that Taliesin, far from existing in the sixth-century, was a Welsh poet working in the twelfth century by stating that 'A critic may dispute my rendering, but it does not follow that he is right because he differs from me, or cannot in 7 months see what it has taken me 7 years to "grip"' (*Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, xiii, n.10). John Morris Jones, Evans's most prolific critic (a review article for *Y Cymmrodor* ran to several hundred pages and required a special issue of its magazine), remarked at the end of his huge refutation of Evans's thesis that 'that all this trash should be printed in the best ink on the finest paper [...] is sad indeed' (*Taliesin*, 1918).

It is likely that Williams knew these traditions from translations made by Iolo's son –
also called Taliesin – in the mid-nineteenth century. These were republished in 1931
(before Williams began the cycle) in *The Shrine of Wisdom*, a journal dedicated to
'philosophical, religious and mystical works of universal significance' which may
have appealed to Williams.[168]

Following its sources loosely, 'The Calling of Taliessin' chronicles the bard's
mysterious birth and growing up among the Welsh tribes. Although 'Druid-sprung',
the pagan Taliessin, already a great poet, hears rumours of Christianity and travels to
Byzantium to learn more.[169] Leaving Wales, he encounters Merlin and Brisen, who
are here the twin children of Nimue, who is not the Tennysonian *femme fatale* but an
embodiment of Nature. Merlin is to found Camelot; Brisen, with foreknowledge of
the city's downfall is to prepare Carbonek for the Grail questers; Taliessin is to travel
to Byzantium, the heart of the Empire, where he learns of Logres's historic Christian
mission.[170] When he returns to British shores, Cradlemas is already dead and Logres
is nearly complete.[171] Taliessin becomes the 'king's poet' and assumes his traditional
role (from the *Hanes Taliesin*) of a mythic bard who reveals mystical visions
('Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn'), becomes the country's historical recorder
('Taliessin on the Death of Virgil') and competes with Logres's other poets
('Taliessin in the School of the Poets').

But Taliessin is more than a poet and he supersedes the role assigned to him in
Welsh tradition. He takes up Merlin's role as prophet and politician: he advises on
policy ('On the King's Coins'), challenges the authority of Arthur's lesser knights
('The Ascent of the Spear'), and establishes a social-religious order in opposition to
that of the Round Table ('The Founding of the Company'). The bard also takes a
practical role in the formation of Logres. At the battle of Mount Badon he is

appointed chief of Arthur's cavalry and his military intervention proves vital. Not

unusually, Taliessin suffers a vision mid-battle: of Virgil, 'barbaric centuries away',

struggling for a phrase for his *Aeneid* ('sought for the word, sought for his thought, /

sought for the invention of the City by the phrase').[172] When, in the vision, Virgil

finds the phrase Taliessin moves his troops into battle ('he saw the hexameter spring /

and the king's sword swing').[173] Virgil, the poet of Roman civilization, has imposed

order on the chaos of thought and language; Taliessin, the poet of Arthurian and

Christian civilization, wins the battle which will bring order to Logres. Like Virgil,

Taliessin is the poet of the City (Rome/Camelot); but unlike Virgil, he has a role in its

physical foundation, not just idealisation.

Thus, Taliessin conforms to the exalted position Iolo Morganwg claimed the

bard possessed in Celtic Britain: 'the rib-cage of the body politic, rembrancers, a

collective memory honed for historical action.'[174] Of more social significance than the

English poet, the Celtic bard was instrumental to the community, embodying – in

English terms – Shelley's dictum that 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the

world'.[175] In the figure of Taliessin, Williams combined the Republican zeal of Iolo

with the radical romanticism of Shelley's poet, but in doing so he altered their

ideological positions into a reactionary Catholic ideal: transforming 'the bard of

liberty' into a poet-governor, a mythic version of Eliot's Christian intellectuals who

would order Europe into sound, obedient, disciplined Church-centric states. Taliessin

is, in short, a heroic embodiment of interwar Anglo-Catholic intellectuals, like Eliot

and Williams, inflated to heroic proportions. The two volumes of this panacea for all

of Europe were published either side of the bloodiest conflict in world history.

Conclusion

The writers discussed in this chapter all understood the Arthurian story as essential to the identity of the British people. For each, the Matter of Britain was a myth of unity, not of ethnic faction, as it had been in the work of other authors, whether English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh or Cornish. This injection of Anglo-Celticism – largely brought about by scholars such as Weston, Loomis and Rhŷs – rejuvenated the Arthurian story at a time when English writers such as Evelyn Waugh were satirising it as a Victorian anachronism. Yet, despite the fact that this newly-formed, inclusive Britishness was Arthurian literature's dominant trend from the mid 1920s to the early 1940s, the Anglo-Celtic Arthur did not produce a paradigmatic account of the legend.

Partly this was a result of the form that the Anglo-Celtic Arthur took in these years. Traditionally, large-scale Arthurian works had been narrative accounts, whether in prose or poetry; yet those of Ernest Rhys and Charles Williams were essentially lyrical, while David Jones's interest in the legend was largely confined to a series of allusions placed amid his highly complex modernist writing. Collectively, their work presented no narrative frame in which other writers could produce sub-paradigmatic work. Only John Masefield's *Midsummer Night* possessed such a structure. Yet Masefield was in many ways too old-fashioned a poet to inspire younger writers. Frequently describing himself as a Victorian born into an unsuitably modern world, his brand of narrative verse was hardly a popular medium after the Great War. Far from being recognised as an innovator of a new type of Arthurian literature, Masefield was an example of the old order, whom more stylistically radical writers were reacting against.

Yet if Masefield seemed too out of date for contemporary writers to imitate, Rhys, Jones and Williams were antiquated in other ways. Rhys, simply, belonged to

another era; his poetry of the pre-war school of the Celtic Twilight had little, if any,

attraction for modern writers. In contrast, the early Welsh literature which captivated

the modernist David Jones was unknown to most of his readers, who had little

opportunity to respond to his ingenious manipulation of myths and texts. While, for

instance, it required only an educated reader to understand T.S. Eliot's fascination

with Dante, or Joyce's preoccupation with the *Odyssey*, it required a Celtic scholar to

penetrate Jones's use of *Y Gododdin* – hardly a text that was discussed in polite

English literary circles. The work of T.S. Eliot also stands in contrast to that of

Charles Williams. While both poets based their later work on their Christian, Anglo-

Catholic beliefs, Eliot's *The Four Quartets* appealed to many readers, whereas few

general readers have found sympathy with the Taliessin-cycle's mixture of patriarchy,

extreme conservatism and ascetic religiosity.*

But Jones and Williams were unlikely to inspire large numbers of imitators for

other reasons. Like so much Grail literature produced after the Great War, Jones's and

Williams's Arthurian writings are characterised by their difficulty – a difficulty born

of their awkward ideological positions. Along with Rhys and Masefield, they had

inherited a Tennysonian tradition which was Anglocentric, bourgeois, imperial and

largely humanist. All four writers were desperate to make the Matter of Britain anew

– to fit it for a new age. Because of reasons of mixed national allegiances, class,

history and religion, they rejected the earlier narrative of Anglo-imperialism (or, in a

Welsh context, Celtic resistance) in favour of an inclusive Britishness, which was

forged out of an Anglo-Celtic literary tradition which they largely invented (Taliessin

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* Even J.R.R. Tolkien, a fellow Inkling and conservative Christian, declared himself to be 'wholly unsympathetic to Williams's mind.' He claimed to find his work 'alien, and sometimes very distasteful, occasionally ridiculous.' While he himself remained 'entirely unmoved', he stated that C.S. Lewis 'was bowled over.' But Lewis, Tolkien wrote, 'was a very impressionable man'. Indeed, Lewis was perhaps Williams's only literary successor, his Merlin-based science-fiction novel, *That Hideous Strength* (1945), was clearly indebted to the mythological system of the Taliessin-cycle. This novel is briefly discussed in the following chapter. See Tolkien, *Letters*, 361-2.

and Shakespeare; John Ball and the *Mabinogion*). Whereas Rhys and Masefield employed popular poetic forms (lyric and ballad) to articulate their Anglo-Celtic identities, Jones and Williams moved into more difficult forms of writing. Their texts, like their politics and self-identities, were necessarily complex and could not be made to fit into the traditional pattern of English or Welsh literary production. Neither, as this chapter has shown, could they be placed in that most nebulous and uneasy of rubrics, 'British'.

In contrast, the earlier manifestations of the Arthurian legend in England have almost always, despite consistently serving the ideological interests of the socio-economic elite, been popular and populist. This partly explains, along with political considerations, why medieval England seems never to have adopted Chrétien's sophisticated romances and why its translations from the French have always been simplifications of their sources. The complexity of Jones's and Williams's writings simply does not fit into the larger English Arthurian tradition.

The one major Arthurian text produced in the interwar period which certainly did fall into this tradition was T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Notably, not only was White's Arthuriad partly written for children, it was also produced (unlike the work of Rhys, Masefield, Jones and Williams) as a series of novels – a medium that in the twentieth century has proved far more popular than narrative verse and is certainly a much more populist form of literature than modernist poetry. Indeed, White's work has proved immensely popular among readers and is one of the most influential (yet still not paradigmatic) accounts of the legend produced in the last century. It has also largely eclipsed the work of the Anglo-Celtic writers in most contemporary scholars' accounts of the modern Arthurian literature. Yet, written across the same period as Williams's Taliessin-cycle, White's work, while greatly

differing in form and style, demonstrates many characteristics of the Anglo-Welsh

trend in Arthurian literary production in the interwar period. It was only when the

series of novels was revised in 1958 did it become another Anglocentric version of the

Matter of Britain. It is this work which forms the basis for the conclusion to this

study.

Chapter Six

'The faith that made us rulers': T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* and the post-imperial Arthur

T.H. White was little interested in the transformation of the Arthurian story from a nineteenth-century English epic into a twentieth-century Anglo-Celtic product. He described medieval Welsh accounts of Arthur (as well as the French romances) as 'tedious', seems to have paid little attention to twentieth-century advances in scholarship (particularly the Celticists) and his own work is almost wholly uninfluenced by contemporary Arthurian writers.[1] His own retelling of the Arthurian legend – which became known as *The Once and Future King* – was an attempt to re-Anglicise the legend, to shed it of its recently-acquired Celtic elements. He relied heavily on Malory, whom he read with a distinctly nineteenth-century understanding, being more familiar with Edward Strachey than Eugène Vinaver; yet in his psychological realism and character-driven narrative technique he produced a firmly twentieth-century Arthurian novel – indeed it was one of the first Arthurian novels produced in Britain. The resulting work is, suitably for a book which is filled with Bolsheviks, anarchists and fascists, port-drinking pipe-smoking Etonians and peasants

who run around 'like red Indians', one of the most anachronistic retellings of the Arthurian story made in the twentieth century. From a distance it reads like the *Morte Darthur* rewritten by P.G. Wodehouse; on closer inspection it appears to be the work of a self-consciously nostalgic Tory, whose use of the Arthurian legend was, at turns, wildly inventive, utterly flawed, and both respectful and irreverent. It also proved to be the most popular version of the Matter of Britain written over the last hundred years.

'This is an anachronism [...] a beastly anachronism': T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* and the Arthurian tradition

T.H. White was the child of a colonial family. He was born in Bombay in 1906, the son of a District Superintendent in the Indian police force; his mother was the daughter of an Indian Circuit Judge. His relationship with his parents – who were alcoholic, hysterical and over-possessive – was traumatic and left White psychologically damaged. Aged five he was sent 'home' to England, to live with his maternal grandparents, enjoying a happy existence for some years. At Cheltenham College he was enrolled in the military side, seemingly destined to enter either the army or some form of colonial administration. But he did not and instead went up to Cambridge in 1925, taking 'a tearing First Class with Distinction' in English Literature.[2] In this he was unlike the other major writers of Arthurian literature of this period – Ernest Rhys, John Masefield, David Jones and Charles Williams – whose learning was largely autodidactic. On leaving university he took up several teaching jobs, including one at the progressive public school at Stowe, where he became – while very young – head of English. He left the school in 1935 in order to dedicate his time to writing (he was already the author of numerous novels, poems and books on

country sports).[3] Two years later he began the first volume of what would eventually

become *The Once and Future King*.

White wrote extraordinarily quickly, completing the five volumes of his

Arthuriad in less than five years.[*] Nonetheless the publishing history of his Arthuriad

is complex. The first volume, *The Sword in the Stone*, was published in 1938 while

White was living in a cottage near Stowe School.[4] The rest of the sequence was

written in Ireland, where White lived throughout the Second World War. *The Witch in*

the Wood was published in 1939;[5] *The Ill-Made Knight* the year after.[6] He then began

work on *The Candle in the Wind*, which was based on a play he had written in 1938,

but which had been rejected by Noel Coward.[7] This and the final novel in the

sequence, *The Book of Merlyn*, were sent to his London publisher, Collins, in

November 1941. Neither was published. White had wanted the five books to appear in

one volume, but this was hardly practical in terms of wartime paper shortages.

Besides, *The Book of Merlyn* held little appeal for Collins as it was more of an

inexpert political treatise on the causes of war than a traditional novel.[†] And so, for

seventeen years White's Arthuriad remained complete, but unpublished in its whole

form. It was not until 1958 that *The Once and Future King* appeared.[8] But it was

released as a tetralogy – *The Book of Merlyn* was omitted and the remaining text

much revised: several key scenes from the *Merlyn* were introduced into the first

volume; and *The Witch in the Wood*, now renamed *The Queen of Air and Darkness*,

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[*] He once claimed to have written a novel, *Darkness at Pemberley* (1932), in three weeks (Brewer, *T.H. White*, 6).

[†] White replied to Collins's refusal to print the entire *The Once and Future King* in a letter written in late 1941: 'I do not fully understand the paper shortage. If you had been intending to publish, say, ten books besides, could you not make up the paper shortage by publishing only nine others? You publish too much rubbish anyway' (Warner, *T.H. White*, 187).

was similarly overhauled and shortened. It was not until 1977 (thirteen years after

White's death) that *Merlyn* appeared – White having never revised it.[*][9]

The first book in the sequence, *The Sword in the Stone*, begins with the young

Arthur, known as Wart, and his foster-brother, Kay, growing up in the castle of the

Forest Sauvage under the guardianship of Sir Ector and the tutorship of Merlyn. The

former is a benevolent patriarch of a feudal society who provides the foundling Wart

with a happy home, while Merlyn directs the young Arthur to a series of adventures:

there are encounters with a witch, a giant and Robin Hood (known here as Robin

Wood), as well as several episodes where Wart is transformed into various animals: a

perch, hawk, snake and badger (several of these scenes, as discussed in the next

section, were omitted in the 1958 edition, being replaced with material from *Merlyn*).

Seven years pass in this blissful state until it is announced that the king, Uther

Pendragon, has died. Following the traditional sword-in-the-stone motif, Wart – now

renamed Arthur – is elevated from squire to the King of England. He is told that Uther

was his father, though Merlyn does not inform Arthur that his mother is Igraine,

which precipitates the incestuous disaster in the following novel.

The next volume, *The Witch in the Wood*, is concerned with the less-pleasant

adolescence of Gawaine and his brothers, the sons of King Lot and Queen Morgause

of Orkney. The novel also follows the Arthur's fortunes in his initial wars against the

Gaels, who rebel against his authority. Merlyn remains Arthur's tutor and political

advisor, though his role diminishes in the course of the novel, as Arthur formulates

his own idea on how to harness Might to the service of Right through the foundation

of the Order of the Round Table. The novel ends after the battle of Bedegraine, where

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[*] In 1996 another edition of *The Once and Future King* appeared which claimed to be the 'complete edition'. This contained the 1958 text of *The Once and Future King* followed by *The Book of Merlyn*. However, the latter is not part of this sequence. Rather, *The Book of Merlyn* represents White's first attempt at completing his Arthuriad, whereas the 1958 text (*The Once and Future King* proper) is complete in its own right – and therefore without the *Merlyn*.

Arthur breaks the resistance of the eleven British kings. On the night of his victory

celebrations, a 'black-haired, blue-eyed beauty', many years older than the king,

comes to Arthur's room:

> Perhaps it was because Arthur was always a simple fellow, who took people at
> their own valuation easily. Perhaps it was because he had never known a
> mother of his own, so that the role of mother love, as she stood with her
> children behind her, took him between wind and water.[10]

Whatever the cause, Arthur begets Mordred upon Morgause, his half-sister. And

though he is ignorant of their familial tie, 'it seems, in tragedy, that innocence is not

enough.'[11]

The next volume, *The Ill-Made Knight*, begins with another set of *enfances* –

those of Lancelot. Whereas Arthur's had been idyllic and adventurous, those of the

Orkneys traumatic and violent, Lancelot's education is disciplined and relentless as he

trains to become the greatest knight in the world, 'a sort of Bradman, top of the

batting averages.'[12] Most of the narrative which follows is a redaction of Malory:

Lancelot's coming to Camelot, his early quests, his affair with Guenever, the

begetting of Galahad and his subsequent madness, as well as the later tales of the

poisoned apple, the knight of the cart and the healing of Sir Urre [sic]. Time passes

more quickly in this novel: by the end Lancelot and Arthur are white-haired and many

of the original knights are dead, their places filled by younger men 'for whom Arthur

was not the crusader of a future day, but the accepted conqueror of a past one.'[13]

Needing to reinvigorate the Round Table, Arthur and Lancelot together devise the

Quest for the Holy Grail,* which is recounted in a series of flashbacks as the knights

return to Camelot. But the Grail is 'a short-lived beauty' and offers little redemption

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* The Grail Quest as Arthur's and Lancelot's desire is wholly of White's invention.

as Camelot slides – like Tennyson's *Idylls* – into cynicism: 'it had the fruits of civilization, *savoir-livre*, gossip, fashion, malice and the broad mind of scandal.'[14]

The Candle in the Wind is the conclusion to the 1958 *Once and Future King* (it had not been previously published). It opens with Mordred plotting the destruction of Arthur's England, the king now 'a lonely old gentleman who had worn his crown for half a lifetime in the teeth of fate.'[15] Early in the novel Mordred discovers the affair between Lancelot and Guenever and the novel moves quickly to its conclusion, following Malory closely. The novel ends with Arthur, on the eve of the battle of Camlan, '[l]ooking back on his life and despairing.'[16] But then a page enters – a young Tom Malory of Newbold Revel. The king commands him to record the greatness of the Round Table and its mission to transform Might into the vessel of Right. And so the text ends with Arthur, now prepared for the destruction of Camlan, drawing himself up 'to meet the future with a peaceful heart.'[17]

This then is the conclusion to *The Once of the Future King*. Yet White's original attempt to conclude his Arthuriad, *The Book of Merlyn*, is an intriguing text which takes Arthur away from the field of Camlan and back to Merlyn (who had disappeared with Nimuë early in the third volume) and the animals of *The Sword in the Stone*. Together the assembly try to find an antidote to war.[18] White also recounts the battle of Camlan and briefly charts the death of Lancelot and Guenever. The book ends with a call to pray for both 'Thomas Malory, Knight, and his humble disciple, who now voluntarily lays aside his books to fight for his kind.'[19] But, as a matter of fact, the 'humble disciple' never did enlist and remained in Ireland until the war's conclusion.

*   *   *   *   *

White's Arthuriad – whether in its original or revised form – was very different from

contemporary retellings of the legend. It is a remarkably personal version of the story:

White's call for readers to pray for his soul (he was agnostic) is typical of the book's

self-contradictoriness as a whole. Wart's carefree yet loving childhood is largely a

consolation for his own traumatic youth, while Merlyn represents 'an ideal old age'.[20]

Morgause in *The Witch in the Wood* was largely based on his own mother ('a poor old

witch by now', he wrote in a letter to David Garnett).[21] And the text contains several

references to the painful experience of being a son to an unloving mother,[*] as well as

a revenge fantasy, wherein the queen is murdered by her jealous son, Agravaine,

when he discovers her, aged seventy, in bed with Sir Lamorak.[22] Such personal

elements are discernable throughout the text: the alcoholism of the ageing knights in

The Candle in the Wind; Arthur's constant need for love, as well as his close

attachment to animals, especially the goose, Lyó-lyok (originally in *The Book of*

Merlyn), for whom he would abandon his kingdom.[23]

Another major contrast between White's Arthuriad and other contemporary

retellings lies in the speed with which it was written (less than five years), while

Ernest Rhys, John Masefield, David Jones and Charles Williams had spent most of

their careers attempting to refit the Arthurian story into the twentieth century.[†] The

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[*] Apart from the above-quoted cause of Arthur's incestuous liaison with Morgause ('[p]erhaps it was
because he had never known a mother of his own', 334), *The Once and Future King* makes several
other references to child-parental relationships. In one, White comments on the unrequited love for the
mother of Gawaine and his brothers: 'Indeed, they did love her. Perhaps we all give the best of our
heart uncritically – to those who hardly think about us in return.' (232) In another passage on the young
Lancelot, the author remarks: 'Under the grotesque, magnificent shell [...] there was shame and self-
loathing which had been planted there when he was tiny, by something which it is now too late to trace.
It is so fatally easy to make young children believe that they are horrible' (398). There is also the
description of Morgause's beating of her children in *The Witch in the Wood* (but not included in
TOFK): 'That evening Queen Morgause beat all four of her sons with the leg of a stool. She stripped
them naked and hit at them indiscriminately, almost frothing at the mouth. [...] It was the grinding of
her teeth which frightened Agravaine more than anything else' (185).
[†] The speed with which White's tales were written also contrasts with earlier retellings. Tennyson
wrote Arthurian verse long before 'The Lady of Shalott' was published in 1832. In 1891, a year before
his death, he was still adding final lines to the *Idylls* (Ricks, 671). Similarly, although we know little
about the production of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, if we accept 1450 as the date of composition for 'The

most obvious reason for White's alacrity was his decision to compose in prose, rather than poetry, which was still the chief medium of the Arthurian legend at the time White wrote. As is discussed later, White's influence proved decisive on post-war literary production.

The prose medium allowed White to bring a novelist's approach to the Arthurian legend. One of White's greatest achievements was to turn the traditional Arthurian figures into more psychologically rounded characters. Apart from Arthur and Merlyn, White's redrawing of Lancelot was particularly influential on later writers. As he did for many of his characters, White made extensive notes on Lancelot in his journal: he was to be ugly, humble, self-critical, fastidious, moral and 'probably sadistic or he would not have taken such frightful care to be gentle'. Once again, it was a portrait that owed a lot to White's own personality, as did his postulation that Lancelot might be bisexual:

> Can a person be ambi-sexual – bisexual or whatever? His treatment of young boys like Gareth and Cote Male Tale is very tender and his feeling for Arthur profound. Yet I do not want to write a 'modern' novel about him. I could only mention this trait, if it is a trait, in the most oblique way.[24]

White made Lancelot's 'trait' apparent at the opening of *The Ill-Made Knight*:

> The boy thought that there was something wrong with him. All through his life – even when he was a great man with the world at his feet – he was to feel this gap: something at the bottom of his heart of which he was aware, and ashamed, but which he did not understand. There is no need for us to try to understand it. We do not have to dabble in a place which he preferred to keep secret.[*25]

Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnelle', then Malory, whom the text parodies, must already have achieved fame as an Arthurian writer around twenty years before the *Morte* was completed (1469-70), thus indicating a rough temporal frame for the text's production (See Introduction, n. 44 for details.).
[*] White seems to have been careful to have configured Lancelot's homosexuality within a typically Victorian frame of 'hero-worship', rather than homoeroticism. Thus White writes that Lancelot 'was was in love with his hero'; 'in love with Arthur', 'with another man's ideas'; 'he carried with him in his heart to France the picture of that bright Northern King, at supper, flushed and glorious from his wars' (*TOFK*, 329-47). And, in contrast with his idealised love for the king, when Lancelot falls in love with

Many of the best Arthurian novelists writing after the Second World War have followed White's lead. Lancelot in Rosemary Sutcliff's trilogy of retellings from Malory, *King Arthur Stories* (1979-81), is repeatedly described as humble and ugly.[26] Bedwyr in Henry Treece's *The Great Captains* (1953) shows signs of homoerotic jealously over Arthur's friendship with Mordred.[27] And Marion Zimmer Bradley, in her *Mists of Avalon* (1982), while rejecting the idea of an ugly Lancelot, reverses the sexual plotting of White's *Ill-Made Knight* and has Lancelot discover his desire for Arthur occur after he sleeps with both his lover, Guinevere, and king.[28]

Women characters were more problematic. Morgause, based on White's mother, haunted the writing of *The Witch in the Wood*. She is crudely presented throughout the 1939 edition, as in the scene where she bathes in a 'consommé of snails' blood, [...] dead worms, [...] decayed prawns, offal [...] and other ingredients without which no woman can truly be beautiful.'[29] In the 1958 edition, Morgause is a less central character, which perhaps improves the book, though certainly reduces the 'witch' to a more abstract sinister presence. In contrast, the Guenever of *The Ill-Made Knight* and *The Candle in the Wind* is a much more successful creation, largely thanks to the efforts of Ray Garnett, David Garnett's wife (who is something of a model for Guenever).[30]

Though it has become commonplace to explore Tennyson's *Idylls* – particularly Arthur's speech to his queen in 'Guinevere' – in terms of patriarchy and misogyny, it ought to be noted that the interwar period was possibly worse for its representations of the women of the legend. Usually male writers simply chose to ignore them: rarely are they afforded speaking parts in Williams's Taliessin-cycle,

Guenever, White emphasises that he does so because the queen is 'a real person', not just some representative of a moral standard (*TOFK*, 360).

while Jones's *In Parenthesis* is entirely devoid of female presence and Masefield's

Midsummer Night is so focussed on warfare and politics that it leaves little room for

the story's women. In his focalising on the figure of Guenever, White began to draw

attention to the neglected female characters of the legend, and rescued the queen from

her position as reviled and sinful adulterer in the Tennysonian paradigm. White

perceived Guenever's 'central tragedy' as her childlessness: Arthur and Lancelot, her

husband and her lover, both father illegitimate children, but the queen remains 'an

empty vessel, a shore without sea.'[31] In her childlessness White found a reason why

she remained so faithful to her 'double love': 'perhaps she loved Arthur as a father,

and Lancelot because of the son she could not have.'*[32] Likewise, *The Ill-Made*

Knight, like Martha Kinross's earlier drama *Tristram and Isoult* (1913), sought to

locate Guenever's role in the destruction of the Round Table as a result of her

inability to participate in the legend's larger narrative of 'noble achievement[s]' and

'feats of arms':

> Guenever could not search for the Grail. She could not vanish into the English
> forest for a year's adventure with the spear. It was her part to sit at home,
> though passionate, though real and hungry in her fierce and tender heart. [...]
> For her, unless she felt like a little spinning or embroidery, there was no
> occupation – except Lancelot.[33]

White's Morgause and Guenever were written through and in spite of the author's

undoubted gynophobia ('with fear', he later wrote),[34] but they do make an attempt –

however unsubtly and awkwardly – to expand the role of women in the twentieth

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* Cf. Tennyson, 'Guinevere' (ll. 419-23):
     Liest there so low, the child of one
     I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
     Well is it that no child is born of thee.
     The children born of thee are sword and fire,
     Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws'.

century's retellings of the myth. It would prove to be a key theme in the post-war literature.

The novel form was also a medium much better suited than poetry to demonstrate the author's remarkable, if miscellaneous, knowledge of medieval life. The novels are filled with details of hawking, jousting, armour, archery, hunting and architecture – often garnered through the practical experience of a man who largely eschewed twentieth-century life.[35] Likewise, White's writing is peppered with technical terms, such as 'pel-quintain' (a stake used for tilting at with a lance), 'manchets' (a small loaf of bread), 'pennoncels' (long triangular flags, usually attached to the tip of a lance) and 'misericordes' (daggers).[36] But White's Arthuriad is far from a historical novel, despite its historical details. It is a deliberately anachronistic work, in which manchets and pennoncels sit alongside ahistorical references to newspapers like the *Humberland Newsman* and the *Morning Post*.[37] Sometimes White explains these anachronisms in brief asides,[*] others are legitimised by the fact that Merlyn is living backwards in time, and so brings into the 'twelfth century, or whenever it was', many elements of later history.[38]

Yet White's Arthuriad is itself a cultural anachronism, in many ways the last of the nineteenth-century retellings of Arthur, for all of its contemporary references. Although his text mentions several contemporary scholars – including Jessie Weston and Alfred Nutt – White's work consummately ignores almost every literary and scholarly development in the Arthurian legend produced since Tennyson completed his *Idylls*.[39] Thus, while he refers to 'Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites', 'the Romantics' and Aubrey Beardsley – as well as earlier writers, such as Roger Ascham,

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[*] An example of this occurs at the start of the novel when Sir Ector and Sir Grummore discuss the possibility of sending Wart and Kay to Eton, while drinking port: 'It was not really Eton that he mentioned, for the College of Blessed Mary was not founded until 1440, but it was a place of the same sort. Also they were drinking Metheglyn, not Port, but by mentioning the modern wine it is easier to give you the feel' (*TOFK*, 4).

Geoffrey of Monmouth, Giraldus Cambrensis ('that delightful ass') and Layamon –

White makes not one reference to a modern creative writer, save several allusions to

himself in the form of 'poor old White'.[40] There is, for instance, no mention of a

Westonian Waste Land and the Grail is dealt with briefly and without especial

religious or mystical significance: his edition of Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* is

strewn with facetious, faintly misogynistic comments such as 'you are a school marm

and nought else';[41] and elsewhere he described the Grail as a 'wretched pot'.[42]

Likewise, his Arthuriad is hardly concerned with matters of mythic origins, which had

been a dominant concern of Arthurian scholarship since John Rhŷs published his

Arthurian Studies in 1891. It pays no heed to Arthur's historical position, which

would be one of the dominant themes in post-war literature (and was already the

subject of Collingwood's *Roman Britain* of 1936). And Celtic sources, favoured by

Rhys, Masefield, Jones and Williams, as well as scholars such as Nutt, Brown and

Loomis, are entirely eschewed in favour of Malory and the author's own imagination.

Even the fact that White originally saw the Arthurian story as a tragedy – 'a

regular greek [sic] doom, comparable to that of Orestes'; 'the Aristolelian and

comprehensive tragedy, of sin coming home to roost'[43] – was perhaps based on the

fact that he was reading a nineteenth-century edition of the *Morte* – that of Edward

Strachey (1868/1891). In his long and detailed introduction Strachey claimed that the

Morte possessed 'epic unity and harmony, "a beginning middle and an end"' centred

on Arthur's doom.[44] Like many of Malory's nineteenth-century commentators,

Strachey saw the *Morte* as England's national epic. It was these sentiments that White

was expressing in his unpublished introduction to the 1958 *Once and Future King*:

> The roots of the Arthurian legend are buried among confused narrative ballads
> and prose romances in half the European languages, including French, German
> and Welsh. These tedious roots, which are uniformly contradictory about

almost all the relative facts, were synthesised by the amiable and immortal Sir Thomas Malory into a consistent whole.[45]

By the time White was writing, no serious Malorian scholar was contemplating Malory as such a writer, or the *Morte Darthur* as an epic tragedy. But White knew nothing of, or cared little for, such advancements – which again separates him from writers like Masefield, Jones and Williams. Perhaps this enforced ignorance was the result of his studying Malory at Cambridge[*] – certainly his first-class honours had left White with a very high opinion of his abilities as a scholar.[46] Whatever the cause, White possessed a distinctly nineteenth-century view of the Arthurian story.

It was White's lack of appreciation for contemporary Arthurian writing that gave him such great freedom when he came to write his own epic. Although the inspiration for the entire sequence was Malory, White's *enfances* of Arthur were written without any earlier authority. *The Witch in the Wood* is also largely free from Arthurian influence – the book shows no sign that White was familiar with the *enfances* of Gawain, even though they were available at this time.[47] Nor does *The Ill-Made Knight* show awareness of Lancelot's upbringing as told in 'Le Livre de Lancelot du Lac' (edited by Sommer in 1910 and translated by Lucy Allen Paton in 1929).[48] Rather, White's greatest influence when beginning his Arthuriad was Masefield's tangentially Arthurian *The Midnight Folk* (1927), as he acknowledged in correspondence.[49] And, like Masefield's children's classic, White's Arthuriad is filled with songs, pastiches, interludes and experimentation – not since Thomas Love

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[*] Malory's *Morte Darthur* was not highly thought of at that university at Cambridge at this time (Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King*, 4). Indeed, the university does not seem to have produced a notable Arthurian scholar throughout the interwar period.

Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829) had the Arthurian story been treated so irreverently.[*]

This greater freedom with regard to literary tradition and convention also enabled White to devise an imaginative temporal time frame for his novel – its narrative taking place, not in the Dark Ages of later historical fiction, but over the entire English Middle Ages, with the Arthurian story overlaid upon real historical events. Uther Pendragon's reign begins in 1066 and ends in 1216; Arthur's reign lasting from 1216 until 'the War of the Roses'.[50] Thus Uther is temporally associated with the Norman Conquest, his death with the death of another 'bad monarch', King John. Arthur finds a suitable historical correlative with John's nine-year-old son, Henry III; and his reign assumes the historical events of Edward I and Edward III when he conquers the eleven Celtic kings at the battle of Bedegraine in *The Witch in the Wood*. His campaign against Rome roughly corresponds to the Hundred Years War with France (as Malory's Arthur's campaign against Rome had mirrored that of Henry V's against Charles VI). And Mordred, 'the cold wisp of a man' who usurps the crown and destroys the round Table, is equivalent to Richard III, another of history's 'villains'.[†51] Within this framework 'real' history becomes relegated to the position of literature or legend: the text frequently refers to the 'stories of the

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[*] White's indebtedness to Tennyson ought also to be noted. The *Idylls* seem to be the most obvious source for the growth of cynicism which overtakes Arthur's court in *The Once and Future King* (516 especially). White's depiction of Arthur's idea of chivalry taking root in his knights ('Something of the young man's vision had penetrated to his captains and his soldiers. Something of the new ideal of the Round Table which was to be born in pain, something about doing a hateful and dangerous action for the sake of decency' – 319) may also have been germinated through White's reading of the *Idylls*, wherein each of the knights is 'stamp'd with the image of the King' ('The Holy Grail, l. 27), and in which each knight possesses 'a momentary likeness of the King' ('The Coming of Arthur', ll. 465-6). Also, White's decision to make Gawaine and his brothers particularly attached to their mother, Morgause, may also have found its origins in the Tennyson's 'Gareth and Lynette', especially ll. 1-177.

[†] Notably White's chronology is a literary one: Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819) had established the reign of King Richard and King John as being marred by Norman / Saxon struggles; Richard III's infamy is largely the product of Tudor propaganda and Shakespeare's derivative play.

mythological families such as the Plantagenets, Capets and so forth', or to

'[l]egendary kings like John' and the 'so-called Henry IV'.[52]

This temporal duality – at once English medieval and mythically Arthurian –

allowed White to present Arthur as a fully English king. Instead of having to address

questions of historical realism, White was able to give full reign to his whimsy;

without having to deal with a Celtic chieftain, White was able to produce what is

often an anti-Celtic, pro-Empire text from the standpoint of a colonial Arthur. This is,

of course, entirely in opposition to almost every narrative and ideological

development the Arthurian legend had undergone in the twentieth century: the Welsh

romanticism of T. Gwynn Jones, the Cornish ethno-nationalism of Henry Jenner and

others, as well as the Anglo-Celtic Arthuriads of Rhys, Masefield and Jones, who

sought in the story of Arthur a model of British cohesiveness, not of English

dominance. This feature of White's *Once and Future King*, along with its larger

political position, is discussed in the next section.

'I never could stand these nationalists': the politics of White's Arthuriad

The 1958 edition of *The Once and Future King* is a far more politicised retelling of

the Arthurian legend than that which White published in three volumes in the late

1930s and 40s. It begins with Arthur learning how to be a good king under the

tutelage of Merlyn, moves on to show his struggles against rebel feudal lords, before

proceeding towards its tragic denouement, his kingdom declining into cynicism and

self-destruction. Throughout the novel Arthur's attempts to establish a just rule are

thwarted by those who resist his authority and refuse to be bound to his system of

Right, rather than Might. Always chief of these threats is the Celt – first in the form of

King Lot and Queen Morgause of Orkney, then Gawaine and his brothers, and finally

Mordred who usurps the crown and draws the country into cataclysmic war. Everywhere in the 1958 edition, White challenges and dismisses the causes and complaints of the Gaels concerning the English King Arthur; everywhere Arthur's authority is established and reaffirmed.

But it was not always so. When the original three volumes were first published the Celt was very far from the enemy and the political content of the novels was much less apparent. It was only after the third volume – *The Ill-Made Knight* – was published that White began to reconstruct his Arthuriad as a political epic. Up until then White had considered the story of Arthur to be essentially tragic, its eventual disasters originating with Uther's rape of Igraine and Arthur's later incestuous begetting of Mordred upon his half-sister, Morgause. Yet, in the midst of composing the fourth volume, he wrote to his former Cambridge tutor, L.J. Potts, claiming to have discovered that the 'central theme of the *Morte d'Arthur* is to find an antidote to War.'[53] It was only at this point that White's Arthuriad became explicitly concerned with politics and the contemporary war in Europe.

The form of the resulting work, *The Book of Merlyn*, is a Socratic dialogue held between Merlyn and the animal-educators of *The Sword in the Stone*. Here, Arthur is subjected to a long discussion on the politics of animals, garnered from White's intimate, but inexpert, study of natural history. Merlyn states that certain types of ants are 'communists or fascists' (they are indistinguishable in this text); geese are 'anarchists'; squirrels are essentially bourgeois 'bank-balance-holders'; and most animals, in White's opinion (almost always articulated through Merlyn), believe in 'individual property'.[54] Arthur is then given two more lessons of the sort he received as a child, but this time their educational purpose is distinctly political. From the totalitarian society of the ants, with their proto-*1984* slogans of 'EVERYTHING

NOT FORBIDDEN IS COMPULSORY', Arthur learns the value of liberty.[55] From the pacific geese he learns that nationalism is unheard of in the natural world – that geese, because they fly, have no respect for political division. Neither do they have any concept of 'communal possessions'.[56] Hence, in White's thinking, they are a species of individualists and they have no need of war – indeed, they cannot even conceive of it.

Like that of the goose, man's natural state, claims Merlyn, is that of individualism. This is because 'Capitalism' is 'man's speciality' in the same way to 'eat the top of trees' is the giraffe's.[57] Taking the politics of the geese as evidence, Merlyn states that individual ownership of property is the key to pacific existence. He argues that war 'is due to communal property, the very thing which is advocated by nearly all the demagogues who peddle what they call a New Order.'[58] The nation state, he claims, is the prime cause of war. It 'is nationalism, the claims of small communities to parts of the indifferent earth as communal property, which is the curse of man.'[59] He wants to abolish 'tariff barriers, passports and immigration laws' in order to convert mankind into 'a federation of individuals'.[60] Yet, although Merlyn confesses himself to be 'a staunch conservative' and a defender of the 'despised Victorian capitalist',[61] his views seem very far from traditional conservative thinking. For all his talk of private property and capital, Merlyn's (and White's) politics of the individual are firmly in the tradition of British liberal-socialism.* Even Merlyn rescinds his earlier declaration of himself as a capitalist to admit that he, 'like any other sensible person', is 'an anarchist'.[62]

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* They are not entirely dissimilar from the mythic-nature anarchism of John Cowper Powys's later socialist novels, especially his historical Arthurian novel, *Porius* (1951). The ideas of William Morris, John Ruskin, Aldous Huxley and, above all, Edward Carpenter seem prevalent through much of White's work (see below).

At this point *The Book of Merlyn* is positioned within a William Godwin-like

mistrust of all forms of government and collective institutions – the nation state more

than any other. But this individualist-anarchism is out of place in an Arthurian epic

which has been so directly concerned with matters of kingship, English history and

power. The entire text seems to be constructed upon the essential contradiction

between White's individualist-anarchist political beliefs and the conservative ideology

of his upper-middle class background that he was unable to escape. This contradiction

had been apparent even in the much less political *Sword in the Stone*, as in the novel's

description of Sir Ector's estate:

> Everybody was happy. The Saxons were slaves to their Norman masters if you
> chose to look at it that way – but, if you chose to look at it another, they were
> the same farm labourers who get along on too few shillings a week today. [...]
> They were healthy, free of an air with no factory smoke in it, and, which was
> most of all to them, their heart's interest was bound up with their skill in
> labour. They knew that Sir Ector loved and was proud of them.[63]

This utopia is filled with Morrisian and Ruskinian ideas of the value of labour,

combined with the 'back to the land' ethic of the anarchist Edward Carpenter, whose

primitive commune Milthorpe, Derbyshire, proved highly influential on later

socialists who would reject the effects of nineteenth-century industrialisation (and

whose writing may have intrigued White, who similarly abandoned twentieth-century

technology in favour of what he called a 'feral state'). However, the influence of

Morris, Ruskin and Carpenter is overlaid with White's desire to perceive pre-

industrial society as governed by paternalistic authority. Sir Ector loves and is 'proud'

of his serfs, he 'value[s]' them more than his 'cattle', and everywhere demonstrates

his benevolent patriarchy, making 'presents' of 'milk and eggs', 'home-brewed beer'

and 'free' cottages, as well as providing feasts and overseeing the Boxing Day Hunt,

all of which function as occasions of social harmony.[64] In *The Sword in the Stone*, the

contradictions between freedom and paternal authority are less important as they are

the result of White's desire to provide Wart with a happy, carefree environment, but

one provided by a loving parent-protector. Yet in the more abstract political

discussions of *The Book of Merlyn*, the contradictions of White's anarchist-

conservative position cannot be so easily assuaged.

Indeed, White seems to have realised this and attempted a further conclusion

to his Arthuriad. Towards the end of *Merlyn*, he has the aged, despondent Arthur

leave the debating chamber and wander into the dark night, climbing a small hill that

looks out upon the land:

> It was England that came out slowly, as the late moon rose: his royal realm of
> Gramarye [...] his homely land. [...] He found that he loved it – more than
> Guenever, more than Lancelot, more than Lyó-lyok. It was his mother and his
> daughter. [...] He could tell how the common people would feel about things,
> about all sorts of things. He was their king. And they were his people.[65]

Arthur here understands the 'natural bond' between king and subject. In 'his English'

he sees a 'vast army of martyrs' willing to die 'for other men's beliefs', who would

risk 'utter extinction' in their search for 'Truth'.[66] This vision began as an attempt to

excise the misanthropy the rest of the book has produced ('[a]ll the beauty of his

humans came upon him, instead of their horribleness'),[67] but it ends as a confirmation

of Englishness – the spirit of nationalism that White had earlier denounced. And, as

often occurs in his Arthuriad, at the point of the text's greatest complexity and

contradictoriness White's novel lapses into whimsy – as Arthur stares upon his

kingdom William Blake's 'Jerusalem' is sung by a flea-ridden hedgehog in a thin

Cockney accent.[68]

Anarchist and conservative; nationalist and antinationalist; a novel which

collapses into an unsure political treatise – *The Book of Merlyn* is a confused and

bewildering text. 'It could have been so good and it is so bad,' wrote Sylvia

Townsend Warner. 'The fault is not in the choice of theme: abolition of war is an

interesting subject [...] the fault lies in the book's schizophrenia.'[69] It is not surprising

that White omitted this book in the 1958 sequence. Yet White decided to incorporate

many of the ideas and several scenes of *Merlyn* into the finished sequence, and so

made *The Once and Future King* a much more political version of the Arthurian story

than it was in the early volumes of the 1930s and 40s.[*]

To begin with, Wart's education in the first volume of the 1958 edition was

greatly altered. Gone were the adventures with Madam Mim, the giant Galapas, the

grass snake and Athene; and in their place were Arthur's experiences with the ants

and geese of *Merlyn*. Whereas in the original *Sword in the Stone* Wart's education had

been about wisdom and adventure, in the revised version Wart's schooling is

exclusively concerned with justice, power and kingship. From the Pike he learns of

autocracy, from the hawks he learns of military order, from the ants he learns of

totalitarianism, from the geese he learns of pacifism. And in his final dose of

education with the badger, Wart receives a recapitulation of all that he has learnt –

emphasising that Might is not always Right.[†] In the second volume of *The Once and*

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[*] It is not clear if it was White's or Collins's decision to omit *The Book of Merlyn*; the letters are silent on the matter and White never revised the MS, indicating that he was content with the decision even if he did not make it himself. Certainly White seems to have been satisfied with the revision of the book, writing in his journal on April 17, 1957: 'I believe and hope it is a great book. It sounds presumptuous to say so, but on a great subject, which is the epic of Britain; you have to write downright badly to make a mess of it' (Warner, *T.H. White*, 272).

[†] In comparison, the purpose of the 'education' scenes in *The Sword in the Stone* was much less unified. The episode with Madame Mim (69-86), the black witch, is primarily comedic – in a traditional folkloric motif, Merlyn challenges her to a dual in which they must turn themselves into various animals, vegetables or minerals (Merlyn wins the dual when he transforms himself into microbes of various diseases). From the grass snake he learns myths and legends of the past (172-86); from Athene, he learns of the nature of trees and witnesses the creation of the earth (232-40); the adventure with Merlyn into Galapas the giant's castle is another amusing interlude (241-58). The visits to the pike and the hawks in the mews are largely the same in both versions of the text (54-65; 115-25). The visit to the badger (265-79) is a much briefer affair, and does not contain any of the anti-war dialogue of *TOFK*. Wart's visit to Robin Hood is also very different in the original *Sword in the Stone*. Instead of the raid on Morgan le Fay's Fairies (*TOFK*, 106-18), Robin leads Wart and Kay into a battle with Anthropophagi – the violence of which demonstrates how far pacifism seems to have been from

Future King, Arthur's campaign against the misuses of Might is given a much larger

role than in the original 1939 *Witch in the Wood*. White also decided to include much

more dialogue between Arthur and Merlyn as they discuss the immorality of war, as

in chapter eight in which they debate whether it is legitimate to fight a war for the

purpose of installing a 'new way of life' on people who do not understand that it is in

their best interests to adopt it.[70] Merlyn says that there was such a man he knew in the

twentieth century, 'an Austrian' who 'tried to impose his reformation by the sword

and plunged the civilized world into misery and chaos.'[71] With reference to Marx,

Merlyn also writes that it is 'the business of the philosophers to make ideas *available*,

and *not* to impose them on people.'[72] Nonetheless, this is precisely what Arthur does

with his battles against the Gaels.

Thus *The Once and Future King* inherited many of the ideas of *The Book of

Merlyn*. But, despite its greater political content, the 1958 book is a far more stable

text than are the original volumes White wrote and published in the 30s and 40s. This

is largely due to the second major change between the original and 1958 texts – the

role of the Celts, who become the central villainous presence in the text. They are 'the

hysterically touchy, sorrowful, flayed defenders of a broken heritage';[73] they represent

fascism, collude with communists and bring the entire kingdom to the point of

destruction. Yet White did not always regard the position of the Celt in his Arthuriad

thus and the original *Witch in the Wood* can be termed Anglo-Celtic in much the same

way as Masefield's *Midsummer Night* can be. It was written in Doolistown, County

Meath, at a time when White considered converting to Catholicism, took lessons in

Erse and briefly assumed Irish ancestry (his father was born there). He even began

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White's original conception of the Arthurian story: 'All his life up to then [Wart] had been shooting
into straw targets which made a noise like Phutt! He had often longed to hear the noise that these gay,
true, clean and deadly missiles of the air would make in solid flesh. He heard it' (161).

addressing David Garnett, who first introduced White to Ireland, as an 'Anglo-Norman'.[74]

This new-found Irishness made its way into *The Witch in the Wood*. It begins, for instance, with three epigraphs: one from Malory and two from the *Erse* authors White was learning at the time, the eighteenth-century poet Brian Merriman and the contemporary playwright Craoibhin Aoibinn (Douglas Hyde). White did not provide translations for his readers. Most of the book is set in Lothian and Orkney, while Arthur and Merlyn are marginalised characters, occupying only five out of the novel's thirty-four chapters (in the 1958 edition this is expanded to exactly half of the fourteen). The text also begins with one of several loving descriptions of the Scottish islands, prefaced by an idyllic drawing White made of the castle and the lower village (fig. 23):

> The land of Lothian and Orkney lies in the northern latitudes. It is a country of bog and mountain, where the wind whistles all day, and at night the turf fires glow with small flames in a kind of rusty saffron. The nearest neighbours live ten miles apart, and the grouse say 'Talk,' and the wild merlins can be seen sweeping over the swelling lands in their pursuit of pipits and larks and the white-bottomed wheat-ears which dodge into gorse bushes. It is all heather and loveliness.[75]

In comparison to the humorous, idyllic introduction of the 1939 *Witch in the Wood*, the opening of the 1958 *Once and Future King* quickly established the Celts as darkly magical, cunning, quick to temper and murderous. It begins with a portrait of Gaelic barbarity: the reader is shown Gawaine and his brothers being raised on tales of 'English wickedness', learning to recite the wrongs brought against their race by Arthur's family – especially Uther's rape of their 'granny'. They are crudely nationalistic (crying, for instance, 'Up Orkney, Right or Wrong'), while promising to

keep the feud between their family and the Pendragons alive 'forever'. Meanwhile

their mother, Morgause, boils a live cat to alleviate her boredom.[76]

Throughout the 1958 *Once and Future King* White was careful to make the

Celt the central agent of the collapse of Arthur's realm. The author's journal entry on

Morgause is typical of White's new approach. No longer the hysterical mother-figure

of *The Witch in the Wood*, the Morgause of the 1958 book 'should be quite shallow,

cruel, selfish [...] One important thing is her Celtic blood. Let her be the worst West-

of-Ireland type: the one with cunning bred in her bones.'[77] Such racial essentialism is

present throughout the finished Arthuriad. White also wanted to make his Gaelic

characters appear more alien to Arthur's English court than they were in the original

books – changing, for instance, Gawaine's Standard English into White's

approximation of Scots dialect:

> What happened? Why, what happened was that I wasted eighteen months
> searching for adventures, without finding hardly any, and ended up half dead
> with concussion. (*The Ill-Made Knight*)[78]

> What happened, is it? Why, what happened was that I wasted eighteen months
> and mair forbye in seeking footless for adventure – and ended up half deid
> with what ye name concussion. (*TOFK*)[79]

And although White's original draft of *The Candle of the Wind* has remained

unpublished, his characterisation of Mordred probably owes a great deal to his

increased phobic dislike of the Irish/Celt. He is presented as demonically evil, 'a

creature from Edgar Allan Poe', with 'red eyes, homicidal, terrific, seeming to give

out actual light.' He is the 'scion of desperate races more ancient than Arthur's, and

more subtle.'[80] Later, Mordred is clearly identified not only with Richard III, but with

twentieth-century fascism too, leading the 'popular party', whose aims are 'some kind

of nationalism, with Gaelic autonomy, and a massacre of the Jews'; their emblem is 'a

scarlet fist clenching a whip.'[81] Building on the monstrosity of his character, the narrator announces that Mordred is

> of a race now represented by the Irish Republican Army, rather than Scots Nationalists, who had always murdered landlords and blamed them for being murdered [...] the race that had been expelled by the volcano of history into the four quarters of the globe, where, with a venomous sense of grievance and inferiority, they even nowadays proclaim their ancient megalomania.[82]

In the same way that Tennyson transformed Vivien's licentiousness into 'the evil genius of the Round Table',[83] so White made Mordred's Gaelic origins into the prime cause of the country's collapse.

The Once and Future King is also more careful than the original books to emphasise the Gaels' role in opposing Arthur's struggle for Right. Thus in *The Sword in the Stone*, when Arthur pulls the sword from stone the reader was told that '[a] few revolted, who were later quelled'; but in the 1958 edition this becomes '[a] few Gaelic ones revolted, who were quelled later'.[84] In one of the few directly political moments in the original *Witch in the Wood*, Merlyn defines chivalry as an ideological myth which disguises feudal society's endemic brutality:

> What is all this chivalry, anyway? It simply means being rich enough to have a castle and a suit of armour [...] Look at all the barns burned, and dead men's legs sticking out of ponds, and horses with swelled bellies by the roadside, and mills falling down, and money buried, and nobody daring to walk abroad with gold or ornaments on their clothes. That is chivalry nowadays.[85]

In *The Once and Future King* White inserted the following passage in the middle of Merlyn's diatribe against chivalry, clearly focusing on the Gaels as the prime cause of disturbance:

> They have rebelled, although you are their feudal sovereign, simply because the throne is insecure. England's difficulty, we used to say, is Ireland's

opportunity. This is their chance to pay off racial scores, and to make a bit of money in ransoms.[86]

Further interpolations are made later, invalidating the legitimacy of the Gaels' resistance to Arthur. In one scene Merlyn explains to the young King Arthur some of the reasons for the Gaelic wars – Saxon, then Norman, oppression, Uther's rape of Igraine and the killing of her husband. But Merlyn says that personal reasons or familial vengeance are no justification for war.[87] Neither is colonial resistance:

> The point is that the Saxon Conquest did succeed, and so did the Norman Conquest of the Saxons. [... W]hen a great many years have passed one ought to be ready to accept a *status quo* [...] the Norman Conquest was a process of welding small units into bigger ones – while the present revolt of the Gaelic confederation is a process of disintegration. They want to smash up what we may call the United Kingdom into a lot of piffling little kingdoms of their own. That is why their reason is not what you might call a good one. [...] I never could stomach these nationalists.[88]

This is not, however, just an advocation of the *status quo*. Merlyn's anti-nationalism is firmly situated within the context of English hegemony ('you are their feudal sovereign'); never does *The Once and Future King* refer to Arthur as even a British king. Merlyn's speech against nationalists is a speech against the break up of the English Empire – a declaration of the moral right to continue to subjugate others. Pacifism and non-resistance, it seems, is the only morally legitimate response the colonised may express – especially when the imperial force is English. The Celt is here the signifier for a range of colonised peoples, becoming the focus for a number of racist and cultural slurs. For instance, in the original *Witch in the Wood* there are several xenophobic jokes and crude illustrations referring to the Saracen knight, Sir Palomides (fig. 23), but in *The Once and Future King* such colonial humour pertains

only to the Celts.* As with his conservatism, White seems here to be unable, or unwilling, to escape his colonial upbringing, his *Once and Future King* being one of the many nostalgic, rather bitter works written in wake of the British Empire's collapse.

No doubt personal reasons played a part in the change of the Celt's role in the 1958 version. The Anglo-Celtic *The Witch in the Wood* had been written when White felt himself to be part of an Irish community, whereas the by the end of his time in Ireland the locals suspected him of being an English spy and, after bouts of heavy drinking, the increasingly paranoid author began to lock himself in a hotel room in terror of the IRA.[89] But the larger cause for the Celt's transformation was the change in White's politics. After 1945 White began to identify himself as a 'nostalgic Tory', who regarded the eighteenth-century squirearchy as the perfect form of government.[90] He also became disheartened by the socialist reforms of the Attlee government, describing post-war Britain as the 'Farewell state', and frequently referred to Aneurin Bevan in correspondence as 'Urinal' Bevan.[91]

With his political beliefs now stabilised as identifiably conservative, White presumably found his flirtations with individualist-anarchism in *The Book of Merlyn* untenable and largely removed them from the revised *Once and Future King*. Therefore, when White wished to locate the ultimate cause of war in 'political geography', as he maintained in the conclusion to the 1958 text, he could no longer rely on his earlier, albeit contradictory, political belief system. But by being able to

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* The scene in which the English King Pellinore, hunts the Questing Beast in Orkney, is typical of the revised Arthuriad: 'In various parts of the landscape several dozens of bent and distorted Old Ones [another of White's terms for the Gaels] were intently examining the situation from the concealment of rocks, sandhills, shell-mounds, igloos and so forth – still vainly trying to fathom the subtle secrets of the English' (303). The humour of the scene, of course, only works if the reader accepts the irony of 'savages' laughing at the civilised coloniser. It is a theme common in satiric literary representations of the colonial – most effectively used by Evelyn Waugh in the Africa-set *Black Mischief* (1932) and, with a Welsh setting, *Decline and Fall* (1928).

situate the downfall of the Arthurian kingdom as the direct result of the destructive

cunning of the Celt, White no longer had to force his political philosophy into

tortuous inconsistencies. In many ways, the Celt became an alternative to the whimsy

which White often reverted to at moments of ideological difficulty.* As Alan

Macdonald has written on an essay on *The Witch in the Wood*, '[t]he Celt is hostile to

the effete civilization Arthur would call into being; hostile to its ridiculous quests, its

modes of speech, its assumed authority.'[92] In having such a violently antagonistic

opposition, White was at least able to realise Arthur's civilising project, along with

'the blunt morals of the South', as a hopelessly virtuous, utterly English endeavour,

which failed because of the animosity of the foreigner, rather than because of the lack

of validity of the enterprise's political centre.[93]

The final strategy of *The Once and Future King* to avoid the contradictoriness

of the text's complex response to war, violence and injustice is the conclusion's

recourse to 'Literature':

> The hope of making it would lie in culture. If people could be persuaded to
> read and write, not just to eat and make love, there was still a chance that they
> might come to reason.[94]

By passing on the story of Arthur's mission to transform England into a just state to

the young Tom Malory, White hoped to preserve something of his work's pacific and

political intentions. It was a move that has proved attractive to some critics (at least

more so than White's earlier 'descent' into anarchism).[95] It is also a move that was

entirely in keeping with White's education at Cambridge during the late 1920s. For,

although Malory, as previously noted, was not highly regarded at the university at this

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* Cf. Stephen Knight's comment on White's whimsical asides: 'these should not be dismissed as sugary top-dressing. They are typical of that deliberate and defensive unseriousness that is a feature of the self-conscious English upper-middle class, from whom White came and among whom he found his friends. Where Twain's irreverence had a political bite, White's is no more than a nervous self-protection in case he is caught being too earnest' (*Arthurian Literature and Society*, 203-4).

time, White's Arthuriad is nonetheless heavily indebted to critics like T.R. Henn and

I.A. Richards (both of whom supplied White with references and read manuscripts of

his early novels).[96]

Like all works of Arthurian literature, White's Arthuriad is as much a reading

of the past tradition as it is a new contribution to the canon. And White's critical

reading is essentially a hybrid – formed from the *belles-lettres* of men like Strachey

and Saintsbury (and, at Cambridge, Arthur Quiller-Couch and Walter Raleigh) and

the leaders of the new 'English Studies', especially the Cambridge critics Richards

and F.R. Leavis. While White's writing is filled with the dilettantism of the patrician,

imperial class who first formed the study of English at the ancient universities,

White's Arthuriad is also, in some ways, a practical criticism of the *Morte Darthur*.

Certainly, White's reading of Malory has affinities with Richards's method: there is

the attention to the text, rather than the unnecessary distractions of the sources; the

emphasis on psychology, which is not dissimilar to the approach of Richards's

Principles of Literary Criticism (1924).[97] There are other preoccupations with the

Richards-Leavis axis: the importance of Malory as a canonical English work,

emerging out of an 'organic' society, which the author contrasts to the barbarities of

industrial capitalism; as well as the idea that literature somehow offers salvation to

modern society.

When White's King Arthur passes to Malory the notion of civilisation and

justice, he is not just giving him the plot for a good book. He is – also repeating the

Cambridge critics' belief in the ability of literature to communicate ideas of moral

improvement – suggesting that good literature (and White is thinking of his own work

as much as Malory) can somehow combat barbarism. Not only does White's novel

articulate a struggle to oppose violence and the right of might, its position as

Literature – a torch to be handed down to future generations of cultivated readers – is

White's final attempt to oppose the forces of brutality. Education is the ultimate

means of resisting the twentieth century. As Richards wrote in 1926: literature 'is

capable of saving us; it is a perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos.'[98] The

attraction for this belief in the transformative power of literature as a 'solution' to the

world's ills was that White no longer had to contemplate a political one.

Thus when *The Once and Future King* appeared in 1958 it was a very different

text from those early novels and manuscripts White had written in the 1930s and early

40s. The political precariousness of *The Book of Merlyn* was replaced by the

stabilising influence of White's increasingly conservative politics, which dominate the

rewriting of his Arthuriad, while the unchecked destructive forces are located as

emerging from the Celtic periphery. Any remaining ideological contradictions are

swept away by the conclusion's recourse to Literature and the improving qualities of

education. Yet *The Once and Future King* and its raw ideological predecessor, *The*

Book of Merlyn, remain searching, large-scale attempts to relate the Arthurian story to

the twentieth century, even if these attempts were frustrated because of White's

inability to present a clear alternative to the models of feudalism, nationalism and

conservatism he interchangeably rejects and extols. It remains a greatly imaginative

work by a writer whose pacifism and individualism were often at variance with his

upper-middle-class origins, whose colonialism and inbred English patriotism

contradicted his desire to see the day when Arthur could return to 'Gramarye with a

new Round Table which had no corners, just as the world had none – a table without

boundaries between the nations who would sit to feast there.'[99]

'Merlin's long gone under and there's no magic any more': the Post-War Arthur

T.H. White's Arthuriad has several affinities with the other major retellings of the Arthurian story. Like Geoffrey's *Historia*, Malory's *Morte* and Tennyson's *Idylls*, White's retelling of the legend transfigured what was predominantly seen at the time of composition as a non-English myth into a major 'English' cultural product. Geoffrey had translated the tales of a Brythonic hero into an Anglo-Norman cultural edifice; Malory had refashioned a largely French tradition into a late-medieval English one; while Tennyson had taken a story that most of his contemporary writers had shied away from, thinking it too Celtic, or too French or too archaic, and transformed it into the bourgeois-liberal epic of the Victorian period. White too had taken a legend that had become increasingly Anglo-Celtic and had remade it into an exclusively English commodity. He had also taken its increasingly modernist, difficult poetic basis and turned it into a children's novel which grew increasingly complex, but which remained simple in its formal construction. And, with regard to the increasingly religious, or at least spiritual, Grail literature, he had once more returned the myth to its secular origins in English culture.

Yet White's Arthuriad was also very different from those of Geoffrey, Malory and Tennyson. Unlike them White did not attempt to synthesise contemporary Arthurian literature – the *Historia* had combined Latin historiography, French Charlemagne chansons and Celtic legends in order to produce a new literary monument to its Anglo-Norman patrons; the *Morte Darthur* had similarly blended French romance with English historiography; and the *Idylls* had combined the Welsh tales of the *Mabinogion* with Malory's *Morte Darthur* and imbued the sequence with Victorian bourgeois ideology. White, rather, chose to ignore almost every development in the twentieth-century evolution of the Arthurian myth. It was an

anachronism; it was also an arbitrary reading – few subsequent writers would wish to rewrite the story as an animal fantasy and even fewer would wish to turn the myth into a pacifist morality novel. As it was, White's *The Once and Future King*, while it never approached the paradigmatic status of its forebears, was nevertheless the most widely-read version of the Arthurian story written in the twentieth century.

Its influence might have been greater had White been able to publish the complete five- (or four-) volume edition before 1958. Between the years of its initial and revised publication, White's Arthuriad chiefly seems to have influenced children's retellings of the legend – several popular versions were written by Roger Lancelyn Green (1953), Phyllis Briggs (1954), Enid Blyton (1950, 1963), and the cross-over success of later works such as Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset* (1963) and Mary Stewart's Merlin Trilogy (1970-83) were also partly inspired by White's ability to write for adults and children simultaneously.[100]

Perhaps the earliest works to have direct affinities with *The Once and Future King* are James Bridie's Arthurian plays, especially 'Holy Isle' and 'Lancelot' (1944). The first is a marginally Arthurian comic and satiric drama, set among the Orkney Islands of King Lot and Queen Morgause. White's focalisation on the 'Orkney faction' in *The Witch in the Wood* seems to be the most likely source of inspiration for Bridie here – certainly Morgause is cast in a similarly vain, if slightly less malevolent, mode.[101] The indebtedness to White's work is more pronounced in 'Lancelot', which deals with the destruction of Arthur's kingdom. Unlike the earlier Tennysonian dramas, Bridie brought an irreverent humour – very similar to White's – to the traditional story. White's influence is particularly noticeable in Bridie's characterisation, especially with the flawed Lancelot and the strong yet hysterical Guinevere. White's anachronistic style is also present in the descriptions of Arthur as

an 'etherised Blimp' and Merlin as a nineteenth-century Benthamite, who also

dabbles in eugenics.[102]

White's influence grew much larger in the late 1950s when *The Once and*

Future King was finally published. The success of White's multi-volume sequence

proved decisive in persuading later writers to cast their Arthuriads in ever-increasing

length – as demonstrated by the works of Mary Stewart, Stephen R. Lawhead, Fay

Sampson and Vera Chapman, among others.[103] In 1960 White's work was turned into

the stage musical *Camelot* (figs. 24, 26, 27) by Alan Jay Lerner and 'Fritz' Loewe. As

Walt Disney would not sell the rights to *The Sword in the Stone* (fig. 28), which they

had bought in 1939, *Camelot* dealt only with the latter books of the sequence – the

result being a much more 'adult' version of *The Once and Future King* than the

whimsical Disney production.[*104] Immensely successful, the musical ran for two years

on Broadway, and toured for another two, starring Richard Burton and Julie Andrews

(the sort of woman, Lerner remarked, 'that makes you wonder how the Britain ever

lost the Empire').[†105] In 1967 it was made into a film.[106] The musical also entered

American folklore in 1963 when another T.H. White – Theodore H. White, a

journalist for *Life* magazine – interviewed Jackie Kennedy a week after the president

had been assassinated. It was this interview which mythologised the Kennedy

administration as America's Cold War Camelot:

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[*] The Disney production of *The Sword in the Stone*, directed by Wolfgang Reitherman (1963; fig. 28), is an adaptation of the original version of White's novel – not the revised 1958 edition – and contains the episodes with the pike, the flight with Archimedes, Merlyn's owl, Madam Mim and the tournament at which Wart draws the sword from the stone. There are, as one would expect, several notable changes – Kay becomes much older and thuggish and speaks with a Cockney accent (Wart is resolutely American); and an additional amorous scene with a squirrel takes the place of Arthur's love for Lyó-lyok. The film ends, however, more like the conclusion of *The Once and Future King* – Arthur will not only inspire books: someone, Merlyn tells him, 'might even make a motion picture about you.'

[†] Initially Loewe had been reluctant to work on the Arthurian legend, saying to his partner: 'That king was a cuckold. Who the hell cares about a cuckold?' When told that people had cared about the story of Arthur for a thousand years, the Viennese-born Loewe replied: 'Well, that's only because you Americans and English are such children' (Alan Jay Lerner, *The Street Where I Live*, 172).

At night, before we'd go to sleep, Jack liked to play some records; and the
song he loved most came at the very end of this record. The lines he loved to
hear were:
>Don't let it be forgot,
>That once there was a spot,
>For one brief shining moment
>That was known as Camelot.

You must think of him as this little boy, sick so much of the time, reading in
bed, reading history, reading the Knights of the Round Table.[107]

But American presidents were not the only world leaders to be memorialised

through allusions to the Arthurian legend. Winston Churchill in his *History of the*

English-Speaking Peoples (1956) may have wished to have seen something of himself

when he described Arthur as 'a great British warrior, who kept the light of civilisation

burning against all the storms that beat, and behind his sword there sheltered a faithful

following of which the memory did not fail.' This Arthur guarded 'the Sacred Flame

of Christianity and the theme of a world order, sustained by valour, physical strength,

and good horses and armour, slaughtered innumerable hosts and foul barbarians and

set decent folk an example for all time.'[108] Churchill's narrative of heroic

individualism overlaid with the idea that Arthur was a champion of civilisation was

typical of much British historiography at the time. The notion of Arthur as the last

embodiment of Roman culture had been discussed as early as 1776 in Edward

Gibbons's *Decline and Fall*, yet few historians seemed much interested in a historical

Arthur until the 1930s.[109] Similarly, it was Arthur's fictionality which provided the

basis for the countless retellings of the king in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Yet White's *Once and Future King* was, in many ways the last of the purely-fictional

major retellings of the legend. Post-war writers were more concerned with the idea of

the historical Arthur – and the key influence was R.G. Collingwood's *Roman Britain*

(1936).

Collingwood's Arthur was a Great Man who gathered around him

a group of friends and followers, armed according to the tradition of civilised warfare and prov[ed] their invincibility in a dozen campaigns.* [...] He was the last of the Romans: the last to understand Roman ideas and use them for the good of the British people.[110]

Stating that his historicity can 'hardly be called into question', Collingwood constructed Arthur as a fifth-century *Comes Britanniarum*, a cavalry leader of Roman military learning and who (like Gibbon's Arthur) represented the last flowering of Roman civilisation. 'The story of Roman Britain', the historian wrote, 'ends with him'.[111] Collingwood's *Roman Britain* remained the dominant account of the Roman period until the 1980s.[112] It proved enormously influential on historical novels, the genre which came to dominate Arthurian literary production in the post-war years. Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset* (1963) is perhaps the best-known work of this form. Her much-praised novel eschewed the 'rainbow colours of romance' in order to reveal the heroically-individual 'figure of one great man [...] a Romano-British war-leader, to whom, when the Barbarian darkness came flooding in, the last stuttering lights of civilisation seemed worth fighting for.'[113] While far from a feminist,[†] Sutcliff brought some much-needed novelistic seriousness to a genre that was becoming

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* Derived from the battle list of Nennius.
† Cf. Diana Wallace's claim that Sutcliff's and Stewart's Arthurian novels 'marked a radical appropriation and reinterpretation of a dominant male narrative', made possible due to the fact that their fiction relied on historiography, rather than romance – which had historically been 'a male-authored tradition, used to legitimise male power'. Sutcliff in particular, Wallace states, created 'a space for the "feminine" within the story, through her sympathetic and psychologically realist treatment of the women characters.' (*The Woman's Historical Novel*, 167-70). Yet Sutcliff in fact seems to provide little of this female space – her narratives are driven by the traditionally male dynamics of historical romance: violence, honour and glory. A greater 'feminine' space was produced by later writers who avoided historical realism in favour of Celtic fantasy. *The Mists of Avalon* (1982) by the American novelist Marion Zimmer Bradley is the best-known of these works. Her mammoth novel retells the entire Arthurian story – largely that of Malory – entirely from the view of the women of the legend: Igraine, Morgause, Viviane, Niniane and Nimue as well as Gwenhwyfar and Morgaine. Bradley's work was also one of the first novels to divide the Arthurian world into pagan and Christian Celts. Indeed, the book's central theme concerns the struggle between the old religions (Druidism, early Christians and worship of the Mother Goddess) and a more narrow-minded Augustinian Christianity. Bradley's success has led to several similar retellings, the most successful perhaps being Fay Sampson's racy series of novels, the *Daughter of Tintagel* sequence, which focuses on Morgan le Fay.

increasingly driven by fantasies of violence and misogyny. Henry Treece's *The Great Captains* (1956), for instance, presents Arthur as a brutal, ruthless savage who frequently inflicts his sadistic fantasies on the novel's female characters: the novel is filled with the violence inflicted on exotic dancers from Byzantium, while Celtic villagers are raped, or otherwise physically or mentally abused; and the climactic scene involves Arthur's unfaithful wife, Lystra, being thrown into Caerleon's amphitheatre, where she is killed after being impaled by a bull in a remarkably violent rape fantasy. The publisher of the 1980 reprint of *The Great Captains* seems to have realised the titillating qualities of Treece's novel and included several semi-pornographic illustrations.*

Treece's novel introduced another element into his story of the *Comes Britanniarum*: the author's bibliography. This became a constant feature of historical Arthurian literature of the 1950s and 60s as novelists attempted to verify the historical and scientific status of their work.[114] In Treece's list both Collingwood and Chambers are present, as one would expect, but so is John Rhŷs. In fact, he is the only Celticist present, a fact which illustrates the dramatic decline in the importance of mythic-ritual scholarship after the Second World War. In the 1920s and 30s scarcely a poem or novel seems to have been written without some reference to Jessie L. Weston hidden within the text, but the historical and historiographical Arthur was very different from

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* Historical fiction was not the only genre which became a vehicle for conservative fantasy and expressions of misogyny. C.S. Lewis's science-fiction novel, *That Hideous Strength* (1945), tells of Merlin's return into a post-war world and how he helps a band of Christian technophöbes in a struggle with an evil organisation ('NICE') dedicated to reconditioning the human race, through a set of eugenic and technological improvements. Together they utterly destroy the organisation's headquarters, along with most of the local town, but it is apparently a small price to pay for the destruction of scientific progress and atheism (see 740-1, in particular). *That Hideous Strength* is marked by Lewis's dislike of the surge of women in traditionally male professions – a dislike which sometimes reaches the point of hysteria in its depiction of female characters, especially 'Fairy' Hardcastle, chief of NICE's security: 'Her face was square, stern, and pale, and her voice deep. A smudge of lipstick laid on with violent inattention to the real shape of the mouth was her only concession to fashion and she rolled or chewed a long black cheroot, unlit, between her teeth. [...] She had indeed excited in Mark [Studdock, the novel's protagonist,] the distaste which a young man feels at the proximity of something rankly, even insolently sexed, and at the same time wholly unattractive' (401, 416).

the king of myth and ritual (though both relied on the idea of the Celtic, whether

through the literature of the *Mabinogion* or through historical and, later,

archaeological research). Whereas Weston and others had presented a reinvigoration

for an age that was declining in religious belief, the historical Arthur presented a

materialist myth for a non-spiritual age.

The first post-war historical novel was John Masefield's *Badon Parchments*

(1947). Here, Arthur is – as in the historiography – the only individual strong enough

to resist the Saxons and oppose the political stagnation which has overcome the Celtic

chieftains. Not of noble blood himself, he is elected *dux bellorum* and his campaign,

seemingly foolhardy, is filled with the brief optimism of post-war Britain:

> Any foreigner would have said that the British were spent, and had lost the
> day. I looked at some of them, and wondered whether after such loss and
> disaster those men would go up the hill again. But the longer I lived among
> these people, the less I found I knew them: they do not live by reason, like
> other men: they have a way of their own, and what their silly way will be no
> man can foretell. And what folly they will do is not to be believed, and
> afterwards something deep down in them will come up and somehow there is
> nothing like it and nothing can stand against it.[115]

Masefield's Arthur is not unlike that of Churchill's *History of the English Speaking*

Peoples. Also like Churchill's work, *Badon Parchments* is preoccupied with the

imminent fall of the British Empire. Yet because Masefield situates Arthur as a fifth-

century Briton, rather than a medieval English king, he cannot locate the Arthurian

story as an imperial narrative of British greatness and decline – unlike T.H. White.

Masefield countered this by having as his narrator a representative of the Byzantine

Emperor (Arthur, too, is the Emperor 'suppliant'), who urges his sovereign at the end

of the novel to keep Britain a province of the Empire, for if Byzantium could 'restore

a faith and hope to them, [the Britons] would have charity enough in them to move

the world.'[116] In Masefield's hands, therefore, the historical Arthurian story becomes

at once a narrative of Britain's lesser place in the post-war / post-Roman world, filled as it is with hostile foreigners who would further diminish Britain's international position, and also a narrative that articulates a desire to maintain the imperial unit.

For Masefield the anxieties felt over the diminishment of world power and the empire resulted in Arthur's affiliation with Byzantium – a connection which earlier writers had already made. Indeed, the appeal of the Byzantine Empire is one of the more curious aspects of Arthurian literature of this period. Charles Williams in the Taliessin-cycle situates Byzantium as the heart of his Christendom – presumably as an alternative to Rome as the centre of western Christianity. The eponymous hero in John Cowper Powys's *Porius* (published in 1951 but written during the war) begins the novel by contemplating whether or not to join Arthur in his struggles against the Saxons before travelling to Byzantium to help the Orthodox emperor and patriarch reopen 'the ancient Pelagian controversy' and anathematise the Pope.[117] Again, Byzantium offers an alternative to Catholic Rome, as Pelagius offers an alternative to Augustinian Christianity. For Masefield the appeal of the Byzantine Empire was less spiritual, more political. The stamp of Classical education – and chiefly Rome's military writers – had been so heavily imprinted on the British ruling caste of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the myth of Rome had become one of the most dominant ideologies of the British Empire. But with the demise of this modern empire writers could either search the past for analogies of imperial decline (Gibbon remains important here) or else they could search the past for new models of imperial endurance – and for Masefield perhaps this was the significance of the Byzantine Empire, which lived on many centuries after Rome's deterioration. Byzantium, it seems, became the Commonwealth to Rome's Empire.

The early historical novel was not always a conservative ideological structure.
John Cowper Powys used the form to produce his last Arthurian novel, *Porius*, in
1951. This enormous romance is set in one week of the year 499 and concerns the
decision of Porius, a Celtic prince, to join Arthur's cause. The novel also marked a
shift in Powys's politics from state socialism to individual anarchism, as well as his
shift from 'eldritch modernism'.[118] The chief spokesperson for Powys's political shift
is Myrddin, who in one speech says:

> Nobody in the world, no body beyond the world, can be trusted with power,
> unless perhaps it be our mother the earth; but I doubt whether even she can.
> The Golden Age can never come agains till governments and rulers and kings
> and emperors and priests and druids and gods and devils learn to unmake
> themselves as I did, and leave men and women to themselves! [...] But none
> of them last forever. That's the hope of the world. The earth lasts and man
> lasts, and the animals and birds and fishes last, but gods and governments
> perish![119]

As writers Powys and T.H. White could scarcely be further apart, but this passage is
nonetheless suggestive of what White's *Book of Merlyn* could have been like had he
been ideologically able to embrace the individualist-anarchism he so often espouses in
that book.

But the development of historical fiction was not the only one in the Arthurian
story in the post-war years.* Indeed, Arthurian cultural production from 1945 has been
most obviously characterised by the continued expansion into new evolving cultural
mediums: comic books, television series, numerous film adaptations, cartoons, rock
music, opera, advertising and the gaming industry. Indeed, in the modern period only
the poetic form seems to have suffered a major decline, the taste for narrative verse
never having recovered from modernism's assault. In terms of the novel, apart from

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* Although the historical novel became the dominant form of the popular Arthurian myth in the post
war years (Higham, *Mythmaking and History*, 2), it became apparent in the 1980s that it was never
going to form a paradigmatic account of the legend.

historical romances, the range of Arthuriads has exploded into various subgenres:

science fiction (C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, 1945); Celtic fantasy (Stephen

R. Lawhead's *Pendragon* sequence, 1987-97); feminist retellings (Marion Zimmer

Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* 1982; Fay Sampson's *Daughter of Tintagel* series,

1996-2005); anarchist revisions (John Cowper Powys's *Porius*, 1951); spy fiction

(John le Carré's Karla trilogy, 1974-9)* and many versions for children.

Because of the greater speed with which the novel, or multi-volume sequence,

can be produced (in comparison to poetic cycles, such as those by Tennyson or

Charles Williams), most of the notable retellings of the Arthurian story since the

Second World War have been complete accounts of the legend. And seemingly few

writers have dealt with isolated incidents in the larger Arthurian story (except in the

short story form). There have, however, been two notable exceptions to this

generalisation – literature pertaining to the Grail and to Sir Gawain. Grail literature

has been as eclectic as the larger Arthurian story. Apart from Christian, Pagan and

Ritualist Grails, there have been socialist Grails (Rutland Boughton's *The Holy Grail*

and *Avalon*, 1943), conspiricist Grails (Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, 2003),

satirical Grails (*Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, 1975), even self-help Grails (John

Matthews's *A Guide to the Grail Quest in the Aquarian Age*, 1986).[120] Occasionally

some text has reiterated the divergent nature of the Grail, such as Naomi Mitchison's

To the Chapel Perilous (1955), in which each knight receives the kind of Grail they

wish to see: there is no original *ur*-Grail and Gawain, Peredur, Bors, Lancelot and

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* The three volumes of John le Carré's 'Karla Trilogy' (*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, 1974; *The Honourable Schoolboy*, 1977; *Smiley's People*, 1979) are symbolical linked by Arthurian symbols. In the first 'Merlin' is the false intelligence source fed by the KGB to Britain's floundering MI6; in the second, Jerry Westerby, the 'schoolboy' of the title, is frequently referred to as 'Galahad'; while British agent, George Smiley's pursuit of Karla, the head of Soviet intelligence, is repeatedly referred to as his quest for the 'Black Grail'. Also in the same genre, American novelist Maxey Brooke published 'Morte d'Espier' in 1955 (republished in Mike Ashley's *The Merlin Chronicles*, 1999), in which it is Merlin's task to uncover the spy who betrayed Arthur's army in its battles with Sir Brian.

Galahad all achieve very different objects, each reflecting a twentieth-century,

scholarly view of the Grail.[*]

This body of literature has grown directly out of the Grail texts of the 1920s

and 30s, with texts like *The Da Vinci Code* and Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln's *The*

Holy Blood and the Holy Grail (1982) replicating the creative-scholarly relationship

that so informed the earlier Eliot-Weston, Machen-Waite literary productions.[121] But

the work of Brown, Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln also marks a new form of Grail

literature which emerged in the 1980s. The earlier twentieth-century Grail texts had

used the vessel as a symbol of spiritual drought in a materialist age, or had presented

the Grail as a means of rejuvenating such an impoverished present. Grail texts from

the 1980s onward reversed this trend: in their versions, the Grail was no spiritual

object which could renew the present; instead, the quest for it became a search for

blood lines, secret societies, Catholic intrigue and conspiracies surrounding the

(fraudulent) divine nature of Jesus. Essentially, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*

and its imitators have sought materialist answers for a material age.

Reasons for the development of a corpus of literature concerned exclusively

with Sir Gawain – based exclusively on the fourteenth-century *Sir Gawain and the*

Green Knight – are less obvious. As early as 1907 Jessie Weston had called on

scholars and poets to take up the theme of Sir Gawain, in order to please 'the hearts of

our English folk'.[122] Yet despite the publication of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

in 1909 and 1925, as well as several book length studies (1897; 1914), creative

interest in the legend did not exist until the late 1960s.[123] Since then the performing

arts have been particularly receptive to the Gawain story: Nicholas Stuart Gray

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[*] Gawain epresenting the Celtic school, receives it as a cauldron of plenty and Peredur finds a stone vessel overflowing with gold. Bors understands the Grail in a Westonian sense and receives it accordingly; Lancelot discovers it as a similar object, but is persuaded by the Church that it is not the true Grail. Galahad believes that only he will find the 'true' Grail, which for him is a wholly Christian relic. When he discovers such a vessel the Church then privileges Galahad's Grail over all the others.

(1969), David Self (1979), Michael Herzog and Kenneth Pickering (2000) have all written plays on the Gawain story;[124] operas have been penned by Richard Blackford (1982), Harrison Birtwistle (1990) and Michael McGlynn (1993);[125] while Stephen Weeks has directed two films: *Gawain and the Green Knight* (1973) and *Sword of the Valiant: the legend of Gawain and the Green Knight* (1983), and David Rudkin wrote perhaps the best filmic treatment in 1991: *Gawain and the Green Knight* (directed by John Michael Phillips).[126] Away from the theatre, Vera Chapman wrote a novel, *The Green Knight* (1975), which was the first of an Arthurian trilogy; Iris Murdoch's contemporary-London novel, *The Green Knight* (1993) uses incidents and motifs from the tale, while Margaret Meadley (1975), Selina Hastings (1981), Margaret Berrill (1988) and Mick Gomar (1995) have all written versions for children.[127]

As is so often the way with Arthurian literary production this creative growth was preceded by an intense period of scholarly endeavour. Much of the earlier Gawain scholarship before the 1960s belonged to the 'Weston-Loomis school of myth criticism'.[128] From 1962, with the publication of Marie Borroff's study of the stylistic features of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, critics turned increasingly to the text itself, rather than to questions of mythic sources.[129] Borroff's work was followed by important studies by J.A. Burrow (1965), Larry Benson (1965), Donald Roy Howard and Christian Zacher (1968) and A.C. Spearing (1970), as well as W.R.J. Barron's critical edition of 1975, which continue to define Gawain-studies to this day.[130] The appeal of the Gawain story for both scholars and creative writers is the complete opposite of the appeal of the Grail. Whereas writers of the 1920s and 30s found the Grail attractive because it was easily divorced from the paradigmatic structure of the larger Arthurian story; the Gawain narrative offers a *return* to such a comfortable tradition. Gawain represents an Anglocentric version of the Arthurian story, free from

foreign influence (Celtic, French, etcetera). It is a single text – a work of individual

genius – produced in an apparently monocultural environment (Midlands England).

And the scholarly search for external influence (particularly Celtic sources) can be

dismissed as the work of outdated Celticists like Jessie Weston.[*]

Indeed, whereas post-war Arthurian literature has continued the inter-war

trend of Celtic inflections (particularly, and necessarily, so in the historical novel),

modern Gawain literature (whatever its sources in Welsh or Irish culture) has

remained remarkably 'English'. Moreover, Gawain literature and Gawain studies have

the other appealing characteristic of being essentially paradigmatic. The tradition is

governed by a central text (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) and a central critical

approach (the essentially New Criticism approach of Burrow and Benson), which

allow scholars and writers to work within an established critical and

narratorial/thematic field. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in many ways, offers an

escape from the anarchic principles of larger, post-war Arthurian culture.

*   *   *   *   *

Away from England, after the war there was a sharp decline in Arthurian literature

produced in the Celtic countries. Yet what was produced (at least in Cornwall and

Wales – Ireland and Scotland being traditionally unconcerned with the myth) was as

eclectic and as powerful as anything in England. Indeed, it was after the Cornish-

language revival that *Kernewek* was given perhaps its greatest twentieth-century

literary work: A.S.D. Smith's *Trystan hag Ysolt*. It was mostly written during the

Second World War, but Smith died before it was completed; but in a sign of pan-

Celtic literary affiliation, it was a Welshman from the Rhondda, D.H. Watkins, who

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[*] There was a growing resistance to the idea of the use of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as a storehouse for source-hunters throughout the 1950s. '[T]oo much concern for sources and analogues and too little for the meaning and purpose of the romance per se', was Denver Ewing Baughan's summary of earlier Gawain scholarship ('The Role of Morgan la Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *English Literary History* 17.4 (1950), 241).

completed the work in 1962.[131] Other works, like Alan M. Kent's 'Nativitas Christi'

(2000) have maintained Cornwall's strong association with the Christian Grail

tradition;[132] while in the popular imagination Arthur's return is still closely bound up

with Cornish independence. A recent newspaper article, written by a member of the

Cornish Stannary Parliament, surveyed recent developments in the Cornish separatist

movement. The symbol of this rejuvenation, the author claimed, was the successful

reintroduction of the Chough which had disappeared from Cornwall in the 1970s.[133]

A novel on a similar theme was published by Anthony Burgess in 1989. *Any*

Old Iron is a satire on Welsh and Israeli nationalism, in which Arthur's sword,

Caledvwlch, is discovered in Cold War Russia and brought to Wales, where 'The

Sons of Arthur', a Welsh Nationalist terrorist organisation, try to procure it. Earlier,

during the Second World War, Reginald Morrow Jones, who will later possess

Arthur's sword, says in response to calls for an independent Wales:

> My father heard the same talk in the first war and it got nowhere. You cannot
> rewind history as if it were a film. The Wales you talk of was not free. It was
> under the rule of Rome. What was Arthur but a *dux Romanus* taking his orders
> from Ravenna? [...] Such talk as yours is acceptable turned into verse for an
> Eisteddfod, but there is no political reality in it.[134]

Eventually, Reginald Morrow Jones throws Caledvwlch into a lake, saying 'Merlin's

long gone under and there's no magic any more.'[135] Several post-war Welsh writers

seem to agree with Burgess's satire on recourse to history for nationalist purposes.

R.S. Thomas claimed that Arthur is one of the ghosts of Wales, part of the mythic past

which frustrates any sense of future possibilities. Even the romanticism of Glyn

Jones's *The Island of Apples* (1965) presented Arthur as something of an empty,

juvenile hero.*

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* See chapter four for discussion of these writers.

A fine novel on the Grail story, *The Fisher King*, was published in 1986 by Anthony Powell, another Anglo-Welsh writer (this time from the border gentry). Set on a round-Britain voyage ('what seemed to be a notably Arthurian cruise'), Powell's novel charts the passengers' unceasing desire to understand their experiences in terms of myth. Beals, the historical romance novelist (author of *The Wizard on the Heath*, *Nell O' the Chartists* and others), is particularly intent on perceiving Saul Henderson, a crippled photographer who can no longer take photographs, Barbarina, his companion, a ballerina who no longer dances, and Jilson, the 'beau chevalier', in light of the Arthurian legend. Beals moves from the Grail story to Jessie Weston, from T.S. Eliot to medieval romance in his pursuit of meaning. And although the novel is often satiric, its conclusion, set on the island of Thule, with its prehistoric ring of stones (another metaphor for understanding the world), is a despairing image of the world without these consoling myths:

> The rain had abated a little, though not altogether. [...] On the far side of the waters, low rounded hills, soft and mysterious, concealed in luminous haze the frontiers of Thule: the edge of the known world; man's permitted limits; a green-barriered checkpoint, beyond which the fearful cataract of torrential seas cascaded down into Chaos.[136]

It is because the Arthurian story supplies so many of these myths and metaphors for understanding the modern world that the Matter of Britain has maintained so important a place in twentieth-century culture.

Like Naomi Mitchison's *To the Chapel Perilous*, Powell's *The Fisher King* is less about the Arthurian legend itself and more about twentieth-century responses to it – especially its eclecticism, the numerous ways in which scholars and writers have been able to draw significance from the myth. For what has certainly not emerged since 1945 is any sense that the Matter of Britain would return to a paradigmatic state.

Indeed, modern Arthuriana's chief characteristic is surely its extreme eclecticism, a characteristic once again defined by scholarship.

The discovery of the Winchester manuscript of the *Morte Darthur* in 1934 and its publication by Eugène Vinaver in 1947 in many ways symbolises post-war cultural production. The enormous scholarly apparatus of Vinaver's three-volume edition[*] meant that his edition became the most authoritative available, eclipsing the earlier editions by Ernest Rhys, Strachey and Sommer.[137] Famously, Vinaver argued:

> Instead of a 'single work' subordinate to an imaginary principle of all-embracing dramatic 'unity', what we have before us is a series of works forming a vast and carried panorama of incident and character. What the 'assemblage' may lose in harmony it gains in diversity and richness of tone, expressive of the author's real design.[138]

Unlike the assertions of Saintsbury and Strachey that the *Morte* was a unified, coherent single text (as T.H. White also believed), Vinaver argued that Malory's part in the evolution of the novel was negligible and that what the fifteenth-century author had produced was eight separate romances. So he gave his edition the title *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. Many scholars, including R.H. Wilson, R.M. Lumiansky and C.S. Lewis, rejected Vinaver's hypothesis,[139] which prompted the French scholar to reply in the second edition of the *Works*:

> Why, then, in Malory's case this passionate attachment to the 'unity' of the entire volume? [...] people in various parts of the English-speaking world felt that something precious was being taken away from them [...] an English classic was being destroyed, pulled to pieces by an insensitive critic whose ear was not attuned to the inner harmonies of the text.[140]

Vinaver was being provocative. Nonetheless, this French scholar had challenged the sanctity of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, which was, after the successive challenges of

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[*] This included over five hundred pages of notes, commentary and introduction, which synthesised most of the scholarship, criticism and debate produced over the previous fifty years.

earlier scholars of the twentieth century, the last bastion of conservative, English

textual studies. And while it caused consternation among British and American

critics, it allowed many more creative writers to recreate the Arthurian story – or

stories – in new ways.

Some writers, like Roger Lancelyn Green, understood Vinaver's theory as a

challenge:

> [I]t has recently been shown that Malory himself did not write his Book of
> King Arthur as a single narrative, but merely as a collection of quite separate
> stories, based on a variety of old French romances. There is a certain
> coherence, but no fixed plan.
>   So now I have endeavoured to make each adventure a part of one fixed
> pattern.[141]

Vinaver's disruption of the unity of the *Morte* sanctioned Green to interpolate many

tales not found in his main source. Thus Green borrowed from Collingwood's theory

of a *dux bellorum*, Geoffrey's *Historia*, Layamon, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,

Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, Gottfried von Strassburg, the *Mabinogion*, Chrétien and

other sources and inserted them into a 'unified' retelling of the *Morte Darthur*.

Rosemary Sutcliff's three-volume retelling of Malory (1979-81) did precisely the

same (using almost exactly the same sources), as did James Riordan's *Tales of King

Arthur* (1982) and many other retellings.[142] Yet Vinaver's thesis did not only have an

impact on writers who specifically set out to retell the *Morte Darthur*. Vinaver's

influence is perhaps best demonstrated by the number of works which use Malory as

their dominant narrative structure – Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*

(1982) or Fay Sampson's *Daughter of Tintagel* sequence (1996-2005), for instance –

yet completely overhaul its meaning and reconfigure its ideological significance (in

Bradley and Sampson's cases, into a feminist discourse). In the period before the

Second World War, of course, creative writers tended to rely on scholars such as

Weston, Loomis and Rhŷs to produce alternative meanings of the Grail, French and

Celtic stories before they could retell the Arthurian story. Backed up by Vinaver's

thesis, writers after the war could appropriate whatever they chose and refashion it

however they wanted to. Essentially Vinaver had freed the *Morte Darthur* from an

interpretation which saw it as an English, patriarchal epic, complete with fixed

national qualities and political meanings.

The second major piece of scholarship to emerge after the war was perhaps as

reflective of the change in creative writing as it was influential upon it. Loomis's

Arthurian Literature of the Middle Ages (1959) superseded the earlier major accounts

of the legend by John Rhŷs (1891), J.D. Bruce (1922) and E.K. Chambers (1927).[*143]

But unlike their studies, Loomis's 1959 book was a collaborative history of the Matter

of Britain, containing forty-one essays by numerous scholars with often disparate

views, but which had little desire to synthesise them into a homogenous whole. It

remains 'the widest twentieth-century survey of the field',[144] and it became the major

reference work for subsequent scholarship. It included some classic pieces of criticism

by Rachel Bromwich on the Welsh Triads, Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson on the

historical Arthur, A.O.H. Jarman on the Welsh Myrddin poems, Jean Frappier on the

Vulgate Cycle, Vinaver on the Prose Tristan and Loomis, who contributed several

articles, on 'Arthurian Influence on Sport and Spectacle'. And though several of its

articles have now been superseded it remains the pivotal work of post-war criticism

outside of Malory studies. Moreover, its collaborative basis has been adopted by

virtually every other 'big book' account of the Arthurian legend since – *Essays on*

Malory (1963), *Aspects of Malory* (1981), *Studies in Malory* (1985), the continuing

Cambridge *Companion Guide* series (1996, 1997, 2008), as well as the multi-volume

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[*] Indeed, in the 'Preface' to the work Loomis wrote that his intention in publishing *Arthurian Literature of the Middle Ages* was to bring J.D. Bruce's *Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, a work he described as 'a pridgious feat of erudition and synthesis' (v), up to date.

series of Arthurian studies published by the University of Wales Press and named after Loomis's 1959 collection.[145] Even creative writing publications have in recent years begun to produce collaborative collections, such as Lawrence Schimel and Martin H. Greenburg's *Camelot Fantastic*[146] and the five volumes of short stories and miscellanea (including interviews with Arthurian authors, medieval prose romances, poems and scholarship) edited by Mike Ashley in the *Chronicles* sequence (1989-97).[147]

In short, where the scholarship (and sometimes literature) of the first half of the twentieth century was diverse and often combative, post-Second World War Arthurian writing has been largely characterised by a collaborative, more tolerantly diverse set of interpretations and retellings. Writers in the first half of the century attempted to establish a new dominant means of reading the tradition (approaches which can be variously labelled as Celtic, Ritual, or Classic English Studies). In the second half of the century, despite a plethora of new methodologies (including feminism, Marxism, cultural materialism and others), Arthurian scholarship has generally been less concerned with the production of a single, all-encompassing critical paradigm. Indeed, such an aim now appears to be futile. Also, despite the reactionary tendencies of several conservative critics when encountering new and radical (often politically-charged) approaches, modern Arthurian scholarship has tended to be a far more collegiate affair than the early twentieth century, when Jessie Weston wrote of herself as being 'solemnly warned off ground sacred to scholars of another sex, and dare we say of another nation'.[148] And though many hostile reviews may still appear in the pages of journals of medieval literature, rarely do they summon the vociferous energy that the self-confessedly 'pugnacious' Loomis could produce in

the 1930s.[*] Yet this increased collegiality in scholarly circles raised a larger question:

that, despite the superabundance of writing – both scholarly and creative – on the

legend, is the Arthurian myth really as culturally important in post-war Britain as it

was in the first half of the century, let alone the Victorian age?

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[*] This is not to dismiss the various scholarly struggles that took place during the late 1970s and 80s when feminism and cultural materialism was beginning to make its mark on medieval literature. Nonetheless, these were struggle which often took place at the level of *viva voca* than on the review pages of medievalist journals.

Conclusion

'The old order changeth': towards a new Arthurian legend

It has been the recurring contention of this thesis that the English Arthurian tradition, unlike those of the Celtic nations, has usually operated in a paradigmatic structure, but that in the period since the Great War this structure has all but disappeared. It is worth reflecting, in this conclusion, on some of the reasons why the nature of Arthurian literary production has changed so greatly in the last hundred years.

In earlier centuries the writing of Arthurian literature was a dogmatic enterprise, controlled by the cultural productions of social elites who desired to regulate a myth that they found useful in disseminating ideological and social ideals. Certain texts – Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* – enshrined these ideals in epic retellings of the Arthurian story and proved so successful, as both literary and ideological edifices, that they acquired paradigmatic status. As paradigms, these texts constituted the most authoritative versions of the Arthurian story within their period: in effect each became *the* Arthurian legend for their readers, audiences and imitators. They dominated subsequent retellings of the legend in such a compelling manner that

almost all literature produced under their auspices can be termed Galfridian, Malorian or Tennysonian. Rarely in literary history have three texts proved as influential.

Yet the literature after the Great War abandoned this hegemonic structure. Instead of reproducing the narrative and ideological precepts of Tennyson's *Idylls* – as earlier Arthurian authors had done for fifty years – writers and scholars in the twentieth century consciously began to react against Victorian Camelot, which had been English, domestic, bourgeois and patriarchal. Whereas the *Idylls* had been Anglocentric ('this King is fair / Beyond the race of Britons'),[1] writers from the Celtic nations reasserted native traditions which had diminished greatly during the years of the *Idylls*' dominance. Moreover, these Celtic Arthurs, particularly in Wales and Cornwall, were imbued with separatist and nationalist ambitions, gradually breaking away from the influence of Tennyson as their tradition evolved. Meanwhile, at the turn of the twentieth century there also developed a trend for Anglo-Celtic retellings of the legend, which sought to relocate the Matter of Britain as a truly British cultural product – this trend culminating with the ballad-cycle of John Masefield's *Midsummer Night* (1927), David Jones's *In Parenthesis* (1937) and John Cowper Powys's novels, *A Glastonbury Romance* (1938) and *Porius* (1951). Indeed, during the 1920s and 30s, the idea of a wholly English Arthurian tradition seemed increasingly impossible.

But the Arthurian story was not only reinvented in terms of nationalist awakenings: the Tennysonian paradigm was eroded in other ways – often being directly challenged by post-Great War writers. The *Idylls* had been a largely humanist expression of the medieval world; but writers such as Charles Williams, Arthur Machen and A.E. Waite tried to 'restore' it to what was often a fundamentalist Christian perspective – which found its most extreme instance in Williams's exotic

Grail sequence, the Taliessin-cycle (1938-44). But the post-war Grail was antithetical

to the *Idylls* in other ways. While Tennyson had perceived the destruction of Victorian

Camelot as the result of the uncontrolled sexual desires of private individuals, the

Grail legend, under Jessie Weston's influence, was reinvented in the 1920s as a

narrative of earthly and spiritual rejuvenation – the 'original' significance of which

(so Weston claimed) was largely sexual in orientation and was symbolised by the

vaginal cup and phallic lance.

Likewise, Tennyson's Arthuriad had been constructed as a monument to

bourgeois liberalism, but writers after 1918 took Arthur into politically much more

dangerous territory. David Jones, often thought of as an arch-conservative in politics,

appropriated the stories of Malory, Geoffrey and the *Mabinogion* for the working-

class troops of the First World War. John Cowper Powys, in a series of Anglo-Welsh

novels, transformed the Matter of Britain into a mythic brand of anarchism; while

Charles Williams turned the legend's mythic materials into a type of clerical-fascism,

which agreed with T.S. Eliot's desire for a return to Catholic feudalism. T.H. White,

with typical contradiction, took 'Wart' both to the ecological left and to the dutiful

right, as he struggled with his own fluctuating politics.

Meanwhile, the struggle to emancipate the legend not only from Victorian

patriarchy but centuries of male chauvinism, has been an unsure, sporadic affair.

Dramatic works such as Graham Hill's *Guinevere* (1906) and Martha Kinross's

Tristram and Isoult (1913) sought to exonerate the adulterous women of the legend,

but laboured under the full weight of the Tennysonian tradition, which had heaped

blame upon women for many years. Interwar writing seemed little concerned with

Guinevere, Vivien and Morgause and even the Arthuriad of T.H. White (1938-58),

which contained the most sympathetic account of Guinevere in the period, was written

through a mixture of gynophobia and matricidal anxiety. It was not until the early 1980s that the American author Marion Zimmer Bradley began to offer a sustained female-centric retelling of the legend. Yet, discontinuous as this less-chauvinistic trend has been, it has nonetheless managed to extricate itself from the patriarchalism of the Tennysonian tradition, as has the twentieth-century recreation of Arthur in many other ways – in its abandonment of moralism (saving where it is religious), the movement away from narrative verse and the relegation of the legendary-mythic world of Malory and Tennyson in favour of historical fifth-century realism, science fiction and fantasy.

However, when writers of the twentieth century – and especially those writers of the first half of that century – have consciously challenged Tennyson's *Idylls*, they have also challenged the very fabric of Arthurian literary production in England. Indeed, the eclectic corpus of post-1918 literature – consisting of anarchist Merlins, hybrid Anglo-Welsh myths, working-class legends, fascist and feminist Grails and post-imperial Celtic chieftains – appears more of a series of subversions of the Arthurian story than a sequence of retellings. Indeed, to use the Kuhnian phrase, throughout the twentieth century Arthurian literary production has been in a 'crisis' state, in which cultural significance has been unstable and contradictory, while no recognisable social group has consistently been able to draw ideological support from it. Despite the fact that Malory remains the basis for many forays into Arthurian writing, while the *Morte Darthur* retains a position in most undergraduate courses, Malory's text has not been repeatedly rewritten by twentieth-century writers in the way that the *Idylls* were in the nineteenth century, or the *Historia* from the twelfth to fifteenth. Rather, the *Morte Darthur* and, to a lesser extent, the work of Geoffrey and Tennyson, remain powerful major texts: influential but not dominant or prototypical.

Similarly, no modern text has claimed a similar paradigmatic status: not *The Mists of Avalon*, or *Sword at Sunset* or even *The Once and Future King*. Indeed, what this thesis has tried to demonstrate is that what certainly did not emerge from the literature of the 1920s onwards was any sign that the Arthurian legend would return to a paradigmatic state. Indeed, in the twentieth century an equivalent Galfridian, Malorian or Tennysonian text, which would encompass an entire world view, was unthinkable, as the Matter of Britain became subject to an evermore expansive set of political and social forces.

Yet even in the past Arthurian writing has not always taken place within a paradigmatic structure. European cultural interest in the legend has never functioned in this way and neither have the Celtic versions of the myth. Ireland was only ever tangentially concerned with Arthur and much of the historiographical interest in late-medieval Scotland was opposed to the appropriation of the legend by English ideologues, eager to fit the Arthurian story for imperialist propaganda. Cornish interest in the legend, meanwhile, was always too localised to require an authoritative tradition to support its continuation; while the Welsh representation of Arthur has been an irregular, spasmodic affair, which has been closely related to the turbulent situation of Welsh political and economic affairs.

Even in England a paradigmatic formation has not always been strictly necessary for Arthurian literary production to take place. There have been two earlier periods of 'crisis' in which the Arthurian story has been written outside of an authoritative tradition. The first occurred in the fifteenth century before Malory, when the stories of Arthur began to be claimed by mercantile and yeoman audiences – when Arthur came to be associated with misrule, ballads and folk-romance; when his authority came to be challenged by lowly carls, imperious hosts and mischievous

hags. The second occurred after the Reformation, when Puritan scholars scorned the legend and writers began to eschew the medieval tales for newly-rediscovered Classicism.

The first crisis was resolved when Malory wrote the *Morte Darthur*, beginning around 1450 and completing it in 1469.[2] Malory restored the Matter of Britain to the social elite who had always patronised it and who derived from it the most profound ideological significance. The second crisis, however, was not resolved for centuries. Instead, the legend disappeared from the interests of high culture and entered the subterranean world of political propaganda and popular culture, where it gradually shed all of its medieval appearance. Even when it did appear in higher, or marginally higher, forms – Dryden's *King Arthur* (1691) or Fielding's *Tom Thumb* (1730), for example – it was unrecognisable as Arthurian literature. It was only when Tennyson wrote his *Idylls of the King* in the nineteenth century was this crisis resolved.

The crisis in Arthurian literature since the Great War, however, has differed from those of both the early fifteenth century or the post-Reformation in that it has neither been resolved by a new paradigmatic account of the legend, but nor has interest in the legend diminished. Instead, the Matter of Britain appears to be more popular than ever, with hundreds if not thousands of scholarly and creative interpretations of the myth appearing each year. The stories of the king and his knights are retold in a range of media: from the short story to multi-novel sequence, from opera to computer games. Seemingly infinitely variable, the twentieth- and twenty-first-century Arthurian tradition is constantly renegotiated and contested and appears to be unlikely to form a paradigm in the near future.

Reasons why English Arthurian literature has eschewed its traditional form are multifarious. Certainly the diversity of twentieth-century Arthurs precludes any notion

of a collective, synthesised tradition. Much of the responsibility for this eclecticism

rests with contemporary scholarship. The first half of the last century witnessed a

profound shift in the creative importance of the scholar. Editors and critics have

occupied a crucial role in configuring the Arthurian legend's cultural and political

significance since Thomas Warton in the mid eighteenth century, but, in the period of

this study, scholars such as Weston, Bruce, Loomis and Vinaver were as influential as

were creative writers like Eliot, Jones, Williams or White. The critics' frequently

hostile debates concerning the original meaning of medieval Arthurian literature could

not fail to be impressed on creative writers, who extended their debates to the question

of what Arthurian literature ought to be like in the modern world. Pagan, Christian or

atheist; conservative, anarchist or fascist; patriarchal or feminist – these irreconcilable

differences forced modern Arthuriana into heterogeneity.

Other reasons are also discernable. The political and cultural landscape was

perhaps too fragmentary and too unstable to foster the production of a literary

monument based on the story of Arthur. Perhaps the war had created a sense of

dislocation with the past – and with the Victorian past most of all, however much

certain writers may have wished to return to its certainties and confidence. Perhaps no

writer possessed the individual genius capable of the *Idylls'* achievement – or, for that

matter, that of the *Historia* or the *Morte Darthur*. While several major writers of the

last century did approach the Matter of Britain, many, including Eliot, Joyce and

Woolf, only dealt with the story of Arthur tangentially. It is also possible that a

paradigmatic structure itself may have simply been unattractive for contemporary

writers. Although the post-1918 literary and scholarly corpus has remained largely

conservative (perhaps more so after the Second World War), the breakdown in the

paradigmatic model has at least increased the possibility of resisting a tradition that has been characterised by conservatism, patriarchy and conformism.

Another reason for the disassociation between twentieth-century and earlier manifestations of the Arthurian story lies in the diminished position England has occupied in the world since the Great War. In Tennyson's 'The Coming of Arthur' several 'great Lords of Rome' stride into the hall of the newly-crowned king, demanding their age-old tribute. Arthur refuses them, saying:

> The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
> And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
> Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
> To drive the Heathen from your Roman wall,
> No tribute will we pay.[3]

Like Geoffrey before him, Tennyson was locating the moment of his own society's pre-eminent power as emerging out of the decline of Rome's imperial fortunes. As Geoffrey had historicised Anglo-Norman colonial and political ascendancy, so did Tennyson mythologise imperial, bourgeois England. Both were inheritors of the Arthurian imperium and both made their contemporary ideological context appear to have emerged out of a literary continuum, thus appropriating the tradition's cultural and political authority.

Arthur makes his speech to the Romans through the 'boundless purpose' of his young reign.[4] And though much of the *Idylls* is concerned with death and destruction, like Arthur Tennyson spoke with the confidence of his own age, class and nation. Indeed, the English Arthurian story was reborn in the nineteenth century out of colonial, industrial and economic dominance – just as the *Historia* had been produced out of the martial and imperial aggression of Anglo-Norman society. But as Arthur had told the lordly Romans, so did the dying Arthur tell Bedivere after the battle of

Camlan: 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new'.[5] And after the Great War,

Britain, like the Rome of Arthur's youth, became another 'slowly-fading mistress of

the world'.[6] And the English Arthurian story, which had always been predicated on

dominance and power, was radically unsuited to England's newly diminished place in

the world.

While much of its literature has continued to be concerned with the traditional

Arthurian themes of order and authority – perceiving Arthur to be the fount of strong

government – much of the Arthurian literature of the twentieth century has been

situated, not amid imperial wars and continental affairs, but within a politically and

racially fragmented Britain. No longer an imperial king, Arthur has become a

chieftain struggling to unite what is left of post-Roman Britain against further

incursions from the Heathen. This is true of John Masefield's *Midsummer Night*

(1927) and *Badon Parchments* (1947) and the great flood of historical fiction which

appeared after the Second World War. It is also the case with T.H. White's Arthuriad,

which articulated its author's sense of post-imperial anxiety not amid barbarian

Saxons, but among Britain's own barbarians, the Celts. Arthur, in short, while still

being concerned with order has, in the twentieth century, become a figure of

resistance – an emblem of an embattled social and national elite struggling against the

vagaries of a post-imperial world. Only the Arthur of America has been concerned

with the idea of imposing order on a wider world – manifest in a presidential, Cold

War Camelot, in the martial confidence of MGM's *Knights of the Round Table* (1953)

and the imperial derring-do of Jerry Bruckheimer's *King Arthur* (2004), released a

year after the invasion of Iraq, where Arthur leads a band of medieval G.I.s to save a

half-barbaric country from falling to the irreligious Saxons. Although Alan Lupack

and Barabara Tepa Lupack have claimed that the American Arthurian tradition is 'the

ultimate democratization' of the myth, American culture since 1945 has been the inheritor of the authoritative Arthurian imperium.[7] English Arthuriana, meanwhile, has not only grown closer to the Celtic Arthur in terms of themes and sources – it has also become, as a narrative of resistance, closer to it in terms of ideological significance.

If the Arthurian legend has seemed out of place in the modern world, due to England's, or Britain's, diminished position within it, there is another, more recent, change which may shape future Arthurian literary production even more profoundly. The Arthurian story has always – at least in Britain – been concerned with the unity of the disparate nations of this island. Often it has been so in the form of English or, in the twelfth century, Norman imperialism. But, as David Jones wrote, it could also be true of those writers whose national identities did not belong to a rigidly English or Welsh or Cornish patriotism. In Jones's words, it is the only tradition that is 'equally the common property of all the inhabitants of Britain (at all events of those south of the Antonine Wall').[8] And for Jones, as for many writers whose interest in the legend was not concerned with order, authority and imperialism, Arthur has been inextricably linked with the idea of 'the unity of this island', as he wrote in his final Arthurian work:

> Does the land wait the sleeping lord
> or is the wasted land
> the very lord who sleeps?[9]

Yet as devolution challenges the very concept of the 'unity of this island', can the story of Arthur survive such a massive political shift? Probably the answer is yes, but it will emerge as a very different cultural product.

Notes

Introduction

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[1] Alfred Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', ll. 247, 254, in *The Poems of Tennyson: a selected edition*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1989), 677-93. All further references to Tennyson's poems are to this edition.

[2] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', l. 61.

[3] Tennyson, 'The Epic', l. 295.

[4] Norris J. Lacy (ed.), *A History of Arthurian Scholarship* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006). This volume includes a chapter by Daniel Nastali, 'Modern Literature in English' (233-251), which chronicles critical accounts of modern Arthurian literature.

[5] Richard Barber, *Arthur of Albion, an introduction to the Arthurian literature and legends of England* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1961); *King Arthur, hero and legend* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1986); Stephen Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society* [1983] (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Jennifer R. Goodman, *The Legend of Arthur in British and American Literature*, Twayne's English Authors Series 461 (Boston: Twayne, 1987); and Alan Lupack, *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[6] Geoffrey Ashe, 'The New Matter of Britain', in *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*, ed. Ashe (London: Pall Mall, 1968), 244-57; Elisabeth Brewer, 'The Figure of Guenevere in Modern Drama and Fiction', in *Arthurian Women: a casebook*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 307-318; Muriel Whitaker, 'Unifying Makers: Lancelot and Guinevere in Modern Literature and Art', in *Lancelot and Guinevere: a casebook*, ed. Lori J. Walters (New York: Garland, 1996), 159-180; Raymond H. Thompson, 'Conceptions of King Arthur in the Twentieth Century', *King Arthur: a casebook*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996), 229-311; Chris Brooks and Inga Bryden, 'The Arthurian Legacy', in *The Arthur of the English: the Arthurian legend in medieval English life and literature*, ed. W.R.J. Barron [1999] (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 247-65; Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, 'Arthur in the Underworld: The Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Alexander and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[7] Clark S. Northup and John J. Parry, 'The Arthurian Legends: modern retellings of the old stories. An annotated bibliography', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 43 (1944); Stephen R. Reimer, 'The Arthurian Legends in Contemporary English Literature, 1945-1981', *Bulletin of Bibliography* 38 (1981): 128-38; Mary Wildman, 'Twentieth-Century Arthurian Literature', *Arthurian Literature* 2 (1982): 127-65; and William D. Reynolds, 'Arthuriana: a bibliography of published treatments of the Arthurian legends, 1951-1983', *Studies in Medievalism* 2 (1983): 89-106.

[8] Norris J. Lacy (ed.), *The Arthurian Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1986); *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1991); *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, revised edn (New York and London: Garland, 1996); Lacy and Raymond H. Thompson (eds), 'Arthurian Literature, Art and Film, 1995-1999, *Arthurian Literature* 18 (2001): 193-255. 'The Camelot Project', sponsored by the University of Rochester and maintained by Alan Lupack, also ought to be mentioned here. It is available at http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/

[9] Juliette Wood, 'The Holy Grail: from romance motif to modern genre', *Folklore* 111 (2000): 169-90; Dhira B. Mahoney (ed.), *The Grail: a casebook* (New York: Garland, 2000); Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: the history of a legend* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2004); John B. Marino, *The Grail Legend in Modern Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004).

[10] Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990); Debra N. Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art* (New York and London: Garland, 1990); and Christine Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian legend and British art 1840-1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

[11] Kevin J. Harty (ed.), *Cinema Arthuriana: essays on Arthurian film* (New York: Garland, 1991); *King Arthur on Film: new essays on Arthurian cinema* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999); Kevin J. Harty (ed.), *Cinema Arthuriana: twenty essays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002). See also Bert Olton, *Arthurian Legends on Film and Television* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000).

[12] Charles Moorman, *Arthurian Triptych: mythic materials in Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis and T.S. Eliot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960); Elisabeth Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King'* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993); David Llewellyn Dodds (ed.) *Arthurian Poems* by Charles Williams (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1991); and Dodds (ed.), *Arthurian Poems* by John Masefield, Arthurian Poets Series (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1994). Dodds's books contain extensive notes and introductions.

[13] M.W. MacCallum's *Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King' and Arthurian Story from the XVIth Century* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1894).

[14] W.P. Ker, *Epic and Romance, essays on medieval literature* [1896] (New York: Dover, 1957), 335; W. Lewis Jones, *King Arthur in History and Legend* [1911], 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 133-4.

[15] For other accounts of the post-medieval Arthurian tradition see Howard Maynadier, *Arthur of the English Poets* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907); Ronald Crane, *The Vogue for Medieval Romance During the English Renaissance* (Menasha, WI: Collegiate Press, 1919); Lillian Winstanley, 'The Arthurian Empire in the Elizabethan Poets', *Aberystwyth Studies* 4 (1922): 59-66; Roberta Florence Brinkley, *Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932).

[16] Margaret J.C. Reid, *The Arthurian Legend: comparison of treatment in modern and medieval literature. A study in the literary value of myth and legend* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1938).

[17] Nathan Comfort Starr, *King Arthur Today: the Arthurian legend in English and American literature, 1901-1953* (Gainesville, FL.: University of Florida Press, 1954).

[18] Barbara Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Literature since 1800* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983).

[19] Raymond H. Thompson, *The Return to Avalon: a study of the Arthurian legend in modern fiction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985).

[20] Debra Mancoff (ed.), *The Arthurian Revival: essays on form, tradition and transformation* (New York: Garland, 1992); and Mancoff (ed.), *King Arthur's Modern Return* (New York: Garland, 1998).

[21] Donald L. Hoffman and Elisabeth S. Sklar (eds), *King Arthur and Popular Culture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002).

[22] Gordon Hall Gerould, 'King Arthur and Politics', *Speculum* 2.1: 33-51 (33).

[23] Thomas Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: selected studies in scientific tradition and change* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 294.

[24] Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[25] Ziauddin Sardar, *Thomas Kuhn and the Science Wars*, Postmodern Encounters Series (Cambridge: Icon; New York: Totem, 2000), 59-60.

[26] Sardar, *Thomas Kuhn*, 60.

[27] Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'The Celtic Tradition', in *Arthur of the English*, 1-10 (1).

[28] Richard White includes the Arthurian sections of three Scottish chronicles in his anthology, *King Arthur in Legend and History* (London: J.M. Dent, 1997): John of Fordun (129-131), Andrew of Wyntoun (131-134) and William Stewart (134-40). It is interesting to note that, due to the paradigmatic construction of Arthurian literature, the essentially anti-Galfridian and (in the case of Boece and his adapters) anti-Malorian Scottish chronicles have received little critical attention. Only in 2005 was there published a full-length study of the works of John of Fordun and his successors. See Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan, *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005).

[29] See, for instance, Jeffrey Gantz, 'Introduction' to his translation of *The Mabinogion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 9-34 (13); and Tony Conran, 'Introduction' to *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, ed. Conran (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 25. The earliest critical account of Welsh Arthur as cultural consolation is Joseph Ritson's *The Life of King Arthur: from ancient histories to authentic documents* (London: Payne and Foss, 1825).

[30] N.J. Higham, *King Arthur: myth-making and history* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 98-217.

[31] The Arthurian entries in both the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Annales Cambriae* are contained in *King Arthur in Legend and History*, ed. White, 4-6.

[32] All the Arthurian passages in the *Vitae Sancti* are contained in White's anthology, *King Arthur in Legend and History*, 12-21. For discussion see O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 37-47; and Brynley F. Roberts, '*Culhwch ac Olwen, the Triads, Saints' Lives*', in *The Arthur of the Welsh: the Arthurian legend in medieval Welsh literature*, ed. Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 73-95 (82-4).

[33] *Culhwch ac Olwen*, in *The Mabinogion*, trans. Gantz, 134-76. The passage relating to Arthur's alienation of Kay is at 167-8.

[34] A translation as well as a discussion of the difficulties in interpreting *Pa gur yvy porthaur*? is available in Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in *Arthur of the Welsh*, 38-46.

[35] John Davies, *A History of Wales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 133.

[36] For discussions of the sometimes vehement debates over the genesis of the three romances see Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature*, 77-82; and Gerald Morgan, 'Welsh Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 92-3.

[37] Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature*, 89. The complete text was edited and translated by Robert Williams in 1876; see *Y Seint Greal* (Cribyn: Llanerch, 2002).

[38] Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'The Celtic Tradition', 10.

[39] Elissa R. Henken, *National Redeemer: Owain Glyndŵr in Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

[40] No edition of Elis Gruffydd's Chronicle has been published. For discussion see Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'The Celtic Tradition', 10, and her 'Elis Gruffydd a Thraddodiad Cymraeg Calais a Chlwyd', *Cof Cenedl* 11 (1996): 29-58.

[41] On the border-identity implications of the *Historia* see chapter 2 of Knight's *Arthurian Literature and Society*; and, more recently, Michelle R. Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1300* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). J.S.P. Tatlock's *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'Historia Regum Britanniae' and its early vernacular versions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950) remains an important work in the field, especially with regard to its dismissal of Geoffrey's use of Welsh sources.

[42] The idea that the *Historia* provided a quite conscious equivalent to the Charlemagne *chansons* was first put forward by Gordon Hall Gerould in 'King Arthur and Politics', *Speculum* 2.1 (January, 1927): 33-51, following a similar suggestion in J.D. Bruce's *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, I, 23.

[43] Martin B. Shichtman and Laurie A. Finke, 'Profiting from the Past: history as symbolic capital in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*', *Arthurian Literature* 12 (1993): 1-35.

[44] For details on Malory and his sources see Eugène Vinaver's extensive commentary in his edition of *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 2nd edn., 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); P.J.C. Field, 'Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*' , in *Arthur of the English*, 225-46 (232-41); and Stephen H.A. Shepherd, 'Sources and Backgrounds', in Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur; or, the hole book of Kyng Arthur and of his noble Knyghtes of the Round Table. Authoritative text, sources and backgrounds, criticism*, ed. Shepherd (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2004), 699-757.

[45] Apart from works by Vinaver, Field and Shepherd, on Malory's alterations of his sources, particularly with regard to the troublesome Grail narrative, see P.E. Tucker, 'Chivalry in the *Morte*' in *Essays on Malory*, ed. J.A.W. Bennet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 64-103 (83); Mary Hynes-Berry, 'Malory's Translation of Meaning: "The Tale of the Sankgreal"', *Studies in Philology* 74 (1974): 243-75 (257); and Dhira B. Mahony, 'The Truest and Holiest Tale: Malory's transformation of *La Queste del saint Graal*', in *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University Press, 1985), 109-28.

[46] Julia Catherine Crick, *The 'Historia Regum Britanniae' of Geoffrey of Monmouth, III: A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1989). See also Crick's *The Reception of*

Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'Historia Regum Britanniae': the evidence of manuscripts and textual history (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989). The early editions of Malory, all in black letter, are: Caxton (1485), Wynkyn de Worde (1498), de Worde (1529), William Copeland (1557), Thomas East (c. 1577) and William Stansby (1634).

[47] John Bale, *Scriptorium Illustrium Maioris Britanniae* (1548, 1557), quoted with translation in Marylyn Parins (ed.), *Sir Thomas Malory: the critical heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 54-5.

[48] 'Sir Lancelot' is based on the story of Lancelot's encounter with Sir Tarquin – cf. Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, 159-65. 'The Legend of King Arthur' and 'King Arthur's Death' are found in a composite ballad in the Percy MS (ff.179^r-183^r), which were divided into two works by Percy in his *Reliques*. There is, however, no doubt that they were originally two separate works blended together. See Charles Bowie Millican, 'The Original of the Ballad "King Arthur's Death" in the Percy Folio MS', *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America* 46 (1931): 1020-4, and Robert H. Wilson, 'Malory and the Ballad "King Arthur's Death"', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 6 (1975): 139-49. The critical history of 'The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnelle' is more complicated. P.J.C. Field expounded the belief that Malory was the author of 'The Weddynge' in 'Malory and "The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell"', *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 219 (1982): 374-81. Stephen H.A. Shepherd, more recently, has countered Field's claim in a persuasive essay: 'No Poet had his Travesty Alone: "The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnelle"', in *Romance Reading on the Book: essays on medieval narrative, presented to Maldwyn Mills*, ed. Jennifer Fellows, Rosalind Field, Gillian Rogers and Judith Weiss (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), 112-28. If Shepherd is correct, and evidence does indicate that he is, the 'Weddynge' raises interesting questions concerning the *Morte Darthur*'s reception – particularly as Malory claims (in the Caxton edition) to have completed his Arthuriad between 1469-70, but the 'Weddygne' was composed, most scholars agree, around 1450. This might lead to the suggestion that Malory's earlier tales were in circulation before the octology's completion.

[49] A useful summary of the Elizabethan age's relationship with Arthur – including Shakespearian references, non-extant Arthurian dramas and speculation of why more works relating to the Matter of Britain were not produced – is given by James Douglas Merriman in his *Flower of Kings: a study of the Arthurian legend in England between 1485 and 1835* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1973) 31-48.

[50] For discussion see W.R.J. Barron, Françoise Le Saux and Lesley Johnson, 'Dynastic Chronicles', in *Arthur of the English*, 11-46. See also Julia Catherine Crick, *The 'Historia Regum Britanniae' of Geoffrey of Monmouth: dissemination and reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1991).

[51] On the Arthur of English politics (non-literary) see James P. Carley, 'Arthur in English History', and Juliet Vale, 'Arthur in English Society', in *Arthur of the English*, 47-57 and 185-96; Higham, *King Arthur: myth-making and history*, 221-34. On the Plantagenet uses of the legend for propagandist purposes see Barber, 'Was Mordred Buried at Glastonbury? An Arthurian tradition in the Middle Ages', *Arthurian Literature* 4 (1985): 37-69, and J.C. Parsons, 'The Second Exhumation of King

Arthur's Remains at Glastonbury, 19 April 1278', *Arthurian Literature* 12 (1993): 173-7. On Tudor use of the legend see S. L. Jansen, 'Prophecy, Propaganda, and Henry VIII: Arthurian traditions in the sixteenth century', in *King Arthur Through the Ages*, 2 vols, ed. Valerie M. Lagorio and Mildred Leake Day (New York and London: Garland, 1990), I, 275-1 and David Starkey, 'King Henry and King Arthur', *Arthurian Literature* 16 (1998): 171-96.

[52] MSS of Geoffrey's *Historia* have various dedications. Dedications to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, are the most commonly found. In at least seven MSS Waleran, the Count of Mellen, is also named. Despite the intimate associations with the Earl of Gloucester, his opponent, King Stephen, is named as a dedicatee in MS Berne, Stadtbibl. 568. See Lewis Thorpe, 'Introduction', *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. and trans. Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 9-45 (39-40, n. 7). Alexander, the Bishop of Lincoln, is the dedicatee of the *Prophetiae Merlini*, incorporated into the *Historia*. See Geoffrey, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, 170-185 (170).

[53] Layamon, in his adaptation of Wace's *Brut*, informs us that Wace's Anglo-Norman version of Geoffrey's *Historia* was patronised by Eleanor, the wife of Henry II, and one of the great cultural benefactors of the age. See Layamon's *Brut; or, Hystoria Brutonum*, ed. W.R.J. Barron and S.C. Weinberg (Harlow: Longman, 1995), ll. 43-52. On the idea that Wace's *Brut* was conceived as political propaganda for Henry II see Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, 'The Round Table: idea, fiction, reality', *Arthurian Literature* 2 (1982): 41-75 (49, 61-68).

[54] Pierre de Langtoft, *Chronicle*, in *King Arthur in Legend and History*, ed. White, 530-4 (531).

[55] See Janson, 'Prophecy, Propaganda, and Henry VIII'; and Starkey, 'King Henry and King Arthur'. Barber lists Arthurian pageants at Coventry in 1498, at the marriage of Margaret Tudor and James IV of Scotland in 1503, at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520 and in London processions of 1522 and 1544 – *King Arthur: hero and legend* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer), 139-40. Henry VIII fostered many Arthurian associations. Like his father he, too, named a son Arthur and spent over £4000 on an Arthurian-style tournament at Winchester (in which he participated) in 1511. He also ordered the repainting of the Round Table in the colours of the Tudor green and gold. The redecoration included making Arthur's visage appear not unlike his descendant. The purpose, as with the Arthurian trappings at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, was to impress visiting members of foreign powers with the historical splendours of England's past.

[56] The most complete account of the literary Grail is Barber's *The Holy Grail*, but see also Helen Adolf, *Vision Pacis: Holy City and Holy Grail, an attempt at an inner history of the Grail legend* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1960) and Stephen Knight, 'From Jersualem to Camelot: King Arthur and the Crusades', in *Medieval Codicology, Iconography, Literature and Translation*, ed. P.R. Monks and D.D.R. Owen (Leiden: E.J. Bril, 1994), 223-42.

[57] For example, Sir Melias's pursuit of 'such deeds of prowess and valour as shall win me repute' is termed as covetous and proud – mortal sins that were exemplary virtues in earlier romances. See *Queste del Saint Graal*, trans. P.M. Matarasso (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 66, 70. See also the treatment of Gawain and Lancelot at 41-2, 76, 89-93, 263. Such is the position of secular knighthood in the text (in contrast the celestial chivalry of Galahad, Bors and Perceval) that the slaying of a knight is termed 'a trifling offence', whereas the death of a hermit is mourned in martyred tones (204).

[58] Felicity Riddy, 'Reading for England: Arthurian literature and national consciousness', *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society* 43 (1991): 314-32 (320).

[59] See Glenys Goetinck, *Peredur: a study of the Welsh tradition in the Grail legends* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), 41-128, for a study of the relations between Chrétien's *Perceval*, the English *Sir Percyvell of Gales*, the Welsh *Peredur* (which also does not explicitly mention the Grail) and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*.

[60] Henry Lovelich's *History of the Holy Grail* (c. 1430) is the first English text written explicitly on the Grail story. It was produced for Harry Barton, a member (like Lovelich) of the Skinners' Company who later became Lord Mayor of London. Lovelich also produced his *Merlin* around 1430, in which he stressed Merlin's role as the prophet of the Grail. Both texts were adaptations from the Vulgate cycle. A further adaptation from the Vulgate *Suite de Merlin* was made by an anonymous redactor for a similarly mercantile audience in c. 1450 (*The Prose Merlin*). See Karen Hodder, 'Henry Lovelich's *History of the Holy Grail*', and 'Henry Lovelich's *Merlin* and the *Prose Merlin*', in *Arthur of the English*, 78-80, 80-83.

[61] All these romances are contained in *Sir Gawain: eleven romances and tales*, ed. Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo: Published for T.E.A.M.S., by Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 27-38. For discussion see Gillian Rogers, Diane Speed, David Griffith and John Withrington, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English*, 197-224. However, none of the contributors see the mischievous and burlesque presentations of Arthur as constituting any 'crisis' in the cultural utility of the Arthurian story. Indeed, the tendency in English Gawain studies has often veered on the conservative side.

[62] Merriman, *Flower of Kings*, 32-3.

[63] Merriman, *Flower of Kings*, 49-53.

[64] For details of Milton's proposed epic see his 'Mansus' (1640), in *Poetical Works*, ed. and trans. Douglas Bush (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 150-5 (154). See also 'Epitaphium Damonis', 166-8. For Milton's account and mockery of the Arthurian story, including its attacks on earlier historians see his *History of Britain*, a facsimile of the 1677 edn, ed. Graham Parry (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1991).

[65] Malory, *Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, 495.

Chapter One

[1] Tennyson, 'The Epic', l. 18. On Tennyson's 'Morte d'Arthur' being influenced by Arthur Hallam's death see Ricks's headnote to the poem, 146-64 (148).

[2] Tennyson, 'The Epic', ll. 49, 34-40.

[3] Merriman, in *The Flower of Kings*, 63, memorably described Dryden's Arthuriad: 'The final effect of the whole – to use the word loosely – with its compounding of sentimentalised blindess and exposed innocence, rhetorical passions, and febrile eroticism, resembles a slightly sticky marshmallow sundae laced with absinthe and sprinkled with cantharides.' For a brief, though well-balanced account of the

ridicule Blackmore suffered at the hands of Dryden, Pope and other contemporaries see Richard C.

Boys, *Sir Richard Blackmore and the Wits* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949). Stephen

Knight, in *Arthurian Literature and Society*, 158, described Fielding's *Tom Thumb* as Arthur's 'nadir'.

Nonetheless, Dryden's Blackmore's and Fielding's works each gained remarkable popular success

which, considering their much-derided aesthetic merits (particularly in the case of Blackmore),

presumably attests to the attraction the figure of Arthur could still hold over audiences at a time when

the Matter of Britain was very far from the national consciousness.

[4] For the most recent account of the ideological utilities of the Arthurian legend from the sixteenth to

nineteenth centuries see Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, 'Arthur in the Underworld: the sixteenth to

nineteenth century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Alexander

and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[5] Arthur pursues the fair blind Emmeline in John Dryden's *King Arthur, or the British Worthy: a

dramatick opera* (London: Tronson, 1691); Dollalolla is Arthur's wife in Henry Fielding's *The Tragedy

of Tragedies: the life and death of Tom Thumb the Great* (London: Roberts, 1731).

[6] The best introduction to Warton's career and his impact on the development of medievalism and his

vital contribution to the study of English literary history is David Fairer's Introduction to Warton's

History of English Poetry (London: Routledge, 1998), 1-70.

[7] Thomas Warton, *Observations on 'The Faerie Queene' of Spenser* [1754], 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: R.

and J. Dodsley, 1762), II, 264, 268.

[8] Warton, 'The Grave of King Arthur' and 'On King Arthur's Round-table at Winchester', in *Poems: a

new edition* (London: T. Becket, 1777), 63-72, 83.

[9] Warton, *Observations*, I, 208-9.

[10] Stephanie Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: the legends of

King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[11] See Rob Gossedge, 'Towards a National Epic: the use of the Arthurian legend in England, Scotland

and Wales, 1800-1833', M.A. Disertation (2004), Cardiff University and NLW; 'Thomas Love

Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Arthur* and the Romantic Arthur', in *Arthurian Literature* 23 (2006):

157-76; Gossedge and Knight, 'Arthur in the Underworld'.

[12] See John Pinkerton (ed.), *Scotish Poems, reprinted from scarce editions*, 3 vols (London: John

Nicols, 1792); David Laing (ed.), *Select Remains of the Popular Poetry of Scotland* (Edinburgh:

Bannatyne, 1822) and Walter Scott (ed.), *Sir Tristrem; a metrical romance of the thirteenth century by

Thomas of Erceldoune, called the Rhymer* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1804). *Sir Tristrem* was

republished four times in the nineteenth century: 1806, 1811, 1819, 1891. Scholars have since been

unsure of the latter text's Scottish origins. For discussion see Bertram Vogel, 'The Dialect of *Sir

Tristrem*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 40 (1941): 583-544; Alan Lupack,

'Introduction', in *'Sir Lancelot du Laik', and 'Sir Tristrem'*, ed. Lupack (Kalamazoo: Western

Michigan University Press, 1994), 143-52. For contemporary literary production see: Scott, 'The Bridal

of Triermain', in *Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan, 1881), 338-66; and Anne Bannerman, 'The

Prophecy of Merlin', in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1802), 126.

The Scottish historiographical Arthur was also well known by the nineteenth century, see: Johannis de

Fordun, *Scotichronicon, cum supplementis et continuatione Walteri Boweri*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Roberti Flaminii, 1752); a second edn was published in 1759. Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historiae* was first available, in William Harrison's translation of John Bellondon's Scottish dialect version, in vol. 5 of Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1807). This Anglicised edition bears little ideological similarity to the original *Historiae*; more faithful was the facsimile edition of Bellondon's 1572 translation: *Hector Boethius' 'Scotorium Historiae'*, trans. John Bellondon (London: W. Bulmer, c. 1820).

[13] On the Cornish interest in the Arthurian story at this time see the anthology of Cornish writings edited by Amy Hale, Alan M. Kent and Tim Saunders, *Inside Merlin's Cave: a Cornish Arthurian Reader, 1000-2000* (London: Francis Boutle, 2000), esp. 73-88.

[14] The key text in the Welsh scholarship of Arthurian materials is the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, ed. William Owen Pughe, Iolo Morganwg and Owen Jones [1800-7], reprinted in a one-volume edition in 1870 (Denbigh: Thomas Gee). See also Pughe's *The Cambrian Biography, or historical notices of celebrated men among the Ancient Britons* (London: E. Williams, 1803), which gave summaries of *Culhwch ac Olwen* and Arthurian verses from the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, as well as 'historical notices' on Arthur, Cai, Geraint, Peredur, Olwen and Gwenhwyfar. Pughe also prepared an edition of *The Mabinogion* (a title of his invention and not, as is commonly thought, Charlotte Guest's), the MS of which is available at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, MS 12342. Gerald Morgan, 'Welsh Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 77-94, 81, claims that Pughe showed Scott a copy of his translation of *Peredur* as early as 1800.

[15] Percy's *Reliques* contained six poems with Arthur as their chief subject: 'Lancelot du Lake', 'The Boy and the Mantle', 'The Marriage of Sir Gawaine', 'King Rycene's Challenge', 'King Arthur's Death' and 'The Legend of King Arthur'. See Thomas Percy (ed.), *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, consisting of old heroic ballads, songs, and other pieces of our earlier poets, together with some few of later date* [1765], ed. Henry B. Wheatley, 3 vols (New York: Dover Publications, 1966). Ritson published several romances and poems, including the ballad 'Sir Launcelot de Lac', in *A Select Collection of English Songs*, 3 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1783), and 'Ywain and Gawain', 'Launfal', 'Libeaus Desconus' and 'The Marriage of Sir Gawain', in *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës*, 3 vols (London: G. and W. Nicols, 1802). After a lengthy study of the origins of the Arthurian legends, Ellis's *Specimens* included summaries of *Arthour and Merlin* and the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, along with much romance material supplied by French materials. See George Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, chiefly written during the early part of the fourteenth century. To which is prefixed an historical introduction*, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1805). It was reprinted in 1809, 1811 and 1848. See also John Dunlop's often derivative and equally popular *The History of Fiction: being a critical account of the most celebrated prose works of fiction from the earliest Greek romances to the novels of the present age* [1814] (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845). Dunlop's work was reprinted in 1816, 1845, 1896 and 1906 – the last two being under the title of *History of Prose Fiction*. Geoffrey's *Historia* had been available in English translation since 1718 in Aaron Thompson's edn, *The British History, translated into English from the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth*.

With a large preface concerning the authority of the 'History' (London: J. Bowyer, 1718). Three other editions were published in the century.

[16] The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* was published in 1819, *Arthour and Merlin* in 1838, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in 1839, Layman's *Brut* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* in 1847 and the English *History of the Holy Grail* was not available until as late as 1861. See: Thomas Ponton (ed.), *Le Morte Arthur [Stanzaic]. In verse. Taken from the fourth part of the 'Lancelot'* (London: Roxburghe Club, 1819); W.B.D.D. Turnbull (ed.), *Arthour and Merlin, a metrical romance, now first edited from the Auchinleck MS* (Edinburgh: Abbotsford Club, 1838); Frederic Madden (ed.), *Syr Gawayne; a collection of ancient romance-poems, by Scottish and English authors, relating to that celebrated knight of the Round Table* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1839); Frederic Madden (ed.), *Laymon's Brut, or chronicle of Britain; a poetical semi-Saxon paraphrase of the 'Brut' of Wace. Now first published from the Cottonian Manuscripts in the British Museum; accompanied by a literal translation, notes, and a grammatical glossary*, 3 vols (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1847); James Orchard Halliwell (ed.), *Morte Arthure. The Alliterative romance of the death of King Arthur. Now first printed from a manuscript in Lincoln Cathedral* (London: Private edition of twenty-five copies, 1847); Frederick James Furnivall (ed.), *The History of the Holy Grail, English, ab. 1450 AD by H. Lonelich* [sic], *from the French prose of Sires R. de Borron (or, rather, based on the poem by R. de Borron)* (London: Early English Text Society, 1861).

[17] The two 1816 edns were reprintings of the corrupt 1634 Stansby edn: *The History of the renowned Prince Arthur, King of Britain, with his life and death, and all his glorious battles*, ed. unknown, 2 vols (London: Walker and Edwards, 1816) and *La Mort d'Arthur: the most ancient history of the renowned Prince Arthur and the knights of the Round Table*, ed. unknown, 3 vols (London: R. Wilks, 1816). A more satisfying text was the 1817 deluxe edition, which included a lengthy and learned dissertation by Robert Southey (though he did not, as some critics claim, actually prepare the edition): *The Byrth, Lyf, and Acts of King Arthur; of his noble knights of the Rounde Table, theyr merveyllous enquestes and adventures, thachyeung of the Sant Greal; and in the end Le Morte Darthur, with the dolourous deth and departyng out of this worlde of them all* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1817).

[18] See, for instance, Elisabeth Brewer and Barbara Taylor, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Literature since 1800* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), 1-13.

[19] Merriman claims that Gregory Lewis Way's translation, completed in 1800, was the more influential of the English editions. See Merriman, *Flower of Kings*, n. 67, 234-5 for full citations. George Ellis's improved edition of Way's text, *Fabliaux or Tales, abridged from French manuscripts of the XIIth and XIIIth centuries, by M. Le Grand, selected and translated into English*, 3 vols (London: J. Rodell, 1815), contains the following Arthurian texts: 'The Mantle Made Amiss', 'The Mule Without a Bridle', 'The Knight and the Sword', 'The Vale of False Lovers' and two of Marie de France's lais – 'The Lay of Lanval' and 'The Lay of Gugemar'.

[20] Merriman, *Flower of Kings*, 128 and n. 65, 248.

[21] Southey, 'Introduction', in Malory's *The Byrth, Lyf, and Acts of King Arthur*, i-lxiii.

[22] Scott, *Sir Tristrem*, xxvi.

[23] Southey, 'Introduction', in Malory's *The Byrth, Lyf, and Acts of King Arthur*, vii.

[24] See Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: the study of medieval romance in the eighteenth century* (London: Athlone Press, 1964), 158-159, for details of Turner and Ellis. Southey and Coleridge's intentions to learn Welsh are discussed in Robert Southey's *Life and Correspondence*, ed. C.C. Southey, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1849-50), II, 218, 222.

[25] Joseph Ritson, *The Life of King Arthur*, xxxix.

[26] Sharon Turner, *A Vindication of the Genuineness of the Ancient British Poems of Aneurin, Taliesin, Llywarch Hen, and Merdhin, with specimens of the poems* (London: E. Williams, 1803).

[27] Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion, translated, with notes* [1838-49] (London: HarperCollins, 2000). For a brief summary of the influences on, and the immediate effect of, Guest's translation on English and French scholars see Gerald Morgan, 'Welsh Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 83.

[28] Gossedge, '*The Misfortunes of Arthur* and the Romantic Arthur': 174-6.

[29] Pughe's entries on Arthur, Seithenyn, Gwythno, Taliesin and Elphin in the *Cambrian Biography* are all major sources for Peacock's novel as was *The Myvyrian Archaiology*. Peacock read the latter in the original, having learnt Welsh from his wife, Jane Gruffydd. See Gossedge, '*The Misfortunes of Arthur*' for details.

[30] *The Myvyrian Archaiology* contained twenty-seven poems apparently from the sixth century and attributed to Taliesin (at 22-83); a number of them were translated by Peacock - these were: 'Dyhuddiant Elphin' ('Elphin's Consolation'), 25-26; 'Kanu y Medd' ('Mead Song'), 26-27; 'Dymma fustle y beirdd' ('The Gall of the Bards'), 29 and 'Can y Gwynt' ('Ode to the Wind'), 38. Peacock's translations can be found at 46, 69-70, 74-75 and 71-72 of *The Misfortunes of Elphin* [1829] (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1991). All translations of titles are those that appear in *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*.

[31] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk, recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge (and John Taylor Coleridge)*, ed. C. Woodring, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), XIV, 441.

[32] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', ll. 38-41.

[33] See the prose sketch of this plan in the preliminary notes to the *Idylls of the King*, in *Tennyson: a selected edition*, 667-74 (667-8).

[34] The novel was called *Qui conta come la Damigella di Scalot mori per amore di Lancialotto de Lac*, ed. Giulio Ferrario (Milan: Dalla Societa Tipographica de Classici Italiani, 1804).

[35] Letitia Elizabeth Landon, 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' [1833], (The University of Rochester: The Camelot Project), available online [http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/Landon.htm, last accessed August 26, 2006].

[36] Henry Fielding, *The Tragedy of Tragedies: the life and death of Tom Thumb the Great* (London: Roberts, 1731), 1.

[37] Walter Scott, 'The Bridal of Triermain', 346.

[38] Reginald Heber, 'Le Morte d'Arthur: a fragment' [1830], in *The Poetical Works of Reginald Heber*, ed. M.A. DeWolfe (Philadelphia: E. H. Butler, 1858), 95-147 (122-3). See also Heber's 'The Masque of Gwendolen' [1830], a rendition of the Marriage of Sir Gawain narrative – in *Works*, 157-72.

[39] De Wolfe's edn of Heber's *Works* contains an interesting memoir on Heber's extraordinary life as a missionary – *Poetical Works*, v-xxii.

[40] Tennyson, 'Morte d'Arthur', l. 264.

[41] For both Sterling's and Hunt's strictures on the 'Morte d'Arthur' see the headnote to the poem, 148-9 in Ricks's edn.

[42] Malory, *Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, 624.

[43] Tennyson, 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere', ll. 16-7.

[44] Tennyson, 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere', ll. 42-5.

[45] Alicia Faxon, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as Knights of the Round Table', in *Pre-Raphaelitism and Medievalism in the Arts*, ed. Liana de Girolami Cheney (Lampeter, Lewiston, NY, and Queenston, Ontario: E. Mellen Press, 1992), 53-69.

[46] Tennyson, 'Sir Galahad', ll. 61, 23-24, 1-4.

[47] For details of these, see the preliminary notes to the *Idylls of the King*, 667-74.

[48] See Ricks's preliminary notes to the *Idylls*, 672-3, for further details of the publishing history of the *Idylls*.

[49] Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster. Or plaine and perfite way of teachyng children, to vnderstand, write and speake, the Latin tong, but specially purposed for the priuate brynging up of a youth in Ientleman and noble mens houses, and commodious also for such, as haue forgot the Latin tong, and would, by themselues, without a scholemaster, in short tyme, and with small paines, recouer a sufficient habilitie, to vnderstand, write and speake Latin* (London: Iohn Daye, 1570), 88.

[50] Anon., 'Preface' to *La Morte d'Arthur*, R. Wilks edn, xii-xiii.

[51] Southey, 'Introduction', in Malory's *The Byrth, Lyf, and Acts of King Arthur*, i-lxiii. For instances of Southey's squeamishness see, for example, xxiv and xxx.

[52] Southey, 'Introduction', xvi.

[53] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *King Arthur*, 2 vols [1848] (Leipzig: Bernh, 1849), II, n. 307. For an account of other amendations to Malory's texts in this period see Marilyn Jackson Parins, 'Malory's Expurgators', in *The Arthurian Tradition: essays in convergence*, ed. Mary Flowers and John Bugge (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 144-62.

[54] Tennyson, 'Merlin and Vivien', l. 46.

[55] Malory, *Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, 78-9.

[56] Southey, 'Introduction', xliv-vi.

[57] Quoted by Tennyson in a letter to the Duchess of Argyll, July 1867, reprinted in the preliminary notes to the *Idylls of the King*, 672.

[58] Hallam Tennyson, quoted in preliminary notes to 'Merlin and Vivien', 805-807 (805).

[59] Tennyson, 'Guinevere', ll. 97-8.

[60] Swinburne, *Under the Microscope* [1872], quoted in *Tennyson: the critical heritage*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 321.

[61] Tennyson, 'The Marriage of Geraint', ll. 111-4.

[62] Tennyson, 'Geraint and Enid', ll. 734-44.

[63] Charlotte Guest (trans.), 'Geraint son of Erbin', in *The Mabinogion*, 207-38 (234).

[64] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', l. 30.

[65] This epithet is employed in 'Geraint and Enid', ll. 811, 931, 969; 'Balin and Balan', l. 472, 'Merlin and Vivien', ll. 162, 777, and 'The Holy Grail', l. 865.

[66] Tennyson, 'The Holy Grail', ll. 25-7.

[67] Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', ll. 266-78.

[68] Tennyson, 'Guinevere', ll. 465-6.

[69] The line 'Ideal manhood closed in real man' (l. 38 of 'To the Queen') were the very last words Tennyson added to his 1891 corrections. See prefatory material to the *Idylls*, in *Tennyson: a selected edition*, 671.

[70] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', l. 37. On the growth of the Victorian cult of chivalry generally see Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: chivalry and the English gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

[71] Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', l. 508; 'The Passing of Arthur', l. 408.

[72] Chris Brooks and Inga Bryden, 'The Arthurian Legacy', in *Arthur of the English*, 247-64 (258).

[73] Tennyson, Letter to J.T. Knowles, August 20 or 21, 1868, in *Letters of Alfred Tennyson*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982-1990), II, 501.

[74] Robert Pattison, *Tennyson and Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass, and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 167.

[75] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', ll. 41-2.

[76] Tennyson, 'Guinevere', ll. 341-2.

[77] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', ll. 61-2.

[78] For a discussion of ideology in the *Idylls* see Knight, 'The Phantom King: Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*', chapter 5 of *Arthurian Literature and Society*.

[79] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', ll. 18-9.

[80] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', ll. 21, 23.

[81] Tennyson, 'To the Queen', ll. 65-6, 24-5.

[82] The year before Tennyson began satisfying critics' hopes, there appeared in an unsigned review of William Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere, and other poems* in the Saturday Review 6 (November 20, 1858), 506-7, a mention of 'the British subject which Milton resigned in despair to the feebleness of Bulwer, or – may it be hoped? – to the fullness of Tennyson's powers'. Quoted in Brewer and Taylor, *The Return of King Arthur*.

[83] J.M. Gray, 'Introduction', to Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), 9-10.

[84] Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1990), 179.

[85] Matthew Arnold, 'Tristram and Iseult', first published in *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* (London: B. Fellows, 1852), Part III: 'Iseult of Brittany', ll. 96-101.

[86] Brewer and Taylor, *The Return of Arthur*, 85.

[87] Edward Hamley, 'Sir Tray: an Arthurian Idyl', available at The Camelot Project at the University of Rochester, available online [http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/sirtray.htm, last accessed July 30, 2007]. Elinor Sweetman, 'Pastoral of Galahad' and 'Pastoral of Lancelot', in *Pastorals and Other*

Poems (London: J.M. Dent, 1899); G. Constant Lounsbery's 'An Iseult Idyll', in *An Iseult Idyll and Other Poems* (London and New York: John Lane, 1901).

[88] William Edmondstoune Aytoun, 'La Mort D'Arthur. Not by Alfred Tennyson', in *The Book of Ballads* ed. Bon Gautier [Theodore Martin and Aytoun] (London: Wm S. Orr, 1849), 224; Samuel O. Beeton, Aglen A. Dowty and S.R. Emerson, *The Coming K---: a set of idyll lays* (London: Beeton, 1873); 'Our Own Poet Laureate', *Arthur, or, the hididdle-diddles of the King: an original travestie, in three acts, written expressly for private dramatic performance, January 18, 1860* (London: Boddington, 1859).

[89] Faxon, Alicia, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as Knights of the Round Table', in *Pre-Raphaelitism and Medievalism in the Arts*, ed. Liana de Girolami Cheney (Lampeter, Lewiston, NY, and Queenston, Ontario: E. Mellen Press, 1992), 53-69.

[90] Barber, *King Arthur: hero and legend*, 150.

[91] Barber, *King Arthur: hero and legend*, 163-4.

[92] The first and most influential account of Arthurian visual interpretations is Whitaker's *The Legends of King Arthur in Art*, see also Debra Mancoff's *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art* (New York: Garland, 1990) and her *The Return of King Arthur: the legend through Victorian eyes* (New York: Garland, 1995).

[93] See, for instance, Richard Barber (ed.), *King Arthur and Music* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2002).

[94] See, for instance, John Burnett, *Vivien's Song from the 'Idylls of the King'* (London: Leader and Cock, 1859) and *The Song of Fortune, from 'Idylls of the King'* (London: Leader and Cock, 1859); 'Dolores' [Elizabeth Dickson], *Vivien's Song (In love, if love be love), from the 'Idylls of the King'* (London: Jeffreys, 1861); Emily Josephine Troup, *Vivien's Song* (London: Published on behalf of the composer, 1878) and William Richardson Dempster, *Songs in the 'Idylls of the King'* (New York and London: William A. Pond, 1864).

[95] The British Library holds translations of the *Idylls of the King* in Dutch, Swedish, French, Danish, Czech, Italian and Hungarian. See, *De Konigs – Idyllen*, trans J.H.F. Le Comte (Rotterdam, 1893); *Elaine*, trans. Aug. Hjelmstierna (Stockholm: Z Haeggströms Förlagssexpedition, 1877); *Genièvre*, trans. Francisque Michel (Paris, 1868); *Idyller om Kong Arthur*, trans. Andreas Munch (Kjøbenhaun, 1876); *Idyly Královské*, trans. F. Kresk, 2 vols (Kladné, 1921-2); *Király-idyllek*, trans. József Csukássi (Magyar Könyvesház, 1876), and *Morte di Arturo*, trans. Emilio Teza (Padova, 1899). Herbert Malim's *King Arthur: being stories of the 'Idylls of the King'* (London 1914), was printed as volume 5 of the 'Stories Retold for Indian Students' series. Later, as befitting its moral-pedagogical nature, it was reprinted as a children's book: *King Arthur: stories from the 'Idylls of the King', rewritten in prose* (London: Hamish, 1937). The impact of the *Idylls* on literature of the Empire is still under-researched. Taylor and Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur* (360) only list three pre-1900 Arthurian works originating from the Empire: William Mower Akhurst's *King Arthur, or Lancelot the Loose* (Melbourne, 1868); John Reade's *The Prophecy of Merlin and Other Poems* (Montreal, 1870) and W.W. Campbell's 'Mordred. A tragedy in five acts. Founded on the Arthurian legend of Sir Thomas Malory', in *Mordred and Hildebrand: a book of tragedies* (Ottawa, 1895).

[96] Lupack and Tepa Lupack illustrate this dependence on Tennyson in two of their chapter titles: 'Reaction to Tennyson: Parody' (ch. 2, 35-58), 'Reaction to Tennyson: visions of courageous achievement' (ch. 3, 59-92). See these chapters for discussion of the texts mentioned here: Alan Lupack and Barbara Tepa Lupack, *King Arthur in America* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999).

[97] A similar organisation for girls, The Queens of Avalon, required its members to have read all of the *Idylls* before reaching the level of 'Queen'. See Lupack and Tepa Lupack, *King Arthur in America*, 66. See also Forbush's *The Queens of Avalon*, 4th edn (Boston: The Knights of King Arthur, 1925), 33 and Forbush and Dascomb Forbush, *The Knights of King Arthur: the Merlin's book of advanced work* (Oberlin, OH: The Knights of King Arthur, 1915), 27.

[98] On Baden-Powell's basing of the Scouts on Forbush's Knights see Lupack and Tepa Lupack, *King Arthur in America*, 62; and Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 254-5. The film, *Knights of the Square Table; or, the grail* (US: Edison, 1917), was directed by Alan Crosland and featured a screenplay written by the Scout Commissioner James Austin Wilder. The Scout's magazine carried an unsurprisingly favourable review: *Scouting* 5 (July, 1917): 11. See Kevin J. Harty, '*The Knights of the Square Table*: The Boy Scouts and Thomas Edison Make an Arthurian Film', *Arthuriana* 4 (1994): 313-23.

[99] These are: 'Palomydes' Quest' and 'St. Agnes' Convent' (1855), 'The Chapel in Lyoness', 'The Defence of Guenevere', 'A Good Knight in Prison', 'King Arthur's Tomb', 'Near Avalon' and 'Sir Galahad: a Christmas mystery' (1858). Some time around 1870 Morris also penned 'In Arthur's House'. For discussion of these poems see Brewer and Taylor, *The Return of King Arthur*, 135-48.

[100] Elizabeth Jenkins, *The Mystery of King Arthur*, 200; Chris Brooks and Inga Bryden, 'The Arthurian Legacy', 262.

[101] Chris Brooks and Inga Bryden, for instance, have claimed that Swinburne's work presents a 'politically, socially and theologically subversive medievalism' that reacted against the idea of Arthur as upholder of establishment values. See their 'The Arthurian Legacy', 262.

[102] Swinburne, in contrast, sought to create a new poem that was 'acceptable for its orthodoxy and fidelity to the dear old story'. Swinburne, letter to R. H. Horne, February 13, 1882, in *The Swinburne Letters*, quoted in Taylor and Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur*, 32. Taylor and Brewer also quote the following extract from a letter to Rossetti (December 22, 1869): 'My first attempt at a poetic narrative may not be as good as "Gudrun", but it doesn't lick the Morte d'Albert, I hope I may not die without extreme unction', 150.

[103] Algernon Swinburne, *Tristram of Lyonesse* [1882] (London: Heinemann, 1917), 138.

[104] Swinburne, *Tristram of Lyonesse*, 149.

[105] Barber, *King Arthur: hero and legend*, 165. Swinburne wrote in his letter to Rossetti (December 22, 1869), that he wrote 'not after the Chaucerian cadence of Jason, but after my own scheme of movement and modulation in Anactoria, which I consider original in structure and combination'. Quoted in Taylor and Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur*, 150.

[106] Tennyson, 'Lancelot and Elaine', ll. 1406-7, 871-2.

[107] Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 428.

[108] According to Barczewski the word 'sea' appears forty-four times in the *Idylls*, 'waves' eighteen. See *Myth and National Identity*, 204.

[109] Tennyson, 'Guinevere', l. 485.

[110] Swinburne, 'The Tale of Balen', in *The Poems*, 6 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1905), IV, 155-233.

[111] Taylor and Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur*, 160.

[112] Thomas Hardy, 'Preface', *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall* (London: Macmillan, 1923), ii.

[113] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'God's Graal', in *The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. William M. Rossetti (London: Ellis, 1911), 239. (The poem was written in 1858 but first published in this 1911 edition of Rossetti's poems.) Owen Meredith, (pseud. of Robert, Lord Lytton), 'The Parting of Lancelot and Guenevere', 'Elayne le Blanc' and 'Queen Guenevere', in *The Poetical Works* (London: Chapman Hall, 1867), 369-74, 379-84, 383-4.

[114] Tennyson's poems inspired illustrators from quite early. But contrast the early examples of Paolo Priolo, *Illustrations of Alfred Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'* (London: Produced for the Art Union, 1863) and Amy Butts, *Sixteen Illustrations to the 'Idylls of the King'* (London: Day and Son, 1863) with the great cyclic editions of *The Doré Book of Illustrations to Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'* [1878] (New York: Dover, 1995) as well as Simmons's edition of *Le Morte Darthur* (London: Dent, 1893), with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley. For examples of twentieth-century illustrated editions see Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale's b/w illustrations for the *Idylls* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911) and Florence Harrison's b/w illustrations for *Tennyson's 'Guinevere' and Other Poems* (London: Blackie and Sons, 1912).

[115] Henry Elsdale, *Studies in the 'Idylls': an essay on Mr Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'* (London: S. King and Co., 1878); Albert Hamann, *An Essay on Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'* (London: Belin, 1887); Richard Jones, *The Growth of the 'Idylls of the King'. With a hitherto unpublished version of Tennyson's 'To the Queen'* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1895).

[116] George Campbell Macaulay (ed.), *'The Marriage of Geraint' and 'Geraint and Enid'* (London: Macmillan, 1892).

[117] M.W. MacCallum's *Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King' and Arthurian Story from the XVIth Century* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1894); S. Humphrey Gurteen, *The Arthurian Epic: a comparative story of the Cambrian, Breton and Anglo-Norman versions of the story and Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam, 1895).

[118] H. Oskar Sommer, 'Introduction' to his edition of the *Morte Darthur*, reprinted in Marylyn Parins (ed.), *Sir Thomas Malory: the critical heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 268-91.

[119] Edward Strachey, *Le Morte Darthur*, 2nd edn [1891] (London: Macmillan, 1901), xiii.

[120] George Saintsbury, *The English Novel* (London: Dent 1912), 25.

[121] Edward Strachey (ed.), *Le Morte D'Arthur: Sir Thomas Malory's book of King Arthur and of his noble Knights of the Round Table. The original edition of Caxton revised for modern use* (London: Globe Edition, 1868), viii.

[122] Quoted in Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity*, 146-7.

[123] Alfred Austin, 'The Passing of Merlin' (1898), in *Alfred the Great: England's darling*, 5th edn (London: Macmillan, 1901), 97-103 (ll. 11-15).

[124] Austin, 'The Passing of Merlin', ll. 81-2.

[125] Austin, 'The Passing of Merlin', ll. 21-5, 31-5.

[126] T. Gwynn Jones, 'Ymadawiad Arthur' (1910, rev'd 1925), in *Caniadau* (Wrecsam: Hughes a'i Fab, 1934), 15-34 (l. 460).

[127] John Davidson, 'The Last Ballad', in *The Last Ballad and Other Poems* (London: John Lane, 1899), l. 80.

[128] G.K. Chesterton, 'The Ballad of King Arthur', in *The Queen of the Seven Swords* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1926), 15-17; Sidney Fowler Wright, *The Ballad of Elaine* (London: Merton, 1926). For other examples see Alan Lupack, *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 125.

[129] Tennyson, 'Sir Galahad', l. 3.

[130] Masefield, 'The Ballad of Sir Bors' [1910], in *Collected Poems* [1923], 2nd edn (London: William Heinemann, 1932), 53-4, ll. 13, 14, 1.

[131] Tennyson, 'Sir Galahad', ll. 83-4; Masefield, 'The Ballad of Sir Bors', ll. 119-120.

[132] For a lengthy discussion of Arthurian drama from this period see chapter 4 of Brewer and Taylor, *The Return of King Arthur*, 205-34.

[133] Brewer and Taylor, *The Return of King Arthur*, 333.

[134] Sivori Levey, *Guinevere and Arthur. Adapted from Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'*, Pilgrimage Plays 41 (Roehampton: Fountain, 1920); Grace Calvert Holland, *The King and His Knights. A Poetry Drama adapted from Lord Tennyson* (London and New York: French, 1925); Winifred F. Allen, *The Old Order Changeth. From the 'Idylls of the King'*, Parish Plays 18 (London: Sheldon Press, 1928); Ellden Mary Hill, *The Fall of Camelot. A play. Adapted from Tennyson's 'Idylls of the Kings'* (London: A. H. Stockwell, 1929).

[135] Clement Scott, *From 'The Bells' to 'King Arthur': a critical record of the first-night productions at the Lyceum Theatre from 1871 to 1895* (London: John MacQueen, 1896), 372-84.

[136] J. Comyns Carr, *King Arthur: a drama in a prologue and four acts* (London: Macmillan, 1895), Act III.

[137] Carr, *King Arthur*, Act IV.

[138] For contemporary reviews see Gerald Boardman, *American Theatre: a chronicle of comedy and drama, 1869-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 387; and the Camelot Project, University of Rochester, available online [http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/carr-dh.htm, last accessed August 16, 2007]. The latter contains reviews from *The Athenæum*, January 19, 1895; *The Dial*, March 16, 1896; and G.B. Shaw's review, published in *The Saturday Review*, January 12, 1895.

[139] F.B. Money Coutts, *King Arthur: a trilogy of lyrical dramas founded on the 'Morte D'Arthur' of Sir Thomas Malory* (London: Printed for the Author, 1897); *The Romance of King Arthur: poems and plays* (London and New York: John Lane, 1907); Ernest Rhys, *Gwenevere: a lyric play written for music* (London: Dent, 1905); *Enid: a lyric play written for music* (London: Dent, 1908); *The Masque of the Grail* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1908); Arthur Dillon, *King Arthur Pendragon* (London: Elkin

Matthews, 1906); Morely Steynor, *Lancelot and Elaine: a play in five acts* (London: George Bell, 1909).

[140] Henry Newbolt, *Mordred: a tragedy* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895), IV.ii.

[141] Henry Newbolt, 'Vitai Lampada', in *Poems: new and old* (London: Faber and Faber, 1921), 95-6, l. 8.

[142] Graham Hill, *Guinevere: a tragedy in three acts* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1906).

[143] Martha Kinross, *Tristram and Isoult* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 6; Brewer and Taylor described Isoult's choice to drink the poison at the end of the play as a 'defiant act of courage [... which is] typical of the militant feminism of the play as a whole' (*The Return of King Arthur*, 216).

[144] Antonia R. Williams, *Isolt: a new telling* (London: Published by the Author, 1900); J. Comyns Carr, *Tristram and Iseult: a drama in four acts* (London: Duckworth, 1906); Thomas Herbert Lee, 'The Marriage of Iseult: a tragedy in two scenes', in *The Marriage of Iseult and Other Plays* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1909), 1-19; Maurice Baring, 'Tristram and Iseult: a play in five acts', in *The Collected Poems of Maurice Baring* (London: John Lance, 1911), 89-176; Michael Field, *The Tragedy of Pardon* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1911); Arthur Symons, *Tristan and Iseult: a play in four acts* (London: Heinemann, 1917); Thomas Hardy, *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall at Tintagel in Lyonesse: a new version of an old story arranged as a play for mummers in one act requiring no theatre or scenery* (London: Macmillan, 1923); John Masefield, *Tristan and Isolt: a play in verse* (London: Macmillan, 1927). As these plays are not exclusively concerned with the Arthurian story, there is no space to discuss them here. For summary and discussion see Brewer and Taylor, *The Return of King Arthur*, chapter 7: 'New Dramatic Developments', 204-34; Lupack, *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend*, 397-405 and Joan Tasker Grimbert's 'Introduction', in *Tristram and Isolde: a casebook* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), xiii-cii.

[145] G. Constant Lounsbery, 'An Iseult Idyll', in *An Iseult Idyll and Other Poems* (London: John Lance, 1901), 1-8; Cyril Emra, 'The Love Song of Tristram and Iseult', in *The Love Song of Tristram and Iseult and Other Poems* (London: Elliot Stock, 1905); Laurence Binyon, 'Tristram's End', in *Odes* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1913), 9-28.

[146] Joseph Bédier, *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseult: renouvelé par Joseph Bédier* (Paris: H. Piazza, 1900); Bédier, *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult: drawn from the best French sources*, trans. Hilaire Belloc (London: George Allen, 1903).

[147] T.E. Ellis, *Lanval: a drama in four acts* (London: Bumpus, 1908); Jessie Weston, 'Knights of King Arthur's Court', in *The Rose Tree of Hildesheim and Other Poems* (London: David Nutt, 1896), 47-58; R.C. Trevelyan, *The Birth of Parsifal* (London: Longmans, 1905); *The New Parsifal: an operatic fable* (London: Printed for the Author, 1914).

[148] Evelyn Underhill, *The Column of Dust* (London: Methuen, 1909).

Chapter Two

[1] Nathan Comfort Starr, *King Arthur Today: the Arthurian legend in English and American literature* (Gainseville: University of Florida Press, 1954), 124.

[2] Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 94, 100-1, 114-7.

[3] See chapter eight 'The Great War' in Mark Girouard's *The Return to Camelot*, 275-93, for an overview of the use of chivalry in the First World War.

[4] Tennyson, 'Sir Galahad', ll. 3-4.

[5] Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society*, 169-70.

[6] Elinor Sweetman, 'The Pastoral of Galahad', in *Pastorals and Other Poems* (London: J.M. Dent, 1899), ll. 55-63.

[7] Kate Douglas Ramage, 'My Friend', in *Vashti and Other Poems* (Montreal: J. Lovell, 1884), ll. 15, 9.

[8] Charlotte Yonge, *The Heir Of Redcliffe* (London: John W. Parker, 1853).

[9] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in Literature. Six lectures. Reported with emendations and additions* (London: James Fraser, 1841); Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays, by an old boy* [1857] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). See Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, 168, for a brief discussion of Hughes's relationship to the cult of 'Muscular Chivalry'.

[10] Peter Hunt, headnote to an extract from Yonge's *The Daisy Chain; or, aspirations, a family chronicle* (1856), in *Children's Literature: an anthology*, ed. Hunt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 131.

[11] Quoted in Hunt, *Children's Literature*, 131.

[12] Anon., '*Heir of Redclyffe, The*', in *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, ed. Ian Ousby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 448.

[13] Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, 148.

[14] A.M. Grange, *A Modern Galahad* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1895); J. Lockhart Haigh, *Sir Galahad of the Slums* (London: Simpkin, 1907).

[15] Lupack and Tepa Lupack, *King Arthur in America*, 24-5, 72-3.

[16] Christine Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian legend in British art, 1840-1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 114.

[17] Marilynn Lincoln Board, 'Art's Moral Mission: reading G.F. Watts's *Sir Galahad*', in *The Arthurian Revival: essays on form, tradition and transfiguration*, ed. Debra N. Mancoff (London and New York: Garland, 1992), 132-54 (132).

[18] Cf. Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 114.

[19] Anon., 'Royal Academy Exhibition', *The Times*, May 3, 1862: 14.

[20] Watts's *Sir Galahad* was bequeathed to Harvard by Grenville Lindall Winthrop, as part of a massive collection of four thousand artworks. For a history of the bequest see C.R., 'Unveiled', *Harvard Magazine*, March-April 2003, available online [http://www.harvardmagazine.com/on-line/030391.html, last accessed January 23, 2006].

[21] Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, 175.

[22] H.E. Luxmoore, quoted in Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, 176.

[23] MacCallum, *Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King' and Arthurian Story from the XVIth Century*, 41.

[24] On chivalric memorials to the Anglo-Boer War see Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, 169, 173; Poulson, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 113-4; Meurig Jones, 'Survey of Memorials to the Second Anglo-Boer

War in the United Kingdom and Eire', first published in the *Journal of the Africana Society*, 1.15 (Anglo-Boer War Centenary Issue, 1999), revised and published online as part of the *Anglo-Boer War Memorial Project*, available online [www.casus-belli.co.uk/abswmp/index.html, last accesed January 23, 2006].

[25] For an account of the Bishop of Ripon's unveiling of the memorial window see 'Tennyson Memorial at Haslemere', *The Times*, August 1899: 8.

[26] Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* [1903] (London: Penguin, 1995), 182.

[27] George Nathaniel Curzon, quoted in Robert Graves's memoir, *Goodbye to All That* [1929], rev. edn [1957] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 220.

[28] Stefan Goebel, 'Chivalrous Knights *versus* Iron Warriors: representations of the battle of matériel and the slaughter in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940', paper delivered at the Twentieth International Congress of Historical Sciences, Sydney, July 3-9, 2005. Available online [http://cishsydney2005.org/images/RT%2020%20Goebel%20paper.doc, last accessed January, 23, 2006]. Goebel's paper is one of the few studies of German medieval imagery in the First World War available in English. I am indebted to his discussion.

[29] David Lloyd George, 'An Appeal to the Nation', September 19, 1914, in *The World's Greatest Speeches*, ed. Lewis Copeland, Lawrence W Lamm and Stephen J. McKenna, 4th edn (New York: Dover, 1999), 201-4 (204, 203). In the same speech Lloyd George also characterised the staples of the German diet as being 'blood and iron'.

[30] Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, plates xxviii-xxxx.

[31] Anon, 'The Great Battle. Special report', *The Times* July 3, 1916: 9.

[32] See for instance, the memorial notice printed in *The Times* (April 18, 1916: 1) of Lieutenant Hugh Arthur Grenville Malet, killed on April 18, 1915. The notice includes a near-quotation from Tennyson's 'The Holy Grail', ll. 294-5: 'Oh Galahad, Galahad for such as thou art the Vision'.

[33] *My Galahad of the Trenches : being a collection of intimate letters of Lieut. Vinton A. Dearing* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1918); Mildred Huxley, 'A Song of Oxford', *The Spectator*, September 12, 1916.

[34] Albert Marrin, *The Last Crusade: the Church of England in the first World War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1974); Shannon Ty Bontrager, 'The Imagined Crusade: the Church of England and the mythology of nationalism and Christianity during the Great War', *Church History* 71.4 (December, 2002): 774-99; and Paul Fussell, 'The Fate of chivalry and the Assault Upon Mother', in *Killing in Verse and Prose and Other Essays* [1988, under the title *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays*] (London: Bellow Publishing, 1990), 217-44.

[35] Charles Brown, 'The Modern Call to Knighthood', *Quiver* 51 (May 1916): 653-4.

[36] J.D. Jones, 'Sir Galahad', *Quiver* 51 (May 1916): 661-3. For discussion of *Quiver*'s use of chivalric ideology see Bontrager, 'The Imagined Crusade'.

[37] Arthur Winnington-Ingram's Easter homily was paraphrased in *The Times*, April 17, 1911: 5.

[38] Quoted in Paul Fussell, 'The Fate of chivalry and the Assault Upon Mother'.

[39] Anon., 'The Coast Guard. With trawlers and submarines: a fisher Galahad', *The Times*, May 27, 1916: 3.

[40] Anon., 'Quiet Friends. In an old picture gallery', *The Times*, June 14, 1918: 9.

[41] Anon., 'Young America', *The Times*, April 4, 1917: 9.

[42] Anon., 'Young America', *The Times*: 9

[43] T.S. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial*, 72.5 (May 1922): 510-3 (511).

[44] Henry Newbolt, 'Vitai Lampada' (1897), in *Poems: new and old* (London: Faber and Faber, 1921), 95-6, l. 8.

[45] See Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, 233-5.

[46] The fragment of Rupert Brooke's 'King Arthur: a tragedy' is contained in a notebook among Brooke's papers, at King's College, Cambridge (ff. 1-2, 4, 10-13, 34, 47-8; holdings reference: MS King's/PP/RCB/2/D. Brooke admired Malory from an early age. His favoured edition, apparently, was Aubrey Beardsley's illustrated version for Dent (1897). See Nigel Jones, *Rupert Brooke. Life, death and myth* (London: B.B.C. Books, 2002), 33.

[47] Rupert Brooke, 'The Dead', in *The Collected Poems* (London: Sidgewick and Jackson, 1942), 300 (ll. 9-14).

[48] David Cannadine, *The Decline and fall of the British Aristocracy* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 74.

[49] On the themes of rejuvenation and renewal in wartime literature see John H. Johnston, *English Poetry of the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 21-70.

[50] See, for instance, Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: the rise and fall of an ideal* (London: Deutsch, 1982), esp. 10-11.

[51] Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, 157.

[52] Robert Graves, 'Babylon', in *Complete Poems of Robert Graves*, ed. Beryl Graves and Dunstan Ward, 3 vols (Manchester: Carcanet Press; Paris: Alyscamps Press, 1995), I. 28 (ll. 17-8).

[53] Herbert Read, 'The Happy Warrior' (1919), in *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 35 (ll. 6-12).

[54] Siegfried Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* [1937] (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 258.

[55] Sassoon, 'The Poet as Hero' (1917), in *The War Poems*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis [1983] (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 50 (ll. 5-6, 9-10).

[56] Sassoon, 'The Poet as Hero', ll. 11-13.

[57] Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*, 449.

[58] Sassoon, 'They', *War Poems*, ll. 2-3, 5.

[59] Sassoon, 'They', ll. 7-10, 12.

[60] Sassoon, 'The Glory of Women', *War Poems*, ll. 3-4.

[61] Sassoon, 'The Glory of Women', ll. 13-4.

[62] Cannadine, *Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 75.

[63] Arthur W. Pollard, *The Romance of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham (London: Macmillan, 1917), vi.

[64] Pollard, 'Preface', xi.

[65] Pollard, 'Preface', xi.

[66] Examples of Owen's direct borrowings and transtextual relationships with Tennyson can be witnessed in 'To Poesy' (cf. Tennyson's 'To Poesy', 1830) and 'Supposed Confessions of a Secondrate Sensitive Mind in Dejection' (cf. Tennyson's 'Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind', 1830) – both poems completed by 1912. In 1911 Owen worked on a fragment, beginning with the line 'Full springs of Thought around me rise', which mentions Tennyson's marriage to Emily Sellwood (ll. 27-8). All poems are available in *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. Jon Stallworthy [1985] (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990), 3-6, 11-13, 175-6.

[67] 'Cramped in that funnelled hole' is partly based on 'Charge of the Light Brigade' (1854); the title of 'Wild with all Regrets' is taken from Tennyson's 'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean', a lyric in *The Princess* (1847), Part IV, ll. 21-40 (l. 39), while 'Futility' (1918) borrows heavily from part LVI of *In Memoriam*. For Owen's verse see *Poems*, 182-3, 188-9, 32-3.

[68] There is a likely reference to 'Merlin and the Gleam' in Owen's 'Six O'clock in Princes Street', *Poems*, 79 (ll. 5-8): 'Neither should I go fooling after clouds, / Following gleams, untrue, / And tiring after beauty through star-crowds, / Dare I go side by side with you'. Cf. Tennyson's lines: *I* am Merlin, / And *I* am dying, / *I* am Merlin / Who follows The Gleam' (ll. 7-10). In a letter to Siegfried Sassoon written just after completing 'Six O'clock in Princes Street' Owen parodied these same lines: 'I am Owen; and I am dying. I am Wilfred; and I follow the Gleam'. Letter to Sassoon, November 27, 1917, in *Collected Letters of Wilfred Owen*, ed. Harold Owen and John Bell (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 512.

[69] Jon Stallworthy, *Wilfred Owen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 248-9.

[70] Owen, 'Hospital Barge at Cérisy' (1917), *Poems*, 104-5 (ll. 2-5).

[71] Owen, 'Hospital Barge at Cérisy', ll. 9-14.

[72] Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 361-71.

[73] Benjamin Gilbert Brooks, 'Camelot', in *Camelot and Other Poems* (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1919), ll. 12-1, 101-4.

[74] Brooks, 'Camelot', ll. 1, 20, 23.

[75] Brooks, 'Camelot', ll. 158-61.

[76] Brooks, 'Camelot', ll. 157, 195, 211-4.

[77] Brooks, 'Camelot', ll. 86, 90-1, 139-40, 24-30.

[78] Kenneth O. Morgan, 'The Twentieth Century: 1914-1991', in *The Oxford Popular History of Britain*, ed. Morgan [1984] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 582-663 (584).

[79] Brooks, 'Camelot', ll. 180, 205-6.

[80] Brooks, 'Camelot', ll. 193-7.

[81] Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 111.

[82] Poulson lists the following church memorials: St Mary's, Bloxham (1921), St John's United Reform Church, West Hartlepool (1923), Barnaby Gate Methodist Church, Newark (1922), St. Alban's, Streatham Park (1921) and St John the Evangelist, Exmouth (1921).

[83] Clifton College's Great War Memorial Window depicts Arthur and Galahad; Barton School commissioned a St George and Galahad window, as did Rydal School, Colwyn Bay. In the courtyard of

Victoria College, Jersey, there stands an 8-foot bronze statue of Sir Galahad. King's School, Chester, features a Watts-like Galahad, accompanied with further stained-glass figures of Arthur, Lancelot, Bors and Tristram – beneath each image is a quotation from the *Idylls*. See Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 112-3.

[84] Herbert Warren, 'Poetry and the War', quoted in 'A Nation of Poets: Greece, England or Germany', *The Times*, March 12, 1915: 10.

[85] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: an introduction* [1983], 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 26.

[86] For an account of German Arthurian scholarship see Albrecht Classen, 'German Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 122-39.

[87] Wendelin Foerster (ed.), *Christian von Troyes Sämtliche Werke*, 5 vols (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1884-99).

[88] Jessie L. Weston, *Germany's Literary Debt to France* (London: David Nutt, 1915).

[89] Weston, *Germany's Crime against France* (London: David Nutt, 1915).

[90] Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, 239.

[91] Graves, 'Introduction', to *Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur*, abridged by Keith Baines [1962] (London: Signet Classic, 2001) xi-xx (xiv).

[92] Graves, 'Introduction', *Morte D'Arthur*, xii-xiv.

[93] Graves, 'Introduction', *Morte D'Arthur*, xiii.

[94] R.G. Collingwood and J.N.L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), 320-5. See also Geoffrey Ashe, 'Arthur, Origins of Legend', in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 17-21 (19), and N.J. Higham, *King Arthur: myth-making and history*, 19-21.

[95] Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, 20-5.

[96] Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society*, 210.

[97] For instance, in a letter to his mother, August 26, 1906, T.E. Lawrence quotes 47 ll. of various excerpts from the *Idylls*. See *Letters*, ed. David Garnett (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), 47-8.

[98] The *Morte Darthur* was a constant companion, other books change according to which account one reads. Lawrence James, *The Golden Warrior: the life and legend of Lawrence of Arabia* [1990] (New York: Paragon, 1993), claims it was *The Odyssey* (154); Lawrence's letter to D.G. Hogarth, April 7, 1927 (512-3) claims: 'My books in Arabia were the *Morte*: Aristophanes (I read all the *Peace*, very gratefully, and without much technical trouble) and *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. Not so fastidious after all.'

[99] Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* [1935], ed. Angus Calder (London: Wordsworth, 1997), 96, 476. The abridged version, *Revolt in the Desert* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927), also contains a passage referring to Malory at page 283.

[100] James, *The Golden Warrior*, 344.

[101] Lawrence, Letter to Edward Garnett, December 1, 1927, *Letters*, 550.

[102] For a succinct account of the making of the Lawrence legend see James, *The Golden Warrior*, 265-98.

[103] Angus Calder, 'Introduction' to *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, v-xxv (v).

[104] Lawrence Binyon, *Arthur: a tragedy* (London: William Heinemann, 1923), scene eight, 122.

[105] Binyon, *Arthur*, scene nine, 126.

Chapter Three

[1] Two Sir Galahads – one an Old English Mastiff, the other a Cocker Spaniel – won several prizes in the 1930s. The Spaniel, in particular, enjoyed several victories between 1938 and 39. For details see 'City and Suburban Canine Society', *The Times*, March 7, 1930: 21; 'White Kennel Association', *The Times*, April 30, 1938, 14; 'Richmond Dog Show', *The Times*, July 5, 1939: 23. Accounts of the careers of the many Galahads and Grail racehorses are contained in the various 'Racing News' reports of *The Times* between 1920 and 1925.

[2] Frederick Edwin Smith, Lord Chancellor, quoted in 'The Future of the Navy', *The Times*, March 18, 1920: 9.

[3] Ramsey MacDonald, 'Speech at the Victory Demonstration at the Royal Albert Hall', quoted in 'Labour on the Threshold', *The Times*, January 9, 1924: 14.

[4] For a more extensive assessment of Grail scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than there is space to give here see Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: the history of a legend* [2004] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2005), 227-366; 'The Search for Sources: the case of the Grail', also by Barber, in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 19-36; John B. Marino, *The Grail Legend in Modern Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004); and the various articles of Juliette Wood, especially 'The Holy Grail: from romance motif to modern genre', *Folklore* 111 (2000): 169-90. In addition, J.D. Bruce in *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance from the Beginnings down to the Year 1300* [1922], 2 vols (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1958), II, 354-62, gives details of other origin theories of the Grail: Jewish, Syrian, Arabic and another relating to the Alexander the Great legend.

[5] On the Nanteos Cup see Juliette Wood, 'Nibbling Pilgrims and the Nanteos Cup: a Cardiganshire legend', in *Nanteos: a Welsh house and its families*, ed. Gerald Morgan (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2001), 202-53; on the Glastonbury and the Palestine Grails see Barber, *The Holy Grail*, 298-9, 300-1. Juliette Wood has also published a paper online concerning the Glastonbury Grail, 'Obscure Objects of Desire: is this the real Holy Grail?' [http://www.juliettewood.com/papers/GRAILOBS.pdf, last accessed July 19, 2006].

[6] There is no full-scale biography of Weston published. However, Janet Grayson has written an excellent survey of her life, with particular emphasis on her scholarly relationships: 'In Quest of Jessie Weston', *Arthurian Literature* 11 (1992): 1-80. Grayson includes as an appendix an annotated bibliography of Weston's work, including some little-known articles. Additional information can be found in Weston's obituary, *The Times*, October 1, 1928: 19l; Gillian Thomas, 'Weston, Jessie Laidlay (1850-1928)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Howard Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn

[http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38620, last accessed 22 June 2006]. Further references to the *Oxford DNB* are all to the online edn.

[7] Jessie L. Weston, 'Preface to the first edition' to her translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: a Middle –English Arthurian romance retold in modern prose* [1909] (New York: Dover, 2003), v-viii (vii).

[8] Weston, 'Introduction' to *Sir Gawain and the Lady of Lys*, volume VII of *Arthurian Romances Unrepresented in Malory's 'Morte D'Arthur'*, ed. and trans. Jessie L. Weston (London: David Nutt, 1907), xv.

[9] There were seven published volumes in Weston's *Arthurian Romances Unrepresented in Malory's 'Morte D'Arthur'* series. Volume one, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1898), retells the Middle English romance in modern prose; Weston provides an introduction and notes. Volume two, *Tristan and Iseult* (2 vols, 1899), is Weston's translation of Gottfried von Strassburg's work. Volume three, *Guingamor, Lanval, Tyolet, Le Bisclavert* (1900), is a translation of four French lays into English. Volume four, *Morien* (1901), is a translation of a Dutch romance. Volume five, *Le Beaus Desconnus and Cligés* (1902), renders two Middle English versions of *Libeaus Desconsus* and Chrétien's *Cliges* into modern prose. Volume six, *Sir Gawain at the Grail Castle* (1903), contains translations of the Gawain-Grail episodes from Chrétien's *Perceval*, Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Die Crône* and the Vulgate *Lancelot*. Volume seven, *Sir Gawain and the Lady of Lys* (1907), translates two episodes from Wauchier's *Continuation* of Chrétien's *Perceval*. All were published in London by David Nutt.

[10] For a summary of German scholarship on the Arthurian legend see Albrecht Classen, 'German Arthurian Literature' in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 122-139. But see also Keith Busby and Jane H.M. Taylor's chapter in the same book, 'French Arthurian Legend', 95-121 (especially at 101).

[11] Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, I, iv.

[12] Barber, 'The Search for Sources: the case of the Grail', 29.

[13] Elise Francisca Wilhelmina Maria van der Ven-Ten Bensel, *The Character of King Arthur in English Literature* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1925), 12.

[14] For a brief discussion of Nutt's predecessors see Juliette Wood, 'The Holy Grail: from romance motif to modern genre', 181-2.

[15] Wood, 'The Holy Grail: from romance motif to modern genre', 181; see also Wood's 'Folklore Studies at the Celtic Dawn: the role of Alfred Nutt as publisher and scholar', *Folklore*, 110 (1999): 3-12.

[16] Nutt's firm published several of Meyer's translations from Old Irish: *Merugud Uilix maicc Leirtis. The Irish Odyssey* (London: D. Nutt, 1886); *Aislinge Meic Conglinne. The Vision of Mac Conglinne, A Middle-Irish wonder tale*, with an Introduction by Wilhelm Wollner (London: David Nutt, 1892); *King and Hermit. A colloquy between king Guaire of Aidne and his brother Marban* (London: David Nutt, 1901); *Liadain and Curithir. An Irish love-story of the 9th century* (London: David Nutt, 1902); *Four Old-Irish songs of summer and winter* (London: David Nutt, 1903). Nutt also provided an essay on 'The Irish Vision of the Happy Otherworld and the Celtic Doctrine of Rebirth', for Meyer's translation, *The Voyage of Bran Son of Febal to the Land of the Living. An Old Irish saga* (London: David Nutt, 1895); while Meyer provided translations of the stories of Tuan mac Cairill and the Dinnshenchas of

Mag Slecht for the appendices of Nutt's *The Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth* (London: David Nutt, 1897). Nutt also produced an annotated edition of Charlotte Guest's translation of *The Mabinogion* (London: David Nutt, 1902).

[17] See Alfred Nutt, *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail: with especial reference to the hypothesis of its Celtic Origin* [1888] (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003) especially at 181-6; A.C.L. Brown, 'The Bleeding Lance', *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 25 (1910): 1-59, and his *The Origin of the Grail Legend* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943); Dorothy Kempe, *The Legend of the Grail* (London: Kegan Paul, 1905); Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927); *Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes* (New York Columbia University Press, 1949); *The Grail: from Celtic myth to Christian symbol* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press; New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

[18] Bruce includes a chapter on 'The Theory of Celtic Origin' in *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, 269-76; his argument against the Celticists – and Nutt in particular – is at its strongest at 275-6.

[19] Bensel, *The Character of King Arthur*, 12, n. 6.

[20] Bensel, *The Character of King Arthur*, 12.

[21] Wood, 'The Holy Grail: from romance motif to modern genre', 182.

[22] Weston, *The Quest of the Holy Grail* [1913] (New York: Dover Publications, 2001), 66.

[23] Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* [1920] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 4.

[24] Weston, *Ritual to Romance*, 2.

[25] Weston, *Ritual to Romance*, 3.

[26] J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a study in magic and religion*, abridged edn (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 312-3. For Weston's discussion of the nature of the Mystery cult, see *From Ritual to Romance*, 52-64.

[27] Weston, *Ritual to Romance*, 136.

[28] Weston, *Ritual to Romance*, 136.

[29] Weston, *Ritual to Romance*, 76. The whole of chapter VI, 'The Symbols' (65-80), is interesting on the sexual-fertility interpretation of the traditional Grail symbols.

[30] All quoted in Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, 260-1.

[31] Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, I, 277-89.

[32] Eleanor Hill, Review of Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, *Folk-lore* 31.2 (June, 1920): 163-8 (164).

[33] Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, 261. Weston harshly reviewed Loomis's work for the *Modern Language Review* 32 (1928): 243-8. See Grayson, 'In Quest of Jessie Weston', 19.

[34] Loomis, *The Grail: from Celtic myth to Christian symbol*, ix-x. See also Loomis, *Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes*, ix, for an earlier recantation of his belief in the fertility ritual basis of the Grail myth.

[35] Wood, 'The Holy Grail: from romance motif to modern genre', 183; Barber, 'The Search for Sources', 30; Barber, *The Holy Grail*, 249-50; Marino, *The Grail Legend in Modern Literature*, 44-7.

[36] Edmund Wilson, 'The Poetry of Drouth', *Dial*, lxxiii (December 1922): 611-16; reprinted in Michael Grant (ed.), *T.S. Eliot: the critical heritage*, 2 vols (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), I, 138-44 (144).

[37] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* [1922], in *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 21-50 (ll. 202, 31-4, 42, 189, 424, 388).

[38] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, l. 231.

[39] Eliot wrote of *The Waste Land*: 'it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmic grumbling.' Quoted in Brewer and Taylor, *The Return of King Arthur*, 237.

[40] Eliot, 'Notes to the Waste Land', in *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, 42-7 (42).

[41] Eliot, 'The Frontiers of Criticism' (1956), in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 103-18 (109-10).

[42] Peter Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot* [1984] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 127. They had also been included to avoid the charges of plagiarism which had been levelled at his earlier poetry. Ackroyd has stated that 'it was the presence of the notes which provoked the attention of reviewers'. Their response, however, was mixed.

[43] Tony Sharpe, *T.S. Eliot: a literary life*, Macmillan Literary Lives series (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1991), 89.

[44] J.C. Squire, 'Poetry', *London Mercury*, 8 (October, 1923): 655.

[45] Anon., 'Review of 'The Waste Land' and Notice of the First Issue of *The Criterion*', *TLS* 1084 (October 26, 1922): 690. *The Waste Land* appeared first in the first issue of Eliot's new magazine, *The Criterion* in October 1922. The notes were not appended to the poem until its publication by Faber in the following year.

[46] Helen McAfee, 'The Literature of Disillusion', *Atlantic* (1923): 227; reprinted in *T.S. Eliot: the critical heritage*, I, 182-3 (183).

[47] Elinor Wylie, 'Mr Eliot's Slug Horn', *New York Evening Post Literary Review* (January 20, 1923): 396; in *T.S. Eliot: critical assessments*, ed. Graham Clarke, 4 vols, The Chistopher Helm Critical Assessments of American Writers in English Series (London: Christopher Helm, 1990), I, 84-6 (85).

[48] John Crowe Ransom, 'Waste Lands', *New York Evening Post Literary Review* (July 14, 1923): 825-6; in *Critical Assessments*, I, 96-102 (102).

[49] Louis Untermeyer, 'Disillusion vs. Dogma', *Freeman* 6 (Jun, 1923): 453; in *Critical Assessments*, I, 81-3 (82).

[50] Edmund Wilson, 'The Poetry of Drouth', *The Dial* lxxiii (December, 1922): 611-6; in *The Critical Heritage*, I, 138-44 (139-40).

[51] Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle: a study in imaginative literature 1870-1930* (London and New York: Scribner, 1931), 93-131.

[52] Cleanth Brooks, '*The Waste Land*: an analysis', in *T.S. Eliot: a study of his writings by several hands*, ed. B. Rajan (London: Dennis Dobson, 1947), 7-36 (especially at 8-9); Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: a study in sources and meanings* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1956), 69-70, 74-7; Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (London: Cresset Press, 1949), 87; George

Williamson, *A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot: a poem-by-poem analysis*, 2nd edn (New York: Octagon Books, 1979), 119-20.

[53] Brooks, '*The Waste Land*: an analysis', 7; Williamson, *A Reader's Guide*, 120.

[54] Jennifer Kroll, 'Mary Butts' "Unrest Cure" for *The Waste Land*', *Twentieth Century Literature* 45.2 (January, 1999). Available online [http://web2.infotrac.galegroup.com/article A57589967, accessed 28 July 2006]. Kroll, it ought to be stated, is commenting on 'interpretations of *The Waste Land* informed by knowledge of *The Golden Bough* and *From Ritual to Romance*', and this is not Kroll's own estimation of Eliot's poem.

[55] Anon., 'Review of "The Waste Land" and Notice of the First Issue of *The Criterion*', *TLS*, 1084 (October 26, 1922): 690. Even Edmund Wilson, the earliest Weston-centric critic, saw the poem as a 'whole world of strained nerves and shattered institutions' ('The Poetry of Drouth', 144). On the later critics' spiritual-based reading of the poem see Clinton A. Brand, 'The Voice of This Calling: the enduring legacy of T.S. Eliot', *Modern Age* 45.4 (Autumn, 2003): 357-66 (360): 'However, Eliot did not use tradition only or even primarily as an instrument of critique for contrasting a shabby present with a vibrant past – though crude readings of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* hardly get beyond this inference.'

[56] F.L. Lucas, Review of *The Waste Land*, *The New Statesman* [1923]; reprinted in *The New Statesman*, November 29, 1999: 44.

[57] Wilson, 'The Poetry of Drouth', 144.

[58] Everett A. Gillis, '*The Waste Land*' as a Grail Romance: Eliot's use of the medieval Grail legends, Graduate Studies Texas Technical University (Lubbock: Texas Technical Press, 1974), 26.

[59] Brooks, '*The Waste Land*: an analysis', 31; Wilson, 'The Poetry of Drouth', 144. Brooks writes of his fellow Westonian (31): 'Even a critic so acute as Edmund Wilson has seen the poem as essentially a statement of despair and disillusionment, and this account sums up the stock interpretation of the poem'.

[60] Brooks, '*The Waste Land*: an analysis', 35.

[61] Sharpe, *T.S. Eliot: A Literary Life*, 94.

[62] Sharpe, *T.S. Eliot: A Literary Life*, 35.

[63] Brewer and Taylor are firm Westonians (*The Return of King Arthur*, 235-9); Barber has described *The Waste Land* as 'a powerful vision of the spiritual desolation [Eliot] felt in the modern world' (*King Arthur: hero and legend*, 185); Lupack has claimed that the poem is 'a reflection of the human conditions of rampant spiritual decline' (*The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend*, 263).

[64] B.C. Southam, *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 3rd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 72; Robert MacFarlane, 'At the World's Waning: William Morris and the sources of *The Waste Land*', *TLS*, November 16, 2001: 14-5.

[65] Edwin Arnold, 'Hagar in the Wilderness', in *Poems, Narrative and Lyrical* (Oxford: Francis Macpherson, 1853), 58-67 (ll. 1-2, 5-6).

[66] Arnold, 'Hagar in the Wilderness', ll. 203-4.

[67] MacFarlane, 'At the World's Waning: William Morris and the sources of *The Waste Land*', 14-5.

[68] Ambrose Bierce, 'Sires and Sons', in *The Collected Works*, 12 vols (New York and Washington: Neale, 1909), IV, 249 (ll. 1, 2-3).

[69] Robert Ian Scott was the first critic to note the relationship between Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Cawein's 'Waste Land'. See Scott, 'The "Waste Land" Eliot Didn't Write', *TLS*, December 8, 1995: 7-8.

[70] Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot*, 33.

[71] John Davidson, 'The Last Ballad', in *The Last Ballad and Other Poems* (London: John Lane, 1899), ll. 1-2.

[72] Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot*, 74-5, 83.

[73] David Ned Tobin, *The Presence of the Past: T.S. Eliot's Victorian inheritance* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 85.

[74] Eliot, '*In Memoriam*' [1936], *Selected Essays*, 3rd enlarged edn (London: Faber, 1972), 328-39 (328-331).

[75] McAfee, 'The Literature of Disillusion', 227.

[76] McAfee, 'The Literature of Disilusion', 338.

[77] Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 48-9.

[78] Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 93, 139-41.

[79] Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 367-72.

[80] All lines refer to 'The Passing of Arthur' and *The Waste Land*: 'dust' (Tennyson, ll. 77; Eliot, l. 30), 'bones' (Tennyson, l. 215; Eliot, l. 390), 'rock' (Tennyson, l. 215; Eliot, ll. 331 ff.), 'graves' and 'tombs' (Tennyson, l. 343; Eliot, l. 387), 'agony' (Tennyson, l. 369; Eliot, l. 324), 'lamentation' (Tennyson, l. 370; Eliot, l. 367), 'dead', 'death' and 'dying' (Tennyson, ll. 115, 74; Eliot, ll. 328-9), 'murmur's, 'mutters' and 'rumours' (Tennyson, ll. 347, 268; Eliot, l. 367).

[81] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 188; *The Waste Land*, ll. 323

[82] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 41-3; *The Waste Land*, ll. 371-2.

[83] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 31-3, 39, 47; *The Waste Land*, ll. 325, 384.

[84] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 364-6; *The Waste Land*, l. 368.

[85] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 46-9, 116-7.

[86] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 175-6.

[87] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 178-9.

[88] *The Waste Land*, ll. 386-9.

[89] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 301-29, 433-40.

[90] 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 408-10.

[91] *The Waste Land*, ll. 55, 312-21, n. 46.

[92] *The Waste Land*, ll. 399-422.

[93] Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', ll. 7, 20; 'The Holy Grail', l. 244.

[94] Tennyson, 'Gareth and Lynette', l. 589; 'Geraint and Enid', ll. 940-3.

[95] Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', l. 84.

[96] Tennyson, 'Merlin and Vivian', l. 73.

[97] Tennyson, 'Geraint and Enid', ll. 31, 50, 100, 313, 438.

[98] Tennyson, 'Geraint and Enid', l. 313.

[99] Tennyson, 'Geraint and Enid', ll. 940-3.

[100] Tennyson, 'Geraint and Enid', ll. 948-51.

[101] Tennyson, 'Lancelot and Elaine', ll. 525, 224, 300.

[102] Tennyson, 'Lancelot and Elaine', l. 251.

[103] Tennyson, 'The Holy Grail', ll. 784-5.

[104] Tennyson, 'Guinevere', ll. 127-9.

[105] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 31-4, 77, 279-91.

[106] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 111-38.

[107] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 222-56.

[108] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 294-5, 297-9.

[109] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 366-7.

[110] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, l. 379.

[111] Wilson, 'The Poetry of Drouth', 144.

[112] Eliot, '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth', *The Dial* 75 (November, 1923): 480-3.

[113] Brian Howard, quoted in Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot*, 128.

[114] See Lupack and Tepa Lupack, *King Arthur in America*, 135-82, for a discussion of these and other Eliot-influenced U.S. writers.

[115] Arthur Machen, *The Secret Glory* (London: Secker, 1922), 8.

[116] Machen, *The Secret Glory*, 5.

[117] Machen, *The Secret Glory*, 29.

[118] Arthur Machen, *The Great Return* (London: Faith Press, 1915). See also Machen's short story 'Guinevere and Lancelot', in which the queen uses sorcery to entrap the otherwise virtuous knight – in *Guinevere and Lancelot and Others*, ed. Michael T. Shoemaker and Cuyler W. Brooks, Jr (Newport, Va: Purple Mouth, 1986), 7-15. For Machen's scholarly work on the Grail see 'The Secret of the Sangraal' in *The Shining Pyramid* (New York: Knopf, 1925), 71-126.

[119] Barber, *The Holy Grail*, 295.

[120] Barber, *The Holy Grail*, 296.

[121] R.A. Gilbert, 'Waite, Arthur Edward (1857-1942)', *Oxford DNB* (2004).

[122] Grayson, 'In Quest of Jessie Weston', 35-40. For comments on Weston and her work see Waite's *The Holy Grail: the Galahad Quest in Arthurian Literature* [1933] (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 1993), 393, 434 and 479.

[123] Barber, *The Holy Grail*, 295.

[124] Charles Williams, *War in Heaven* [1930] (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 7.

[125] Williams, *War in Heaven*, 136.

[126] Williams, *War in Heaven*, 137.

[127] See Waite, *The Hidden Church of the Holy Grail*, 163-4, 373, 387. Alan Lupack, in *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian literature* (466-7), supplies the following additional information: 'Prester John was believed to be a priest-king who ruled an idyllic kingdom somewhere in Asia (or, in some versions of the legend, in Africa) [...] In Wolfram's *Parzival* (first decade of the thirteenth century), Prester John is

the son of Parzival's half-brother Feirefiz and Rapanse de Schoye. In *Der jüngere Titurel* (c. 1270), the Grail is taken to his realm for safekeeping. In Richard Johnson's *Tom a Lincolne* (1599; 1607), Arthur's illegitimate son, the Red-Rose Knight, visits Prester John's realm and persuades his daughter Anglitora to run off with and ultimately marry him. [...] And in Umberto Eco's novel *Baudolino* (2000), the title character writes a letter purportedly from Prester John, whose realm he seeks, to Frederick Bararossa, with the help of 'Kyot' and 'Boron', who supply information about the Grail'.

[128] Williams, *War in Heaven*, 255.

[129] Williams, *War in Heaven*, 255.

[130] Émile Souvestre, *Le Foyer Breton* [1841] (Paris: Edimbourg, 1922); Andrew Lang, *The Lilac Fairy Book* [1910] (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), 161-73.

[131] George Moore, *Peronnik the Fool* [first printed in *The Dial* in 1921; in book form in 1924], included in *Quest for the Holy Grail*, ed. Mike Ashley (London: Robinson, 1996), 324-359.

[132] Moore, *Peronnik the Fool*, 328-9.

[133] Marino, *The Grail Legend in Modern Literature*, 48-9.

[134] Moore, *Peronnik the Fool*, 358.

[135] Jane Garrity, *Step-Daughters of England: British Women Novelists and the National Imagery* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 282; J.W. Graham, 'Manuscript Revision and the Heroic Theme of *The Waves*', *Twentieth-Century Literature* 29.3 (1982): 312-332; Michael Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot and Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 226.

[136] Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* [1931] (London: Grafton, 1977), 30.

[137] Woolf, *The Waves*, 30.

[138] Woolf, *The Waves*, 97, 30.

[139] Woolf, *The Waves*, 30, 97, 126, 209, 216.

[140] Woolf, *The Waves*, 29.

[141] Woolf, *The Waves*, 126.

[142] Woolf, *The Waves*, 90, 142-3.

[143] Woolf, *The Waves*, 134, 142, 147, 152, 159, 152, 160, 162, 168-9, 178.

[144] Mary Butts, *Armed with Madness* [1928] (London: Penguin, 2001), 31.

[145] Butts, *Armed with Madness*, 9.

[146] Butts, *Armed with Madness*, 73, 12.

[147] Butts, *Armed with Madness*, 77.

[148] Butts, *Armed with Madness*, 115.

[149] Butts, *Armed with Madness*, 123.

[150] Butts, 'The Sanc Grail', *The Bookman* 84 (1933): 72-4; quoted in Jane Garrity, *Step-daughters of England*, 238; and Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet: my childhood at Salterns* [1933] (Manchester: Carcanet, 1988), 33.

[151] Butts began writing *Armed with Madness* after reading Waite's *The Hidden Church of the Holy Grail* in 1925. Stephen Heath, 'Introduction', *Armed with Madness*, vii-xxiv (xii).

[152] Butts, *Armed with Madness*, 20, 131, 141, 83, 18, 37.

[153] Woolf, entry for July 23, 1927, *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf*, 5 vols, ed. Anne Oliver Bell with Andrew MacNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1980), III, 147-50 (150). For Woolf's opinion of Butts see the former's letter to William Plomer, June 17, 1937, in *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicholson with Joanne (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975-80), V, 137-8 (138).

[154] Lawrence Rainey, in 'Good Things: pederasty and jazz and opium and research', *London Review of Books* 20.14 (July, 1998): 14-7, claimed that *Armed with Madness* is 'a masterpiece of Modernist prose' which will within a decade 'assume its rightful place within the canon of Modernist prose' (14). Many subsequent scholarly works on Butts concur. See Nathalie Blondel, *Mary Butts: scenes from the life: a biography* (Kingston, NY: McPherson, 1998); Stephen Heath's 'Introduction' to the Penguin edn; Jennifer Kroll, 'Mary Butts' "Unrest Cure" for *The Waste Land*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 45.2 (January, 1999); Jane Garrity, *Step-daughters of England*.

[155] Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Romance*, 208. W.J. Keith's *John Cowper Powys' 'A Glastonbury Romance': a reader's companion* (2005) is a very useful 'glossary' of Powys's work. Keith has made this work available online [http://www.powys-lannion.net/Powys/Keith/Gcompanion.pdf, last accessed July 27, 2006].

[156] John Cowper Powys, *A Glastonbury Romance* [1932] (London: Picador, 1953).

[157] For an account of Powys's politics see Victor Golightly, 'John Cowper Powys and Anarchism', in *'To Hell with Culture': anarchism and twentieth century British literature*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 126-40.

[158] Powys, 'Preface to the New [1955] Edition', *A Glastonbury Romance*, xi.

[159] Powys, *A Glastonbury Romance*, 696-99, 739, 807-8, 229.

[160] Powys, *A Glastonbury Romance*, 125.

[161] Powys, *A Glastonbury Romance*, 285.

[162] Malory is referred to in *A Glastonbury Romance* at 176, 793, 827, 883, 996, 999, 1023, 1055.

[163] Powys, *A Glastonbury Romance*, 354.

[164] Dhira B. Mahoney, 'Introduction', *The Grail: a casebook*, ed. Mahoney (New York: Garland, 2000), 1-101 (65-6).

Chapter Four

[1] A.C. Bradley, 'The Reaction Against Tennyson' [1929], in *English Critical Essays: twentieth century*, ed. Phyllis M. Jones (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 59-86 (75-6).

[2] For instance, see Sivori Levey, *Guinevere and Arthur. Adapted from Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'*, Pilgrimage Plays 41 (Roehampton: Fountain, 1920); Grace Calvert Holland, *The King and His Knights. A Poetry Drama adapted from Lord Tennyson* (London and New York: French, 1925); Winifred F. Allen, *The Old Order Changeth. From the 'Idylls of the King'*, Parish Plays 18 (London: Sheldon Press, 1928); Ellden Mary Hill, *The Fall of Camelot. A play. Adapted from Tennyson's 'Idylls of the Kings'* (London: A.H. Stockwell, 1929).

[3] Evelyn Waugh, *Decline and Fall* [1928], ed. David Bradshaw (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001), esp. 20; Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* [1934], ed. Robert Murray Davis (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000).

[4] For examples of Waugh's use of Tennyson's conception of the Arthurian story see Part Three, Chapter vi of *Decline and Fall*, 'The Passing of Paul Pennyfeather', a loose parody of Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur' (186-90). While Tennyson's *Idyll* is one of the most sombre of Victorian poems, Waugh's chapter deals with the escape from prison of a young man who had been sentenced (falsely, it turns out) as a white slave trafficker. He is abetted by Sir Alastair Trumpington, a former student of his from Llanabba public school who watches Paul sailing to Crete 'like Sir Bedivere' (190).

[5] Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*, 17.

[6] Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*, 17.

[7] Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*, 37.

[8] Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*, 164.

[9] Waugh, *Sword of Honour* [1965], ed. Angus Calder (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 5.

[10] E.K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* [1927] (Cambridge: Speculum Historiale, 1964), 232.

[11] W.B. Yeats, 'Time and the Witch Vivien' (1889), in *The Poems of Yeats* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 523-6 (ll. 86, 60-1).

[12] Padraic Colum, *The Boy Apprenticed to an Enchanter* (New York: Macmillan, 1920).

[13] John Freimarck, '"Araby": a quest for meaning', *James Joyce Quarterly* 7 (1970): 366-8; Jerome Mandel, 'The Structure of "Araby"', *Modern Language Studies* 15.4 (Autumn 1985): 48-54; and Mandel, 'Medieval Romance and the structure of "Araby"', *James Joyce Quarterly* 13 (1976): 234-7.

[14] Geert Lernont, 'Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* in the genesis of *Finnegans Wake*', *James Joyce Quarterly* 38.1-2 (Fall 2000): 143-57; cf. Fred Radford, 'Anticipating *Finnegans Wake*: The *United Irishman* and "La Belle Iseult"', *James Joyce Quarterly* 33.2 (Winter 1996): 237-44.

[15] Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* [1939] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), 3.

[16] Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 229, 392, 143, 285, 375.

[17] Indeed, 'there is no implied hierarchy of authors in the *Wake* as there is in *Ulysses*'. Seamus Deane, 'Introduction', *Finnegans Wake*, vii-xlx (xii).

[18] Joyce himself used the term 'encyclopaedia' as one of his descriptions of *Ulysses*. See *Selected Letters*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1975), 271.

[19] Brewer and Taylor, *The Return of King Arthur*, 216.

[20] James Bridie, 'Lancelot', in *Plays for Plain People* (London: Constable, 1944), 17; pagination for each play is discontinuous.

[21] Bridie, 'Lancelot', 20.

[22] Richard Carew, 'A Herring's Tail' [1598], and *The Survey of Cornwall* [1602], in *Inside Merlin's Cave: a Cornish Arthurian reader 1000-2000*, ed. Amy Hale, Alan M. Kent and Tim Saunders (London: Francis Boutle, 2000), 68-9 and 70-1.

[23] George Woodley, *Cornubia: a poem in five cantos* [1819], Thomas Hogg, *The Fabulous History of Cornwall* [1827], William Hals, *The Complete History of Cornwall* [c. 1736], H. J. Whitfield, *Scilly and its Legends* [1852], Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England: the drolls, traditions, and superstitions of Old Cornwall* [1865], extracts of which can be found in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 81-

2, 82-7, 73-80, 88-95, 113-20. Hogg's *History* contains much more Arthurian matter than could be contained in this anthology, and so the 1827 (Truro: E. Heard) edition ought to be consulted. Particularly interesting is its unusual treatment of Merlin's involvement in Arthur's story (which is largely adapted from Geoffrey, supplemented by Hogg's local knowledge/imagination). R.S. Hawker's 'The Quest for the Sangreal' (1863) is discussed below.

[24] Ronald Perry, 'Cornwall's Mining Collapse Revisited: an empirical survey of economic re-adjustment in late-Victorian and Edwardian Cornwall', *Cornish History*, August, 2001: 1-2. Available online [http://www.marjon.ac.uk/cornish-history/miningcollapse/cmcr.pdf, last accessed February 7, 2007].

[25] David Staines, *Tennyson's Camelot: the 'Idylls of the King' and its medieval sources* (Waterloo, Ca: Wilfred Laurier University, 1982), 25-6.

[26] See notes to Hawker's 'The Quest of the Sangreal', in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 101-113.

[27] Hawker, 'The Quest of the Sangreal', 109.

[28] Hawker, 'The Quest of the Sangreal', 109.

[29] Katherine Lee Jenner, 'Angelice, a Patriotic Song of our Motherland' [1926], in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 183-4 (ll. 3, 17-20).

[30] B.D. Vere, *King Arthur: his symbolic story in verse* [1930], in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 193-8 (195).

[31] Robert Morton Nance, 'An Balores', in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 220-3; the translation can be found at 198-202.

[32] See, for instance, his textbook introduction to *Kernewek, Cornish for All: a first book* (St. Ives: James Lanham, 1929), as well as his *An English-Cornish Dictionary* (St. Ives: Federation of Old Cornwall Societies, 1934) co-written by A.S.D. Smith.

[33] Brian Murdoch, 'Nance, Robert Morton (1873-1959)', *Oxford DNB* (2004).

[34] Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales?* (London: Penguin, 1985), 166.

[35] Quoted in Dillwyn Miles, *The Secret of the Bards of the Isle of Britain* (Llandybie: Gwasg Dinefwr, 1992), 218. See also the Breton Gorsedd's official history, 'Historique du Gorsedd de Bretagne', available online [http://www.gorsedd.com/historique.html, last accessed February 7, 2007].

[36] These aims, which remain in place today, can be found at the Gorseth Kernow's website: www.gorsethkernow.org.uk, last accessed February 7, 2007.

[37] The relevant Arthurian section of the Gorseth's ceremony is contained in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 219-20 (in Cornish), 191 (in English).

[38] 'Bro Goth Agan Tasow', in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 220, 191. For more detail on the ceremonies and history of the Gorseth see the official 'Origins and History', available online [http://www.gorsethkernow.org.uk/english/history.htm, or in Cornish: http://www.gorsethkernow.org.uk/kernewek/ystory.htm, last accessed February 7, 2007].

[39] E. Whitefield Crofts, *Tourist's Companion to West Cornwall* (1877), quoted in Ronald Perry, 'Cornwall's Mining Collapse Revisited', 6.

[40] A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, *Mines and Miners of Cornwall: part xvi, Wadebridge, Camelford and Bude* (Cornwall: Old Cornwall Societies, 1970); the relevant passage is contained in *Inside Merlin's cave*, 213-5.

[41] Dinah Craik, *An Unsentimental Journey Through Cornwall* (London: Macmillan, 1884). Despite its title, Craik's travelogue is remarkably sentimental, especially in its passage on Tintagel.

[42] Margaret A. Courtney, *Cornish Feasts and Folklore* [1890], in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 127-8.

[43] Lyonesse, *Legend Land: being a collection of some of the old tales told in Cornwall once* (London: GWR, 1922).

[44] John Daniel has given the entire list of GWR's locomotive names in his database, 'Great Western Standard Gauge Locomotive Name Database' (2000-6), available online [http://www.greatwestern.org.uk/names.htm, last accessed February 7, 2007].

[45] See, for instance, Brenda Duxbery and Michael Williams, *King Arthur Country in Cornwall* (St Teath: Bossiney Books, 1979), though there are numerous examples of this. The work of John Matthews is comparable.

[46] Mary Ellen Chase, *Dawn in Lyonesse* (London: Collins, 1938).

[47] James Noble, 'Tintagel: the best of English twinkle', in *King Arthur and Popular Culture*, ed. Donald L. Hoffman and Elizabeth S. Sklar (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), 36-58.

[48] Ronald Duncan, quoted in Duxbery and Williams, *King Arthur Country in Cornwall*, 18.

[49] Anne Whitehouse, 'Out and About: Riding: the stuff of myths and profits', *The Times*, July 28, 1984: 16.

[50] Henry Jenner, 'Tintagel Castle in History and Romance', in *King Arthur in Cornwall* [two essays by Henry Jenner], ed. Kelvin I. Jones (No Place: Oakmagic, 1996), 25-36 (36).

[51] Jenner, 'Some Possible Arthurian Place-Names in west Penwith', in *King Arthur in Cornwall*, 1-24.

[52] Amy Hale, 'King Arthur and Modern Cornwall', in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 21-7 (26); Anon., 'Coaching Capitals', *Time Magazine*, September 8, 1930: 35.

[53] Amy Hale, 'King Arthur and Modern Cornwall', 23.

[54] Further information on the contents of 'The Hall of Chivalry' can be found in Don Hutchinson, *One Man's Dream: the story of King Arthur's Great Halls* (Tintagel: Sword in the Stone Publishing, 1999); Hale, 'King Arthur and Modern Cornwall', 23-4; Hale, 'The Land Near the Dark Cornish Sea: the development of Tintagel as a Celtic Pilgrimage site', *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* 2 (2004): 206-25 (213-6); Duxbrey and Williams, *King Arthur Country in Cornwall*, 22-32; Noble, 'Tintagel: the best of English Twinkie', 38-9.

[55] Hale, 'The Land Near the Dark Cornish Sea', 215.

[56] Duxbrey and Williams, *King Arthur Country*, 31.

[57] See the official website: http://www.kingarthursgreathalls.com/page%202.htm, last accessed February 7, 2007.

[58] Geoffrey, *Historia*, trans. Thorpe, 226-7).

[59] Wace, *Brut*, in *The Life of King Arthur*, trans. Judith Weiss and Rosamund Allen (London: Dent, 1997), 1-102, ll. 10197-10236 (10236).

[60] Layamon, *Brut*, in *The Life of King Arthur*, trans. Weiss and Allen, 103-320, ll. 120097-115 (ll. 120113-5).

[61] Prys Morgan, 'Engine of Empire c. 1750-1898', in *The Tempus History of Wales, 25,000 B.C. – A. D. 2000*, ed. Prys Morgan (Stroud: Tempus, in association with The National Library of Wales, 2001), 175-210 (198, 205-10); John Davies, *A History of Wales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), 458-9.

[62] Morgan, 'Engine of Empire c. 1750-1898', 200; J. Graham Jones, 'Wales Since 1900', in *The Tempus History of Wales*, 211-44 (211); Davies, *A History of Wales*, 454-5.

[63] Dafydd Johnston, 'The Literary Revival', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, 7 vols, ed. Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), VI, *c. 1900-1996*, 1-21 (12).

[64] Marie Trevelyan, *The Land of Arthur, its Heroes and Heroines* (London: J. Hogg, 1895); Owen Morien Morgan, *The Light of Britannia: the mysteries of ancient British druidism unveiled, the original source of phallic worship revealed; the secrets of the court of King Arthur revealed...the Holy Grail discovered in Wales* (Cardiff: D. Owen, 1987). Ernest Rhys's work is discussed in the following chapter.

[65] Hywel Teifi Edwards, *The Eisteddfod* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), 26.

[66] Johnston, 'The Literary Revival', 9; Tony Conran, 'Introduction', *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, ed. and trans. Conran and J.E. Caerwyn Williams (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 13-72 (70).

[67] Idris Bell, 'Poetry', in *A Great Welshman: symposium of tributes from Idris Bell, J. Ellis Williams, T.E. Nicholas, Keidrych Rhys, W.J. Rees, D. Gwenallt Jones, Dilys Cadwaladr, D. Tecwyn Lloyd, Idris Cox* (Tonypandy: Welsh Committee of the Communist Party, no date, though no earlier than 1944), 3-5 (3).

[68] Edwards, *The Eisteddfod*, 40.

[69] There is no English-language biography (or critical study) of Jones's work. For information see Emrys Wynn Jones, 'Jones, Thomas Gwynn (1871–1949)', *Oxford DNB*.

[70] T. Gwynn Jones, 'Ymadawiad Arthur', in *Caniadau* (Wrecsam: Hughes a'i Fab, 1934), 15-34 (ll. 481-3). No complete translation of 'Ymadawiad Arthur' has been published. An extended extract is available in Tony Conran's second edition of *Welsh Verse*. This translation was very kindly provided by Katie Gramich, who has been of immeasurable assistance in suggestions for this section.

[71] Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', ll. 408, 411.

[72] Jones, 'Ymadawiad Arthur', ll. 391-4.

[73] Johnston, 'The Literary Revival', 12.

[74] Jones, 'Ymadiawiad Arthur', ll. 403-4.

[75] Jones, 'Ymadiawad Arthur', ll. 443-59.

[76] J. Ellis Williams, 'Drama', *A Great Welshman*, 6-8 (7).

[77] Winners of the Eisteddfod Chair for the *awdl* following Jones include: J. Machreth Rees's 'Geraint ac Enid' (Rhyl, 1904); John Dyfnallt Owen's 'Y Greal Santaidd' (Swansea, 1907); D. Cledlyn Davies's 'Dychweliad Arthur' ['Arthur's Return'] (Mold, 1923); William Morris's 'Ogof Arthur' ['Arthur's Cave'] (Neath, 1934). In addition, D. Tecwyn Evans won the *cyfieithiadau* (academic prize) for his translation of Morris's 'The Defence of Guenevere', 'Diffyniad Gwenhwyfar', at the 1915 Bangor Eisteddfod; and Pardarn Besrudd won the Rhiangerdd for 'Olwen' (Neath, 1918). Breaking away from the Romantic version of the Arthurian story, the winner of the 1936 Crown at the Abergwaun Eisteddfod was David Jones's 'Yr anialwch' (The Waste Land). Each year the National Eisteddfod

Committee produces a paperback volume containing all the prize-winning entries, with accompanying adjudications.

[78] Away from the Eisteddfod, the Tristram and Iseult story was the central theme of the most significant work of Elphin (Robert Arthur Griffith), *Sonedau 'r Nos* [Night Sonnets] (1902); E. Tegla Davies published *Y Greal Sanctaidd* [The Holy Grail] for children (Wrexham: Hughes a'i Fab) in 1922; Frank Harold Lee's adaptation of Malory, *The Children's King Arthur* (London: Harrap, 1935) was translated into Welsh as *Brenin Arthur y plant* (London: Harrap, 1953); and Tom Parry-Jones reworked the early Welsh poem 'Preiddau Annwn' into a short verse drama featuring Pluto and Persephone, instead of Arthur and his warriors, in *Preiddau Annwn* (Aberystwyth: Gomer, 1944), 7-19.

[79] These were published in three forms: the 1902 Eisteddfod edn: *Yr Awdl, Y Bryddest, A'r Telynegion* (Caernarfon: Eisteddfod Committee, 1902), 1-48; *Ymadawiad Arthur a Chaniadau Ereill* (Caernarfon: Cwmni y Cyhoeddwyr Cymreig, 1910), and *Detholiad o Ganiadau* (Gwasg Gregynog: y Drenewydd, 1925).

[80] Jones, 'Some Arthurian Material in Keltic', *Aberystwyth Studies* 8 (1926): 37-93; *Welsh Folklore and Folk-Custom* [1930] (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979), esp. 20-22, 77-81, 87-9.

[81] Jones, 'Atro Arthur', in *Manion* (Wrecsam: Hughes a'i fab, 1932), 70-2, ll. 5, l. Again, the English translation has been kindly provided by Kate Gramich.

[82] Jones, 'Arthur's Return', ll. 35-8.

[83] T. Gwynn Jones, 'Tir na n'og', 'Madog', 'Broséliàwnd' and 'Argoed', in *Caniadau*, 60-74; 87-104; 75-8; 105-13.

[84] Jones, 'Broséliàwnd', ll. 54-9; translated by T. Robin Chapman, 'Poetry Between the Wars', in vol. 7 of *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, 50-88 (70).

[85] Jones, 'Argoed', ll. 1-3; trans. Tony Conran, in *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, 230-6 (ll. 1-3).

[86] Jones, 'Argoed', l. 193.

[87] Jones, 'Argoed', l. 8.

[88] J. Graham Jones, 'Wales Since 1900', 225.

[89] I am indebted to Katie Gramich for pointing out this reference.

[90] See Elissa R. Henken, *National Redeemer: Owain Glyndŵr in Welsh tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), especially at 193, 194.

[91] R.S. Thomas, 'Welsh History' (l. 15) and 'Welsh Landscape' (l. 20), in *Collected Poems* [1993], (London: Phoenix, 2000), 36 and 37.

[92] Thomas, 'Welsh History', l. 30.

[93] Thomas, 'Border Blues', *Collected Poems*, ll. 15-23.

[94] Thomas, 'Border Blues', ll. 28-30.

[95] Thomas, 'Welsh Landscape', l. 25; 'Border Blues', l. 6.

[96] Thomas, 'A Welshman to any Tourist', *Collected Poems*, ll. 6, 8-12.

[97] Leslie Norris, *Glyn Jones*, Writers of Wales Series (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), 47.

[98] Glyn Jones, *The Island of Apples* [1965] (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), 107.

[99] Belinda Humfrey, 'An Introductory Discussion', in *The Island of Apples*, vii-xxvii (xi).

[100] Rhŷs, *Arthurian Legend*, 338; Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, 191.

[101] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 167.

[102] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 46.

[103] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 53.

[104] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 46.

[105] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 210.

[106] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 250.

[107] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 32, 98.

[108] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 96-7.

[109] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 251.

[110] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 253.

[111] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 254, 251.

[112] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 255-6.

[113] Jones, *The Island of Apples*, 198.

[114] T. Gwynn Jones, 'Ymadawiad Arthur'.

[115] David Jones, 'The Myth of Arthur', in *Epoch and Artist: selected writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), 212-59 (221).

Chapter Five

[1] Mary Hynes-Berry, 'A Tale "Breffly Drawyn oute of Freynshe"', in *Aspects of Malory*, ed. Toshiyuki Takamiya and Derek Brewer (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1981), 93-106.

[2] Eric Hobsbawm, *Ages of Extremes: the short twentieth century 1914-1991* [1994] (London: Abacus, 1995), 21-222.

[3] B. Ifor Evans, 'Foreword' to W.P. Ker's *The Dark Ages* [1904] (London: Thomas Nelson, 1955), v-xiii. Evans also stated that Ker's scholarly ability lay in his 'synthetic power of uniting, often across centuries, apparently disparate ideas, gave a strong and fresh illumination to the themes he explained' (vi).

[4] See chapter one, 22-7; also Gossedge, 'Thomas Love Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Arthur* and the Romantic Arthur', 162-5, 169.

[5] Ker was born in Glasgow in 1855; he died during a walking expedition in Italy in 1923, a year after he retired from academic life. He held professorships at the University College of South Wales, Cardiff, and University College, London; he was also a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, from 1879; and was elected Chair of Poetry at Oxford in 1920. During the Great War he was engaged in confidential work for the Admiralty. See Evans, 'Foreword', to *Dark Ages*; R.W. Chambers, 'Ker, William Paton', rev. A.S.G. Edwards, *Oxford DNB* (2004).

[6] Ker, *The Dark Ages*, 319; *Epic and Romance: essays on medieval literature* [1896] (New York: Dover, 1957), 335-7.

[7] Ker, *The Dark Ages*, 339.

[8] Ker wrote that the Three Romances 'in spite of their foreign associations [...] are hardly less purely Celtic than the Four Branches [of the *Mabinogion*] themselves' – *The Dark Ages*, 338. The debate over the Welsh or French origins of the Three Romances – which is part of a much wider debate as to the indebtedness of Arthurian romance to Celtic sources, discussed below – is summarised by Gerald Morgan, 'Welsh Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 77-94 (esp. 88-9).

[9] Ker, *Epic and Romance*, 334, 337.

[10] Ker, *Epic and romance*, 337.

[11] Ker, *Epic and Romance*, 335.

[12] Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Objections to the Celtic Origin of the "Matière de Bretagne"', *Romania* 79 (1958): 47-77; reprinted in Loomis, *Studies in Medieval Literature: a memorial collection of essays* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 213-43 (214).

[13] Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1963), 175.

[14] These were: Edmond Faral's *La Légende arthurienne, études et documents*, 3 vols (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'École de Hautes Études, 1929); and Acton Griscom, *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth. With contributions to the study of its place in early British history by Acton Griscom. Together with a literal translation of the Welsh manuscript No. LXI of Jesus College, Oxford, by Robert Ellis Jones* (New York and London: Longmans, 1929).

[15] On this point see Siân Echard, 'Latin Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 62-76 (esp. 62-3 and 67).

[16] John Rhŷs, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* [1891] (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), v; W. Lewis Jones, *King Arthur in History and Legend* [1911], 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933); Alfred Nutt (ed.), *The Mabinogion: mediæval Welsh romances*, trans. Charlotte Guest [1902], 3rd edn (London: David Nutt, 1910). Nutt wrote a series of 'Notes', actually essays, on the Welsh Arthurian tradition, included as an extensive appendix; see also Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail: with especial reference to the hypothesis of its Celtic Origin* [1888] (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003); Jessie L. Weston's use of Welsh sources (as well as many other sources) is apparent throughout her works.

[17] See, for instance, Loomis 'The Irish Origin of the Grail Legend' *Speculum* 8.4 (October 1933): 413-31; William A. Nitze, 'The Waste Land: a Celtic Arthurian theme', *Modern Philology* 43 (1945-6): 58-62; A.C.L. Brown, *The Origin of the Grail Legend* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943).

[18] E.K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* [1927] (Cambridge: Speculum Historiale, 1964); J.S.P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950); Gordon Hall Gerould, 'King Arthur and Politics', *Speculum* 2.1 (January, 1927): 33-51.

[19] Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, 20, 232.

[20] Eugène Vinaver, *Malory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929); 'Malory's *Morte Darthur* in the Light of a Recent Discovery', reprinted from the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (Manchester: Manchester

University Press, 1935); as editor, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947).

[21] Kittredge, an American scholar, offered the identity of Malory as that of Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, Warwickshire. See G.L. Kittredge, 'Who was Sir Thomas Malory?', *Harvard Studies in Philology and Literature* 5 (1896): 85-106. The authorship question would continue in Alfred T. Martin, 'The Identity of the Author of *Le Morte Darthur*', *Archaeologica* 56 (1898): 165-78; E.K. Chambers, *Sir Thomas Malory* [pamphlet] (London: English Association, 1922); Edward Hicks, *Sir Thomas Malory: his turbulent career* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928); Eugène Vinaver, *Malory* (1929). See also Richard R. Griffith, 'The Authorship Question Reconsidered', in *Aspects of Malory*, 159-77; and P.J.C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993). For a contemporary review of Malory studies see A.C. Baugh, 'Documenting Sir Thomas Malory', *Speculum* 8.1 (1933): 3-29.

[22] H. Oskar Sommer (ed.), *Le Morte Darthur, by Syr Thomas Malory. The original edition of William Caxton now reprinted and edited, with an introduction and glossary. With an essay by Andrew Lang*, 3 vols (London: David Nutt, 1889-91); Vida D. Scudder, *The Morte Darthur and its sources* [1917] (London: Dent, 1921); E.K. Chambers, *Sir Thomas Malory* (1922), *Arthur of Britain* (1927), *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), final chapter. Roger Dalrymple, 'English Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 140-57, states the importance of R.H. Wilson's work on the study of Malory's sources. See, particularly, Wilson, 'Notes on Malory's Sources', *Modern Language Notes*, 66 (1951): 22-6. It must be stated, though, that Vinaver's studies of sources were, and remain, the most influential guide.

[23] J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance from the Beginnings down to the Year 1300* [1923], 2 vols (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1958), I, 94, 269, n.2, II, 90-103.

[24] Bruce, *Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, I, 74-91.

[25] Brynley F. Roberts, for instance, stated in 1964 that as 'Bruce was the starting point for any excursion' into Arthurian scholarship, so is Loomis's 1959 collection 'that text today.' See 'Supplementary Bibliography' to the 1964 reprint of Chambers's *Arthur of Britain*, 301-20 (302).

[26] Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, 15.

[27] For instances of all these jumps see Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* [1920] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), and Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* [1926].

[28] Loomis, 'Objections to the Celtic Origin of the "Matière de Bretagne"', 215.

[29] A.C.L. Brown, *The Origins of the Grail Legend*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943), 109.

[30] Loomis, 'Objections to the Celtic Origin of the "Matière de Bretagne"', 220.

[31] Her first work, assisted by Nutt, was a verse translation of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*. She followed this with a critical study, *Legends of the Wagner Drama* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1897).

[32] Loomis, 'Objections to the Celtic Origin of the "Matière de Bretagne"', 213.

[33] Janet Grayson, 'In Quest of Jessie Weston', *Arthurian Literature* 11 (1992): 1-80.

[34] H.R. Tedder, 'Nutt, Alfred Trübner', rev. Sayoni Basu, *Oxford DNB* (2004).

[35] John Fraser, 'Rhŷs, Sir John', rev. Mari A. Williams, *Oxford DNB* (2004), and The Cymmrodorion Society, *Sir John Rhŷs* (London: The Cymmrodorion Society, 1916).

[36] Albert C. Baugh, 'Foreword', in *Studies in Medieval Literature*, by Loomis (1970), v-vi; Kemp Malone, Paul Oscar Kristteller, William Roach, Albert C. Baugh, 'Roger Sherman Loomis', in 'Memoirs and Fellows of the Mediaeval Academy of America', *Speculum* 42.3 (July 1967): 587-94 (590-1).

[37] John B. Marino, *The Grail Legend in Modern Literature*, 37.

[38] Nutt, 'Presidential Address to the Folk-lore Society: "The Fairy Myth of English Literature: its origin and return"', *Folk-lore* 8.1 (1897): 29-53 (53).

[39] Elise Bensal, *The Character of King Arthur in English Literature* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1925), 12.

[40] Weston, *Germany's Literary Debt to France* (London: David Nutt, 1915); *Germany's Crime against France* (London: David Nutt, 1915).

[41] Weston, 'Introduction' to *Sir Gawain and the Lady of Lys*, volume VII of *Arthurian Romances Unrepresented in Malory's 'Morte D'Arthur'*, ed. and trans. Jessie L. Weston (London: David Nutt, 1907), xii-xvi.

[42] Weston, 'Introduction', *Sir Gawain and the Lady of Lys*, xv.

[43] For instance, Loomis, in *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, employs the fame of Bleheris to substantiate his claims concerning the dominance of Celtic bards and *conteurs* in the mid twelfth century (29, 32).

[44] Grayson, 'In quest of Jessie Weston', 12.

[45] Weston, 'Introduction' to *Sir Gawain and the Lady of Lys*, xv-xvi.

[46] Frederic Madden (ed.), *Syr Gawayne; a collection of ancient romance-poems, by Scottish and English authors, relating to that celebrated knight of the Round Table* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1839).

[47] Ernest Rhys (ed.), *Malory's History of King Arthur and the Quest of the Holy Grail* (London: Walter Scott, 1886); (ed.), *The Noble and Joyous History of King Arthur* (London: Walter Scott, 1892); *The Garden of Romance: romantic tales of all time, chosen and edited by E. Rhys* (London; Kegan Paul, 1897); *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems* (London: Nutt, 1898); *Lays of the Round Table and Other Poems* (London: Dent, 1905); *Gwenevere: a lyric play written for music* (London: Dent, 1905); *Enid: a lyric play written for music* (London: Dent, 1908); *The Masque of the Grail* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1908).

[48] The title of Rhys's first volume of autobiography was called *Everyman Remembers* (London: J.M. Dent, 1931).

[49] Rhys, *Wales England Wed* (London: J.M. Dent, 1940), 1. For additional biographical details see also: Alec Waugh, 'Rhys, Ernest Percival', rev. Katherine Chubbuck, *Oxford DNB* (2004), and J. Kimberley Roberts, *Ernest Rhys* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Welsh Arts Council, 1983).

[50] Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, 4.

[51] Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, 86.

[52] Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, 11-5.

[53] Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, 51.

[54] Rhys, 'Introduction' to *Malory's History of King Arthur and the Quest of the Holy Grail*, v-xxxv.

[55] Rhys, 'Introduction' to Malory's *The Noble and Joyous History of King Arthur*; quoted in Marilyn Parins (ed.), *Sir Thomas Malory: the critical heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 329-32 (330).

[56] John Rhŷs, 'Preface', to Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* [1893] (London: Dent, 1956), v-xxiv (v-vi).

[57] Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, 689.

[58] Rhys, 'Arthur's Grave', *Lays of the Round Table*, 63.

[59] Thomas Warton, 'The Grave of King Arthur', in *Poems: a new edition* (London: T. Becket, 1777), 63-72.

[60] Roberts, *Ernest Rhys*, 30.

[61] Rhys 'King Arthur's Sleep: a ballad of Bala Fair' (1898), l. 91, in *'Arthur, the greatest king': an anthology of modern Arthurian Poetry*, ed. Alan Lupack (New York and London: Garland, 1988), 164-9.

[62] Rhys, 'King Arthur's Sleep', ll. 117-21.

[63] Rhys, 'Autobiography', printed on the opening page of *Wales England Wed*.

[64] Roberts, *Ernest Rhys*, 66.

[65] Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, 104.

[66] David Llewellyn Dodds has collected the complete Arthurian works of Masefield, save *Badon Parchments*, in *John Masefield*, Arthurian Poets Series (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1994).

[67] Mary Andere, *Arthurian Links with Herefordshire* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 1996).

[68] John Masefield, *So Long to Learn: chapters of an autobiography* (London: Heinemann, 1952), 90-1. For additional biographical material see Paul Binding, *An Endless Quiet: a reappraisal of John Masefield* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 1998), David Gervais, 'Masefield, John Edward', *Oxford DNB* (2004); and C.B. Smith, *John Masefield: a life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[69] Masefield, *So Long to Learn*, 91.

[70] Masefield, *In the Mill* (London: Heinemann, 1941), 235-6; C.B. Smith, *A Life*, 53.

[71] Masefield, 'Badon Hill', *Collected Poems* [1923], revised edn (London: Heinemann, 1934), 812-8 (ll. 1, 3-4).

[72] Masefield, 'Badon Hill', l. 40.

[73] Masefield, 'Badon Hill', ll. 139-40.

[74] Masefield, 'The Sailing of Hell Race', 818-28 (ll. 19, 37, 52).

[75] Masefield, 'The Sailing of Hell Race', ll. 60-2.

[76] Masefield, 'The Sailing of Hell Race', l. 216.

[77] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* [1929], rev. edn [1957] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 241.

[78] Gervais, 'Masefield, John Edward', *Oxford DNB* (2004).

[79] Masefield, 'The Fight on the Wall', *Collected Poems*, 842-54 (ll. 287-94).

[80] Masefield, 'The Fight on the Beach or The Passing', *Collected Poems*, 868-73 (ll. 23-7).

[81] Masefield, 'A Consecration', *Collected Poems*, 3 (l. 10).

[82] Masefield, 'The Fight on the Beach or The Passing', ll.115-8.

[83] Masefield, 'The Fight on the Beach or The Passing', ll. 129-30.

[84] An example of the desolation of war is contained in one of the unpublished Arthurian poems of this period, 'The Coming of the Pirates' (Dodds, 276), which describes the fear of the people as they see 'the red sails of the pirates' approach: men 'fleeing before the stroke / A widow with a child upon her arm / A handless victim of the pirates' sport' (ll. 17-19).

[85] Masefield, 'Midsummer Night', *Collected Poems*, 837-41 (ll. 84, 91-8).

[86] Masefield, 'Midsummer Night', ll. 122-5.

[87] Masefield, 'Midsummer Night', ll. 131-3.

[88] Masefield, *The Midnight Folk* [1927], in *The Midnight Folk* [and] *The Box of Delights* [1935] (London: William Heinemann, 1991), p. 150 (novels are paginated separately).

[89] Masefield, 'The Begetting of Arthur' [1927], in *Collected Poems*, 793-800.

[90] Masefield, 'The Begetting of Arthur', ll. 41-5.

[91] Masefield, 'Fulfilment', *Collected Poems*, 901-8 (l. 5).

[92] Masefield, 'Fulfilment', l. 88.

[93] Masefield, 'Fulfilment', l. 135.

[94] Masefield, 'Midsummer Night', ll. 198-9.

[95] Masefield, 'Midsummer Night', l. 194.

[96] Eliot placed Jones among the four greatest modern writers – namely himself, Pound and Joyce – in 'A Note of Introduction', *In Parenthesis* [1937] (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), vii-viii (vii); Auden wrote that *In Parenthesis* is 'the greatest book about the First World War' that he had read, while *The Anathemata* (1952), Auden claimed that Jones was 'one of the most important poems of our time' – 'On *The Anathemata*', in *David Jones: Man and Poet*, ed. John Matthias (Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, 1989), 45-9 (45-6); Yeats hailed the author of *In Parenthesis* at a party in 1938 – Keith Alldritt, *David Jones: writer and artist* (London: Constable, 2003), 108; Stephen Spender took Stravinsky to visit Jones in his monastic room in Harrow-on-the-Hill sometime in the 1950s. Stravinsky, who was a great admirer of Jones's work said that it was 'like visiting a holy man in his cell' – Spender, 'David Jones', *Man and Poet*, 65-8.

[97] T.S. Eliot, 'A Note of Introduction', vii.

[98] Jones, 'Preface', *The Anathemata* [1952] (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 11. Keith Alldritt's *David Jones: writer and artist* is the most complete biography.

[99] Jones, 'Preface', *The Anathemata*, 11.

[100] See, for instance: Auden, 'On *The Anathemata*', in *Man and Poet*, 51-3; J.E. Meredith, Review of Jon Silkin, *Out of Battle: the poetry of the Great War*, in *Poetry Wales* 8.3 (Winter, 1972): 96-105 (103). Jones's second great work, *The Anathemata*, which many critics have favoured over *In Parenthesis*, was never quite finished to Jones's satisfaction. Two volumes of poetic fragments have been collected by his friends René Hague and Harman Grisewood: *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974) and *The Roman Quarry* (New York: Sheep Meadow Press, 1981).

[101] Jones, 'Preface', *In Parenthesis*, xi.

[102] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 70, 1; cf. Malory, *Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, 280.

[103] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 59; cf. Malory, *Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, 519.

[104] Jones, 'Preface', *In Parenthesis*, xi.

[105] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 66, and corresponding note: n.12, 203.

[106] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 160, 162-3.

[107] In his 'Note of Introduction' Eliot wrote: 'as for the writer himself, he is a Londoner of Welsh and English descent. He is decidedly a Briton' (vii). For discussion of Jones's conception of Anglo-Welsh identity see Pennar Davies, 'London-Welsh Islander', in *Poetry Wales* 8.3 (Winter, 1972): 10-3, and William Blisset, 'The Welsh Thing in Here', in *David Jones, Artist and Poet*, ed. Paul Hills, Warwick Studies in the European Humanities (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 109-21. Two brief essays by Jones are of additional interest: 'Wales and the Crown' and 'Welshness in Wales', in *Epoch and Artist: selected writings*, ed. Harman Grisewood (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), 39-50 and 51-3.

[108] Jones, 'The Myth of Arthur', *Epoch and Artist*, 212-59 (216).

[109] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 79.

[110] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 80-2.

[111] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 84.

[112] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, n. 37 (K), 209.

[113] Jones was familiar with Collingwood's work, referring to it in the Prefaces to both *In Parenthesis* (xiii) and *The Anathemata* (36).

[114] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, n. 9, 219: 'Various passages of Malory have influence here. Particularly book xx, ch. 2.'

[115] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 138.

[116] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 137.

[117] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 139.

[118] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 154.

[119] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 154.

[120] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 109.

[121] '*In Parenthesis* poses for itself the problem of re-attaching traditional meanings to the unprecedented actualities of the war. [...] The poem is a deeply conservative work which uses the past not, as it often pretends to do, to shame the present, but really to ennoble it. The effect of the poem, for all its horrors, is to rationalise and even to validate the war by implying that it somehow recovers many of the motifs and values of medieval chivalric romance. [... It is both] overtly patriotic and even propagandist' – Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* [1975] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 145, 147. Cf. Mary E. Jones's article, 'Heroism in Unheroic Warfare', *Poetry Wales* 8.3 (Winter, 1972), 14-21: 'The great Welsh heroic battles are battles of defeat for the Welsh; their greatness lies in sacrifice, not in victory. The First World War for David Jones does not continue the tradition of Waterloo, of Trafalgar, of the Boer War, but of ancient battles which were heroic defeats, battles such as those at Catraeth and at Camlann and Llewelyn's last battle. [...] What the men privately achieve is in no way related to the aims, achievements and failures of the organising "staff", for there is a barrier of total non-communication between the privates and "staff"' (15).

[122] Elizabeth Ward, *David Jones: mythmaker* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983). Cf. Kathleen Henderson Staudt's refutal in 'Recent Criticism on David Jones', *Contemporary Literature*

28 (Fall, 1986): 409-22 (esp. 416-20); Staudt's 'The Decline of the West and the Optimism of the Saints: David Jones's reading of Oswald Spengler', in David Jones: man and poet, 443-63; and Thomas Dilworth, 'David Jones and Fascism', Man and Poet, 143-59.

[123] Aldritt, David Jones, 106.

[124] Aldritt, David Jones, 156.

[125] Dilworth, 'David Jones and Fascism', 155.

[126] Jones, Review of René Hague's translation of The Song of Roland, in The Tablet, December 24, 1938, reprinted in The Dying Gaul, ed. Harman Grisewood (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 94-104 (104, 100).

[127] On the parallels between the Catholic right and fascism see Hobsbawm, Age of Extremes, 114-5. Cf. Elizabeth Ward's contextualisation of Jones's Catholicism with regard to the Catholic intellectuals, such as Christopher Dawson, with whom Jones mixed in the 20s and 30s: David Jones: mythmaker, 42-63.

[128] Barber, King Arthur, 194; C.S. Lewis, 'Preface', Essays Presented to Charles Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 1947), vii; John Heath Stubbs, Charles Williams (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), 10; David Llewellyn Dodds, Charles Williams, Arthurian Poets (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1991), 1.

[129] These critics are mentioned in Williams's essay, 'Malory and the Grail Legend' (1944), in The Image of the City and Other Essays, ed. Anne Ridler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944), 186-94.

[130] Elisabeth Brewer, 'Charles Williams and Arthur Edward Waite', VII: an Anglo-American Literary Review 4 (1983): 45-67 (54).

[131] Extracts from the 'commonplace book' are contained in Williams's The Image of the City and Other Essays, ed. Anne Ridler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

[132] Humphrey Carpenter, The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and their friends [1978] (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 80-3.

[133] Williams, 'Malory and the Grail Legend', 187.

[134] Williams, War in Heaven [1930] (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2001).

[135] Williams, 'Preface', The Region of Summer Stars (1944), 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), vii. This edition also contains Taliessin through Logres, separately paginated.

[136] Williams, 'Preface', Region, vii.

[137] William Wistar Comfort (trans.), The Quest of the Holy Grail (London: Dent, 1926).

[138] See, for instance, Dodds, 'General Introduction', 8-10; Lupack, The Oxford Guide to the Arthurian Legend, 247; and Glen Cavaliero, Charles Williams: poet of theology (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), esp. 166-77.

[139] On the politics of the Queste see Albert Pauphilet, Etudes sur la 'Queste del Saint Graal' attribute à Gautier Map (Paris: H. Champion, 1921), 26; Stephen Knight, Arthurian Literature and Society, 127, and 'From Jerusalem to Camelot: King Arthur and the Crusades', in Medieval Codicoogy, Iconography, Literature and Translation, ed. P.R. Monks and D.D.R. Owen (Leiden: E.J. Brilè, 1994), 223-42 (231).

[140] For discussion of the relationships between anti-democratic politics and Catholic and Anglo-Catholic intellectuals see Jay P. Corrin, *Catholic Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democracy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Converts: British and American intellectuals turn to Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornel University Press, 1997), especially chapter 10, 'Fascists, Communists and Total War', 219-36; Tom Buchanan, 'Great Britain', in *Political Catholicism in Europe*, ed. Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 248-74. For a sympathetic discussion of the Catholic counter-modern discourse of the 1930s see Adam Schwartz's *The Third Spring: G.K. Chesterton, Grahame Greene, Christopher Dawson and David Jones* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2005).

[141] Williams claimed that the presence of Byzantium in the Taliessin-cycle was not inspired by Yeats's recent Byzantine Poems: 'The Making of *Taliessin*' [1941], in *Image of the City*, 179-93 (181).

[142] Williams, 'Notes on the Arthurian Myth', *Image of the City*, 175-9 (178).

[143] Williams, 'The Prayers of the Pope', *Region*, 50-61 (l. 102).

[144] Lewis, *Arthurian Torso*, 104.

[145] Williams, 'The Coming of Arthur', *Taliessin*, 14-5 (ll. 10, 12).

[146] Williams, 'The Coming of Arthur', ll. 11, 21, 20.

[147] Williams, 'The Coming of Arthur', l. 20.

[148] Williams, 'The Coming of Arthur', ll. 23, 27.

[149] Williams, 'The Coming of Arthur', ll. 34, 37.

[150] T.S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1934); *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939). In Eliot, *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (London: Penguin, 1953), 112, 198.

[151] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: an introduction* [1983] (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 35.

[152] Eliot, 'Modern Education and the Classics', *Selected Essays*, 515.

[153] Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*, in *Selected Writing*, 198.

[154] Eliot, quoted in Tony Sharpe, *T.S. Eliot: a literary life* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 114.

[155] Williams, 'Bors to Elayne: on the king's coins', *Taliessin*, 42-5 (ll. 29-31).

[156] Williams, 'On the King's Coins', ll. 54-9.

[157] Williams, 'On the King's Coins', ll. 60-3.

[158] Williams, 'On the King's Coins', ll. 72-3.

[159] Williams, 'On the King's Coins', ll. 94-6.

[160] Williams, 'On the King's Coins', l. 32.

[161] Williams, 'The Coming of Palomides', *Taliessin*, 33-7 (ll. 55-65).

[162] Williams, 'Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney', *Taliessin*, 38-41 (ll. 2, 9-10).

[163] Williams, 'The Vision of the Empire', ll. 255-6; 'The Son of Lancelot', *Taliessin*, 54-63.

[164] Williams, 'The Crowning of Arthur', *Taliessin*, 19-21 (l. 63).

[165] '[I]t was in the beginning of Arthur's time and of the Round Table' – Guest (trans.), 'Taliesin', in *The Mabingion* [1838-46] (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 127-48. Guest's notes to 'Taliesin' (293-9) may also have had an influence on Williams.

[166] Iolo Morganwg, NLW MS 13139A (late eighteenth / early nineteenth century), transcribed and translated by Patrick K. Ford, in *Ystoria Taleisin* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), 42.

[167] Iolo Morganwg, NLW MS 13140A (late eighteenth / early nineteenth century), transcribed and translated by Ford, *Ystoria Taliesin*, 42.

[168] Anon., 'Taliesin', *The Shrine of Wisdom* 12.48 (Summer Solstice, 1931): 367-72.

[169] 'His heart turned to know more than could be learned / by Wye of that white healing metaphysic; / he sought the sea and the City; he was caught by a rumour.' – 'The Calling of Taliessin', *Region*, 5-20 (ll. 89-91). 'Druid-sprung' – 'Taliessin's Return to Logres', *Taliessin*, 3-5 (l. 33).

[170] Williams, 'The Calling of Taliessin', ll. 191 to the end.

[171] Williams, 'Taliessin Return to Logres'.

[172] Williams, 'Mount Badon', *Taliessin*, 16-8 (ll. 40, 35-6).

[173] Williams, 'Mount Badon', *Taliessin*, ll. 43-4.

[174] Gwyn A. Williams, *When was Wales? A history of the Welsh* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 165. For a near-contemporary reading of Iolo's configuration of the bard in Celtic Britain see Islwyn ap Nicholas, *Iolo Morganwg: bard of liberty* (London: Foyle's Welsh Press, 1945).

[175] Percy Shelley, 'The Defence of Poetry' (1821), in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*, ed. Mrs Shelley (London: Edward Moxon, 1840), 1-57 (57).

Chapter Six

[1] T.H. White, Projected Introduction to *The Once and Future King* (never published), quoted in Elisabeth Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King'* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993), 210.

[2] Sylvia Townsend Warner, 'Afterword', *The Once and Future King: the complete edition*, by T.H. White (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 813-25 (814). For further biographical details see Townsend Warner, *T.H. White: a biography* (London: Jonathan Cape with Chatto and Windus, 1967); Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King*, 1-16; Richard Ingrams, 'White, Terence Hanbury, (1906-1964)', rev. François Gallix, *Oxford DNB* (2004).

[3] A complete bibliography of White's work can be found in François Gallix, *T.H. White: an annotated bibliography* (New York and London: Garland, 1986).

[4] White, *The Sword in the Stone* (London: Collins, 1938); the U.S. edn (New York: Putnam) appeared in 1939.

[5] White, *The Witch in the Wood* (New York: Putnam, 1939); British edn (London: Collins) appeared in 1940.

[6] *The Ill-Made Knight* (New York: Putnam, 1940); British edn (London: Collins) appeared in 1941.

[7] Townsend Warner, *T.H. White*, 175.

[8] White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Collins, 1958); U.S. edn published the same year (New York: Putnam).

[9] White, *The Book of Merlyn* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1977).

[10] White, *TOFK*, 334.

[11] White, *TOFK*, 335.

[12] White, *TOFK*, 342.

[13] White, *TOFK*, 454.

[14] White, *TOFK*, 526, 517.

[15] White, *TOFK*, 602.

[16] White, *TOFK*, 685.

[17] White, *TOFK*, 697.

[18] White, *TOFK*, 781.

[19] White, *TOFK*, 812.

[20] Townsend Warner, *T.H. White*, 99.

[21] White, Letter to David Garnett, autumn 1940, in *The White / Garnett Letters* (London: Cape, 1968), 75. See also Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King'*, chapter 3, 48-75 and Alan Macdonald, 'A Lost Story of Perversion: T.H. White's *The Witch in the Wood*, *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas, Austin* 23.4 (1993): 106-29; Ingrams and Gallix, 'White, Terence Hanbury', *Oxford DNB* (2004).

[22] White, *TOFK*, 463-5.

[23] The older Lancelot enjoys being 'nagg[ed]' over drinking too much (*TOFK*, 587), while Agravaine is not only frequently drunk, but appears to be suffering from the effects of delirium tremens (*TOFK*, 568, 605); on Arthur's 'warm feelings' for Lyó-lyok see *TOFK*, 773-6 and 783-4. These passages were cut when the geese scenes were inserted into *The Sword in the Stone* (*TOFK*, 169-87). Townsend Warner's biography of White contains many instance of White's affection for animals, especially his Red Setter bitch, Brownie.

[24] For White's eighteen-point list on Lancelot's characteristics see Townsend Warner, *T.H. White*, 148-50.

[25] White, *TOFK*, 339.

[26] Rosemary Sutcliff, *King Arthur Stories* [*The Sword and the Circle*; *The Light Beyond the Forest*; *The Road to Camlann*] (London: Red Fox, 1999).

[27] Henry Treece, *The Great Captains* [1956] (Manchester: Savoy, 1980), 104, 110, 120.

[28] Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 516-9, 556-9.

[29] White, *The Witch in the Wood* (1939), 272.

[30] Townsend Warner, *T.H. White*, 166.

[31] White, *TOFK*, 511.

[32] White, *TOFK*, 511.

[33] White, *TOFK*, 511-2.

[34] White, Journal, June 14, 1940, quoted in Townsend Warner, *T.H. White*, 166.

[35] For hawking see *TOFK*, 9-11, 358-9; jousting, 54, 345-7; armour, 20, 59-72, 342-7; archery, 39; hunting, 146-59; and architecture 577-8.

[36] White, *TOFK*, 345, 281, 343, 349.

[37] White, *TOFK*, 5, 23.

[38] White, *TOFK*, 213.

[39] White, *TOFK*, 810.

[40] Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites are mentioned on page 345, Roger Ascham is unconsciously quoted by Arthur as he comments on the gradual decline of his kingdom: 'If something is not done [...] the whole Round Table will go to ruin. It is not only that feud and open manslaughter have started: there is the bold bawdry as well', *TOFK*, 469. The rest are discussed between 702-4 and 809-12.

[41] Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King*, 86.

[42] White, Letter to David Garnett, May 1940, *The White / Garnett Letters*, 100.

[43] White, Journal (no date), quoted in Sylvia Townsend Warner, 'Afterword', *TOFK*, 814; *TOFK*, 335.

[44] Edward Strachey (ed.), *Le Morte D'Arthur* [1868], 2nd edn [1891] (London: Macmillan, 1901), xiii. White's heavily annotated copy of Strachey's *Morte* is now preserved in the Harry Ransom Centre in the University of Texas, Austin, along with a great collection of White's MSS and papers. See also Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King*', 198, 211.

[45] White, Projected Introduction to *The Once and Future King* (never published), quoted in Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King*', 210.

[46] David Garnett, *Great Friends: portraits of seventeen writers* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 216.

[47] Geoffrey of Monmouth states that the twelve-year-old Gawain was sent to Rome to serve Pope Sulpicus, who later knights him (*Historia*, trans. Thorpe, IX.11, 223). This formed the germ of later *enfances* of Gawain in *De Ortu Waluuanii* (possibly written by a Welsh author) and the French 'Les Enfances Gauvain'. See J.D. Bruce (ed.), *'Historia Meriadoci' and 'De Ortu Waluuanii': two Arthurian romances of the XIIIth century in Latin* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1913); and M.L. Day (ed. and trans.), *The Garland Library of Medieval Literature*, vol. 15 (New York: Garland, 1984), 97-123.

[48] H. Oskar Sommer (ed.), 'Le Livre de Lancelot du Lac', in *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, Edited from Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 8 vols (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1910), vol. 3. The relevant passage on Lancelot's childhood and early adventures is found at 33-129. For the translation see Lucy Allen Paton, *Le Livre de Lancelot du Lac: Sir Lancelot of the Lake: a French prose romance of the thirteenth century* (London: Routledge, 1929).

[49] White, Letter to L.J. Potts, September 1930, *Letters to a Friend: the correspondence between T.H. White and L.J. Potts*, ed. François Gallix (Gloucester: Sutton, 1984), 25.

[50] White, *TOFK*, 209, 702.

[51] White, *TOFK*, 561.

[52] White *TOFK*, 575, 599.

[53] White, Letter to L.J. Potts, December 5, 1940, *Letters to a Friend*, 115-6.

[54] White, *TOFK*, 721, 803.

[55] White, *TOFK*, 739.

[56] White, *TOFK*, 764.

[57] White, *TOFK*, 722-3.

[58] White, *TOFK*, 799.

[59] White, *TOFK*, 780.

[60] White, *TOFK*, 781.

[61] White, *TOFK*, 722, 801.

[62] White, *TOFK*, 801.

[63] White, *The Sword in the Stone* [1938 edn] (London: HarperCollins, 1971), 187-8; In *TOFK* the passage is repeated, with the mention of Sir Ector's love for his people removed (136-7).

[64] White, *The Sword in the Stone*, 188, 195-217; *TOFK*, 137, 148-59.

[65] White, *TOFK*, 787-8.

[66] White, *TOFK*, 789.

[67] White, *TOFK*, 788.

[68] White, *TOFK*, 790-1.

[69] Townsend Warner, *T.H. White*, 182.

[70] White, *TOFK*, 284.

[71] White, *TOFK*, 284.

[72] White, *TOFK*, 284.

[73] White, *TOFK*, 562-3.

[74] David Garnett, *Great Friends*, 215.

[75] White, *The Witch in the Wood*, 9.

[76] White, *TOFK*, 225-32.

[77] White, Journal, October 15, 1940, quoted in Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King'*, 56.

[78] White, *The Ill-Made Knight*, 187.

[79] White, *TOFK*, 472

[80] White, *TOFK*, 561-2.

[81] White, *TOFK*, 563-4, 646.

[82] White, *TOFK*, 562-3.

[83] Hallam Tennyson, quoted in preliminary notes to 'Merlin and Vivien', 805-807 (805).

[84] White, *The Sword in the Stone*, 295; *TOFK*, 220.

[85] White, *The Witch in the Wood*, 26-7; *TOFK*, 237-8.

[86] White, *TOFK*, 238.

[87] White, *TOFK*, 241-4.

[88] White, *TOFK*, 245.

[89] Townsend Warner, 'Afterword', 818-9.

[90] White, *TOFK*, 696; François Gallix, 'T.H. White and the Legend of Arthur: from animal fantasy to political morality', trans. Edward Donald Kennedy, in *King Arthur: a casebook*, ed. Kennedy (New York: Garland, 1996), 285; originally published as 'T.H. White et la légende du roi Arthur: de la fantasie animale au moralisme politique', *Études anglaises* 34 (1981): 192-203.

[91] David Garnett, *Great Friends*, 219.

[92] Alan Macdonald, 'A Lost Story of Perversion: T.H. White's *The Witch in the Wood*', *Literary Chronicle of the University of Texas, Austin* 23.4 (1993): 106-29 (123).

[93] White, *TOFK*, 568.

[94] White, *TOFK*, 697.

[95] See, for instance, Alan Lupack, 'The Book that Grows Up', *Arthuriana* 11.3 (Fall 2001): 103-114 (112-3).

[96] Brewer, *T.H. White's 'The Once and Future King'*, 3.

[97] I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method series (London: Kegan Paul, 1924).

[98] I.A. Richards, *Science and Poetry*, Psyche Miniatures 1 (London: Kegan Paul, 1926), 82.

[99] White, *TOFK*, 696-7.

[100] Roger Lancelyn Green, *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* [1953] (London: Puffin, 1997); Phyllis Briggs, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (London: Thames, 1954); Enid Blyton, *Knights of the Round Table* (London: Latimer, 1950); *Tales of Brave Adventure: stories about Robin Hood and King Arthur* (London: Dean, 1963); Rosemary Sutcliff, *Sword at Sunset* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963); Mary Stewart, *The Crystal Cave* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970); *The Hollow Hills* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973); *The Wicked Day* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1983). Enid Blyton wrote several works on the Arthurian legend, generally retellings of the *Morte Darthur* for children. Her *Malory Towers* sequence (1946-51) is also of interest as, while not directly Arthurian, it is very much concerned with translating a nineteenth-century view of chivalry into a female environment. Often misspelled *Mallory Towers*, the proper title is an allusion to the author of the *Morte Darthur*.

[101] James Bridie, 'Holy Isle: a play in three acts', in *Plays for Plain People* (London: Constable, 1944). Separately paginated.

[102] Bridie, 'Lancelot', in *Plays for Plain People* 17, 4-5.

[103] Stephen R. Lawhead, *The Pendragon Cycle: Taliesin* (London: Lion, 1987), *Merlin* (London: Lion 1988), *Arthur* (London: Lion, 1989), *Pendragon* (London: Lion, 1994), *Grail* (Oxford: Lion, 1997); Fay Sampson, *Daughter of Tintagel Sequence: Wise Woman's Telling* (London: Headline, 1989), *White Nun's Telling* (London: Headline, 1989), *Black Smith's Telling* (London: Headline, 1990), *Taliesin's Telling* (London: Headline, 1991), *Herself* (London: Headline, 1992); Vera Chapman, *The Three Damosels sequence: The Green Knight* (London: Collins, 1975), *The King's Damosel* (London: Collins, 1976), *King Arthur's Daughter* (London: Collins, 1976). See n. 98 for details of Stewart's work.

[104] Alan Jay Lerner (Book and Lyrics) and Frederick Loewe (Music), *Camelot: based on 'The Once and Future King' by T.H. White* [first performed in 1960] (London: Chappell, 1961).

[105] Lerner, *The Street Where I Live* (London: Hodder and Stoughton), 216-9.

[106] *Camelot*, dir. Joshua Logan (Warner Bros., 1967).

[107] Theodore H. White, 'For President Kennedy: An Epilogue,', *Life* December 6, 1963, quoted in Lerner, *The Street Where I Live*, 222.

[108] Winston Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, 6 vols (London: Cassell, 1956), I, 46-8.

[109] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* [1776-88], ed. David Womersley (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, 2000), 3 vols, II, 449-50; E.K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, 1.

[110] R.G. Collingwood and J.N.L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 320, 324.

[111] Collingwood, *Roman Britain*, 324.

[112] N.J. Higham, *King Arthur and Mythmaking*, 19, 26.

[113] Rosemary Sutcliff, *Sword at Sunset*, vii.

[114] Henry Treece, *The Great Captains* [1956] (Manchester: Savoy Books, 1980), 236.

[115] Masefield, *Badon Parchments* (London: Heinemann, 1947), 140.

[116] Masefield, *Badon Parchments*, 160.

[117] John Cowper Powys, *Porius: a romance of the Dark Ages* [1951] (London: Village Press, 1974), 31. 276-7.

[118] Victor Golightly, 'John Cowper Powys and Anarchism', *'To Hell with Culture': anarchism and twentieth-century British literature*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 126-140 (136).

[119] Powys, *Porius*, 276-8.

[120] Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon* (New York: Knopf, 1982); Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones (dirs), *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Michael White Productions, 1975); John Matthews, *The Grail Seeker's Companion: a guide to the Grail Quest in the Aquarian age* (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1986). The last comes complete with several meditation exercises based on the Grail legend. Rutland Boughton's last two operas in his Arthur-cycle have never been performed. The socialist conclusion to the latter play (the peasants revolt against the tyranny of their feudal overlords) made public performance always unlikely in Britain. Nonetheless, Boughton's work still has the power to irritate conservatives, such as Geoffrey Ashe:

> One of his more disruptive qualities was a left-wing outlook which could take curiously graceless forms (he once refused to conduct at a performance of 'The Immortal Hour' because King George V was there). The Arthur cycle, in his hands, kept its Tennysonian panoply yet ended with a peasant's revolt and a red dawn in the east. (Ashe, 'The New Matter of Britain', in *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*, ed. Ashe (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), 244-57 (255).)

[121] Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982).

[122] Jessie L. Weston, 'Introduction' to *Sir Gawain and the Lady of Lys* (London: D. Nutt, 1907), xv-xvi.

[123] Weston (ed. and trans.), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: a Middle –English Arthurian romance retold in modern prose* [1909] (New York: Dover, 2003); J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon (eds), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925); Weston, *The Legend of Sir Gawain: studies upon its original scope and significance* (London: D. Nutt, 1897); and G.L. Kittredge, *A Study of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1914).

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[127] Vera Chapman, *The Green Knight* (London: Collins, 1975); Iris Murdoch, *The Green Knight* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993); Margaret Meadley, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight retold for Children* (York: Yorick, 1975); Selina Hastings, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Methuen/Walker, 1981); Margaret Berrill, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Methuen, 1988), Mick Gowar, *Sir Gawain and the Rugby Sevens* (London: Collins Educational, 1995).

[128] Roger Dalrymple, 'English Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 140-57 (150).

[129] Marie Borroff, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: a stylistic and metrical study* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962).

[130] J.A. Burrow, *A Reading of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965); Larry Benson, *Art and Tradition in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1965); Donald Roy Howard and Christian Zacher (eds), *Critical Studies of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968); A.C. Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet: a critical study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); and W.R.J. Barron (ed. and trans.), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974).

[131] Extracts, with English translation, of A.S.D. Smith's *Trystan had Ysolt* are available in *Inside Merlin's Cave: a Cornish Arthurian Reader, 1000-2000*, ed. Amy Hale, Alan M. Kent and Tim Saunders (London: Francis Boutle, 2000), 203-12; 223-33.

[132] An extract from Alan M. Kent's 'Nativitas Christi', is included in *Inside Merlin's Cave*, 217-8.

[133] Nigel Hicks, 'Cornish Independence Back on the Menu', *Daily Telegraph*, June 15, 2007: 22.

[134] Anthony Burgess, *Any Old Iron* (London: Heinemann, 1989), 91.

[135] Burgess, *Any Old Iron*, 338.

[136] Anthony Powell, *The Fisher King* [1986] (London: Sceptre, 1987), 250.

[137] Roger Dalrymple, 'English Arthurian Literature', 147.

[138] Vinaver, 'Introduction', *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Vinaver [1947], 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), v-vi (vi), xix-cxxv (xli).

[139] See, among others, Robert H. Wilson, 'How Many Books did Malory Write?', *University of Texas Studies in English* 30 (1951): 1-23; R.M. Lumianksy, 'The Question of Unity in Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Tulane Studies in English* 5 (1955): 29-39; C.S. Lewis, 'The English Prose *Morte*', *Essays on Malory*, ed. J.A.W. Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963): 7-28. A collection of responses to Vinaver was edited by Lumiansky under the title *Malory's Originality, a critical study of 'Le Morte Darthur'* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964).

[140] Vinaver, 'Introduction', *Works*, xliv.

[141] Green, *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*, 11.

[142] Sutcliff, *King Arthur Stories* [*The Sword and the Circle*; *The Light Beyond the Forest*; *The Road to Camlann*] (London: Red Fox, 1999), 635-6; James Riordan, *Tales of King Arthur* [1982] (London: Dean, 1992), 119-20. All three conclusions are very similar and it may be that Sutcliff and Riordan are more directly influenced by Green than Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur'.

[143] John Rhŷs, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* [1891] (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966); J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance from the Beginnings Down to the Year 1300* [1923], 2 vols (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1958); Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*; Roger Sherman Loomis (ed.), *Arthurian Literature of the Middle Ages: a collaborative history*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

[144] Dalrymple, 'English Arthurian Literature', 146.

[145] *Essays on Malory*, ed. J.A.W. Bennett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); *Aspects of Malory*, ed. Derek Brewer and Toshiyuki Takamiya (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981); *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak (Kalamazoo, MI: 1985); *A Companion to Malory*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *A Companion to the Gawain Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Alexander and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); *The Arthur of the Welsh*, ed. Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991); *The Arthur of the English*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999); *The Arthur of the Germans*, ed. W.H. Jackson and S.A. Ranawake (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); *The Arthur of the French*, ed. G.S. Burgess and K.E. Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006).

[146] L. Lawrence Schimel and Martin H. Greenburg (eds), *Camelot Fantastic* (New York: DAW, 1998).

[147] Mike Ashley, *The Pendragon Chronicles* (London: Raven, 1989), *The Camelot Chronicles* (London: Robinson, 1992), *The Merlin Chronicles* (London: Raven, 1995), *The Chronicles of the Holy Grail* (London: Raven, 1996), *The Chronicles of the Round Table* (London: Raven, 1997).

[148] Quoted in Janet Grayson, 'In Quest of Jessie Weston', 12.

Conclusion

[1] Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', ll. 329-30.

[2] For discussion of the dating of Malory's *Morte Darthur* see the Introduction, n. 44.

[3] Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', ll. 503, 508-12.

[4] Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', l. 474.

[5] Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', l. 408.

[6] Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', 504

[7] Cf. Alan Lupack and Barbara Tepa Lupack, *King Arthur in America* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), especially their conclusion (326): 'The prevalence of Arthurian material in American popular culture, which makes the legends accessible to everyone and which promotes the ideals of the Arthurian realm as attainable by anyone who cultivates the right values, is in fact the ultimate democratization of the Arthurian tradition.'

[8] David Jones, 'The Myth of Arthur', in *Epoch and Artist: selected writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), 212-59 (221).

[9] Jones, 'The Myth of Arthur', 221; Jones, 'The Sleeping Lord', in *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments* [1974] (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 70-96 (96).

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Considering the nature of this study, wherein scholarship and creative/fictional literature have both been understood as cultural, ideological products, I have eschewed the usual division between 'primary' and 'secondary' texts.

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