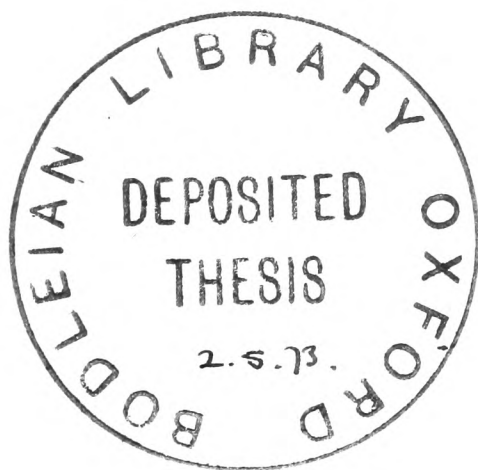




N.V. WYLIE

Lady Margaret Hall

(Hr 1923)

D. Phil. Thesis

THE TRISTAN LEGEND 1804-1914

ABSTRACT

The thesis traces the emergence and development of the Tristan legend during the 19th century as a subject for both scholarly research and creative reinterpretation, the latter being ultimately dependent on the former. In addition, a context of 19th century Arthurian literature is included, together with a discussion of the growth of studies in mediaeval literature. As Tristan scholarship declined in England due attention has been paid to its Continental development.

After a consideration of the unique qualities of the legend and a summary of current scholarly ideas on its development, the thesis continues with an enquiry into the state of mediaeval studies at the beginning of the 19th century, out of which arose Scott's edition of Sir Tristrem. The genesis of this work is traced as an example of contemporary academic method, and is followed by an overall view of British and French scholarship in the first half of the century, including the work of Southey, Guest and la Villemarqué, who provided source material for Tennyson, Arnold and the Pre-Raphaelites.

From the early Continental work with its developing Celtic affiliations came Arnold's Tristram and Iseult. This forms the subject of the third chapter and is set against a background of nascent Arthurian literature in England, which mostly drew on previous English scholarship for material. The poem is seen as an uneasy work originating from unfamiliar subject matter on the one hand, and Arnold's recoil from Marguerite on the other. The artistry of the work, its revisions and contemporary reception are discussed, and it is finally seen as remaining outside the mainstream of Arthurian literature, but having affinities with the later Pre-Raphaelite ethos.

The more usual moralistic attitudes adopted towards the Arthurian legend are discussed in Chapter IV, where the antithetical heroes of Lancelot and Galahad are seen as the heroes of the mid-century. Tennyson's

Idylls of the King is then considered as a reflection and development of those attitudes, thus illuminating his treatment of the Tristan story in 'The Last Tournament'. After dealing with the genesis of the Idylls and the 1859 and 1869 publications, the chapter continues with a consideration of 'The Last Tournament' from its inception in the draft of the Gareth Idyll to its cool reception in 1872. Tennyson's treatment of Malory, the significance of the Idyll in relation to the overall conception and as analysis of its structural and symbolic qualities are included.

Swinburne's Tristram of Lyonesse is seen in the following chapter as embodying the Pre-Raphaelite revolt against this interpretation of the Arthurian material. It is prefigured in Queen Yseult and the early fragments, where is also seen Swinburne's concern with an accurate representation of the sources, together with the stylistic influence of Morris. The prolonged composition of Tristram of Lyonesse, contemporary reaction, Swinburne's use of sources and a discussion of the artistic anomaly this creates within the poem, lead up to a comparison with Wagner's Tristan und Isolde.

Chapter VI begins with an examination of English scholarship and current attitudes to Malory which anticipated the Wagnerite reaction against Gottfried's Tristan. It then continues with a survey of the academic enthusiasm for Tristan on the Continent, tracing its progress from the work of Bossert to that of Bédier and Schoepperle. As the Tristan legend was thus established academically, so it came to be established on a creative level. The coinciding of Wagner's Tristan and the new cultural mood saw an outcrop of Tristan re-workings which reflect the Aesthetic climate in their Wagner-based projections of transcendental passion. This, together with a discussion of the backward-looking Arthurian dramas, is the subject of chapter VII.

Finally, the last chapter summarizes the emergence of the legend in three forms: the academic form, the popular narrative form and lastly, through the Wagner enthusiasm, as a symbol of rarefied passion. It also considers 19th century attitudes towards the romantic Middle Ages in conjunction with the artistic flaws which occur in mediaevalistic works of the period.

Preface

Tristan and Iseult are among those few pairs of lovers whose names are synonymous with fatal and forbidden passion. But at the beginning of the 19th century they were virtually unknown. This thesis aims to investigate the development of their legend from obscurity to adulation in literature and scholarship. Both these aspects are included since the literary reworkings of the legend represent outcrops against the steady background of scholarly studies, and are to a great extent moulded and modified by the state of their development.

It has also been necessary to include a study of the Arthurian legend in general during the 19th century, where it seems relevant to the Tristan literature, since interest in the former dictated, qualified and detracted from interest in the latter. For much of the period, until the popularity of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde established the legend in its own right, it was regarded as an offshoot of the Arthurian cycle. This was advantageous in that it was brought to non-academic notice in the wake of the Arthurian enthusiasm, but detrimental in that it was much overshadowed before it managed to assume its own identity.

The Arthurian background is not so relevant in the field of scholarship. Interest in the Tristan romances was dependent on the growth of mediaeval studies in general, rather than specifically Arthurian research, although the two fields tended to overlap on wider issues such as the provenance of the matière de bretagne. As the Tristan legend soon came to be regarded as a distinct area for study, a discussion of the development of Arthurian scholarship has been omitted, but a brief survey of the state of mediaeval studies has

been included where necessary. In the field of Tristan scholarship discussion has been unavoidably extended into foreign works, as the Tristan romances became almost exclusively the concern of French and German scholars.

As the legend retained its popularity well into the 1930's and has by no means been forgotten since, any chronological division must be, to some extent, arbitrary. However, the terminal date of 1914 can be justified by a change of mood which becomes evident around the beginning of the 1914-18 war: Aestheticism and Wagnerism are superseded by a less transcendental approach, which places stress on the characters' psychology rather than their spiritual life. This date is also advantageous as far as scholarship is concerned since it allows for a consideration of the culmination of 19th century Tristan studies in the works of Bédier and Schoepperle.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	iii-iv
I. The Tristan Legend.	
(1) The character of the legend.	1
(ii) An outline of the legend's development.	9
II. Scott's edition of <u>Sir Tristrem</u>: the founding of Tristan scholarship.	16
III. Arnold's <u>Tristram and Iseult</u>: the French link.	62
IV. Tennyson's 'The Last Tournament': the English view.	107
V. Swinburne's <u>Tristram of Lyonesse</u>: the Pre-Raphaelite reaction.	173
VI. The florescence of Tristan scholarship.	224
VII. The impact of Wagner's <u>Tristan und Isolde</u>.	272
VIII. The Tristan Legend in the 19th century.	318
List of Works consulted.	332

ERRATUM

The page numbered as 102 should be read after page 105.

List of Abbreviations

<u>ALMA</u>	<u>Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages</u> , ed. R.S. Loomis (1959).
Bédier	<u>Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas</u> , ed. J. Bédier, 2 vols. (1902-5).
EETS	Early English Text Society.
<u>JEGP</u>	<u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>
<u>Letters</u>	<u>The Letters of Sir Walter Scott</u> , ed. H.J.C. Grierson, 12 vols. (1932-7). <u>The Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888</u> , ed. G.W.E. Russell, 2 vols. (1895). <u>The Letters of A.C. Swinburne</u> , ed. C.Y. Lang, 6 vols. (New Haven, 1960-2).
	(Each collection of letters listed above is only referred to as <u>Letters</u> in the chapter which takes the author as its main subject).
<u>Materials</u>	Hallam Tennyson, <u>Materials for a Life of Alfred Tennyson</u> , 4 vols. pubd. privately (1897).
<u>Memoir</u>	Hallam Tennyson, <u>Alfred Tennyson : A Memoir</u> , 2 vols. (1897).
<u>MLN</u>	Modern Language Notes.
<u>MLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.</u>
<u>SATF</u>	<u>Société des Anciens Textes Français.</u>
<u>Zs.f.d.Alt.</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum</u>
<u>Zs.f.d.Phil.</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie</u>
<u>Zs.f.fr.Spr.u.Litt.</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur</u>

Quotations from Malory are taken from The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. E. Vinaver, 3 vols. (1967), unless otherwise stated.

CHAPTER I The Tristan Legend

i. The Character of the Legend

Although the extant metrical¹ versions of the legend, together with those implied traditions lying behind them, differ enormously, there is a common core: Tristan and Iseult drink the love-potion and, after a succession of hardships, die as a result of their passion. It is this enduring and fatal bond of love which marks the legend as a unique consideration of human desire. Despite the inconsistencies and individual treatments of the known versions, this core imparts a fundamental unity to the Tristan romances which are complete. The two crucial points are the drinking of the love-potion and the death of the lovers, these two events being linked as cause and effect, and the latter constituting the culmination of a career of suffering and peril. Throughout all versions of the legend the lovers are viewed sympathetically, although their passion comes in conflict with social morality, because the essentials of their tradition delineate a love which is ruinous and therefore beyond criticism.

Like Antony and Cleopatra, Tristan and Iseult throw away rank and honour for passion, but without the blur of glory with which Shakespeare's lovers surround themselves. They fall from high position to disrepute and exile;² even in death there is no

1. Although the Prose Tristan derives certain episodes from the poetical tradition, it diverges too widely to be useful to this discussion. See E. Vinaver, 'The Prose Tristan', Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R. S. Loomis (1959), pp. 339 f.

2. Even Gottfried's lovers welcome a return to court life from the Minnewrotte.

hint that they will be reunited in some Elysium. In this way their story is perhaps more essentially tragic than that of Antony and Cleopatra, especially if the potion is seen in the role of Nemesis.

In the corpus of Tristan poetry which the 19th century inherited, the overall pattern of his career is disastrous, although individual versions may differ in detail: Tristan, the young hero and heir to Cornwall, who seemed prepared for a life of glory after his early victory over the Morold,³ is harried and banished.⁴ He ends up disguised as a pilgrim,⁵ a leper,⁶ a fool,⁷ beaten and scorned. Finally he is betrayed by his wife,⁸ and dies in exile believing that Iseult has betrayed him, while she, ironically, is on the point of arrival.⁹ In Wagner's Tristan und Isolde Tristan dies ecstatically and triumphantly in Isolde's arms, attaining at last the death he has sought so long. But the mediaeval versions,

3. The Morold fight occurs in Gottfried and Eilhart (Thomas and Béroul being incomplete). Sir Tristram, together with the Saga follows Gottfried.

4. In Béroul and Eilhart Tristan and Iseult are condemned to death and escape to live in the forest of Morrois. In Gottfried Tristan is constrained to leave court after the flour trick and both the lovers are later dismissed.

5. Eilhart, after the tryst at the Blanche Lande; Thomas, on the occasion of Tristan's third visit to Ysolt; Gottfried, during the episode preceding the ambiguous oath.

6. Eilhart, when Isolt has Tristan beaten; Thomas, on the occasion of Tristan's second visit; Béroul, in the episode preceding the ambiguous oath.

7. The Berne and Oxford Folie Tristans.

8. Eilhart and Thomas. See the discussion on Isolt's motivation in Eilhart, G. Schoepperle, Tristan and Isolt (1963), i, 93-5.

9. Eilhart and Thomas.

which deal with the lovers' deaths, are implacable. In Thomas Tristan turns his face to the wall and dies, broken by what he believes to be Ysolt's indifference.¹⁰

Iseult too undergoes great ignominy for Tristan's sake. She is spied on, accused and publicly disgraced.¹¹ For the sake of her love she performs dubious and unheroic actions, attempting to murder Brangane, whom she has already substituted in Mark's marriage bed,¹² and setting up the ambiguous oath. Unlike the conventional lady of amour courtois she takes equal shares in her lover's suffering. According to Gottfried she throws away Petitorieu's magic bell, which brings her relief from sorrow,¹³ and in Thomas's version she wears a leather corselet so as to take part in Tristan's misery.¹⁴ But the greatest hardship she undertakes with Tristan is the sojourn in Morrois, where, according to Béroul and Eilhart, they suffer extreme privation. Finally, she follows Tristan's messenger¹⁵ to Brittany without demur and, inevitably, when she finds her lover dead, shares death with him.¹⁶

10. 11. 3029-42.

11. In Béroul and Eilhart she is given to lepers. In Béroul and Gottfried she has to exculpate herself with the ambiguous oath.

12. Eilhart and Gottfried.

13. 11. 16386-406

14. 11. 2021-34.

15. In Thomas, the messenger is Caerdin. In Eilhart he is Tristan's nameless host.

16. Thomas's Ysolt ends her last speech: 'Pur mei avez perdu la vie
E jo frai cum veraie amie:
Pur vos veil murur ensement.'
11. 3111-3.

No inequality in this passion is evident in any of the metrical versions: the lovers seem to define each other's existence. There are influences from the literature of amour courtois,¹⁷ but they do not disturb the fundamental nature of the legend. Iseult is far from the Guenièvre of Le Chevalier de la Charrette: she does not expect to be worshipped and she does not command her lover. Nor is Tristan akin to Lancelot. His heroism is not directed into deeds of chivalry for his mistress's sake, but rather into finding ways into her chamber and extricating himself and Iseult from trouble. Without this equality there could be no love-death, and it is manifest from the moment they both partake of the potion.

Until this moment both are concerned with the world of society and the rules of that world. Tristan undergoes a knightly training¹⁸ and performs notable deeds of valour.¹⁹ His life involves physical danger but is ordered by feudal loyalties and social convention. This also applies to Iseult: on discovering that Tristan is her uncle's killer she attempts to slay him.²⁰ But when they drink the potion, this pattern is disrupted. Considerations of family and feudal ties or personal honour become irrelevant.²¹

17. See P. Jonin, Les Personnages féminins dans les romans français de Tristan au XII^e siècle (Aix en Provence, 1958).

18. Tristan's accomplishments, particularly in music and hunting, are minutely described by Gottfried, and his education is implicit throughout the romances.

19. Besides the Morolt fight, Tristan in Gottfried's account takes revenge on Morgan, his father's killer.

20. Eilhart and Gottfried.

21. Gottfried describes the potion as follows:

'nein, ez was niht mit wine,
doch ez im glich waere,
ez was diu wernde swære,
die endelöse herzenöt,
von der sâ beide lügen töt.'

ll. 11676-80.

As their sole motivation is love of each other, anything which impedes this must be overcome or outmanoeuvred. There is a single-mindedness about their actions which amounts at times to ruthlessness with others and with themselves. Because of the magnetism between them, there is no prudence in their conduct: Tristan leaps into Iseult's bed although he realizes treachery is afoot when he sees the flour on the floor.²² However, they possess a compensating quick-wittedness and a lack of compunction about sacrificing the truth in order to extricate themselves.²³

But the moral position of the lovers is, in the final analysis, unimportant, and one avoids the term adultery in connection with their passion. If the lovers were happy, it might be easier to be moralistic, but their sufferings prevent this and their deaths vindicate them. Indeed, had their story not ended tragically, it is highly doubtful that it would have attained the popularity which it did. But in addition to their deaths, their passion is also excused by the potion, which on a literal level makes the lovers the victims of magic, and on a symbolic level, elucidates the passion which can seize man and woman, binding them to disaster because it has no place in the social order. Response to the legend is in some measure a recognition of this lawless force, which asserts a subjective vision over the predetermined patterns of society, despite the ruin which attends it.

The lovers command sympathy because their love is heedless of any other considerations than its own: it gives the story no

22. Eilhart, Béroul and Gottfried.

23. As in the episode of Mark's eavesdropping on their tryst. (Eilhart, Béroul and Gottfried).

possibility of a happy ending, since this necessitates a reabsorption into society: it can never settle into domesticity.²⁴ Instead it seems to derive the power of self-generation from its conflict with society and its subsequent denial of a stasis. The passion thrives on separation and suffering, which result from this conflict, heightening the magnetism between the lovers and so making their partings as inevitable as their meetings. The crux of the legend, whatever its various ramifications, is founded therefore, on longing and frustration, not fulfilment.

But it must be stressed that the legend does not attempt to render the love sacrosanct. However civilised the treatment it cannot obscure the fact that the conflict is real, involving pain, low trickery and loss of dignity. Nor can it totally obliterate an anti-romantic thread which insists on the final irony of Tristan's death after the harshness of life, and permits such touches of the ridiculous as Iseult's attack on Tristan in his bath,²⁵ Mark's eavesdropping up a tree, and Iseult's sprawling with the disguised Tristan.

Obviously the legend undergoes alteration in the hands of different authors, according to their individual concepts of the basic conflict between passion and the social framework. In Béroul, where the potion is limited to three years' duration,²⁶ the lovers openly confess that they do not love each other but are

24. In Eilhart and in Thomas, together with the translations of the latter, Tristan attempts marriage with Iseult of Brittany, but nevertheless is drawn back to Cornwall.

25. Eilhart and Gottfried.

26. In Eilhart the potion is limited to four years, but Thomas has no such limitation.

bound together by the potion.²⁷ Consequently no concessions are made to a refined vision of love in the narrative which is energetic, coarse and at times violent. On the other hand, Béroul is consistent in his support of the lovers, even when they appear most amoral, and continually inveighs against their enemies. Moreover, this support is extended into a vindication of the lovers, using the machinery of feudal law. When, for example, Mark refuses Tristan the right of judicial combat, he transgresses the code and thus enables God to show mercy in rescuing Tristan by his miraculous leap from the chapel. But Béroul does not treat his story with naïve partisanship: he is to some extent detached in that his work accommodates various modes of comedy together with a submerged vein of ambiguity which runs throughout.

Gottfried, however, sees the love as mystical: the poverty of Morrois is replaced by the spiritual splendours of the Minnegrotte, where Tristan and Isolt are sustained by love as the knights of Munsalvaesche are by the Holy Grail. Consequently, while his treatment of the legend is more sophisticated than that of Béroul, it is less ambiguous in its attitude to the lovers.

The passion Gottfried envisages has its roots in sensuality, but, tempered and refined, it constitutes a mystical communion. This is a rarefied and privileged love, and Gottfried addresses his poem to that small band of edeles herze who are capable of appreciating the nature of his lovers' experience and take it as an example of the distillation of joy from suffering. The refinement of the passion is effected by this distillation,

27. ll. 1384-6 and ll. 1412-5.

producing those paradoxes which underpin the work:

ein ander werlt die meine ich,
 diu sament in einem herzen treit
 ir süeze sūr, ir liebez leit,
 ir herzeliep, ir senede nōt,
 ir liebez leben, ir leiden tōt, 28
 ir lieben tōt, ir leides leben...

In this way Gottfried can expand the range of nuances in his delineation of the lovers' internal world, working from the courtly tradition towards a transcendental interpretation of love. It is therefore unfortunate that he left his poem unfinished, as it would have been interesting to see whether he intimated any sort of spiritual union in death for the lovers, despite the absence of any such indications in his source.

Between these two extremes of interpretation lies a whole range of possible viewpoints, including Thomas's elegant psychology and the chivalric pageantry of the Prose Tristan. Thus, while the basic legend has nothing to do with common sense on the one hand, nor sentimentality on the other, its implications can stretch from the temporal to the transcendental. For the middle ages, however, its appeal may well have been centred in its amorality, its defiance of the rules and its vindication, at times divinely approved, of a forbidden passion.

ii. An Outline of the Legend's Development

The origin of the Tristan legend seems to have been Pictish.¹ This is indicated by the derivation of the name Tristan from one Drust, son of Talorc, who appears in Pictish records as ruling in Northern Scotland around 780. The outline of the legend in its Pictish phase may perhaps be observed in the 10th century rendering of the Irish saga The Wooing of Emer, where a character called Drust is involved with Cuchulainn in adventures which bear a substantial resemblance to the episodes of the Morold, the false claimant and the recognition in the bath. As Drust takes part in these adventures only, it seems possible that he was the original hero, but was ousted by Cuchulainn when his story became assimilated into the latter's exploits.²

In the Welsh Triads the name Drust is mutated to Drystan, or Trystan, son of Tallwch. As Tallwch is not an indigenous name, it must be assumed that the Welsh is subsequent to the Pictish stage of the legend's development.³ It was during this time that Drystan acquired his role as the lover of his uncle's wife. The first mention of this is found in the triad of the Three Mighty Swineherds, where Drystan is associated

1. First postulated by Heinrich Zimmer. 'Beitrage zur Namenforschung in den altfranzösischen Arthurepen', Zeitschrift für Französische Sprache und Litteratur, xiii (1891), 58-86. Joseph Loth contested Zimmer's theory, maintaining the Cornish origin of the legend. See Contributions à l'étude des romans de la Table Ronde (Paris, 1912), pp. 72-90. He finally capitulated in 'Un parallèle au Roman de Tristan en Irlandais, en X^e siècle', Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (March 1924), pp. 122-33.

2. M.L.A. Deutschbein, Beiblatt zur Anglia, xv (1904), 16-21. Gertrude Schoepperle opposed this. Tristan and Isolt: A Study of the Sources of the Romance, 2nd ed. (1963), ii. 331. For more recent work see Rachel Bromwich, 'Some Remarks on the Celtic Sources of "Tristan"', Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion (1953), pp. 38 f.

3. Bromwich, op. cit., pp. 32-60.

with the wife of March, Essyllt, and also Arthur, who was exercising a gravitational pull on originally unconnected heroes as early as the 11th century.⁴ The Drystan-Essyllt relationship is expanded further by another Welsh tradition which describes the lovers' flight into the forest pursued by March. This has a distinct affinity with the Irish legend of the elopement of Diarmaid and Grainne,⁵ and it would appear that the Welsh adapted this story around Drystan and his original Pictish traditions, casting March, who was already known in Wales and Cornwall, as the duped husband.⁶

While the legend was circulating in Wales it also came into contact with Breton influence, though this is not to postulate a definite Breton stage in its development. The evidence for this influence is found in such episodes as the dragon-fight, the changing of Tristan's patronymic to Rivalen and the localization of the later part of the narrative in Brittany.⁷ Evidence for Breton lais of Tristan is found in Marie de

4. Bromwich, 'The Welsh Triads', ALMA, pp. 48-9. Earlier Bédier had affirmed the primitive nature of the triad. Le Roman de Thomas (1902-5), ii, 115. For discussion on the names of Mark and Iseult see summaries in Bédier, ii, 111-5 and Bruce i, 182-4.

5. Trystan ac Essyllt ed. Ifor Williams in Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, v (1930), 115-29. See Williams, Lectures on early Welsh Poetry (Dublin, 1944) in which he establishes that the version is older than originally thought, and Bromwich, Cymrodorion, pp. 51-5.

6. H. Newstead, 'The Growth of the Tristan Legend', ALMA, p. 127. For early Celtic traditions concerning Mark see Schoepperle, ii, 269-72.

7. Helaine Newstead speculates that the legend reached Brittany by the early 11th century. *Op. cit.*, pp. 128-9; R. S. Loomis, Appendix to Schoepperle, pp. 577-8.

France's translation of Chèvrefeuil,⁸ where the essence of the legend is found in the couplet:

Bele ami, si est de nus:
Ne vus sanz mei, ne mei sanz vue.

Just as the hazel and the honeysuckle die when separated, so do the lovers. In addition to this Breton influence, episodes from non-Celtic literature, such as the tryst beneath the tree,⁹ were assimilated into the legend.

By the middle of the 12th century the legend was sufficiently well-known in France for Bernart de Ventadour to allude to the suffering of Tristan in a lament for his absent lady dated around 1154.¹⁰ References to the lovers proliferate in the second half of the century,¹¹ one of the most controversial being the assertion by Chrétien de Troyes that he had written a work 'Del roi Marc et d'Iseut la blonde'.¹² Indeed, so strong was the influence of the legend that Chrétien

8. Marie de France, who professes to have translated and versified Breton lais, was writing somewhere between 1155 (determined by the influence of Wace) and 1189 (date of Henry II's death, to whom she appears to have dedicated her work). For a discussion of the relationship of Chèvrefeuil with the Tristan legend see Schoepperle, i, 138-47. For the text of Chèvrefeuil see A. Ewart's edition of the lais (1944), pp. 123-6.

9. Newstead, 'The Tryst Beneath the Tree', Romance Philology, ix (1956), 269-84.

10. Chrestomathie Provençale, ed. K. Bartsch (1904), 'Tant ai mon cor ple de joia' p. 65. The date 1154, accepted by Bédier, ii, 154, is disputed by Schoepperle, ii, 112-4, and is still unsettled. See Loomis's Appendix to Schoepperle, ii, 567 and 589.

11. See table of references to Arthurian characters in trouvère and troubadour literature, R. Lejeune, 'The Troubadours', ALMA, p. 396. References to Tristan and Iseult outnumber references to any other character in both categories.

12. Cligès, ed. W. Foerster (Halle, 1884), l. 5.

conceived Cligès both as a reply and an improvement.¹³ During this period the legend seems to have crystallized into three extant versions, but whether these were preceded by a literary archetype or constructed from floating tradition is difficult to determine.¹⁴

Thomas's version, now only surviving in fragments,¹⁵ constitutes the earliest extant rendering of the legend. It seems to have been composed between 1155 and 1170, these dates being determined by the use of Wace's Brut and the influence on Chrétien's Cligès. Although, preceding Chrétien he did not benefit from his work, Thomas's Tristan represents an attempt to refine the legend and cast it in a courtly mould; the supernatural and folk elements are rationalized and emphasis is placed on the characters' psychology, as in Tristan's internal debate on his wedding night. From this version comes the Oxford Folie Tristan,¹⁶ an episodic poem of the late 12th century; Gottfried von Strassburg's poem composed around 1210;¹⁷ the Old Norse Tristramsaga¹⁸ translated by

13. Gaston Paris was the first to discuss the relationship of Thomas to Cligès. Journal des Savants (1902), pp. 354-5. His opinion that Thomas preceded Cligès, particularly on the evidence of the pun on l'aner, which he thought more apt in Thomas's version, was challenged by Hoepffner who argues that some of Chrétien's more specific allusions to the Tristan legend come from sources other than Thomas. 'Chrétien de Troyes et Thomas d'Angleterre' Romania, lv (1929), 1-16. Modern opinion seems to support Paris. See Frederick Whitehead, 'The Early Tristan Poems', ALMA, pp. 135-6 and Jean Frappier, 'Chrétien de Troyes', *ibid.*, pp. 173-5.

14. Bédier accounts for the development of the 'floating tradition' theory and the subsequent archetype theory, *ibid.*, 168-71. But Bédier's view of the archetype is by no means completely acceptable, a main objection being the dichotomy between the two halves of the story, which suggests different stages in the legend's development. See Schoepperle, *ibid.*, 448-54; F. Ranke, Tristan und Isolde (Munich, 1925), pp. 8-39.

15. 9 fragments totalling 3144 lines. See Bédier and Les Fragments de Thomas, ed. B. H. Wind (Leiden, 1950).

16. Ed. E. Hoepffner (Paris, 1938).

17. Ed. F. Ranke, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1949).

18. Die nordische und die englische Version der Tristan Sage, ed. E. Kölbing (Heilbronn, 1878-82), 1, Tristrams Saga ok Isondar.

Brother Robert in 1226; and Sir Tristrem, a Middle English romance of the late 13th century.¹⁹ This group of works constitutes the 'courtly' branch of the legend.

The two remaining versions of the legend belonging to the 12th century constitute the 'vulgar' branch, and were considered by Schoepperle to be closer to the archetype than Thomas. The first work, by Bérout,²⁰ seems to have been written in the last decade of the century,²¹ possibly later than that of Thomas, since it could be argued that it shows traces of Chrétien's literary influence,²² despite its less courtly character. It is represented by a long fragment, which has been thought to be the work of two separate authors,²³ and also a jongleur's version rather than a polished literary piece.²⁴ From Bérout's version is derived the Folie Tristan contained in the Berne manuscript.²⁵

The second work belonging to the 'vulgar' branch was composed by Eilhart von Oberg around 1170.²⁶ The text presents difficulties as it exists in three fragmentary manuscripts, collectively containing less

19. Kölbing, op. cit., ii, Sir Tristrem.

20. Le Roman de Tristan par Bérout et un anonyme, ed. E. Muret (Paris, 1903) Société des Anciens Textes Français. Revised by L. M. Defourques (1947). The Romance of Tristan by Bérout, ed. A. Ewart (1939).

21. A reference to 'mal dagres' (l. 3849) may possibly be a corruption of 'mal d'Acre' and so provide a terminus a quo of 1190-1, when an epidemic of leprosy fell on the crusaders at Acre. J. D. Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance, 2nd ed. (Massachusetts, 1958), i, 159. Gweneth Whitteridge disputes this in 'The date of the Tristan of Bérout', Medium Aevum, xxviii (1959), 167-71.

22. F. Whitehead, ALMA, p. 135.

23. In his first edition Muret controversially postulated two authors, the second somewhat later than the first.

24. Bruce, Evolution of Arthurian Romance, i, 188-9, n. 7.

25. Ed. E. Hoepffner (Paris, 1934).

26. Ed. F. Lichtenstein (Strasbourg, 1877). Whitehead, ALMA, p. 136, points out that the Regensburg fragment dates back to 1180.

than 1,000 lines, and three 15th century manuscripts.²⁷ Schoepperle considered this work to be closest to early traditions, since it contains features which have analogues in primitive belief and Celtic romance, rather than French literature.

Both these works differ from Thomas, the main point of divergence being that Béroul and Eilhart limit the influence of the potion to three and four years respectively, whereas in Thomas it is life-long. Bédier saw this as an attempt to rationalize the last part of the story and postulated a source between the 'version commune' and the archetype.²⁸ Schoepperle puts the opposing view. She sees Béroul and Eilhart as inheriting a much harsher view of love from the estoire with which the idea of repentance was not inconsistent. But Thomas's glorification of love needed a different motivation for the return from the forest. He therefore sees the lovers as recalled by Mark, whereas Béroul and Eilhart attribute the lovers' return to the waning of the potion and the second interview with Ogrin.²⁹

The third branch of the legend is embodied in the Prose Tristan,³⁰ first compiled between 1225 and 1235, with an expanded version appearing in the second half of the century.³¹ This can be seen as a sequel to the main Arthurian prose cycle and is much indebted to its style and character. Parts of it, particularly the section extending from the Morold fight to

27. Whitehead, *ibid.*, p. 136. Schoepperle discusses the various redactions of the poem, *ii*, 476-518.

28. Bédier, *ii*, 236-9. See also Bruce's review of Schoepperle, Modern Language Notes, *xxix* (1914), 213-8.

29. Schoepperle, *i*, 75ff.

30. Le Roman en Prose de Tristan, E. Löseth (Paris, 1891); Le Roman de Tristan, ed. R. L. Curtis, *i*, (Munich, 1963).

31. E. Vinaver, 'The Prose Tristan', ALMA, p. 339. Löseth dates the first version earlier between 1215 and 1230, *op. cit.*, p. xxiv. Bruce agrees with Vinaver, Evolution of Arthurian Romance, *i*, 487.

Tristan's flight to Brittany, are closely modelled on the poetic version,³² but generally the story of lawless passion is submerged beneath chivalric concerns. Mark is degraded, and Tristan is reconstituted on the lines of Lancelot, whom he superseded in popularity. Indeed, of all the branches of the Vulgate, the Prose Lancelot provides the closest model. One manuscript, B.N. MS. 103, retains the version of the black sails, but all other texts give an ending in which Tristan is killed by Mark as he sits harping to Iseult. However, this first version, which appears to have affinities with Eilhart's work,³³ was the version used for the printed editions which first appeared in the late 15th century,³⁴ and retained their popularity for the next hundred years.

This outline shows briefly the prevalent views on the legend's development together with the possible and probable relationships of the extant versions. But Tristan scholarship is a field fraught with complexity and controversy, which must be omitted here. When scholars of the late 18th century began work in this area, hardly recognising it as an individual subject amid the confusion of mediaeval studies, they were not even aware of the number of Tristan romances extant, let alone their implications. Thus it was during the 19th century that Tristan scholarship developed from a state of almost total ignorance to one of knowledge and erudition.

32. E. Vinaver, Etudes sur le Tristan en Prose (Paris, 1925), pp. 8-20. See Bédier, ii, 321-95 for sections of the romance which correspond with the metrical version.

33. E. Muret, 'Eilhart d'Oberg et sa source française', Romania, xvi (1887), 288ff.

34. Printed by Jehan le Bourgoys, 2 vols. (Rouen 1489). The last dated edition was the final edition of Jean Maugin's modernization of the romance in 1586, printed by Nicolas Bonfons.

CHAPTER II

Scott's edition of Sir Tristram: the founding of Tristan scholarship

Out of the 18th century fashion for the Gothic arose a more serious interest in mediaeval literature. But by the time English dilettantism had developed into antiquarianism, a progression evident by 1765 when Percy brought out his Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, the French, Germans and Welsh had already begun a determined examination of their literary heritages. Around the turn of the century, however, a group of scholars appeared, who attempted to make up the lost ground, and from their activities resulted Walter Scott's edition of Sir Tristram in 1804.

Until this publication the metrical version of the legend was unknown in Britain and France. The prose romance, which had persisted into the 16th century, was the only accessible version. It had been modernized by the Conte de Tressan in 1776¹ and was also known through the Stansby edition of Malory. This had circulated widely since its publication in 1634 and by Scott's time had become a boys' book.² But even information concerning the metrical version, let alone the version itself, was virtually non-existent.

Gottfried's romance, though published in Carl Müller's collection of mediaeval poetry,³ was not mentioned in England until William Taylor's review of Scott's edition.⁴ The two French fragments⁵ owned by Francis Douce were

1. 'Histoire de Tristan de Léonois et de la Reine Yseult', Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans, i (Paris, 1776).

2. A. Johnston, Enchanted Ground, (1964), p. 189.

3. Samlung deutscher Gedichte aus dem 12., 13 und 14. Jahrhundert, ii (Berlin, 1785). This also contains Heinrich von Freiburg's continuation. That of Ulrich von Türheim appeared in the edition of Gottfried by E. Von Groote (Berlin, 1821).

4. Critical Review, iii (September 1804), 45-52.

5. The Oxford Folie and the concluding section of Thomas's poem. Until Richard Price's article the two fragments were thought to be part of the same work. Warton's History, ed. Price (1824), i, 181-98.

known to his circle, but not published until 1835.⁶ Weber's brief reference to the Tristramssaga in his article for the 1811 edition of Sir Tristrem was expanded by Richard Price in 1824,⁷ but the work remained unpublished until Kölbing's edition in 1878. Finally, the poems of Béroul and Eilhart were not printed until 1823 in Friedrich von der Hagen's collection, which also contained Sir Tristrem and the Welsh fragment.⁸

Scott's work provided a new version of the legend, much simpler in outline than the complex Prose Tristan, where the story of the lovers is lost amid the chivalric exploits. Here also Mark's degradation prevents any conflict between honour and passion, and Tristan's love for Isolt is belittled by his amours with Pharamonde's daughter and Seguarades' wife. The metrical ending was, however, known through de Tressan's work, which follows the black letter editions. But the usual ending of the prose romance, in which Tristan is murdered by Mark, would be better known through Malory.

Scott began the process whereby this superior version of the legend was reinstated, although it was some time before its merit was recognized. Indeed, he was not drawn to the legend's subject matter, but rather to the apparently Scottish connections of the text. Nevertheless, his attitude was more enlightened than that of his non-antiquarian contemporaries who regarded mediaeval literature with a mixture of censure and curiosity.

Paradoxically the romances were relished for their antiquity, but their contents were either patronized as primitive literary attempts or condemned as barbaric. Antiquarians felt the need to justify their pursuits in this

6. Tristan: Recueil de ce qui reste des poèmes relatifs à ses aventures, ed. F. Michel (1835), ii.

7. *Op. cit.*, i, 197.

8. See Sir Tristrem, pp. xcix-ciii. The edition also contained a translation of the hitherto unknown 'Lai de Chèvrefeuille', pp. civ-cvi.

field with the excuse that such literature yielded information concerning early manners and the origin of fiction. Percy made the selection in the Reliques to "shew the gradation of our language, exhibit the progress of popular opinions, display the peculiar manners and customs of former ages, or throw light on our earlier classical poets."⁹ The lure of antiquarian studies in the 18th century lay in the challenge of a completely new field. There were manuscripts to be salvaged and explored, theories to be formulated and controversies to be waged. Amidst this activity literary appreciation remained unconsidered.

But this was not because scholars were too engrossed to perceive literary merit; rather, they considered that the literature had very little. This accounts for the manner in which their discoveries were presented to the public: while eager to put forward their finds, they were diffident about exposing them to the polished taste of the contemporary reader. Consequently anthologies of ballads, poems and romances were offered apologetically after certain improvements by the editor. This interference with the text sprang from a desire to vindicate studies in this field. Ritson was the only editor to preach complete fidelity to the text, except when this made nonsense,¹⁰ and he was informed by one reviewer of his Pieces of Ancient Poetry that "There is not one piece in this collection which a man of taste or sense would not be ashamed to publish, or even to say that he had read; so puerile, so childish are these old rhymes!"¹¹ Percy, to Ritson's undying contempt, interpolated whole stanzas into his Reliques,¹² and Ellis in his

9. Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765), I, ix.

10. Metrical Romances (1802), I, iii and cix.

11. Critical Review, iv (January 1792), 56.

12. See his comparison of Percy's version of 'The Marriage of Sir Gawain' with the original. Metrical Romances I, cx-cxli.

Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances ironed out inconsistencies and added appealing touches.¹³ Scott himself, though an ardent ballad collector, was not above reproach: he admits that in cases like 'Kinmont Willie' 'some conjectural emendations have been absolutely necessary to render it intelligible'.¹⁴ But he is not explicit about the nature of these alterations.

The attitude to mediaeval literature which made these improvements seem necessary is reflected in the reviews of Scott's edition. Praise is accorded to the notes, the summary and the conclusion, but little is said about the romance itself. The British Critic¹⁵ expresses gratitude for this illustration of 'some facts connected with domestic annals' but adds that it is rather 'a document of importance to the history of our literature, than a tale intended to amuse the careless reader.'

The Monthly Review¹⁶ and the Critical Review¹⁷ attack the story on moral grounds, a criticism which was to persist almost throughout the century. Indeed, the latter prophesies with some accuracy that the legend would never attain popularity because of the immorality of Isolt and the 'vulgar disguises' of Tristan. At best it could only lend itself to retelling in the comic style of la Fontaine, and at worst its popularity must have 'served to inspire that rotatory cupidity which infected even the daughters of Charlemagne'.¹⁸ Only Ellis¹⁹ considers the text itself, remarking that the story contains 'more variety of incident and more natural delineations of character than could be expected of its antiquity,' thus implying that

13. Johnston, Enchanted Ground, pp. 170-2.

14. Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802), i. 125.

15. British Critic, xxv (June 1805), 361-8.

16. Monthly Review, xlviii (October 1805), 196-203.

17. Critical Review, iiii (September 1804), 45-52.

18. Loc. cit.

19. Edinburgh Review, iv (July 1804), 427-43.

age determines literary merit.

Scott, however, did not follow the usual practice of smoothing out obscurities. Instead he sought to provide so much explanation and background material that the reader would be induced and helped to read the text as it stands in the Auchinleck manuscript. In this respect the edition was an innovation. Also it was the first romance to be published singly and presented with a full preface concerning its author and place in literary tradition, translations and abstracts of related works, a description of the contents of the manuscript, an adequate glossary, copious notes, and a full summary of the action. In fact, the sheer bulk of material prevented the edition from appearing as the fourth volume to the 1803 edition of Border Minstrelsy as originally planned. It was eventually brought out in 1804 as a separate volume costing two guineas, a price which caused lamentation amongst reviewers.

The previous work on Sir Tristrem had been negligible as the romance was only discovered by Ritson in 1792. Hugh Blair had overlooked it in his description of the Auchinleck manuscript which was partly incorporated into the second edition of the Reliques.²⁰ But nine years later Pinkerton suspected that the romance of Sir Tristrem mentioned by Robert de Brunne in his Chronicle might be in the Auchinleck manuscript after all.²¹ However, as the title pages had been defaced, the search would involve reading through the entire manuscript and Pinkerton did not possess the necessary determination.

The manuscript was presented to the Advocates Library, Edinburgh, by Alexander Boswell in 1744. Its previous history is unknown, but the

20. 'An Essay on the Ancient Metrical Romances', Reliques, iii, (1767). xxi-xxxii.

21. 'List of Scottish Poets', Ancient Scottish Poems (1786), I, lxxvii (Misnumbered as lxxvi).

prevailing theory is that it was written in London in the first half of the 14th century, and may have been known to Chaucer.²² Sir Tristrem itself was taken from the Anglo-Norman of Thomas, either from memory as Kölbing argues on the evidence of the inconsistencies,²³ or from a manuscript as Bédier conjectures.²⁴ Whichever the case, the poet evidently followed the narrative order of his source but cut the substance down to a bare summary. The poetic value is also reduced as the author frequently became entangled in his complicated stanza form.

Although the romance was not discovered until 1792, it was known before this that a popular romance of Sir Tristrem had existed in the early 14th century. This information was derived from Robert de Brunne's Chronicle written in 1330. At the beginning of this work de Brunne cites the romance of Sir Tristrem as an example of the obscurity he wished to avoid in his own work:

I see in song in sedgyng tale
of Erceldoun and of Kendale,
Non þam says as þai þam wrought,
And in þer saying it semes noght;
þat may þou here in sir Tristrem;
ouer gestes it has þe steen,
Ouer alle þat is or was,
if mene it sayd as made Thomas;
But I here it no mane so say,
þat of som copple som is away...²⁵

As can be seen de Brunne mentions a Thomas in connection with Sir

22. L. Hibbard Loomis, 'Chaucer and the Auchinleck MS.'. Essays in Honor of Carleton Brown (New York, 1940), pp. 111-28; A. J. Bliss, 'Notes on the Auchinleck MS.', Speculum, xxvi (1951), 652ff.

23. Tristrans Saga ok Isondar, p. cxlvii.

24. Bédier, ii, 87-8. Dieter Mehl suggests that the inconsistencies are due to a Southern scribe's attempts to decipher a Northern work. The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (1968), p. 175.

25. The Chronicle of Robert Mannyng of Brunne, ed. F. J. Furnivall, Rolls Series (1887), i, 411, ll. 93-102.

Tristrem and possibly an Erceldoun, although the loose syntax obscures its relationship. The evidence is thus inconclusive as Sir Tristrem may have been written by Thomas of Ercildoune or Thomas Kendale, or it may be a third example of 'quaint Inglis' composed by an author merely known as Thomas.

However, from this passage Warton assumes that the romance must have been written by Thomas of Ercildoune.²⁶ He is followed in this supposition by Pinkerton, who not only assumes that Ercildoune was the author, but also that the romance must be founded on British materials, since Tristan was one of Arthur's knights and 'innumerable passages of early Scottish poetry yet remaining are strongly tinged with British tradition.'²⁷ In his 'List of Scottish Poets' Pinkerton suggests that the Romanz di Tristram²⁸ is the source for Sir Tristrem on the strength of his misreading 'Iseult la blonde de Cornealle' as 'Seult labonde de Cornealle', whom he thought was the author.²⁹

Ritson pours scorn on this suggestion in his Bibliographica Scotica,³⁰ an unpublished work which he lent Scott in 1801 after he had decided not to edit his discovery. Here Ritson gathers together much of the available information on Thomas of Ercildoune, whom he also considered the indisputable author. Ritson argues that the Sir Tristrem of the Auchinleck manuscript must be the work mentioned by de Brunne because of the 'singularity of metre of which no other instance has been met with', and hence it must be composed by Ercildoune. Previously it had been thought that Robert de Brunne meant that minstrels who recited the romance blurred the sense by

26. History, i, 74.

27. Ancient Scottish Poems, I, lix.

28. B. M. MS. Royal 20 D.II.

29. *Op. cit.* I, lxxvii (misnumbered as lxxvi).

30. B. H. Bronson, 'Ritson's Bibliographica Scotica', PMLA, lxi, 122-59.

putting it into 'strange Inglis'. Ritson, however, interprets the passage as meaning that the refined style of Ercildoune and Kendale became corrupted in transmission by minstrels who did not understand what they were reciting. Scott puts forward this interpretation as one of his main points in proving authorship.

Ritson supports de Brunne's evidence by referring to the name 'Thomas' which occurs at intervals throughout Sir Tristrem and laments that the first line is defaced because it appears to read 'I was at Erpeldoune'.³¹ He further backs up his claim by noting the apparent evidence of the Douce manuscript where Thomas de Bretagne refers to himself in the third person as following the genuine British tradition.³² Although admitting that the opening stanzas of Sir Tristrem imply that the compiler of the legend was not Thomas but merely one who gathered his materials from his version, Ritson refuses to give weight to the argument, and insists that Ercildoune is not to be deprived of 'the honour of the composition'.

It would appear that Ritson made a transcript of Sir Tristrem as it is quoted in his edition of Minot's poems in 1795, but Scott did not need this as he had access to the Auchinleck manuscript itself.³³ Scott offered to stand down from the editorship³⁴ if Ritson intended to edit the work himself. But Ritson seems to have been contented with an advisory capacity, and in 1801 pushed his earlier conclusions further by maintaining that the Auchinleck manuscript contained the very romance which Ercildoune composed.³⁵

31. In fact, the line is written at the foot of the preceding page.

32. Bédier, 1, 378, l. 2134.

33. Scott refers to 'our invaluable folio Ms' as being in his possession, presumably for transcription by John Leyden. He also mentions a rumour about Ritson's possessing a printed copy, but this must be his transcript. Letter to Richard Heber, 10th March, 1801. Letters of Sir Walter Scott, ed. H. J. C. Grierson (1932-7), xii, 174.

34. Ibid., xii, 174-5.

35. Letter to Ellis, 7 December, 1801. Ibid., xii, 208.

Scott did not follow Ritson in this, since his argument for evidence of corruption during transmission reinforces the case for the romance's identification with that mentioned by de Brunne.

He reiterates Ritson's argument concerning the complex rhyme scheme, adding that it contains sufficient obscurities of language and style to classify it as the 'quaint Inglis' de Brunne hoped to avoid. But he also points out that the language is chiefly 14th century and that the work had been through the hands of more than one minstrel beside the author. Scott maintains that it answers de Brunne's description of the corrupt rendition, since there are at least two examples of omission in the text as mentioned by de Brunne:

But I here it no mane say,
pat of som copple som is away...

He concludes that although the manuscript substantially contains Ercildoune's romance it is in a sufficiently sophisticated form to prove that it had been in circulation between composition and transcription into the Auchinleck manuscript.³⁶ As an additional support for the claim of Thomas of Ercildoune he quotes Ritson's evidence of the Douce fragment.³⁷

This passage from the Douce manuscript, together with Pinkerton's hazardous guess concerning the British sources of the romance, led Scott to make a claim for the originality of Sir Tristrem. He admits that the legend was current in Europe for at least thirty years before Ercildoune, having penetrated France from Celtic Britain via Armorica. Ercildoune, therefore, did not invent the story, which Scott considers to be founded on ancient British history from the evidence of the Triads.³⁸ This floating

36. Sir Tristrem, pp. lxxxvi-lxxxix.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. xxxix-xlv.

38. Sir Tristrem, pp. xxii-xxvi.

tradition, as opposed to a specific compilation, explains such references to Tristan as are found in Navarre's poetry.³⁹ Scott does allow for the possibility of an earlier Tristan^{by} Chrétien de Troyes, but maintains that it was Ercildoune's version which was adapted by later romancers, because he used authentic British traditions rather than those current in France.⁴⁰

Although these two main points concerning the authorship and authenticity of Ercildoune had been considered previously, Scott was the first to assemble all the supporting evidence available. However, he did not draw his theories from the evidence; rather he arranged his material to justify preconceived ideas. Lockhart comments that Scott had an 'indomitable adherence to his own views'.⁴¹ Once he had decided that Sir Tristram was composed by Thomas of Ercildoune he never permitted himself to falter. This conviction was motivated, not only by the witness of de Brunne and the manuscript itself, but also by the fascination which the Scottish poet held for Scott. Equally, his claim concerning Ercildoune's originality was biased by his patriotism, since it awarded Scotland first honours in the field of Tristan literature.

From childhood Scott had been acquainted with the legends surrounding Thomas the Rhymer of Ercildoune. His grandfather's house lay near the Eildon hills where, according to the ballad, Ercildoune was carried off to Fairyland, returning thence with the gift of prophecy. In consequence, many vaticinal rhymes are attributed to him, together with the famous prophecy concerning the death of Alexander III.⁴² One version of his end recounts his mysterious disappearance back to Fairyland,⁴³ while another

39. Scott used Poésies du Roy de Navarre by Lesveque de la Ravalière (Paris, 1742) for these references.

40. Sir Tristram, pp. xxxii-xxxiv.

41. J. G. Lockhart, Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. (1832), ii, 176.

42. Sir Tristram, pp. ix-xi.

43. Border Minstrelsy, ii, 249.

tells how he waits with an armed troop under a mountain until Scotland requires his aid.⁴⁴ It is hardly surprising that Scott found more inspiration in the author of Sir Tristrem than in the romance itself.

As early as 1787 Scott referred to himself as 'the Rhymer' in his letters.⁴⁵ Around 1799 he began a romance on the subject of the choice between horn and sword offered by 'the Merlin of the North', which he later admitted, was 'a very unhappy foundation for a prose story.'⁴⁶ This narrative reappears metamorphosed in a metrical fragment written about the same time, in which the wizard, Michael Scott, is substituted for Thomas of Ercildoune.⁴⁷ In the 1803 edition of Border Minstrelsy Scott added two more sections to the ballad of Thomas the Rhymer, the first containing a reworking of the prophecies collected by Andro Hart in 1615 and the second comprising an original version of the legend of Ercildoune's disappearance.⁴⁸ Even in his last work, Castle Dangerous, Scott returns to the figure of the Rhymer. It is to his credit, therefore, that while he associated them imaginatively, Scott did not confuse in his edition the historical author of Sir Tristrem with the mysterious prophet of Scottish legend.

The minstrel figure also attracted Scott at this time, as can be seen in his 1803 edition of Border Minstrelsy and 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel', which he was working on between 1802 and 1805. The latter shows Scott interested in the minstrel as a repository of ancient tradition, and this is brought out in his claims regarding the authenticity of Sir Tristrem.

44. Waverley Novels, (1877), 1, 42-3.

45. Letter to Jessie, (1787). Letters, 1, 8.

46. Waverley Novels, 1, 36-43.

47. C. O. Parsons, Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction (1964), p. 54. Lockhart, Life, 11, 30-9.

48. Here Scott describes Ercildoune recounting the Tristan story at a feast. This account is more influenced by the Prose Tristan than Sir Tristrem. Mark is a coward; Tristram is associated with Arthur and Joyeuse Garde; the lovers die together.

Scott argues that as the poet lived on the borders of the old British kingdom of Strathelwyd, he must have taken his materials from Celtic traditions persisting long after the Celts were absorbed by the Picto-Scottish alliance. The only alternative would be the Continental form of the legend.⁴⁹ The flaw in this argument is that Scott supposes the survival of British traditions with no factual support except a school of Northern romancers virtually invented for this purpose.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, he maintained this vulnerable position with tough but flexible defences, ensuring that his romance was the first matrix of original traditions.

The document of Soltra proves that Ercildoune died before 1299,⁵¹ and, as he certainly survived 1286 and possibly 1296, his death can be pinpointed fairly accurately. In the 1804 edition Scott hypothesizes that the romance must have been composed about 1250 when the author was thirty. He thus allots him a life-span of seventy years on the grounds of the psalmist's 'three score years and ten' and the traditional venerability of prophets.⁵² Before publication Scott had placed the romance in 1260, but this had been antedated by ten years⁵³ to accommodate possible competition from Raoul de Beauvais, whom Scott erroneously suspected of writing the Douce fragments in the mid-13th century.

However, in 1807 Scott encountered a far more formidable adversary in the form of Gottfried von Strassburg whose Tristan, Weber informed him, had been dated at 1232.⁵⁴ Scott's reply came in the 1811 edition. He pushed back the date of composition by thirty years to 1220, thus bringing

49. Sir Tristrem, pp. xxxix-xxlvii.

50. Ibid., pp. liv-lvii.

51. Ibid., p. viii and Appendix i.

52. Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

53. Letter to Ellis, 19th March, 1804. Letters, i, 215.

54. Letter to Ellis, 1st July, 1807. Ibid., xii, 292-4.

Ercildoune up to over ninety years and allowing a margin of approximately twelve years for Sir Tristrem to circulate to Germany. The manoeuvre gives Scott's theory apparent weight, since Gottfried refers to a 'Thomas von Britanje' as his authority. In fact, this is a reworking of the passage in which Thomas de Bretagne appeals to the authority of Breri.⁵⁵

Scott used all his argumentative powers to retain his position during the preparation of the first edition. Douce studied the language of the fragments and concluded that they must be 12th century, though he was considerably embarrassed by the mention of Thomas, whom he took to be Ercildoune.⁵⁶ Ellis took up the point and argued with Scott that there must have been an earlier poet called Thomas who wrote a Tristan romance in French, which was translated by Thomas of Ercildoune nearly a hundred years later and which was also known to Chrétien.⁵⁷ This near-accurate conjecture was rejected by Scott, who stated that as there is historical evidence for the existence of Ercildoune it would be more sensible to use this to date the fragments than to use the supposed antiquity of the fragments to postulate an earlier Thomas.⁵⁸ He reinforced his position by saying that Chrétien's apparent knowledge of the legend need not be founded on anything other than floating tradition, and that there is no proof that the version of the fragments was known to any poet before Thomas of Ercildoune. In the Preface Scott explains that the French of the Douce manuscript only appears older than it really is because it was written in England where the French language was either stationary or 'retrograde'.⁵⁹

55. Bédier, ii, 38.

56. Bodley MS. Douce d. 6. Douce's notes p. 23.

57. Letters to Douce, 19th June and 24th July, 1803. Bodley MS. Douce d. 34.

58. Letter to Ellis, July 1803. Letters, i, 191.

59. p. xliv.

Ellis confessed to Douce that he was vanquished by these arguments.⁶⁰

Another point raised by Scott in the correspondence with Ellis⁶¹ concerns the style of the fragments which appears 'more artificial and minute' than that of Sir Tristrem. According to Scott this indicates that the French writer expanded the British work. He elaborates on this in the Preface, arguing that as the stuff of romance is limited, the later works possess more embroidery to retain interest. Therefore, because Sir Tristrem is bare of detail, it is older than the more explicit version of the Douce fragments.⁶² In 1824 Scott's theory concerning the authority of Sir Tristrem was severely undermined, when Richard Price pointed out that the Tristramssaga is dated 1226.⁶³

The determination with which Scott maintained his position was not only due to his predilection for Thomas of Ercildoune, but also to his love of Scotland. From the beginning of Scott's association with the Auchinleck manuscript he was intent on trying 'one or two for the honour of Scotland.'⁶⁴ Consequently, he presents Sir Tristrem as an outstanding product of early Scottish literature, composed from original British materials and setting the fashion for Continental writers. Around this he built a school of romance writers on very flimsy evidence.

He appropriated the romance of Wade⁶⁵ as a border composition, together with Gawen and Gologras and Galoran of Galoway, and argued for Ercildoune's authorship of Hornchild.⁶⁶ The list of Scottish writers who made up this

60. 24th July, 1803. Bodley MS. Douce d. 34.

61. 11th May, 1801. Letters, xii, 182.

62. pp. lxxxiv-lxxxvi.

63. Warton, History, i, 197.

64. Letter to Heber, 10th March, 1801. Letters, xii, 174.

65. See Troilus and Criseyde, iii, 614 and the 'Merchant's Tale', l. 1424.

66. Sir Tristrem, pp. lvii-lx.

school comprised Kendal, Hutcheoun of the Awle Royal and 'probably many other poets, whose names and works have now perished'.⁶⁷ These poets were shown composing in advanced English at a time when comparable English romancers composed in French for the Norman nobility:

While the English minstrels had hardly ventured on the drudgery of translating the French romances, or, if they did so, were only listened to by the lowest of the people, our northern poets were writing original gests 'for pride and nobleye', in a high style and complicated stanza, which their plebeian audience were unable to comprehend. In one word, the early romances of England were written in French, those of Scotland were written in English.⁶⁸

Scott does admit to Ellis that the 'Phile-Thomas' must have been an Englishman on the strength of the two lines:

God help Tristrem the knight
He fought for England.

But nevertheless he maintains that 'In other respects the language appears Scottish and certainly contains the essence of Thomas's work.'⁶⁹

Scott was unreliable on language. In dating Gawen and Gologras and Galoran of Galoway during the 13th century, Scott relies on the 'comparative absence of French words' and the 'extreme rudeness and unintelligibility' of style.⁷⁰ In fact, the former is not earlier than 1375 and the latter is dated just before 1500.⁷¹ Ellis was never satisfied with Scott's claims for Scotticisms in Sir Tristrem, and asked him for some rule whereby to decide whether a poem in early English is English or Scottish. He also requested Scott to point out some words or phrases in Sir Tristrem as a criterion.⁷² Scott never gave him a specific answer.

67. Sir Tristrem, p. lv.

68. Ibid., p. lxxv.

69. 20th April, 1801. Letters, i, 112.

70. Sir Tristrem, pp. lv-lvi.

71. J. L. N. O'Loughlin, 'The English Alliterative Romances, ALMA, pp. 526-7.

72. Letters, xii, 175, n.1.

Richard Price first disproved Scott's appropriation of Sir Tristrem as a Scottish composition, on the grounds that there are no traces of Scottish dialect in it.⁷³ Wright points out that the author of Sir Tristrem may have been a Londoner for all the language says to the contrary,⁷⁴ and Vogel shows that Northernisms found in the romance do not prove that it was written in the North of England let alone Scotland.⁷⁵ The philological approach obviously weakens Ercildoune's claim to authorship, but so far it has not been proved conclusively that he did not write the romance.

Scott may be forgiven for his ignorance of philology, as contemporary scholars considered it more a game than a science. Pinkerton, for example, argues the Pictish origin of the Scottish language on invented evidence and occasional reference to early historians.⁷⁶ This vagueness over the derivation of languages gives rise to such mistakes as Ellis's translation of lathru as 'robbers' from the Latin latro.⁷⁷ It also explains many of the faults in Scott's Glossary.

Today Scott's arguments appear extraordinary, but their presentation is still persuasive. At the time of the first edition Scott knew more about the Tristan material than any other scholar. Although such researchers as Douce and William Owen knew of the legend in so far as it touched on their fields of interest, Scott was the first to focus on and assimilate all the available material.

Early in 1801 Scott was introduced to George Ellis through Richard Heber.

73. Warton, History, 1, 196.

74. Ibid., (1840), 1, 109, n.1.

75. B. Vogel, 'The Dialect of Sir Tristrem', JEGP, xl (1941), 538-94.

76. B. H. Bronson, Joseph Ritson: Scholar at Arms (Berkeley, 1938), 1, 201ff.

77. 'An Ode On Athelstan's Victory', Specimens of Early English Poetry (1801), 1, 17, n.8.

This friendship gave Scott access to Douce's manuscripts. Ellis had been interested in Sir Tristrem before he met Scott and contemplated making an abstract of it on the lines of de Tressan's work, with the conclusion taken from the Douce fragment.⁷⁸ This project was abandoned. Instead, Ellis set out to help Scott, in return for which Scott sent him abstracts of romances in the Auchinleck manuscript for inclusion in his Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances.⁷⁹ Ellis provided Scott with abstracts of both Douce fragments and a translation of Chèvrefeuil, all of which were included in the edition. He also made a transcript of part of the Thomas fragment, so that Scott could quote the passage concerning the author,⁸⁰ and even procured a copy of Lady Juliana Berners' treatise to elucidate the difficult hunting terminology.⁸¹

In addition, he was always prepared to make suggestions regarding the format of the edition, and to argue any doubtful point. It was Ellis who suggested prefacing the text with a prose analysis, much in the style of the Specimens.⁸² He also advocated a less obscure rendition of the conclusion,⁸³ the division of the romance into three fyttes,⁸⁴ and the discarding of 'the crooked 3 with all its ambiguities'.⁸⁵ Thus Scott could thank

78. Letter to Douce, 29th January, 1801. Bodley MS. Douce d. 34. Ellis had drawn attention to the romance in Specimens of the Early English Poets. 111,

79. Including Arthur and Merlin, Guy of Warwick, Floris and Blancheflour.⁴⁰⁹⁻¹¹ See Johnston, Enchanted Ground, p. 161.

80. Letter to Ellis, 22nd October, 1801. Scott also asks Ellis whether the language of the fragments reflects that of Sir Tristrem. Letters, xii, 202-4.

81. Letter to Ellis, 7th December, 1801. *Ibid.*, xii, 207.

82. *Ibid.*, xii, 205n.

83. *Ibid.*, 206n.

84. Letter to Ellis, 7th (8th) December 1801. *Ibid.*, xii, 123-4.

85. Letter to Ellis, 24th December 1801. *Ibid.*, xii, 195.

Ellis not only for assistance on all problems from etymology to the Picts, but also for attempting to steer the edition on a course acceptable to the most fastidious reader.

But Ellis was not the only source of aid. Although Percy contributed nothing more than a general expression of interest, the eccentric and vituperative Ritson lent Scott the manuscript of Bibliographica Scotica, which heightened his interest and shaped his ideas. When he visited Scott, Ritson undertook to prove that the manuscript contained Ercildoune's exact version of the romance by collecting evidence of contemporary writers referring to themselves in the third person.⁸⁶ Owen,⁸⁷ the leading Welsh scholar, at Scott's request,⁸⁸ gave him information on the Welsh romances in general and the Mabinogion in particular, which he was translating at the time. His theory that the manuscripts containing the latter date from the 12th and 13th centuries⁸⁹ gave Scott grounds for his claim concerning the circulation of the Tristan legend in the 13th century. Equally important, he introduced Scott to the Triads and the dialogue between Trystan and Gwalchmei, which he transcribed and translated for the edition.

Scott's concern ranged from large, generalized theories to minor details, particularly those which appeared to support his ideas. For example he was roused on meeting a Cornishman called Caerlion to conjecture that this name might be a corruption of *Castrum Leonense*, the chief town of Lyonesse, and not to be confused with Arthur's capital at Caerlion on Uske.⁹⁰

86. Letter to Ellis, 7th December, 1801. *Ibid.*, xii, 208.

87. Later known as William Owen-Pughe.

88. Johnston, *Op. cit.*, p.156.

89. Letters, i, 147n.

90. Letter to Ellis, 27th August, 1803. Letters, i, 198-9.

in consequence, he wrote to the Reverend Polwhele for information on vestiges of the Tristan legend in Cornwall, thus anticipating the research of Joseph Loth by a century.

This particular discussion is omitted from the Preface, as is much of the argument found in the letters. For example, mention of the manuscript's compilation in England only appears in Appendix iv, containing its description. Also, the 'vile Picts', which troubled Scott's slumbers,⁹¹ appear only briefly, and when Chalmers refuted the Gothic origin of the Pictish nation, Scott was able to congratulate himself that so little of his argument rested upon this point.⁹² Conversely, hardly any discussion is found in the Preface which is not touched on in the letters, and this probably accounts for the clarity and persuasiveness of Scott's arguments. The exuberance of the letters is, however, toned down. Scott's determination to make Ercildoune the author of Hornchild,⁹³ for example, becomes modified to a tentative surmise.⁹⁴

In addition to the information received from fellow scholars, Scott was widely read in works on early literature from Hicke's Thesaurus⁹⁵ to Claude Fauchet's Receuil de l'origine de la langue et poésie françoise, first published in 1581. But although Scott added much to the evidence supporting his thesis from these varied sources, he did not alter his first claims. His correspondence and reading tightened his arguments and furnished him with erudition, but these arguments were formulated before his research

91. Letter to Ellis, 25th August-8th September. Letters, xii, 191.

92. Sir Tristrem (1811), p. li, n. See George Chalmers, Caledonia: or an Account, historical and topographic of N. Britain (1807-24).

93. Letter to Ellis, 19th March, 1804. Letters, i, 215.

94. Sir Tristrem, pp. lx-lxi.

95. G. Hicke, Linguarum Vetterum Septentrionalium Thesaurus (1703-5).

was fully under way.

When Sir Tristrem eventually appeared in 1804, the edition was limited to 150 copies,⁹⁶ but subsequently enlarged.⁹⁷ Although it was not recognized at the time, the work's main fault was carelessness, not only in the Preface and Notes, but also in the text. Kölbing remarks that whoever transcribed the manuscript could not have had any knowledge of Middle English because of the many inaccuracies. In fact, Leyden, the person in question, was an accomplished scholar for his day, with a great enthusiasm for both Border Minstrelsy and Sir Tristrem. Nevertheless, the proportion of mistakes was so high that even after the text had been collated with the manuscript for the 1833 edition, Kölbing could still count 130 errors.⁹⁸ Of the five editions in 1804, 1806, 1811, 1819 and 1830, the 1806 is the most corrupt, as the 1811 was checked against the 1804 before printing. Unfortunately, it was the 1806 text which von der Hagen used in his edition of the Tristan romances.

However, textual accuracy was not considered a cardinal virtue in Scott's day. Ritson, its only advocate, personally transcribed manuscripts but even his texts are faulty because he had no Latin and could not read contractions.⁹⁹ Scott was more concerned with ideas than with the text of Sir Tristrem. He took trouble over its presentation - notes, divisions and orthography - but it is evident that such mundane tasks were not congenial

96. 12 copies were unexpurgated, containing the line 'hir queynt abouen hir knewe', II, ciii, which was replaced in the 1806 and subsequent editions. Leyden resigned his joint editorship over this line, because he thought the romance 'too free and easy'.

97. The 1806 edition ran to 750 copies, the 1811 to 1,000.

98. Sir Tristrem, pp. xvii-xviii.

99. F. Madden, 'Remarks on Sir Walter Scott's Sir Tristrem', Gentleman's Magazine, ciii (October 1833), pp. 307-12. Ritson advocated a careful text, not because of its linguistic value, but because it proved the original's authenticity.

to him. He writes to Ellis: 'I set forth upon the task of punctuation with all the resignation to divine providence which you recommend ...' ¹⁰⁰ Nor did Scott's interest in philology take precedence over his interest in the Preface. The Glossary owes much to Macpherson ¹⁰¹ but even so it contains many inaccuracies which were not recognized until Madden's article in 1833. ¹⁰² In this Madden corrects the errors, lamenting that Lockhart did not revise the Glossary for the 1833 edition.

The state of linguistic studies at the time would excuse the inaccuracies as due to ignorance, were it not for the errors in the Preface. Here Scott frequently misquotes and it is evident that he did not check quotations found in print against the manuscript or another source. He misquotes and consequently mistranslates the line 'That non were suyik as they' from Robert de Brunne, which appears as 'That were not suylike as thei'. ¹⁰³ Although Scott had the correct version in Ritson's Bibliographica Scotica, ¹⁰⁴ he did not notice the discrepancy. Sometimes, however, the fault does not lie with Scott: at one point in the quotation from Thomas, Ellis read nerf for vers and sum for l'uni. Scott admits that the line is unintelligible but does not query it. ¹⁰⁵

Sometimes the errors of the Preface are not restricted to misquotation. For example, Scott ascribes the fragments to Raoul de Beauvais, writing about 1257, supporting this with quotation from what he maintains is a Perceval written by this poet. He refers to Ritson's attribution of the passage to

100. 24th September, 1801. Letters, xii, 195.

101. Andrew of Wyntoun, De Origynale Cronykil of Scotland Ed. D. Macpherson (1795), with notes and glossary.

102. *Op. cit.*, pp. 307-12.

103. Sir Tristrem, p. lxii. Taken from Pinkerton's Ancient Scottish Poems, I, lxix.

104. Bronson, PMLA, lxi, 156.

105. Sir Tristrem, p. xlii.

Chrétien de Troyes, but considers him to have mistaken Chrétien's earlier Perceval for this later one.¹⁰⁶ Douce notes in the margin of his copy of Sir Tristrem that the quotation is from Chrétien's Cligès. Thus Raoul de Beauvais is easily proved to have no connection with the fragments and Chrétien's claim to an early Tristan is strengthened. Scott's mistake is left to stand in all editions.

Douce's copy contains many corrections of facts and quotations, together with a few queries as to the validity of Scott's theories, such as his interpretation of Robert de Brunne. Some of these corrections were made in subsequent editions, especially that of 1833, where many of the English quotations, if not the French, were checked. But some inaccuracies noticed by Douce remain even in the last edition. For example, Scott refers to the 1489 edition of the Prose Tristan as existing in 'one volume folio'¹⁰⁷ when it was printed in two volumes.

The 1806 edition contains some correction and innovation such as the paragraph in which Scott deduces that Ercildoune's birth must have been around 1219,¹⁰⁸ replacing some tenuous conjectures in the first edition,¹⁰⁹ It also adds a postscript on the genealogy of Learmont. But most emendation occurs in the 1811 edition after Scott had encountered Gottfried von Strassburg. Here he inserts two passages to include this material¹¹⁰ and adds a new article by Weber on the German Tristan romances. By 1819 Scott has lost interest in this early work and only an occasional minor alteration was made to the fourth and fifth editions. Sir Tristrem was

106. Sir Tristrem, pp. xl-xlii, xli, n.

107. Ibid., p. lxxvii.

108. Ibid., (1806), p. ix.

109. Ibid., (1804), p. viii.

110. Ibid., (1811), pp. x and xlvii.

reissued in the 1833 edition of the Complete Poetical Works. In this edition Lockhart defends the authorship of Thomas of Ercildoune against Price, but admits that the claim to authenticity is unfounded. Nevertheless Scott's arguments in the Preface remain unaltered.

After Price's refutation in 1824 Scott's theories lost ground gradually, although the authorship of Sir Tristrem is still something of a moot point. The fallibilities of the edition are obvious, but nevertheless the work represents a great initial step, not only in Tristan scholarship, but also in mediaeval studies generally. It was the first edition to assemble and investigate all the relevant material available; until Neill's edition in 1886, it was the only available text in England; and its method of presentation ensured interest among gentlemen antiquarians, if not the general public. In fact, it can be said of Scott's edition that it is not only the first, but also the greatest English work on the Tristan legend, as honours in this field passed soon afterwards to the Continent. Equally important is the fact that Scott made available the metrical version of the legend to the poets of the century, particularly Swinburne, whose work heralded the reaction in its favour.

It can be seen from this account of Scott's edition that the methods, and sometimes the aims, of scholars during this period were arbitrary. But in addition to a lack of academic expertise, scholarship was also hampered by a lack of academic facilities: libraries were few and inefficient, and much of the corpus of mediaeval literature existed in private collections. As new works or fresh information came to light, theories became rapidly outdated. Consequently, scholarship in the first half of the 19th century appears a curiosity shop of enthusiasm and idiosyncrasy, but it also demonstrates the origins of advances made much later and helps to define the attitude of the time towards the mediaeval.

After the efforts of Scott, Ritson and Ellis, interest subsided. A

lethargy seized mediaeval scholarship in England and only a handful of valuable works were produced. A reviewer in the Athenaeum of 1st December, 1838 sums up the attitude of the age in an article on a history of the Albigenses by Claude Fauriel:

Here is another proof of the ardour with which our Gallic neighbours ransack every obscure corner for materials to enrich the national history - an ardour that we Englishmen are disposed rather to praise than to imitate.¹¹¹

This lack of impetus was perhaps due to the fact that the English did not regard mediaeval studies in the wider context of nationalism, whereas the Welsh and the French, particularly the Bretons, rejoiced in the discovery of national roots.

As in the previous century mediaeval studies remained in the hands of the gentleman amateur, with time and libraries at his disposal, but little inclination to do more than dabble.¹¹² Nevertheless, one advance did arise out of this activity: the founding of the literary clubs. Their aim was to bring out limited editions of texts edited by club members. Although this did not really alleviate the accessibility problem, it did conserve and present manuscripts from private collections which would otherwise have remained in obscurity. However, it must be remembered that, although the technique of editing had progressed since the days of Percy owing to a more liberal attitude, it was still insufficiently advanced to establish definitive texts. In 1840 Madden, concerned with the necessity for good editions, surveyed gloomily the merits of the leading members of various literary clubs:

But where are the editors for such laborious undertakings? We must not look for them in the Turnbulls, Halliwells, Wrights, Colliers, Hartshornes, and a host of others I could name, of the present day.¹¹³

111. p. 851.

112. See Madden's remarks on the 'indolence' of William Conybeare, the Anglo-Saxon scholar. 17th January, 1824. Madden's Journals, vi, 42. Bodley MS. 40759-801.

113. 14th September, 1840. Ibid., xiv, 169.

The clubs did not confine their attentions to any single category of mediaeval texts during this period, but worked on literary, historical, religious and musical texts from the 12th to the 18th centuries. Consequently, Arthurian studies failed to emerge as a specific area, and, in all but a few minds, remained undifferentiated from the bulk of mediaeval material. This is not surprising as there are comparatively few Arthurian works in English, and those in French belonging to English collectors presented even greater problems for a generation which still had curious ideas on early English linguistics.¹¹⁴ The Roxburghe Club published four Arthurian works between 1814 and 1884,¹¹⁵ the Abbotsford¹¹⁶ and Bannatyne¹¹⁷ Clubs produced one apiece.

The Bannatyne edition constitutes the one professional work during the period: Madden's edition of all the English Gawain romances, which rivalled Michel's work on Tristan. Its professionalism undoubtedly derived from Madden's post in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum, which was later to claim all his time and energy. His acquaintance with French and English Arthurian literature was extensive¹¹⁸ - eight years later he edited Layamon's Brut - and his contacts ranged from Douce of the previous scholarly generation to his contemporary Francisque Michel. Such a critical

114. Halliwell's draft for his later Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words, Obsolete Phrases, Proverbs and Ancient Customs from the 14th century (1847), was roundly condemned by Madden. 18th October, 1844. Journals, xviii, 300.

115. Le Morte Arthur, ed. T. Ponton (1819); Geoffrey of Monmouth's De Vita et Vaticiniis Merlini Calidoni, ed. G. N. Grenville (1830); Lovelich's Holy Grail, ed. F. J. Furnivall (1861-3); La Queste del Saint Graal, ed. F. J. Furnivall (1864).

116. Arthur and Merlin, ed. W. B. D. D. Turnbull (1838).

117. Syr Gawaine, ed. F. Madden (1839).

118. He studied in the Bibliothèque Nationale during the summer of 1838.

survey had not been undertaken before in England, combining the scope of former anthologies with the detailed approach of Scott's Sir Tristrem.

Madden's reference to foreign critics is almost unique during the period for the clubs encouraged complacent insularity. In all the lists of the Abbotsford, Bannatyne and Roxburghe Clubs, the only guest editor is Michel, who edited Le Roman de Fergus for the Abbotsford in 1841. This ignorance of foreign scholarship is a feature of English work in the Arthurian field and persists till the last decade of the century. Previously, as can be seen from Scott's references, there was a greater interchange with foreign scholars. (I include the Welsh here as they were effectively regarded as foreigners by the English). Southey was the last of this more liberal-minded generation to produce a work of importance: the Caxton Malory, published in 1817.

Southey did not edit the text, but wrote an extensive preface. For the latter he turned, with Scott's help, to the Welsh and the work of such French scholars as the Comte de Caylus.¹¹⁹ But although Southey consulted French academics, he placed his main emphasis on the Welsh theories, particularly in connection with the Celtic origins of the Arthurian legend. This question was not reopened until Lady Guest's translation of the Mabinogion (1838-48), and was only fully discussed during the resurgence of Celtic studies at the end of the century. Unfortunately, once having raised the question, Southey's contribution is limited, since he is sidetracked by misguided theories.¹²⁰

Nevertheless, the edition is a landmark, since it represents the first attempt to produce any text other than the Stansby since its publication in

119. De l'ancienne Chevalerie et des Anciens Romains (Paris, 1813).

120. E.g., E. Davies, Mythology and Rites of the British Druids (1809).

1634. The idea of editing Malory had occurred independently to Scott and Southey in 1807,¹²¹ but as there was no known edition of the Caxton extant, both were planning a Stansby reprint. When Lady Jersey's Caxton copy¹²² was discovered in 1809, Scott aimed at publishing a limited edition for antiquaries a year or two after Southey's popular edition.¹²³ In 1812 Scott considered buying a de Worde Malory at the Roxburghe sale, but later abandoned his plan for an edition. Finally, in 1816, Lord Spenser obtained the only other existing Caxton,¹²⁴ which was printed by Longman under the supervision of John Upcott, the missing leaves being supplied from the de Worde text.¹²⁵ This appeared the following year with a preface by Southey.

Southey's Welsh interests seem to have been conceived in connection with his Stansby edition. In 1807 he formed the following plan:

... to give the history of Arthur, and collect, by the aid of Turner, Owen, and Edward Williams,¹²⁶ all that the Welsh themselves can supply, and then the critical bibliography of the Round Table. The notes will refer to the originals from which this delightful book has been compiled, and give all the illustrations that I can supply.¹²⁷

A year later he writes of the difficulty of procuring information on 'the Welsh archaiology' from the elusive Welsh scholars,¹²⁸ and by 1817 his plan

121. See letter to Longman and Co., 13th November, 1807. Robert Southey: Life and Correspondence, ed. C. C. Southey (1850), iii, 111. Letter from Scott to Southey, November 1807. Letters, i 390.

122. The only perfect copy. Now in the Pierpoint Morgan Library.

123. Letter to Southey, 10th September, 1809. Letters, ii, 236.

124. Lacking 11 leaves.

125. This was the 1498 text contemplated by Scott and bought by Lord Spenser.

126. Sharon Turner, History of the Anglo-Saxons (1799-1805); William Owen and Edward Williams, co-editors of Myvyrian Archaology (1801-7).

127. Letter to Heber, 6th November, 1807. Life and Correspondence, iii, 116.

128. Letter to G. C. Bedford, 17th November, 1808. Ibid., iii, 188-9.

had been considerably modified. In the Preface he touches on the historicity of Arthur according to Owen, in addition to the mythological character as interpreted by Davies, but as far as sources are concerned, Southey limits himself to general ideas of Celtic origins, and, after giving the colophons of the printed romances, comments, with occasional notes and quotations, on the similarities to Malory. He remains uncertain as to whether Malory worked from a compendium of romances or made the compilation himself¹²⁹ and ends by conjecturing on his possible sources.

Prophetically, Southey comments on the subject of Malory and contemporary taste:

were it again modernized in the same manner, and published as a book for boys, it could hardly fail of regaining its popularity. When I was a schoolboy I possessed a wretchedly imperfect copy, and there was no book, except the Faerie Queene, which I perused so often, or with such deep contentment.¹³⁰

His desire for a popular text was fulfilled in 1816 when two Stansby editions appeared. The three volume edition published by Wilks is a forerunner of the Bowdlerized texts and popularizations which succeeded the Idylls of the King in that it advertizes itself as suitably expurgated 'to render the text fit for the eye of youth; and that it might be no longer secreted from the fair sex.'¹³¹ (In fact, it merely omits references to Christ and details of the rape of the Duchess of Brittany.)¹³² Its superiority over the rival two volume edition published by Walker and Edwards lies in greater accuracy, not in the omission of 'objectionable, and indeed, obscene passages'. Even the Wilks text was highly corrupt by present standards but the editions were

129. Southey quotes Douce's opinion that Malory worked from manuscripts now lost, thus preventing assessment of his alterations.

130. The Byrth, Lyf and Actes of King Arthur, I, xxviii.

131. The Most Ancient and Famous History of the Renowned Prince Arthur, I, iv.

132. v, 4.

responsible for the inspiration of Tennyson, and in 1891 Sir Edward Strachey pays tribute to them as 'probably the volumes through which my own generation made their first acquaintance with king Arthur.'¹³³ By the 1850's, however, the three editions had become rare.

For the next twenty years Arthurian material remained in the hands of the scholarly clique. The Mabinogion, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest and published in instalments, constitutes the first attempt to bring further material to public notice since the 1816 editions of Malory. This project had first been mooted by Owen and had won the support of Turner, Ellis and Southey, all of whom had some knowledge of Welsh. But although four mabinogion had been translated by 1805, the edition was abandoned.¹³⁴

When Guest's edition was completed, it comprised twelve Welsh texts with English translations, copious notes and, in the style of Southey, selections from European romances. 'Peredur ab Efrewc', for example, is illuminated by quotations from Perceval romances in English, Icelandic, German and French. In this cosmopolitan approach Lady Guest stands apart with Madden from contemporary scholarship, since it enabled her to attempt an examination of the relationships between Welsh and European literature,¹³⁵ which was unusual at the time. She concludes that there is a Celtic nucleus in European romance, transmitted by Geoffrey of Monmouth and

133. Le Morte d'Arthur, 11th ed. (1891), p. xxxii.

134. Johnston, Enchanted Ground, pp. 156-9.

135. She believed the German romances to be derived from the French and then disseminated northwards at the end of the 12th century. This hypothesis has relevance to the relationship of Gottfried and the Douce fragment. Introduction, pp. xiii-xiv.

observable in the works of Wace and other langue d'oïl poets. This nucleus can still be seen in Welsh literature and is substantiated in the Mabinogion by the use of topographical names, suggesting an antiquity not deriving from any European nation.¹³⁶ This constitutes a more circumspect reiteration of Ellis's opinion that the Mabinogion were prototypes for Norman romances, and antedates much later research.¹³⁷

When the first instalment came out Madden wondered that Lady Guest had not mentioned the work of Owen,¹³⁸ but, according to Rhys Phillips,¹³⁹ she did not have access to his manuscripts, using only the three published translations. This seems likely in view of her linguistic proficiency and the assistance of various Welsh scholars. Her work, having popular value, also had an academic soundness and its contribution to scholarship was considerable, since the Mabinogion are crucial to a discussion of the origins of Arthurian romance. It represents, therefore a mid-way stage between the aspirations of Southey and the convictions of Nutt.

It is not surprising that discussion of Celtic sources should be so advanced when English scholarship had barely begun to recognize the existence of Arthurian literature, since Welsh scholarship had been progressing with enthusiasm since the mid-18th century. At the beginning of the 19th century previous work was consolidated and expanded under the leadership of Owen, who worked on editions of Welsh texts¹⁴⁰ and the first Welsh learned Journal.¹⁴¹ This stimulus to research was greater than the corresponding

136. Introduction, pp. xiv-xvi.

137. Madden conversely saw the Mabinogion proof of the minor role played by Celtic sources in the composition of the French Arthurian romances. 11th March, 1842. Journals, xvi, 46.

138. 7th September, 1838. Ibid., xiii, 245.

139. Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion (1921), p. 11.

140. Myvyrian Aethallogy (1801-7).

141. The Cambrian Register (1796, 1799, 1818).

movement in England, and represented an advance on the 18th century pre-occupation with private collecting. The English, however, after the brief era of collaboration at the beginning of the century, became impervious to Welsh scholarship, particularly its chauvinistic theorizing. More concerned with editions than ideas, English scholars regarded the Welsh zeal and inaccuracy with a distaste commensurate with that with which they viewed the Welsh refusal to conform to English culture.

The English were in some measure correct in their condemnation of Welsh theories, since these generally hinged on proving the superior antiquity of the Welsh race. Even Owen was moved to uphold the view that Welsh was the oldest speech of mankind,¹⁴² and in the subsequent attempt to eradicate all defects and inconsistencies in the language, succeeded in creating a bogus grammar. This desire also misled the literary interpreters. Edward Davies' work on the Druids¹⁴³ typifies this sort of fancifulness: influenced by Jacob Bryant's attempt to trace vestiges of Arkite idolatry in Greek mythology,¹⁴⁴ he applies Bryant's ideas to Welsh literature, creating tissues of fiction and speculation in which the real meaning of the literature is lost.¹⁴⁵ Inevitably, amid these extravagances there were forgeries, but again motivated by the same desire. Most famous were the fabrications of Edward Williams, Iolo Morganwg, who passed off a number of his own cwyddau as mediaeval, set up the Gorsedd as an older ceremony than the Eisteddfod and invented an entire romantic history for Glamorganshire.¹⁴⁶

142. Derived from Rowland Jones, The Origin of Language and the Nations (1764). See T. Parry, A History of Welsh Literature, translated I. Bell (1950), pp. 305-6.

143. Mythology and Rites (1809).

144. A New System or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology (1774-6).

145. The triad of the three mighty swineherds becomes an allusion to the incorporation of British primitive religion into the rites of the Phoenician sow. Trystan symbolizes the moving power in British religion and his relationship with Essyllt is mystical. pp. 439-60.

146. See Parry, op. cit., pp. 301-4.

The reason these forgeries remained undetected into the early 20th century lies partly in the lack of centralization which bedevilled Welsh studies. Not until the end of the century were Celtic studies instituted at Oxford and the Welsh University colleges built, which partly compensated for the lack of a national library. Meanwhile the local Eisteddfodau tried vainly to provide a stimulus and standard for scholarship. Although the Welsh Manuscript Society was formed in 1833, mainly by gentlemen and clergy, as in England, this did not effectively mitigate the lack of coordination and scholars continued to work independently. Consequently standards were not high.

The Welsh enthusiasm, which repelled the English, attracted the French. So great was their enthusiasm that in 1838 le Ministère de l'instruction publique commissioned the Vicomte Hersart de la Villemarqué to visit Wales for the Abergavenny Eisteddfod, held in honour of the Bretons. This interest was chiefly occasioned by the growing awareness on both sides of the Celtic connections of the French, manifested particularly in the ancient literature of both nations.

La Villemarqué's report on the meeting is found in the introduction to his work on early British literature which it inspired.¹⁴⁷ The Welsh were delighted when they discovered they could understand the Armorican lay sung by la Villemarqué, and friendship was cemented between the two countries by Lady Guest and la Villemarqué undertaking the publication of the Welsh stories in English and French as a memorial to the reunion. The bonds between French and Welsh were thus strengthened by scholarship and sentiment.

Sentiment pervaded French literature as it did the Welsh. Even allowing for the greater number of Arthurian romances in French compared

147. Contes Populaires des Anciens Bretons (Paris, 1842).

with those in English, there is a marked variance in the levels of appreciation demonstrated by Madden and his French contemporaries. Madden was a devoted scholar, but no literary critic, and he fails to mention the artistry of the main text in Syr Gawayne, although it matches the work of Chrétien. The French scholars, on the other hand, write with a sensitivity for aesthetic qualities, which was to continue throughout the century.

De Roquefort, for example, comments that the Prose Tristan deserves its success 'non seulement par l'intérêt que l'auteur a su répandre sur son héros, mais encore dans les différents épisodes de son ouvrage.'¹⁴⁸ This should be compared with the English attitude summarized by Philip in Charlotte Yonge's The Heir of Redclyffe (1853), who can only see 'a great sameness of character and adventure' in Malory. The English were also more sensitive to the morality of the legends, and Southey rejects the Tristan story in Malory on this count, rather than its inferior artistry:

The story in its progress not only disappointed, but frequently disgusted me. Vile as the thought is of producing by a philtre that love upon which the whole history turns, and making the hero, or rather both the heroes, live in adultery (and that too in both instances of an aggravated kind), these are the conditions of the Romance, which must be taken with it for better for worse: they are the original elements of which the author was to make the best he could. But it is the fault of the author that so many of the leading incidents should shock, not merely our ordinary morals, which are conventional and belong to our age, but those feelings which belong to human nature in all ages.¹⁴⁹

De Roquefort conversely sees the lovers as 'modèles de constance et de fidélité', and Creuzé regards Malory's source, the Prose Tristan, as the 'roman digne des plus beaux siècles ... qui en est incontestablement le meilleur'.¹⁵⁰ Even the passion itself is breathlessly acclaimed by Claude Fauriel:

148. De l'état de la Poésie dans les 12^e et 13^e siècles (Paris, 1815), p. 150

149. I, xv.

150. Le Baron Auguste Creuzé de Lesser, La Table Ronde, 4th ed. (Paris, 1829), p. xxii.

... la ravissante peinture d'un amour dont l'ivresse et l'exaltation survivent à toutes les épreuves du temps et de la volupté, à toutes les traversées de la vie et que la mort elle-même n'a pas la puissance de l'éteindre.¹⁵¹

The later critical style of Gaston Paris thus represents the culmination of a tradition of highly appreciative commitment by French scholarship to Tristan literature, rather than a new departure.

This tradition, however, was also productive of an unbalancing enthusiasm, particularly when it came into contact with some of the stranger Welsh theories. The career of la Villemarqué illustrates this dark side of French scholarship. In 1835 he discovered the work of Guenc'lhan, the Breton Merlin, miraculously preserved in 5th or 6th century fragments. These he unfortunately lost before any examination was made. Four years later he published Barzas-Breiz, Breton songs collected in the manner of Border Minstrelsy, and edited in an even more arbitrary fashion. The temper of scholarship in France and Wales was such that no one was surprised by la Villemarqué's claims of great antiquity for his Breton heritage: the Welsh had been postulating a 6th century school of bards headed by Llywarch-Hên, for some time. Consequently, no one remarked on the amazing completeness of the songs, nor on his equally amazing theory that the fullest in detail were likely to be the oldest.

It was not until 1868 that la Villemarqué was denounced as a Breton Macpherson in Le Men's edition of Jehan Lagadeuc's Catholicon. Le Men, who had done much research and field work, proved in an article for the Athenaeum that la Villemarqué's knowledge of Breton was deficient and that the Barzas-Breiz are either distortions, or, in some cases, complete fabrications.¹⁵² He also revealed that the 'Elegy of Kyndelan', professedly

151. 'Origine de l'épopée chevaleresque', Revue des Deux Mondes (1832), p. 175.

152. 'The Villemarqué Bubble', Athenaeum (11th April, 1868), pp. 527-8.

translated from the Black Book of Caermarthen for la Villemarqué's edition of Bardes Bretons in 1850, is not to be found in the Welsh source. La Villemarqué refused to answer any of these charges, and it is to be regretted that his positive contribution in the awakening of interest in Breton culture and the focussing of attention on the Celtic origins of Arthurian romance, should be vitiated by this sort of unreliability.

Lady Guest had already reason to doubt his integrity, as can be seen from the increasingly irritated entries in her diaries. Though charmed by his behaviour at the Eisteddfod and his offer to transcribe Le Chevalier au Lion, she was less enchanted by his demand that his name be put on the title page of the Mabinogion.¹⁵³ In 1840 la Villemarqué submitted an essay on the influence of Welsh traditions on European literature for an Eisteddfod prize.¹⁵⁴ In this he made great use of Lady Guest's translation which, she was 'amused' to find, he scarcely acknowledged.¹⁵⁵ When la Villemarqué sent her a copy of Contes Populaires, she found that it contained three translations from the Mabinogion, which the author claimed to be taken directly from the Welsh without any reference to her work. She writes that la Villemarqué followed her 'servilely' and used her notes without acknowledgement, 'except in one unimportant instance. Altogether it is a most shabby proceeding'.¹⁵⁶ It is ironical that la Villemarqué's work was praised by the Athenaeum¹⁵⁷ and the ensuing exposé by William Rees

153. 31st January, 1839. Phillips, Lady Guest and the Mabinogion, pp. 22-3. In the Contes Populaires (Paris, 1842) la Villemarqué intimates that he published Le Chevalier au Lion in England, p. 109 n. See also Athenaeum (13th August, 1842), p. 734.

154. A. Schulz (pseud. San Marte) won the prize for an essay which Madden thought grossly uninformed and which roused him against the Welsh for being so ignorant of their mediaeval literature. 2nd March, 1842. Journals, xvi, 42. 'An essay on the influence of Welsh tradition upon the literature of Germany, France and Scandinavia,' translated by Mrs. Berrington (Llandovery, 1841).

155. 11th November, 1840. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 28-9.

156. 20th May, 1842. Phillips, op. cit., p. 33.

157. Athenaeum, (16th July, 1842), pp. 629-31. The reviewer considered that 'the spirit of the originals breathes through la Villemarqué's renderings'.

had little effect on his reputation.¹⁵⁸

It is doubtful whether la Villemarqué's work would have been accepted so readily, had he not been breaking new ground, since the level of French scholarship was comparatively high. Unlike the situation in England, there was something of a tradition in the study of early literature,¹⁵⁹ and unlike the situation in Wales, there was a nucleus of research centred on the Bibliothèque Nationale. In addition, public money was expended on research, as can be seen from la Villemarqué's visits to Wales and England.¹⁶⁰ Later work may by contrast make the work of this period seem amateurish,¹⁶¹ but apart from laying a basis for subsequent successes, by contrast with contemporary English scholarship in general, it appears cosmopolitan and professional.

In view of this, it is not surprising to find the most imaginative and advanced work on the Tristan legend coming from France. The Germans had brought out three editions of Gottfried by 1823, but they were not concerned with theories of development until the work of Kölbing, concentrating instead on the establishing of texts. In France, however, from the time of de Tressan, critics were active piecing together the romance's progress with varying degrees of accuracy.

The Prose Tristan was the first to gain attention, since it was the most accessible and carried with it a tradition of being the recognized rendering of the legend.¹⁶² However, because the family of manuscripts is

158. Athenaeum, (13th August, 1842), p. 734.

159. Johnston, Enchanted Ground, pp. 22-7.

160. Michel's Recueil was also subsidized in this fashion.

161. Gaston Paris disapproved of his father's popularizations of the Vulgate cycle. Paulin Paris, Les Romans de la Table Ronde (Paris, 1868).

162. E. Vinaver, 'The Prose Tristan', ALMA, p. 346.

so complex, work was confined to the printed version. Consequently nothing valuable was produced until the end of the century, when work began on the manuscripts. In addition scholars were misled by the assertions of the authors of the romance, believing them to be factual.

De Tressan in his Preface states that the Prose Tristan is the oldest of the cycle and was taken from British sources by Rusticien de Puise, who wrote in Latin prose at the beginning of the 12th century. In the reign of Henry II, this was translated by Luce de Gast, an English knight living near Salisbury. There were variations,¹⁶³ but the theory persisted well into the 19th century, embodying two misconceptions: that the Prose Tristan was the prototype for the Vulgate cycle and that it existed first in Latin. It was also thought to precede the metrical versions, which were derived from it.¹⁶⁴ Scott alone was not misled. He states firmly that Luce de Gast 'seems to be as fabulous as his castle ... or his Latin original',¹⁶⁵ pointing out that French critics ascribe an absurd antiquity to the Prose Tristan because they assume early references to the metrical romances allude to the prose version.¹⁶⁶ His views remained unheard in France until the 1830's, and the metrical versions generally were unknown until Michel's collection.¹⁶⁷

163. Creuzé believed Luce de Gast to have translated from Latin or 'bas-Breton' his work being finished by 'Helys de Borron' and Rusticien de Puise, thus accounting for references to Rusticien as author. La Table Ronde pp. xxii-xxiii. Michel asserts that the romance was the first begun and last finished. Recueil, xciii-xxx. Madden develops this argument, placing the first half by Luce de Gast in the later 12th century and the second half by Helié de Borron in the early 13th. Syr Gawaine, p. xxvii. Paulin Paris was the first to argue that the Prose Tristan was modelled on the Prose Lancelot. Manuscrits Français de la Bibliothèque du Roi (1836), i, 195-8.

164. Madden subscribes to this view when he asserts that Tristan was unknown before the prose romance. Syr Gawaine, p. xxvii, n.

165. Sir Tristrem, p. lxxii.

166. Ibid., p. lxiv. n.

167. Creuzé laments that Tristan and Lancelot appear in foreign poems, but not in French. Op. cit., p. xxx.

The question of the Prose Tristan was also complicated by its relationship with the lost Tristan of Chrétien, mentioned in Cligès.¹⁶⁸ For scholars who saw Chrétien's poem as the earliest metrical version deriving from the prose romance, its approximate date was important for a placing of the latter. De Roquefort, for example, places Chrétien's work around 1180, mistakenly thinking that Chrétien died in 1191,¹⁶⁹ and subsequently puts the prose romance at 1170.¹⁷⁰ So entrenched was this idea that the prose version was the source for Chrétien, that Michel dismisses as an obvious error Ginguéné's theory that the romance which antedated the Vulgate cycle was not the Prose Tristan but a metrical version by Chrétien.¹⁷¹ The Abbé de la Rue's suggestion that a contemporary of Luce de Gast, one la Chièvre of Rheims, versified the story, thus making his version the first metrical rendering,¹⁷² was equally overlooked.

In 1832 Fauriel made the first serious attempt to clarify the inter-relationship of various Tristan romances over a wider range,¹⁷³ thus anticipating the work of Bédier. He takes seven versions and tries to determine the oldest. Those chosen are the Prose Tristan, the Volksbuch, Gottfried, Sir Tristram, the two Douce fragments and Bérout, which he

168. Some scholars thought Chrétien wrote in prose. See Sir Tristram, p. xxxii.

169. This is the date of the death of Phillippe, Count of Flanders, to whom the Conte de Graal is dedicated.

170. De l'état de la Poésie, pp. 147-8.

171. Recueil, I, xxxi-xxxii. See P. L. Ginguéné's article on Chrétien in Histoire Littéraire de la France, xv (1820), 246. Michel was conservative in his scholarship, tending to discard non-traditional ideas. Madden complains of this. 20th February, 1836. Journal, xii 88.

172. Recherches sur les ouvrages des Barres de la Bretagne Armoricaïne dans la moyen âge (Cayenne, 1817), p. 22. The hypothesis originates from an allusion to a Tristan poem 'que la Chievre fist'. Roman de Renard, branch ii.

173. 'Origine de l'épopée chevaleresque du moyen âge', Revue des Deux Mondes (1832), pp. 175f.

describes as an anonymous manuscript.¹⁷⁴ Understandably he is misled by Scott and fixes the date of Sir Tristrem around 1250,¹⁷⁵ rejecting Gottfried and the Thomas fragment on the grounds that they both mention a Thomas and must derive from the English poem. The second fragment, the Oxford Folie, is also dismissed as being a summary of the work represented by the first fragment,¹⁷⁶ and the Volksbuch is correctly discarded as a redaction of the Prose Tristan. This leaves Bérout, which Fauriel thought anonymous, together with the Prose Tristan, as contenders against Sir Tristrem.

Probably influenced by Scott's scepticism, Fauriel attacks the basic assumption that the author of the Prose Tristan is credible. He points out that, were the evidence reliable, the king Henry referred to is more likely to be Henry III.¹⁷⁷ As he reigned from 1227 to 1272 the Prose Tristan could have preceded Sir Tristrem. But Fauriel, swayed by Scott's argument for simplicity preceding complexity, places it later, thus reversing his argument for proving the second Douce fragment later than the first.

Fauriel sees the Prose Tristan as taken directly from Sir Tristrem, presumably because both were composed in England, thus establishing for it a date well into the second half of the 13th century. Though revolutionary in France, this idea originates from Scott. However, Fauriel's suggestion

174. Fauriel admits the existence of other Tristan romances, but not the reasons for discarding them.

175. 1804 or 1806 edition.

176. Fauriel avoids the mistake of regarding the two fragments as parts of the same work.

177. Previous critics had been guided to Henry II by Walter Map's apparent authorship of the Prose Lancelot. Fauriel seems to have been the first to suggest that the Prose Tristan was written under Henry III.

that the anonymous manuscript from the Bibliothèque du Roi represents Chrétien's lost work is completely original. He dates this composition around 1190 on the grounds that Chrétien's work was becoming known at this time, placing it approximately sixty years before Sir Tristrem. This deprives Scotland of the honours for the oldest version of the legend.

Although Fauriel's idea concerning the Béroul version was refutable, it marks the beginning of a serious consideration of the metrical romances in general and Béroul in particular. Amaury Duval in his article in Histoire Littéraire de la France, which aimed to bring the metrical versions to public notice, repeats the traditional errors concerning the prose romance, but continues the trend begun by Fauriel in his examination of Béroul.¹⁷⁸ This he describes as an Anglo-Norman work of the 13th century, with a style akin to Boiardo's mock-heroic, and summarizes the action fairly accurately, which may have proved useful to la Villemarqué.¹⁷⁹

The Douce fragments had been known to scholars longer than the Béroul manuscript, so work on them was more advanced. Misconceptions lingered, nevertheless. Despite Michel's assertion that the fragments represent different works, Duval still considers them as parts of the same composition. The mistaken assumption that both fragments represent a French Tristan, coupled with the prolonged discussion concerning authorship, made scholars unreceptive to new ideas on their identification. Douce himself exemplifies this. The Abbé de la Rue wrote to him declaring that the author of at least one of the fragments was Thomas of Ercildoune.¹⁸⁰ Douce inclined to the authorship theory, but passed over the numerical implication, being persuaded instead by 'the agreement of both the fragments with the story as

178. 'Fragments des poèmes sur Tristan Fils de Meliadus', Hist. Litt., xix (1838), 687-704.

179. See pp. 57-60

180. 24th November, 1814. Bodley MS. Douce d.6. p.5.

related in the Auchinleck MS. which was evidently constructed from Thomas's materials.¹⁸¹ Six years later de Roquefort picked up the Abbé's idea, but confused the issue by making Thomas of Ercildoune into two people.¹⁸²

The theory received no attention in England after Douce. David Irving in his review of two German editions of Gottfried, discusses the reference to Thomas von Britanje, but does not involve the Douce fragments.¹⁸³ Madden reached the same conclusion as de la Rue independently, and more accurately and, in his article on Sir Tristrem,¹⁸⁴ congratulates himself on being the first to conjecture that Thomas of Ercildoune wrote an Anglo-Norman poem represented by the first Douce fragment. However, he goes further than de la Rue, hypothesizing that this romance was translated by Gottfried. Price, and Weber before him, had postulated that Gottfried's source was a French poem,¹⁸⁵ but this is the first instance of that source being correctly cited. Unfortunately Madden does not pursue this line and it remains unconsidered until Bossert's work in 1865.¹⁸⁶ Instead he concentrates on details and, after noting that Thomas of Kent may also be a contender for the fragments, concludes from de Brunne that Thomas of Ercildoune wrote the original Tristan, which Kendale translated.¹⁸⁷

La Villemarqué was not interested in discovering relationships between the various extant versions, but instead pursued a study of the Celtic sources of the legend, anticipating the work of Schoepperle by about fifty

181. Bodley MS. Douce d.6. p.5.

182. Poésies de Marie de France (Paris, 1820), i. 388n.

183. Foreign Review and Continental Miscellany, iv (1829), 141-62. Review of editions by von Groote (Berlin, 1821), and von der Hagen (Breslau 1823).

184. Gentleman's Magazine (1833), pp. 307-12.

185. Warton, History, i, 192-3.

186. See Chapter 6, pp. 252-4.

187. Michel quotes Madden's arguments but comes to no conclusion. Recueil, I, xxxv-xxxviii.

years. Unfortunately, la Villemarqué's methods are suspect so the substance of his contribution is limited and his conclusions unreliable. This can be seen from his assumptions concerning the Tristan legend. In an article on the interrelationships between Welsh literature and Arthurian romance,¹⁸⁸ he alludes to the three oldest versions as comprising one by a Thomas, a second by Beron, written during the reign of Henry II, and a third by Chrétien, who died around the beginning of the 13th century. There is no substantiation: la Villemarqué's only reference to another authority on this controversial topic occurs in a mention of Fauriel's opinion that the Prose Tristan is derived from the metrical versions.

Although la Villemarqué shows he has read Béroul by quotation, and Thomas by close reference to Isolt's last speech, his summary of the legend, which was to inspire Arnold, is nothing more than a pot-pourri of episodes inaccurately culled from Béroul and the Thomas branch. Admittedly his version is sounder than that of de Roquefort, who invents a campaign against Anguish of Ireland and ends the story soon after the love-potion.¹⁸⁹ But the fact remains that la Villemarqué, writing twenty years later, gives, without explanation, an hybrid account of the story, which represents neither a single mediaeval version, nor an attempt at reconstructing an archetype.

The summary begins with the Morhoult fight. Tristan kills the champion, receiving a wound incurable in Cornwall. Disguised as a harper he goes to Ireland,¹⁹⁰ sees Yseult, and gives such an account of her on his return that Marc'h demands her for his wife.¹⁹¹ Tristan disguises himself as a

188. 'Les poèmes gallois et les romans de la Table Ronde', Revue de Paris, xxxiv. (1841), 266-82. Later published as part of Contes Populaires des Anciens Bretons (Paris, 1842), which was revised and republished as Les Romans de la Table Ronde (Paris, 1860).

189. De l'état de la poésie Francoise, p. 150.

190. No mediaeval version shows Tristan disguising himself from the outset. In Gottfried and Eilhart he passes himself off as a harper turned merchant and in other versions is mistaken for a harper when he reaches Dublin.

191. La Villemarqué's account omits to mention that the second voyage is the result of a murderous plot by Mark in the prose version, or his barons in the poems.

merchant and brings her to Cornwall. On the journey they drink the love-potion, given to Brangien for Yseult and Marc'h. After the wedding the seneschal and dwarf reveal their suspicions concerning the lovers to Marc'h. A trap is set and the lovers are surprised but on the way to execution Tristan escapes and delivers the queen. After three years a hermit reconciles Yseult and Marc'h, and Tristan is banished. Disguised as a fool, however, he resumes relations with Yseult. Some barons confide their misgivings to Mark, but Yseult retaliates by placing herself under Arthur's protection, proposing to prove her innocence by ordeal. Here follows a description of the lovers' trick and the ambiguous oath.¹⁹² In the jousts which follow Tristan defeats the champions of the Round Table, vanishing prudently when Arthur offers a prize for his capture.¹⁹³ However, despite the oath, Tristan is not recalled to court and so goes to Brittany where he marries Yseult, the daughter of King Houel. Vainly attempting to forget Yseult of Ireland amid dangerous exploits, he is wounded and sends for the queen. His wife, learning the secret of his love, leads him to believe that Yseult refuses to come and Tristan dies of 'chagrin'.

Although there is a possibility that la Villemarqué used the Prose Tristan on the evidence of his use of the name Houel, which only appears in this version, his main sources are Bérout and Sir Tristrem. Bérout supplies him with the central section including the trapping of the lovers,¹⁹⁴ the three years' sojourn away from the court and the ambiguous oath.

192. La Villemarqué shows Tristan disguised as a beggar, whereas Bérout shows him as a leper.

193. La Villemarqué has confused Tristan's defeat of Andret, just before the ambiguous oath in Bérout, with a tournament. The account has echoes of Lancelot's Pyrrhic victory in the Winchester jousts. Malory, xviii, 12 and 13.

194. La Villemarqué's mention of the lepers and the Chapel leap in the discussion is inconclusive as the episode occurs in the Prose Tristan. However, mention of 'Saut de Tristan' confirms that he is using Bérout.

The opening events are probably supplied by Sir Tristrem, since la Villemarqué shows no knowledge of, or interest in, the German versions and he is likely to have had access to Scott's edition during his interchange with Celtic scholars. The last part, so sketchy as to be unidentifiable, may have come from the Douce fragment, Sir Tristrem, or possibly the printed edition of the prose romance. It may represent a muddled conflation, not only of primary texts, but also, perhaps, of ready-made summaries.

The omissions in this account are extraordinary: Tristan's enfances the dragon fight, the recognition, the substitution of Brengwain, the tryst at the tree, the sojourn in Morrois, the orchard tryst, the daring water, Tristan's mission to Iseult with Kaherdin, the fatal wooing expedition, Kaherdin's voyage to fetch Iseult. His confusions are also notable: Tristan's first voyage to Ireland is inexplicable without mention of the healing: the tournament following the ambiguous oath is invented and the black sails episode is entirely omitted, although la Villemarqué refers to it later in discussion of a Breton analogue. When la Villemarqué revised the chapter in Les Romans de la Table Ronde more circumstantial detail was added, particularly to the section from Béroul, including mention of the three years' duration of the potion.¹⁹⁵ But, although la Villemarqué read Béroul in the intervening years, the summary as representing an authentic version of the legend, still remains unsatisfactory.

In his discussion following the summary la Villemarqué breaks new ground, influenced considerably by his Celtic researches. On the evidence of the Triads and the dialogue between Trystan and Gwalchmei,¹⁹⁶ he postulates a Welsh Tristan, which later became current in Brittany, supporting this part of the argument with a Breton analogue to the black

195. The drinking of the potion is now motivated by heat. Yseult has golden hair and Tristan is described as a hunter and musician.

196. Sir Tristrem, Appendix ii.

sails episode. The broad lines of his thesis are acceptable, but his evidence is tenuous, since the main body of his discussion is devoted to arbitrarily demonstrating the links between Béroul's version and Welsh tradition. For example, he renders the controversial tri galovyd triad¹⁹⁷ as referring to Tristan's being a shape-shifter and unconquerable except by duress, and then relates it precariously to Tristan's frequent disguises and his capture by Mark. In addition, he follows Edward Jones in believing Tristan to be a disciple of Merlin and his legend to contain vestiges of bardic initiation rites;¹⁹⁸ the love-potion he also sees as stemming from this bardic tradition. But although much of his work is questionable, the enquiry is rare at this stage and, like Guest's Mabinogion, heralds the research into Celtic sources at the end of the century.

Despite this, and despite his influence on Arnold, la Villemarqué's most important contribution is his discovery of another fragment of Thomas. Scholars of the period were seriously hampered in their judgments on the interrelationships of the Tristan romances because the collection of extant Thomas manuscripts was still incomplete. Michel had added a third volume to his Recueil containing the Strasbourg and Sneyd manuscripts;¹⁹⁹ but the Cambridge manuscript was vital since it helped determine the relationship between Gottfried and Thomas, and was later used by Bossert to clinch his argument concerning the translation of the German from the French. La Villemarqué discovered the manuscript in 1855²⁰⁰ 'confondu avec une foule de feuilles de vélin dépareillées'. Enthusiastically he conjectures that this is a sequel to the work published by Michel which ends:

197. See R. Bromwich, 'The Welsh Triads', ALMA, p. 49, n.1.

198. Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards, enlarged ed. (1794), pp. 12 and 14.

199. The Strasbourg fragments were discovered in a manuscript binding in the Seminary library. (Later destroyed in the siege of 1870). The two Sneyd MSS. came from the library of the Rev. M.W.Sneyd. See Madden's account of his visit to the B.M. with the manuscripts for transcription. 30th June, 1837. Journals, xii, 369.

200. Archives des Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires, v (1856), 89-116.

Entre Tristan sur la cortine
Entre ses bras tient la reine

since it begins 'Entre ses bras Yseult la reine'. Characteristically la Villemarqué's enthusiasm misleads him; the work cited is the Berne Folie, clearly described by Michel as a complete poem.²⁰¹

The other crucial factor in the Thomas discussion was the Tristramsaga, but this remained inaccessible until the work of Brynjulfsson and Kölbing. Had Madden been able to acquire a transcript the situation would have been different, for, incensed by Michel's failure to date the work, he comments that could he obtain a copy of the work he would say something more to the purpose than Michel has done'.²⁰² Later he was disappointed to find that a collection of Icelandic manuscripts offered for sale to the British Museum did not contain the Tristramsaga.²⁰³ and later still devotes some pages of his Journals to an examination of the Tristan literature, prompted by Brynjulfsson's research.²⁰⁴

With the exception of this frustrated interest on the part of Madden, Tristan scholarship became extinct in England after Scott's edition. Conversely, on the Continent, particularly in France, it flourished, encouraged to a certain extent by Scott's work. Inevitably, the research of the period was vitiated by unquestioned traditional assumptions, misguided nationalism, a fundamental ignorance of foreign works in the original, and even sharp practice. This is inevitable in a relatively new field of study, while major evidence is being assembled and the main lines of enquiry are being laid down. However, from the activity during this period comes work which was to influence not only the great age of Continental Tristan scholarship at the end of the century, but also the three central works on Tristan produced in England during the 19th century.

201. Recueil, I, lxi-lxii.

202. 20th February, 1836. Journals, xii, 88. Price had already drawn attention to this. Warton, History, I, 197.

203. 1st July, 1836. Journals, xii, 171.

204. See chapter 6, pp. 239-40.

CHAPTER III

Arnold's Tristram and Iseult : the French link.

Despite the failure of English scholarship to distinguish Arthurian studies as a separate branch of enquiry, some knowledge of Arthur percolated through from the academic world to the more educated readers at the beginning of the 19th century. Indeed, there was a hairsbreadth distinction between the scholar and the well educated gentleman at this time, since scholarship was still in the hands of amateurs. As it became more professional, and consequently more accurate and complex, so there arose the need for an intermediary between reader and academic in the form of popularized or modernized renderings of mediaeval romances. But in the first half of the century, those who knew of Arthur knew of him through Malory and the work of contemporary scholars.

The latter tended to dictate the character of Arthur which was transmitted to the less academic reading public. In France he was established as a romance figure, but to English readers Arthur was, to begin with, a 6th century British leader. This view sprang from two well-known enquiries into Arthur's historicity: Sharon Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons and Ritson's The Life of King Arthur, published posthumously in 1825. As the century progressed the view of Arthur became more chivalric and less compelling, since he was eclipsed by Lancelot and the Grail Quest. But at this point in his career he was supreme. Tennyson was the last poet to be captured by this portrait of Arthur, for although the Idylls of the King was published during the second half of the century, the enthusiasm which was to produce the work germinated at this time.

However, Arthur's 6th century persona was hardly prosaic.¹ It

1. For a discussion of Arthur's Helio-Arkite associations see W. D. Paden, Tennyson in Egypt (Kansas, 1942) pp. 79f.

incorporated a romance different from the chivalric, but equally fanciful. Very little was known about the Dark Ages so Arthur inevitably became involved with the Bardic, Nordic, Ossianic and Gothic enthusiasms, which had taken over that period of history as their own domain. These tended to flow into each other, and the resultant literature was both odd and spectacular. A typical example is J. Thelwall's extravaganza The Fairy of the Lake (1801): its dramatis personae includes Hela, the Norns, Taliessin, Vortigern, Maskers, Britons, Knights of the Round Table and an Incubus. The action is sensational and the style ranges from doggerel to Shakespearian pastiche. There is, in addition, a touch of Spenser's Aerasia in the lascivious Rowenna, whom, together with the incestuous Vortigern, Arthur finally overcomes to rescue Guenever from a burning castle in the fifth act.

This quasi-historical view of Arthur is promulgated as late as 1848 by Bulwer-Lytton's twelve-book epic, King Arthur. This while less absurd, is equally fantastic and more emphatically moral than The Fairy of the Lake. Bulwer-Lytton utilizes the British defence against the Saxons as a framework for the central action. The Saxons provide an excuse for excursions into the Nordic, and Caradoc, promoted to the rank of Arthur's bard, together with the Silurian setting, provide the Celtic element. But since the chivalric view of Arthur was pushing itself forward as the century progressed, so Bulwer-Lytton felt that chivalric manners and costume are 'absolutely required by all our familiar associations'.² This creates an anachronism, which, coupled with the Spenserian action, causes a dichotomy between action and setting. The action itself is untraditional,³ centring

2. Preface, p. 3.

3. Edinburgh Review, xc (July 1849), 173-212, applauded this as the reviewer considered the originals to be unethical and contain 'revolting incidents'.

around Arthur's quest for three talismans, but ranging from the heavily supernatural to contemporary satire. Although the work is still-born and far too eclectic, King Arthur is an interesting precursor to the Idylls in that it weaves a shifting allegory, morally pointed, around Arthurian characters, and has an affinity with the sketches Tennyson produced around 1830.

Because of popular interests encroaching on the Arthurian material, together with a Spenserian revival and a limited knowledge of Malory, works on the subject were not bound by the traditional action. Writers allowed their imagination scope, with the result that Arthur became firmly attached to the supernatural, whatever its particular ethos. Reginald Heber's Morte D'Arthur,⁴ for example, although it uses the traditional stories of Lancelot's rearing by a water nymph, and Balin and the sword,⁵ follows the writer's invention in the main narrative. This has its dangers. The work becomes too faery and loses its unity. Predictably, it remained unfinished.

Scott in The Bridal of Triermain, 1813, manages to overcome these problems, and blends traditional traits with his own inventions to create a consistent and rounded narrative. He follows the contemporary trend in that he makes Arthur the central character of a non-traditional plot set in a sketchy historical background. Arthur retains his status as a British leader:

Twelve bloody fields with glory fought,
The Saxon to subjection brought...

but this is combined with his romance aspect, as one would expect from a

4. Written 1812, published in The Poetical Works of Reginald Heber (1841), pp. 189-270.

5. From the Prose Lancelot and Malory respectively. Heber's knowledge is not surprising as his brother, Richard Heber, collaborated with Scott on Border Minstrelsy.

writer who had considered editing Malory. This balance looks forward to Tennyson's treatment.

The romance elements are not Spenserian, but nearer the stuff of tradition, with inclusions from Arthurian material other than Malory, such as Lanval and Caradac (sic). From Malory Scott takes Arthur's Pentecostal court, various knights and the stock attributes of the more famous. Even the invented characters of Guendolen and Gyneth have recognisable origins in Malory. Guendolen, like Merlin, is born of a demon and a mortal, and like Morgan she is sworn to the destruction of the Round Table. Gyneth has traces of the haughty Lynet. Invention is thus integrated into traditional lineaments without strain; the reader is presented with a uniform world, instead of being subjected to a succession of Gothic enthusiasms.

The strength of the work lies, however, in its interpretation. Scott's concern is not so much with the creation of a chivalric world, as with its criticism. In this he foreshadows later treatments of the Arthurian material. Although he stresses the blaze of chivalry, the reputation of Caerleon, the Christian conquests, Scott prefers to show Arthur as a tragic figure dogged by a youthful sin: he succumbs to 'tyrant passion' while his kingdom lies open to invasion, and later the result of this 'lawless love' nearly wrecks the Round Table. This view of Arthur, having its roots in Malory's portrayal of Mordred as an agent of disaster, anticipates Swinburne's attitude to the legend, and Scott's treatment of the corrupt court heralds Tennyson's 'The Last Tournament'.

While Arthur is dallying with Guendolen, Scott intimates that Guenever is concerned with Lancelot. By the time Gyneth claims her inheritance, the Round Table has become coarsened, although the relationship between this and Guenever's adultery remains implicit. Guenever, inured to sin, demonstrates only cynicism when confronted with Gyneth:

But she, unruffled at the scene
Of human frailty, construed mild,
Looked upon Lancelot and smiled.⁶

The knights, who jeered at the mutual fidelity of Carodac and his lady, rush to the combat, not for love of Gyneth but impelled by greed for her dowry. This greed causes the slaughter. Only three knights refrain from battle:

There were two who loved their neighbour's wives
And one who loved his own...⁷

Yet the knights who do fight are by no means all free:

Her love's fond troth, nor wedlock's oath
One gallant could withhold,
For priests will allow of a broken vow
For penance or for gold.⁸

This adds a new dimension to the poem. The pomp and splendour are hollow: Arthur's speech on Beauty as being the 'polar star to valiant knight' is ironical in view of the real motive for the combat; Gyneth herself is a forerunner of Tennyson's Ettarre.

Like Tennyson, Scott was steeped in mediaeval romance. His approach was primarily imaginative as can be seen from his handling of Sir Tristrem. This was rare in an age where antiquarian pursuits into mediaeval literature were not motivated by a love of the mediaeval itself. Consequently, The Bridal of Triermain, despite its emphasis on Arthur, is not a work one would associate readily with the beginning of the 19th century. Its disenchantment with romance and chivalry would argue more for an age to which these subjects were not a novelty. Scott's unique knowledge of mediaeval romance places his poem beyond contemporary works, not merely because he knew his sources, but because he could lay them open to criticism. Wordsworth's 'Egyptian Maid'⁹ is an example of a work where a poet is

6. ii, 15.

7. ii, 18. Tristrem, Lancelot and Carodac.

8. ii, 17.

9. 1830. Wordsworth's sources are the Elaine of Astolat story and the Grail Quest, the Egyptian Maid, being a combination of Elaine and Percivale's sister.

familiar with his sources, but ruins his work with an imbalance of the supernatural stemming from an uncritical attitude to the originals.

However, Tennyson is the most consummate exponent of the Arthurian during this period, as he was to be during the second half of the century, although his early reputation rests on only three lyrics: 'The Lady of Shalott',¹⁰ 'Sir Galahad', and 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere',¹¹ the last being a fragment of a larger project. In these poems Tennyson is an innovator. He proves that an Arthurian poem need not constitute a lengthy narrative poem, although at that time he also had ambitions for an epic: he was sufficiently assured of his conception of the whole to be able to remodel a part. He never feels the need to explain the mediaeval scene, so his work is without the self-conscious use of stage properties. Nor does he rely for effect on the marvellous. Instead of brooding Gothic tones or Ossianic wildness he substitutes a lightness of touch. But most important is his ability to reinterpret his material, to move away from the narrative line in order to present the implications of his subject.

This is particularly noticeable in 'The Lady of Shalott', which has its roots in the story of the Maid of Astolat, but is so reworked as to have very little in common with its source. This poem marks the end of the dominance of the Arthurian by the supernatural, for here the supernatural is used to ask questions about the nature of reality, a device which Tennyson employs later in the *Idylls*, as in the description of the city built to music in 'Gareth and Lynette'. Here Tennyson does not dismiss the faery as an unreality, but uses it to symbolize a world outside the real, which nevertheless is contiguous to it. At the time of

10. 1832 volume. Written May 1832. Revised for the 1842 edition.

11. 1842 volume. 'Sir Galahad' was written by September 1834 and 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' around 1830. *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. C. Ricks (1969), pp. 502-3.

composition, Tennyson was much concerned with the problem of the aims of art, and if we interpret 'The Lady of Shalott' as referring obliquely to the difficulty of the artist's relationship with his age, then the poem can be seen as an innovation in that the Arthurian is used as a vehicle for the poet's urgent preoccupation.

Tennyson's characteristic double vision is seen again in 'Sir Galahad', where the ambivalent world of shadows in 'The Lady of Shalott' is replaced by mystical experience. Here modes of normality and spirituality are not at variance, but are reconciled in Galahad's higher chivalry. As yet, however, Tennyson's portrayal of the mystic is naïve, and the subject is only fully realized in 'The Holy Grail'. Nevertheless the poem makes three innovations in 19th century Arthurian literature. First Tennyson takes a traditional character and recreates his situation from within, attempting to convey the quality of his experience.¹² Secondly the emphasis consequently falls on character rather than straight narration of action, and thirdly Tennyson omits the conventionally marvellous, substituting instead the mystical.

It is difficult to assess 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' since it represents a fragment of a larger scheme, in which Launcelot finally acknowledges his sin through Galahad's rejection of him. This is in keeping with the moralistic attitude towards Lancelot and Guinevere prevalent towards the middle of the 19th century. But from the fragment itself it can be seen that Tennyson was not merely condemnatory, but set out to convey all the seductiveness of Launcelot's earthly love and illuminate the motivation for his sin:

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.¹³

12. 'The Holy Grail' is also cast as a monologue. Morris used the form to good effect in The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems (1858).

13. 11. 42-5.

Had this work been completed, it would have been the forerunner of the Lancelot and Guinevere literature of the mid-century.

In the same year as the publication of 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' Tennyson published the 'Morte d'Arthur'. The lyrics had not concerned Arthur, and such was Tennyson's conception of his supreme hero that only the epic form could provide satisfactory scope for its realization. The plan of an Arthurian epic was daring, for Arthur was as yet a minority enthusiasm and Tennyson risked being charged with irrelevance at a time when art was being pressed to involve itself with the modern world. The 'Morte d'Arthur' was thus a trial run to test public opinion. The arguments it was bound to raise were forestalled in the introduction, and the epilogue put forward the plea for an imaginative approach to the material.

But not only was the material strange to those who were unfamiliar with the Arthurian legends, it must also have seemed strange to those who were familiar. The emphasis is still on the hero, but the Arthur of Tennyson's poem is far different from the emergent popular image. No other poet had attempted to portray the king shattered, disobeyed twice by his last remaining follower and carried to Avilion in a mist of doubt. Arthur was, if anything, the dazzling Christian emperor, the British leader who had driven back the Saxons, not 'unaccommodated man' in his hour of ruin. The last symbol of his glory, Excalibur, is flung into the mere and he departs amid the wailing of women.

Tennyson follows Malory closely,¹⁴ but the effects of the two accounts are very different. Malory was winding up a complex narrative; Tennyson's account had to stand on its own. In it he had to make the material

14. All the action has origins in Malory and there are also verbal parallels. For example, 'Comfort thyself' seyde the Kynge, '... for in me ys no truste for to truste in...', xxi, 5, and Tennyson's 'Comfort thyself; what comfort is in me?'

acceptable and also make it intimate a larger significance than that of mere narrative: the 'Morte d'Arthur' suggests not just the passing of a legendary hero, but the passing of an age. This sense of the universal rescues the poem from the charge of escapism. It cannot be said to carry one

'from the present's gloomy strand
Back to King Arthur's court and Fairyland.'¹⁵

Rather it achieves the reverse. However, John Sterling's adverse criticism defeated Tennyson and he abandoned his scheme.

Although the Arthurian legend inspired Tennyson with grand concepts, it was, at this time, also capable of inspiring a sense of the ridiculous. The Arthurian burlesques belonged very much to the first part of the century,¹⁶ and their presence is difficult to explain since it arose at such an early stage in the development of Arthurian interest. It was not, therefore, founded on fashionable enthusiasm or a body of serious literature. The Arthurian legend was not generally known: poets from Scott to Arnold felt obliged to give explanatory notes. This being so, it is extraordinary that some writers chose a genre which demanded a knowledge of the originals for its full effect.

In the same year as Scott wrote The Bridal of Triermain, John Frere began his poem The Monks and the Giants, which he finally abandoned in 1817.¹⁷ This work takes its style from Pulci's Morgante Maggiore. Thus Frere was not only reviving a long forgotten tradition, but also using a totally unfamiliar mode. The vulgarization stemming from the narrator personae of the Brothers Whistlecraft, combined with satire and a narrative jeu d'esprit, must have confused even those readers who knew anything of Arthur, whether in his romantic or historical character.

15. C. J. Riethmüller, Lancelot of the Lake (1843), Proem, p. viii, ll. 44-5 This is a serious Arthurian drama, unique during the period.

16. Except R. Henry's Lancelot the Lovely (1839). Later the literary modes associated with the Arthurian were satirized rather than the material. George du Maurier's A Legend of Camelot (1898) pillories the Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes.

17. Cantos 1 and 2 published 1817, 3 and 4 published 1818.

Two years before The Monks and the Giants was begun Peacock started work on Satyrane, which he later abandoned for Calidore in 1815, and which likewise he never finished. In the latter Peacock flippantly shows us Arthur and his knights resurrected by Merlin after Camlan. But this irreverent treatment, which delights in farce and illogicality, is at its best in The Misfortunes of Elphin. Here Peacock differs from Frere and Moultrie and, indeed, his earlier Arthurian burlesques, in that he uses tradition closely. Even more unusual, the tradition is Welsh. He draws mainly on the Mabinogion, but also shows knowledge of the poetry of Aneurin, Taliessin and Llywarch Hân, and the Triads. Peacock integrates this use of the Welsh sources with the historical view of Arthur by setting the combined stories of Elphin and the abduction of Gwenyvar in 6th century Wales. Not until Tennyson's 'Enid' does a work draw so exhaustively on Welsh sources, and even then The Misfortunes of Elphin remains superior in an erudition which was almost exclusively limited to the Welsh.¹⁸ In view of this, the keen sense of humour it manifests throughout is even more surprising.

Peacock's work is uniformly satirical or burlesque, which tends to obscure the reason for this type of Arthurian treatment. But the works of Praed are more illuminating. Praed treats the Round Table chivalry with the same irreverence as Peacock, but unlike Peacock he evinces a sensitivity to the legendary and mysterious. Sometimes, as in 'The Troubadour'¹⁹ and 'The Bride of Belmont',²⁰ this sensitivity comes into conflict with his sense of humour, but generally they create a comic incongruity, giving rise at best to a superb bathos. Nevertheless, one

18. The auction catalogue for Peacock's library (1866) shows a large number of antiquarian books including Owen's Welsh and English Dictionary (1793) and Grammar of the Welsh Language (1803).

19. Written 1823-4. Unfinished.

20. Written 1831.

feels that Praed would have liked to have written seriously, such is his feeling for the remote, but was baulked by his sense of the ridiculous - not so much the ridiculousness inherent in his material, but the ridiculousness of his writing seriously.

Praed's work is unpretentious. It was written for his private circle and not published until after his death in 1839. He did not consider himself anything more than an amusing versifier. But while his sense of the comic is genuine, it may also constitute a defence mechanism which has its origin in a realisation of his lack of serious talent.

Like the Arthurian narrative poem which depended on the marvellous for interest, the Arthurian burlesque was liable to lose its shape and remain unfinished. As with Satyrane and The Monks and the Giants this was the case with John Moultrie's Sir Launfal²¹ which was abandoned at the end of the third canto. Thirteen years later Moultrie added the conclusion which merely bids farewell to the poem. This work is the most extrovert example of the genre. The poet is even more obtrusive than the Brothers Whistlecraft and is the cause of the poem's failure, since he unhinges the narrative with long diatribes on himself and his literary performance. The work is studiously anachronistic and disorganised, creating a preccocious effect. The narrative, taken from Ritson's Metrical Romanceës, is constantly interrupted, not only by self-comment, but also by contemporary satire, such as the attack on Leigh Hunt. The influence of Don Juan is obvious, but Moultrie lacks Byron's versatility and sense of direction. This allegiance to Don Juan places the poem in a different category from other humorous poems on Arthurian subjects, for whereas the others burlesque the Arthurian tradition, Moultrie uses the traditional narrative as a launching pad for a comic tour de force.

Arthurian burlesque can be seen as an unpredictable manifestation of the growing interest in the subject. All the writers, with the possible

21. Poems (1837). Written around 1824.

exception of Moultrie, were well versed in the sources and in mediaeval literature generally. Their refusal to recreate the material seriously does not necessarily indicate a facetious attitude to the originals. Rather, it seems to argue an affection and familiarity. This is supported by the impression that, as the humour tends to communicate on the level of the in-joke, the works were written mainly for the writers' own amusement.

In treating the Arthurian material comically, the burlesque writers were making capital out of the serious writers' main problem, that of consistency. The former used inconsistency as a main-spring for comedy, and were thus free to wander in an Arthurian landscape without imposing a unity on their vision. But serious writers of the period, with the exception of Tennyson, failed because they had no settled attitude to the legend. Moreover, the legend had a shifting identity coloured by the various Gothic enthusiasms. In addition the Arthurian material tended to attract antiquarians rather than poets of any calibre; Wordsworth is an exception, but even he could not combine his imaginative concept with any powerful unifying idea.

Tennyson, however, was the only writer to break through the superficial attraction of the legend to imbue it with a universal significance. This he only partly achieves in his early lyrics, but he foreshadows in them the means whereby he was to achieve the greatness of the Idylls. In his early poems he breaks with the traditional narrative interest and places the emphasis on character and mood. The more facile means of focussing interest such as the marvellous and sensational, are dispensed with; the range of material is narrowed down and condensed. But most important is the fact that Tennyson moves towards endowing the material with wide concepts, while retaining his poetic vision of the originals. In this way Arthurian reworkings were saved from remaining on the literary fringe and revealed instead as a potential vehicle for serious thought.

In view of the unsettled character of the Arthurian legend coupled with its unfamiliarity, it is not surprising that Tristan was virtually unknown. With the exception of Scott's third section of the *Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer*, where Ercildoune recounts the Tristan story, no other poet until Arnold attempted to recreate the legend. At best Tristan is mentioned in connection with Iseult;²² at worst he is assigned an untraditional role in an untraditional action. The position was exacerbated by the non-availability of the better versions of the legend: apart from Malory, the only other English work was Sir Tristram, which tended to be regarded more as an antiquarian curiosity. Tristan was not sufficiently linked to the Arthurian cycle to make his story essential to its reworking; nor was his independent story sufficiently well known, or, if known, approved of, to make him a possible poetic subject. Consequently he generally appears amongst a list of Round Table knights to lend local colour. Because of this and the lack of scholarly interest after Scott, Tristan's popularity had to spread from the Continent.

Tristan makes his first appearance in 19th century literature as Arthur's drunken squire in Thelwall's The Fairy of the Lake, a figure which is a combination of Trinculo and Lear's Fool. In 1812 Heber inserts the Tristan story into the Morte d'Arthur as a song sung at a feast, a device copied from Scott. However, he does not give an outline of the legend as Scott does, but merely alludes to the Marhaus fight, the healing and the love-potion as prologue to a set-piece on Tristram's suffering.²³ Heber did not use either of the traditional endings, and so Tristram dies bequeathing

22. Peacock merely lists Tristan son of Tallweh among Arthur's twenty-four marchawg in The Misfortunes of Elphin, briefly referring to his connection with Essyllt.

23. Because Tristram was unfamiliar, Heber gives a note from the Wilks Malory, recounting events from the Marhaus fight to the drinking of the potion. Poetical Works, p. 452.

his arms to Lancelot, and Isonde to the latter's protection. It is probable that Heber was unfamiliar with the legend and used it not for its own sake but for its potential melancholy. Passion is thus given over to a crudely handled pathos.

In contrast to this is Frere's characterization of Tristram in The Monks and the Giants. Instead of the melancholy knight of sea and forest we have a volatile, mocking Tristram, whose only traditional attributes are his harping, hunting and giant fights. He chases curious birds in moments of crisis, scandalizes Gawain's sense of military propriety and shows no embarrassment on leading the army in a complete circle. He is a likeable madcap, who, while having little connection with his original, may have had some influence on the anti-hero of 'The Last Tournament'.²⁴ The latter may also hark back to the disapproval which surrounded the legend in this period, manifesting itself in Scott's The Bridal of Triermain where Tristram joins with Lancelot in representing the moral degeneracy of the Round Table.

As any impetus given to the Tristan legend had to come from the Continent, it is appropriate that it came through Matthew Arnold, since he was the first writer of the century to involve himself seriously with Continental culture. He discovered La Villemarqué's summary of the legend²⁵ during a visit to Thun in either 1848 or 1849,²⁶ when he was in love with a French girl called Marguerite.

24. Frere also anticipates Tennyson's portrayal of the flawed Lancelot.

25. See Chapter 2, pp. 57-60. Arnold wrote to Clough, 1st May, 1853, that he derived the legend from an article in Revue de Paris 'on Fauriel'. Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. H. F. Lowry (1932), pp. 135-6.

26. Kenneth Allott favours 1849 as Arnold would be more susceptible to 'a tale of doomed love'. Poems of Matthew Arnold (1965), p. 194. This would seem the more likely date, but rather because Arnold was recoiling from his involvement with Marguerite, than because he wished to identify with a fatal passion.

Arnold could also have read the articles by La Villemarqué²⁷ and Louandre²⁸ on the Vulgate Merlin at this time. If this is so, the consequent associations of the two legends may have influenced his choice of material for the last section of the poem.

Arnold had not read Malory previous to meeting the Tristan legend for the first time. He therefore had no preconceptions when he encountered La Villemarqué's rendering and his reaction appears to have been immediate:

I read the story of Tristram and Iseult some years ago at Thun in a French review on the romance literature: I had never met with it before, and it fastened upon me: when I got back to England I looked at the Morte d'Arthur and took what I could, but the poem was in the main formed, and I could not disturb it.²⁹

Only circumstantial details and a few close verbal references were added later from Malory,³⁰ since the poem's main substance was 'set' by the time Arnold returned to England.

There is, however, a problem concerning the Merlin section. We know that Arnold read Revue de Paris and it may be that he encountered the legend here. But there is also a strong possibility that he found it in Southey's Preface to his edition of Malory, in which he translates the relevant part of the romance.³¹ This possibility would be strengthened if Arnold used this edition for his later reading. In this case the Merlin section would have been added after the poem's conception. The last line is added from Malory, but this is not conclusive. Arnold's own statement on the subject in his letter to Hill is ambiguous:

27. 'Visite au Tombeau de Merlin', Revue de Paris, 2nd series, xli (1837) 45-62.

28. 'L'Enchanteur Merlin', Revue de Paris, 3rd series xvi (1840), 109-22.

29. Letter to Herbert Hill, 5th November, 1852. See R.E.C. Houghton, TLS (19th May, 1932), p. 368.

30. Eg. Tristram's birth, his hunting, Lancelot's hospitality, Arthur's wars.

31. pp. xliv-xlvi. This gives exactly the same account as La Villemarqué and provides the source for Tennyson's 'Merlin and Vivien'. Arnold wrote to Clough, 1st May, 1853, that the Merlin section was 'imported from the Morte d'Arthur', which may not necessarily mean that Arnold used Malory's version of the legend, if one takes the title as a specific reference to Southey's edition.

... the story of Merlin, of which I am particularly fond, was brought in to relieve the poem, which else I thought to have ended too sadly; but perhaps the new element introduced too much.

The phrase 'brought in' could be taken as meaning 'added later' or 'introduced'. If the latter, then the Merlin episode was conceived along with the rest of the poem, but if the former is true, then it constitutes the first main instance of Arnold's adding to the poem out of a sense of dissatisfaction.³²

One would suppose that a poem which gelled so quickly and completely in the poet's mind, would be a satisfying, assured work, which reflected certain fundamental attitudes newly illuminated. Tristram and Iseult is, however, quite the reverse. Arnold was never happy with it. This is demonstrated in his letter to Hill where he writes that had he read Malory first he would have handled the legend differently, intimating that the second part in particular would have been changed. But later he writes to Swinburne on the subject of Tristram of Lyonesse:

I suppose you have taken the sails as the issue of your story; a beautiful way of ending, which I should perhaps have used had I known of it, but I did not...³³

This is inconsistent with his comment on Malory, since the black sails episode belongs to the metrical tradition. One suspects that Arnold had no definite idea as to how he would have reconstructed the story and that these ideas are merely passing fancies, not indicative of any later settled interpretation but rather pointing to a dissatisfaction with his work. Indeed, Arnold seems to have been drawn to the various versions

32. See H. F. Lowry and C. B. Tinker, The Poetry of Matthew Arnold: A Commentary, p. 118. They maintain the episode was added later from la Villemarqué's article, but there is no reason why Arnold's source should not be Southey's Preface.

33. 26th July, 1882. E. Gosse, 'Matthew Arnold and Swinburne' TLS (12th August, 1920), p. 517. Arnold mentions the episode again when he writes to Grant Duff about Tristram of Lyonesse: 'He has taken the story, answering to the old Theseus story, of the black and white sails, and a very fine story it is for poetical purposes'. 29th July, 1882. Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888, ed. G. W. E. Russell (1895), ii, 200.

because of their immediate appeal rather than because they suggested some revelation.

Although Arnold was unhappy about his poem, he was not prepared to award the palm to any other rendering. He remains silent on the subject of 'The Last Tournament', but his general attitude to Tennyson would suggest that he disapproved. His comments on Tristram of Lyonesse (if he ever read it) are unrecorded, but his dire anticipation of reading the work is discouraging.³⁴ Finally, although he saw Wagner's Tristan und Isolde at Bayreuth,³⁵ and although he enjoyed Wagner's texts if not his music,³⁶ he was unable to come to terms with the interpretation:

I may say that I have managed the story better than Wagner. The second act is interminable, and without any action. The hero and heroine sit on a sofa and sing to one another about light and darkness, and their connexion with love... The third act is better I imagine. But even in that, less is made of the story than might be made.³⁷

This comment is revealing since it intimates most clearly of all that Arnold placed the emphasis on action.

This is supported by the fact that most of Arnold's major emendations between 1853 and 1857 are concerned with superficial intelligibility and attempt to clarify the action. There is no concern with shaping the poem around a central idea. It is evident from Arnold's letter to Clough on the 1st May, 1853 that he was exclusively concerned with the comprehensibility of the narrative:

If I republish that poem I shall try to make it more intelligible. I wish I had you with me to put marks against the places where something is wanted. The whole affair is by no means thoroughly successful.³⁸

34. 'I have not yet faced his poem, but I must try it soon', Letter to Grant Duff, 29th July, 1882. Loc. cit.

35. Arnold left after the second act.

36. 'His stories interest me so much, and his libretto is so poetically written, that I like to see his operas, though, of course, the music says little to me.' Letter to Fanny Arnold, 20th March, 1886. Letters, ii, 324.

37. Letter to Frances Arnold, 4th March, 1886. Letters, ii, 321.

38. Letters to Clough, pp. 135-6.

As much of the poem is allusive, it was an impossible task to rewrite possibly obscure sections for an hypothetical reader, and Arnold was eventually led to adopt Froude's suggestion that he preface the poem with Dunlop's account of the legend in the History of Prose Fiction (1814).³⁹ This solved the intelligibility problem, which, though valid owing to the unfamiliarity of the legend, possibly obscured the real issue. But Arnold was still dissatisfied with the poem and his subsequent attempts to improve it added to the effect of diffuseness, since they mostly constituted decorative and elucidatory passages.

Tristram and Iseult is an untypical poem for Arnold to have written, particularly in view of his later development. He was not a poet of the mediaeval like Tennyson. Mediaeval literature only occupied a small corner of his interest: his reading lists show an acquaintance with 18th century antiquarian studies and some originals such as the Gesta Romanorum, but his knowledge of English literature before 1500 seems to be limited to Chaucer and Malory.⁴⁰ His interest in Arthurian literature, foreign and indigenous, is negligible. If Arnold's poetic imagination recognised a spiritual home, it was among the Greeks.

As his critical tenets hardened, he later became opposed to poetry which baulked the responsibilities of the age. His contention was that 'the elements with which the creative power works are ideas; the best ideas, on every matter which literature touches, current at the time.'⁴¹

39. Letter to Clough, 25th August, 1853. Letters to Clough, pp. 140-1. Froude suggested the account in preference to Arnold's, but as it was too long, Arnold was forced to compromise with a much truncated version, which gives only a vague outline of the legend. See Poems, ed. Allott, pp. 194-5. Dunlop's unsympathetic account taken from the printed version provided Arnold with a rendering of the black sails episode.

40. Notebooks of Matthew Arnold, ed. H. F. Lowry, K. Young and W. H. Dunn (1952), *passim*.

41. 'The Function of Criticism', Matthew Arnold, Lectures and Essays in Criticism, ed. R. H. Super (Michigan, 1962), p. 260.

As a result Arnold became increasingly antipathetical to certain poetical currents. He kept silent on the subject of the Pre-Raphaelites⁴² and he disliked Swinburne, but it was Tennyson who aroused his greatest distaste. Arnold said little openly against Tennyson, feeling his own position vulnerable,⁴³ but his letters express his dissatisfaction. Tennyson was 'deficient in intellectual power';⁴⁴ he was not 'a grand et puissant esprit';⁴⁵ his poetry was mere 'word-painting',⁴⁶ and seemed to fail in its responsibilities. Arnold did not underestimate the 'unpoetical' nature of his time,⁴⁷ but he appears to have felt that Tennyson lacked artistic integrity and succumbed to this problem.

The intellectual commitment represented by his critical standpoint, however, was undermined to some extent by his sensibilities. This can be seen broadly in the ever-increasing dichotomy between Arnold's criticism and his poetry, but it also manifests itself more minutely in his attitude to the mediaeval. Arnold did not find intellectual stimulus in the Middle Ages, nor could he condone mediaeval re-creations in contemporary poetry. However, he was susceptible to the mediaeval ethos. His inconsistency is seen in this letter to Frances Arnold:

I have a strong sense of the irrationality of the period, and of the utter folly of those who take it seriously, and play at restoring it; still, it has poetically the greatest charm and refreshment possible for me. The fault I find with Tennyson in his Idylls of the King is that the peculiar charm and aroma of the Middle Age he does not give in them. There is something magical about it, and I will do something with it before I have done.⁴⁸

42. Arnold may have met Rossetti on two occasions, but does not comment. See O. Doughty, A Victorian Romantic (1960), pp. 351 and 392.

43. See letter to J. Dykes Campbell, 22nd September, 1864. Letters, i, 239. Arnold did, however, make some muted observations on Tennyson's lack of simplicite in his lecture 'On Translating Homer', On the Classical Tradition, ed. R. H. Super (Michigan, 1960), pp. 204-7.

44. Letter to Fanny Arnold, 17th December, 1860. Letters, i, 127.

45. Letter to Lady de Rothschild, 25th September, 1864. Ibid, i, 241.

46. 6th December, 1847. Letters to Clough, p. 63.

47. 'Not unprofound, not grand, not unmoving:- but unpoetical.' Early February, 1849. Letters to Clough, p. 49.

48. 17th December, 1860. Letters, i, 127.

In his lecture on Pagan and Religious Sentiment Arnold pinpoints his dilemma. He favours the Greek Classical age on account of its 'imaginative reason'⁴⁹ and because, through the equilibrium of vision and intellect, the Greeks have an affinity with the 19th century. But the poetry of mediaeval Christianity 'lived by the heart and imagination' and sprang from an age of extremes and 'indeterminate grotesques',⁵⁰ which could offer little to Arnold's time. Nevertheless, Arnold was susceptible to what he saw as mediaeval emotionalism, despite his desire for balance.

He could only describe this attraction as 'magic', but it probably involved his feeling for Oxford to a large extent: he considered that 'the Middle Ages with all their poetry and impressiveness are in Oxford' rather than Cambridge.⁵¹ In the Preface to Essays in Criticism Arnold reveals a nostalgia for this combination of Oxford and the mediaeval:

And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection - to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side?⁵²

Thus the mediaeval found dignity through its association with Oxford's idealism and Oxford found romance through its association with the mediaeval.

This emotional response, which seems to deny Arnold's intellectual stand, is also seen in his lectures On the Study of Celtic Literature. Like the mediaeval, the 'natural magic' of Celtic literature exercised over him an inexplicable charm. The strength of this can be seen in the very fact that Arnold chose to mediate in the Celtic debate at a time when the Celts were unpopular with the English and their idiosyncratic culture provided an additional irritant.⁵³ But Arnold had a 'great penchant for the

49. Lectures and Essays in Criticism, p. 230

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-1.

51. Letter to Frances Arnold, 2nd March, 1853. Letters, i, 26.

52. Lectures and Essays in Criticism, p. 290.

53. Arnold wrote to his mother about the success of the lectures, adding 'certainly a more hopeless subject in itself to approach the British public with one could hardly imagine.' 25th May, 1866, Letters, i, 329.

Celtic races with their melancholy and unprogressiveness',⁵⁴ not only because he felt the English owed much to them 'spiritually and artistically',⁵⁵ but because he recognised something akin to the Celt in his own emotional make-up. Indeed, he distorts the true picture of Celtic literature by stressing the melancholy, which is the hall-mark of his own poetry, at the expense of the grotesqueness and vitality which is equally present.

But just as Arnold recognised the extremism of the Middle Ages, so he is equally aware of the faults of the Celts. He saw that despite their sense of style, their eloquence, even their Titanism, they could justly be accused of a lack of patience, stability and organized thought - charges which could also be levelled against Arnold's poetry. Consequently, he was finally forced to reject the Celtic values in favour of the Germanic virtues of science and architectonice,⁵⁶ although temperamentally opposed to the Teutonic,⁵⁷ since they were necessary to modern culture. On the Study of Celtic Literature, therefore, is not merely a mediation between the Celt and his detractors, but also between the conflicting poles of Arnold's personality.

When Arnold encountered la Villemarqué's summary, this conflict was not explicit. But one may assume that although Arnold's intellectual position had not hardened, his temperamental susceptibilities were operative. This would help to explain, if not why Arnold wrote his poem, at least why he was drawn to an article on Welsh and mediaeval literature. It may

54. Letter to Lady de Rothschild, 25th September, 1864. Letters, i, 240.

55. Letter to Jane Forster, 24th December, 1859. Letters, i, 112. Arnold continues with a discussion of Renan's 'Sur la Poésie des Races Celtiques' in Essais de morale et de critique (1859), which was to form the basis for the Celtic Lectures. Renan was a Breton and shared the same sort of enthusiasm as la Villemarqué, whose work he admired unreservedly.

56. 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', Essays in Criticism, p. 381.

57. Arnold found the German 'hideousness and commonness' depressing. Letter to Wyndham Slade, 12th September, 1865. Letters, i, 300.

also illuminate Arnold's long perseverance with the poem, when according to his later criteria it was lacking in value.

But Arnold's feeling for the mediaeval cannot account for his attraction to the legend. In the 1853 Preface Arnold asserts that the time and place of an action are insignificant compared with the greatness of the action itself.⁵⁸ It is difficult to see, nevertheless, how Arnold could have perceived a greatness of action in la Villemarqué's bald and inconsistent account of the legend. Some specific focussing mechanism was needed to concentrate Arnold's attention creatively upon the story, and this is found in his relationship with Marguerite.

Unfortunately there is little documentation of this, and the circumstances which led up to the composition of Tristram and Iseult will always be obscure. Moreover, it is impossible to know at what stage of the relationship the poem was written, so the precise bearing of the one on the other is a matter of hypothesis. All that is known about Marguerite is contained in two letters to Clough and the Marguerite poems.

The affair seems to have been unhappy. It appears that Arnold met Marguerite at Thun in 1848 and again the following year when they parted for good. On 29th September, 1848 Arnold wrote to Clough:

Tomorrow I repass the Genni and get to Thun; linger one day at the Hotel Bellevue for the sake of the blue eyes of one of its inmates; and then proceed by slow degrees down the Rhine...⁵⁹

Arnold had met Marguerite on the journey out and was sufficiently attracted to arrange another meeting on the way back. Indeed, she and the implications of their relationship were occupying Arnold's thoughts, for, in the same letter, during a discussion on literature, he breaks off to comment of women 'We know beforehand all they can teach us; yet we are obliged to learn it all directly from them.' This sense of emotional duress

58. Poems, ed. Allott, p. 595, ll. 144f.

59. Letters to Clough, p. 91.

is also present in the fragment⁶⁰ with which he concludes the letter, where he indicates that he has unwillingly felt the pull of a woman's 'little moment life of loveliness' in contrast to an intellectual contemplation of the 'twin reaches of great time'. But despite Arnold's cynical pose, 'A Memory Picture' and 'Meeting' indicate that the relationship was, to begin with, fruitful and happy.

After a year the couple met again to find the situation altered. Marguerite, according to 'Isolation', had been unfaithful to Arnold, while he had remained constant to her. The resultant tensions constituted perhaps the first painful emotional experience of Arnold's life. He felt that sustained love was impossible, partly because he was temperamentally inadequate, partly because lack of self-knowledge prevented communication.⁶¹ But his attitude to this belief was ambiguous: on the one hand he wanted a platonic relationship, on the other he needed emotional contact.⁶²

The evidence of the poems is reflected in a letter to Clough. Here he confides the misery of his situation and the need for an undemanding comforter:

I am here in a curious and not altogether comfortable state: however, tomorrow I carry my aching head to the mountains and to my cousin the Bhunlis Alp... Yes, I come, but in three or four days I shall be back here, and then I must try how soon I can ferociously turn towards England.

His 'curious.....state', he implies is due to an inner deficiency:

What I must tell you is that I have never succeeded in any one great occasion in consciously mastering myself: I can go thro the imaginary process of mastering myself and see the whole affair as it would then stand, but at the critical point I am too apt to hoist up the mainsail to the wind and let her drive...⁶³

This has its poetic equivalent in 'A Farewell', where Arnold desires

60. Poems, pp. 577-8.

61. 'A Farewell' and 'The Buried Life'.

62. Summarized in 'Absence'. The platonic need is clearly seen in 'Parting'.

63. 23rd September, 1849. Letters to Clough, pp. 110-11. This letter also contains a passage from 'Parting'.

'trenchant force' and a 'will like a dividing spear', but is forced to recognise that these qualities, which Marguerite needs in her partner, he does not possess. The 'God's tremendous voice', Life's 'petty dust' or its 'darting river'⁶⁴ which seek their separation, are, in fact externalizations of a fundamental incompatibility.

From this experience comes a new note in Arnold's poetry. Gone is the Parnassian tranquility of the 1849 volume, replaced instead by a mood of turbulence, in which Arnold confronts the antitheses of passion and calm, self-direction and fate. The 1852 poems strive after a serenity, symbolized by the stars of 'Self-Dependence', but are vitiated by a fear that man cannot impose control either on himself or the forces of life. In 'A Summer Night' Arnold summarizes his dilemma in the question 'Madman or slave, must man be one?' As a result, two of the major poems of the collection, Empedocles on Etna and Tristram and Iseult deal with the futility of knowledge and passion which leads inevitably to death.

Although Tristram and Iseult was conceived during Arnold's relationship with Marguerite, in some senses it stands opposed to the Marguerite poems. The latter repeatedly assert the impossibility of communion, whereas the former demonstrates a corrosive passion, which can only be shaken off in death. In 'Parting' Arnold laments the passing of love during separation; in Tristram and Iseult the lovers are unable to forget each other while apart, remaining obsessively committed. Neither lover doubts the other: Tristram reproaches Iseult with being late, but never doubts she will come, and she proves her fidelity by dying with him. In 'Isolation', 'Parting' and 'The Buried Life', however, Arnold stresses that one is ignorant of one's own feelings, and, therefore, the feelings of others.

64. From 'Meeting', 'Absence' and 'A Dream' respectively.

The Marguerite poems dwell on the transience of love, caused by the essential isolation of human beings. 'A Memory Picture', for example, shows how

Time's current strong
Leaves us fixed to nothing long⁶⁵

as Marguerite's image slips from Arnold's memory. But for Tristram Iseult's image arises spontaneously in battle, solitude and fever, and memories usurp the present reality in his delirium. Arnold cries out that man is 'enised' in the sea of life, but Tristram and Iseult presents the converse problem of a passion which is as indestructible as it is destructive. The lovers are not enervated by a sense of fundamental alone-ness, but by an inescapable desire for each other. An internal deficiency causes Arnold and Marguerite to separate, but an external agency binds Tristram and Iseult together.

However, Tristram and Iseult links with the Marguerite poems in its exploration of alienation through the figure of Iseult of Brittany. Arnold's despair in 'To Marguerite - Continued' is that of the second Iseult: both desire love; both are denied. Arnold is balked because some God decreed that separation be a part of the human condition, Iseult because the potion keeps Tristram turned from her. The poem thus represents not only an exploration of unalleviated passion, but also the equal torment of unreciprocated love. It may have been partly because of this two-fold potential that Arnold was drawn to the legend as a vehicle for his investigation into the new experience of emotional disruption.

It is impossible to speculate whether Arnold wrote the poem from a desire to console himself for his failure, or to exorcise any vestiges of attachment, but it seems more certain that Arnold was not attempting autobiography. As he laments his inability to sustain a relationship in

the Marguerite poems, it is unlikely that he would be consciously moved to cast himself in the role of Tristram. Also, as Baum points out, Arnold could not have seen himself in a triangular relationship before 1852,⁶⁶ so the story could not have attracted him as a parallel to his own situation. Neither would Marguerite be a suitable parallel to Iseult of Ireland whose 'raven hair', 'proud dark eyes' and 'petulant quick replies' do not accord with the sketch of Marguerite in 'Parting':

The sweet blue eyes - the soft ash-coloured hair -
The cheeks that still their gently paleness wear -
The lovely lips with their arch smile...⁶⁷

But, more important, Iseult remains faithful to death, whereas Marguerite was unfaithful within the year. Indeed, the blue eyes, gold hair, silver voice and pale complexion of Iseult of Brittany approximate more closely to Marguerite's physical description, although their characters differ. Any similarities would thus appear to be fortuitous, so an autobiographical interpretation can be discarded.

Arnold had already considered the triangular relationship in 'A Modern Sappho', which was probably written just before he met the Tristan legend. This is much more naïve than the poems of the Marguerite period, and seems to have been motivated by Arnold's feelings for alienation and transcendental calm which swiftly rises above emotion. Nevertheless, it does constitute a synthesis of two major aspects of Tristram and Iseult and the Marguerite poems: the narrator is in virtually the same situation as Iseult of Brittany, but she maintains a hope by virtue of the inevitable transience of love, this optimistic expectation of change vanishes with the pessimism of experience, and in both Tristram and Iseult and the Marguerite poems an intolerable situation is seen as unalterable. But having written

66. P. F. Baum, 'Tristram and Iseult', Ten Studies in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold (Durham, N. C., 1958), p. 54.

67. ll. 37-9.

'A Modern Sappho', Arnold may have been more alive to the possibilities of the triangular relationship in presenting reciprocated and unreciprocated passion when he met la Villemarqué's summary.

This gives no indication of how mediaeval writers treated the lovers' passion, so Arnold was completely free to impose what interpretation he wished upon the material. It is interesting, therefore, that his conception approximates to that of Béroul, whose version provides the central part of la Villemarqué's account. Béroul's lovers are not exponents of amour courtois: love is imposed on them with a terrible tyranny, depriving them of responsibility and choice. They love because they have to, not because they want to, a compulsion which is manifest in Iseult's appeal to Ogrin and which repeats what Tristan has previously asserted:

'Sire, por Dieu omnipotent,
Il ne m'aime pas, ne je lui,
Fors par un herbé dont je bui,
Et il en but; ce fu pechiez.'⁶⁸

Nor does their love bring peace. Amour courtois was conducted on the principles of mesure, patience and joie; this love is extreme and painful. In Morrois, when the potion abates after the three years' duration, both regret the loss of courtly comfort and content, not on their happiness, but on the suffering their passion has brought them. Tristan exclaims:

'Ha Dex... tant ai travail!
Trois anz a hui, que riens n'i fal.
Onques ne me falli pus paine
Ne a foirié n'en sorsemaine.
Oublié ai chevalerie,
A seure cort et baronie.'⁶⁹

This treatment of passion springs from Béroul's great sympathy for the lovers in their three years' obsession, not an admiration for transcendental love.

For Béroul the love-potion would seem to abrogate the lovers' responsibilities: their love is a madness capriciously imposed without

68. ll. 1412-5.

69. ll. 2161-6.

their volition. Arnold does not stress the potion, presumably because he felt the supernatural lacked credibility and seriousness, but, like Bérout, he does not decry the morality of the situation. He ignores la Villemarqué's hints concerning the 'liaison coupable', together with his explicit accounts of Morrois and the ambiguous oath. Arnold's lovers are not seen as adulterers. When Iseult warns Tristram of their discovery, it need not be taken as anything more than a discovery of their emotional relationship. Mention of adultery would alienate the lovers and confuse the central exposition of their passion, so the question is not allowed to arise. In this, Arnold is at variance with the attitudes of the mid-19th century, epitomized in 'The Last Tournament', although he imposes his own value judgment in portraying the passion as destructive.

Arnold was not bemused by the romantic concept of an undying love. Having experienced a situation in which intellect was overrun by emotion, he regarded realistically, and with distaste, the problem of a man bound by passion, finding in it the cause of suffering and deprivation. In Tristram and Iseult neither lover is able to find peace in either solitude or society, action or passivity, not so much because of the fact of separation as the nature of passion itself. Ogrin could comment 'Amors par force vos demaine' with equal justice to Arnold's lovers.

Their reunion, for example, is not a conventional love-scene. The dominant tone is one of reproach: Tristram recriminates with Iseult for her late arrival, finds fault with her 'courtly tone', tells her she cannot save him and orders her to stay by his grave. Iseult, though more conciliatory, asserts that she has suffered equally. Tristram says he is happy but immediately qualifies this with mention of his birth and grief-stricken life. Peace is absent even in reunion. Only in death do the lovers find an escape from their wasted lives, and assume an aspect of calm.

Arnold stresses the tyrannous nature of the passion in the first section through his description of Tristram's attempts to forget Iseult.

He seems to have been drawn to la Villemarqué's statement that during Tristan's marriage to Iseult of Brittany 'c'est en vain qu'il court les aventures périlleuses'. This is misleading as far as the relevant mediaeval versions are concerned, since they show Tristan's marriage punctuated with dangerous visits to Iseult of Ireland, or exploits done in her name. The action thus springs directly from the passion. But la Villemarqué's misinterpretation brings Arnold to see Tristram attempting to escape from his old love, rather than to her. Arnold's Tristram makes no attempt to revisit Iseult of Ireland after their meeting at Tyntagel. Instead he tries to flee the obsessive image which presses in on him both in the violent action of Arthur's campaigns,⁷⁰ and in the quiet solitude of peace.

Passion for Arnold does not motivate action but negates it. Consequently each of his three central characters is left to suffer in isolation, and this lays the poem open to the very criticism which he levelled against Empedocles on Etna:

What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also.⁷¹

In tragedy passion finds release in action; in Tristram and Iseult passion is overlaid with an enervating melancholy, not because Arnold had no alternative in his sources, but because he was induced by circumstances and temperament to interpret it in this way. The frustration

70. This passage must have been added after Arnold returned home and read Malory v, which deals with Arthur's European campaigns. Tristram does not participate in these, but Arnold took the opportunity of placing his hero in the conventional Arthurian context in order to emphasize his position as outsider.

71. Preface to 1853 edition. Poems, p. 592, ll. 57 f.

of this interpretation has its musical counterpart in the opening phrase of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, but whereas this works within the fabric of the music drama, Arnold fails to resolve this situation on any level and leaves his characters in a state of inaction. Death is not the goal as it is in Wagner, but the only course left open to the three protagonists.⁷²

La Villemarqué's account of the lovers' death is deficient, since he omits the episode of the black sails.⁷³

Mais la fille du roi de la Petit-Bretagne, qui a surpris le secret des amours de son mari, lui fait accroire que la reine de Cornouailles refuse de se rendre à ses voix, et Tristan meurt de chagrin.

When Arnold wrote to Swinburne that he did not know the episode, his memory is probably faulty, since there are certain factors which point to his having read the end of the article and having rejected the material for a version which did not compromise Iseult of Brittany. If Arnold had not read this, he must have taken Iseult's death from Malory, since la Villemarqué does not mention it in his summary. This is unlikely as the reference in Malory is obscure.⁷⁴ But more important, it would necessitate Arnold's conceiving the poem without a climax. Also, if Arnold had not read the article, the reference to 'the gleam of thy white sail' would be a strange coincidence. Having thus removed the deception practised by Iseult of Brittany, there is nothing to precipitate Tristram's death before Iseult's arrival, so the lovers die together unecstatically.

This rejection of the white sails episode results from Arnold's

72. In the metrical version Tristan dies because he thinks Iseult has not come, but in Arnold's poem Iseult causes no desire or energy in Tristram, who seems to want death more than his mistress. It is not clear, therefore, why he sends for her.

73. He refers to it, together with Iseult's death, at the end of the article.

74. See Malory, xix, ll. The second account of Tristram's death, xx, 6, does not describe Isode's end.

sympathy for the innocent victim, whose situation is more intolerable than that of the lovers. They at least have peace in death and the knowledge of a mutual passion, however unfulfilled. Iseult of Brittany has her children, but they are no consolation. She remains totally isolated. We never hear her speak; her love for Tristram remains implicit in her sorrow, and is unrelated to that of Tristram and Iseult of Ireland. She does not impinge on their relationship, although Arnold refers to her as the 'younger rival' and Iseult of Ireland terms herself her 'former rival', for she demonstrates no jealousy. Her mute suffering prevents a relationship with Tristram, and where there is no relationship, there can be no rivalry. Moreover, her grief can find no resolution in action: since she is a product of Arnold's sympathy there can be no white sails episode, nor any relationship of revenge.

Arnold confronts Iseult with three potential relationships, all of which fail. As Iseult represents Arnold's indictment of passion, she cannot involve herself in it, nor can she be seen to have any consolation. She remains 'like one dying in the mask of youth', a paradox of outward tranquillity and incommunicable anguish. Arnold portrays her in terms of silence, purity and fragility, his sympathy overbalancing into sentimentalization at times, as in the flower imagery: 'the snowdrop by the sea', 'this sweet flower', 'this patient flower'. Contrary to the evidence of *la Villemarqu  * and Malory he presents her as a young orphan,⁷⁵ and associates her with two untraditional children to heighten the pathos of her situation as young widow and mother. Her youth, innocence and vulnerability are emphasized to create a sense of tragic waste, but as the poem does not attain tragedy, these qualities merely heighten the pain of an insoluble situation. Indeed, Arnold's concept of Iseult is a main factor

75. In *la Villemarqu  * she is 'la fille d'Howel, roi du pays'; in Malory she is the daughter of 'Kynge Howell' and sister of Sir Keyhydins.

in the poem's failure, since she fails to integrate into the narrative qualities of the work, constituting instead a stasis incapable of development and change.

Because of Iseult's isolation, the three-cornered relationship fails to develop. There is no abrasion between the characters as there is in the originals. They exist encapsulated. Iseult of Brittany has no contact with her husband or his mistress; Tristram attempts to evade the image of the latter; Iseult of Ireland is overmuch concerned with her past and future. None of the emotion generated or intimated within the poem springs from a direct and comprehending contact, but rather from the negative sources of frustration, yearning and profound discontent. This lowers the tension, already diminished by Arnold's refusal to see the story in terms of social conflict, and causes a frustration of legitimate expectations.

In a situation which suggests urgency, there is no sense of the urgent. Much of la Villemarqué's summary is unusable either on the grounds of irrelevancy or immorality, so Arnold concentrates on the final events. But having removed the vengeance theme, he fails to compensate with other tensions. This capitulation to fatalistic melancholia may support Arnold's view of an exhausting, wasting passion, but it removes credibility from the passionate relationship itself.

Arnold's handling of the love-potion contributes towards this effect also. Understandably he minimizes its importance because of the problems raised by the use of the supernatural. In the 1852 version the potion is referred to as 'poisoned wine' and 'that potion rare', but this was not sufficiently explicit for an audience who generally had no knowledge of the legend. In 1853, therefore, Arnold inserted lines 56-82 in which he makes mention of 'that spiced magic draught' and 'the love draught'. Arnold was reluctant to attribute the passion to enchantment because it is

removed from the sphere of possible human experience. But instead of coming to terms with the problem, either by ignoring the episode completely or using it symbolically, he uses the information afforded him by la Villemarqué and Malory,⁷⁶ and then ignores it. There is no reference to the drink or the 'wild delicious passion' it engenders at any other point in the poem. We are not shown the onset of passion, merely its decline and exhausted demise, so the primary cause and effect remain unconnected with the state of affairs at the end of the story. If Arnold intended a connection between the fever in Tristram's blood and the draught

Which since then for ever rolls
Through their blood and binds their souls...⁷⁷

his description of the latter should be less insulated.

Although the legend itself has a large potential for tension, which is even realized to some degree in la Villemarqué and Malory, Arnold seems temperamentally inclined to endow all his material with a sense of waste and regret. It is likely in view of his circumstances during the poem's conception that this sense of waste was an endemic attitude, which crystallized in his portrayal of the lovers. The main details which he takes from Malory, for instance, are transformed into repositories for a melancholy totally alien to the original.

In the Morte D'Arthur Tristram is a hunter knight, belonging to the forest rather than the sea. Here hunting is seen as an expression of courtly life, an honourable and ordered pursuit which reflects the social hierarchy:

76. La Villemarqué states that after they had drunk the potion 'tous deux aussitôt sentent l'amour couler dans leurs veines' and Malory comments: 'But by that drynk was in their bodyes they loved aythir other so well that never hir love departed, for well nother for woo.' viii, 24.

77. i. 65-6. Arnold was the first to perceive the dramatic possibilities of Tristram's fever. This was later developed by Wagner and thereafter frequently imitated by the dramatists.

And as the booke seyth, he began good measures of blowynge of beestes of venery and beestes of chaace and all maner of vermaynes, and all the tearmys we have yet of hawkynge and huntynge... Wherefore, as me semyth, all jantyllmen that bereth olde armys ought of ryght to honour sir Tristrams for the goodly tearmys that jantylmen have and use and shall do unto the Day of Dome...⁷⁸

But instead of using Tristram's hunting skills as a demonstration of his courtliness, his moving within a social framework, Arnold uses them to cut Tristram off from society, as Tennyson was to do later. He shows Tristram solitary amidst nature, attempting to find solace in much the same way as Arnold himself does in 'Parting'. In fact, the Tristram of Malory bears no relation to Arnold's hero, who spends the long summer day

Idle as a mossy stone
In the forest depths alone,
The chase neglected and his hound
Couched beside him on the ground.⁷⁹

Malory's Tristram is a man of accomplishment and action.⁸⁰ He would not allow his love to come between him and his duty as a knight, but would rather be urged on to chivalry by it. When Arnold's Tristram does engage in action, he has no stature. He is merely the 'moonstruck knight' and not the second champion of the Round Table. The pathos in his speech describing his birth⁸¹ is totally alien to the dignity of Malory's hero, whose nearest approach to self-pity is found in his reproach to the apparently unfaithful Isode:

Alas! madame, the good love that I have lovyd you, and many londis and grete rychesse have I forsakyn for youre love! And now ye ar a traytouras unto me, whych dothe me grete payne.⁸²

Arnold seems to recognize the Tristram of the prose version in his mention

78. viii, 3.

79. i, 223-6.

80. Only once in Malory does Tristram become secluded and melancholy, when he goes mad. ix, 18. Arnold may have been influenced by Malory's portrayal but whereas this interlude is an aberration for Malory's hero, for Arnold's it is a way of life.

81. Derived from Malory viii, 3.

82. ix, 16.

of the sojourn at Joyous Garde,⁸³ but he makes no use of this to demonstrate a deterioration from what Tristram was to what he is become.

Arnold's all-pervading melancholy is seen again in the third section which is his own invention with the exception of the Merlin and Vivien episode. The structural reason for this section is obscure, as nothing is developed: the brooding atmosphere arising from the impossibility of action is sustained instead of resolved. One feels that the focus should widen out into a vision of regeneration implicit in the children and nature description. But this fails to happen and its failure merely serves to emphasize Iseult's isolation. Arnold seems to have recognized the necessity for this regeneration to balance the preceding negative movement but was incapable of achieving it and in his anxiety became self-indulgent in his handling of the children.

His incapacity seems to have sprung, at least in part, from the fixity of the young Iseult. As in the first two sections she is incapable of action because she is encased within her suffering, so she remains in the third. Arnold imposes emotion on her, rather than allowing it to arise organically from her character. Her frozen misery originates from Arnold's denunciation of passion, but Arnold makes her so much of a victim that she loses contact with the cause of her grief and exists in a state of total passivity. Arnold seems to have sensed that this oblique method was insufficient, since he added the narrator's explicit statement on the futility of passion.

The Merlin and Vivien episode seems also to be an admission of defeat, in that Arnold substitutes it for a necessary resolution. His comment that it was introduced to relieve the gloom suggests that he was thinking in terms of decorative detail rather than meaning, a trend evident throughout

83. i, 202-3. Arnold departs from Malory, since the latter shows Launcelot extending his hospitality to both lovers. x, 52.

the poem. As it is, the episode has no organic relationship to the whole and therefore can only lend an illusory, and fundamentally dishonest, relief.

If the episode was 'brought in' after Arnold read Malory, then Tinker and Lowry may well be right in supposing that the poem originally ended at what is now line 63.⁸⁴ In this case Arnold may have envisaged the first part of section three as a coda, and then, having enlarged on this as a result of his attraction towards Iseult of Brittany, added the Merlin section as a palliative, forming a second fade-out. This may explain to some extent why the section is artistically anomalous.

The use of a coda is typical of many of Arnold's poems. This, as in 'The Future' and 'The Scholar Gypsy', for example, provides an oblique resolution by panning out from the main action to find some other area of poetic experience which has affinities but offers consolation. But here the poetry is at variance with the work's intellectual content; it seeks to obscure the main action through ornamental romance, rather than offer another perspective to the problem of passion and so constitute a full artistic resolution.

The implications of the coda are confused. Primarily it is a statement that even the wisest are prey to passion. This does not relieve the real sombreness of the poem, but extends and reinforces it, although the romance setting disguises this and, in the final analysis, trivializes it. At the same time it shows a sloughing off of passion in Vivien's rejection of Merlin. But in the last line 'For she was passing weary of his love' we are brought back to Iseult, wearied by her love for Tristram and unable to shed her emotional burden so easily, just as Tristram and Iseult of Ireland were unable to shed theirs. The romance setting therefore, while offering a different perspective, provides a useless conclusion because it withdraws from the reality of the main action and offers either unilluminating parallels or impossible solutions. Its solace is therefore chimaerical

84. Tinker and Lowry, A Commentary, p. 118

and its relationship to the main story tenuous.

This lack of intellectual and artistic unity is typical of the poem. Arnold conceived the work spontaneously during his first emotional crisis rather than recollecting it in tranquillity, but subsequently it seems to have slipped and slid its meaning until one is unsure as to how far the poem corresponds with what Arnold wanted to say, or, indeed, whether Arnold himself was certain of his interpretation under his concern for intelligibility and decoration. The anomalies and vagueness within the poem seem to result, if not from an incoherence in concept, at least an imbalance in performance.

Arnold saw passion as a burning obsession which blights and exhausts life. But he portrays the melancholy results to which he was more temperamentally attuned, rather than giving an insight into the passion itself. This is particularly true of the dialogue in the second section, which, if its effect is as Arnold intended, implies that he conceived of a passion which does not communicate, or even concern itself, with its object, but is more intent upon a recital of its side-effects. The most assured passages of the work are the static descriptions, which would indicate that Arnold was unable to animate the central relationships and relied on superficial emotional effects.

However, Arnold did not attempt to recast the poem for the 1853 edition. Rather, while regarding the poem as unsatisfactory, he concentrated on the peripheral areas of style and narrative clarity, looking outwards to a potential audience, instead of inwards to a reassessment of the poem's meaning. This is not to say that the emendations Arnold made were unnecessary, but that they were inadequate to cover up the central problem.

During composition Arnold was faced with the task of compressing a great deal of material into a manageable and comprehensible unit. He chose not to write a full-scale narrative poem and consequently had to select only the barest details, many of which he was constrained to telescope and fit

obliquely into the action. As the legend was generally unfamiliar, it was more than usually important that these details should cohere. But Arnold chose to complicate the problem by narrating from a variety of standpoints. In the first section he uses straight narrative interspersed with dramatic allusion. In the second section he presents a dramatic dialogue, probably the most unsatisfactory part of the work, and then switches to a second observer in the persona of the huntsman.⁸⁵ The third section is less difficult, involving straight narrative and description with one passage of direct comment from the narrator in the persona of a Breton bard.⁸⁶ This tentativeness regarding standpoint is symptomatic of a prevailing uncertainty, and it is noteworthy that Arnold is more successful artistically in the third section when he is freed from the trammels of the legend and the exigencies of presenting a relationship.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the facts of the narrative became obscured. The main problem of the first draft was the confusion surrounding Iseult of Ireland, since her late entry fails to clarify her relationship

85. Clough found difficulty with this transition, only clarifying it on the fourth re-reading. North American Review, lxxvii (July 1853), 13. The 1852 version ran as follows:

On that clear forest-knoll he stays,
With his pack round him, and delays,
As rooted to the earth, nor sounds
His lifted horn, nor cheers his hounds
Into the tangled glen below.
Yet in the sedgey bottom there
Where the deep forest stream creeps slow
Fring'd with dead leaves and mosses rare,
The wild boar harbours close and feeds.
He gazes down into the room,
With heated cheeks and flurried air,
Who is that kneeling lady fair?...

86. This conjecture was made by Baum, Ten Studies, p. 40, and is supported by Allott, Poems, p. 197. It is suggested by reference to 'Our snowdrop by the Atlantic Sea', i, 196, the 'old-world Breton history' of Merlin, and, less specifically by the archaisms. Arnold probably got the idea from la Villemarqué's article, as there is no evidence of his having encountered Berzes-Breiz.

with Tristram. Arnold thus adds lines 56-62 to emphasize the distinction between the two Iseults and avoid possible confusion. It also introduces the voyage from Ireland and the love-potion, which provide knowledge of the source and nature of the passion, together with a background for Tristram's memories which might otherwise appear too enigmatic. This insertion also establishes the chronological relationship between the two Iseults, which is necessary to a comprehension of Tristram's speech in lines 94-104.⁸⁷ In addition, the passage clears up the major confusion as to who shares the potion with Tristram: his apostrophe 'Child' would evoke Iseult of Brittany and not the shadowy other Iseult who has only been mentioned once before.

The relationship between Iseult and Marc is strengthened by the addition of line 138 in the first section. In the 1852 version of the poem there were only two vague references to Iseult's 'future lord' and 'the prince whom she must wed'. This gives Marc a specific identity which is enlarged on in the section following by the stanza now standing as lines 45-48. Here Marc is referred to by Iseult as 'my deep-wronged husband', which though its moral import remains undeveloped, makes Iseult's misery more intelligible.

Although most of Arnold's alterations constituted additions, he did make an important omission for the 1853 edition. This was the passage in section three which comments directly on the futility of passion. Arnold probably felt, while attending to the problem of oblique and direct expression, that this passage was too explicit. In addition, he was confronted with the problem of mediaevalizing these reflections which for

87. As the love-potion had not been previously mentioned in the 1852 edition the reader had to wait 30 lines for an elucidation of the reference to 'poisoned wine'.

consistency's sake are presented through the bardic narrator. On the other hand, Arnold's reinstatement of the passage in the 1857 edition indicates that he was not satisfied with the experiment. It was evidently needed, despite its manifest faults, as a platform for Arnold's comments on the vanity of passion. This suggests that more subtle methods within the narrative had failed, and that Arnold finally decided that he could not rely on the reader's response to Iseult of Brittany.

By 1853 Arnold had read the account of the legend by Dunlop, which is far more accurate and cogent than that given by la Villemarqué. However, Arnold adds no more than two circumstantial details from this source. The first stems from the description of the second Iseult as Yseult with the White Hands. Arnold met Isode La Blanche Mains in Malory, which may have motivated the snow-drop image, but not until the 1853 version does he refer to her by her traditional title. The second alteration occurs at the beginning of the third section, where Arnold adds two lines making reference to the fact that the lovers were buried in Marc's chapel in Cornwall.⁸⁸ The reason for the first addition is obvious, since it increases the impression of Iseult's fragility. The second detail is more difficult to explain, since Arnold is not primarily concerned with accuracy at other points in the poem. Possibly it was added to emphasize the isolation of Iseult of Brittany; possibly one should read into it an act of forgiveness on the part of Marc. However, the addition is not sufficiently explicit to succeed either way.

Seventeen years after the poem's first appearance, Arnold was still contemplating possible improvements. This concern may have sprung from a

88. Section iii had previously begun:

A year had flown, and in the chapel old
Lay Tristram and queen Iseult dead and cold.
The young surviving Iseult...

general dissatisfaction with faulty workmanship, or perhaps, because the poem still eluded and baffled him at the same time as holding a certain fascination. In the 1869 version the main addition was the passage which now constitutes lines 131-146 in section two. This formerly comprised the first paragraph of 'Lines Written by a Death-bed', which may have formed part of the original draft of Tristram and Iseult.⁸⁹ If this is so, one must assume that the passage occupied roughly the same position as it did on its replacement. Why it was omitted is unknown, but presumably it was reinstated because Arnold felt some contrast was needed between the fever of passion and the peace of death. It also acts as a bridge between the Cornish dames and the tapestry huntsman.⁹⁰

Clough found this transition confusing, and his article of July 1853 indicts the poem in its 1852 form of being insufficiently incisive for its meaning to be clear.⁹¹ This criticism may have influenced Arnold's decision regarding the preface from Dunlop. But Clough seems also to have been concerned with the poem's essential meaning rather than its general intelligibility, as his comments regarding the third section demonstrate:

We listen, indeed, not quite displeased, to a sort of faint musical mumble, conveying at times a sort of subdued half-sense, or intimating, perhaps, a three-quarters implied question: is anything real? - is love anything? - what is anything? - is there substance enough even in sorrow to mark the lapse of time? - is not passion a diseased unrest? - did not the fairy Vivian when the wise Merlin forgot his craft to fall in love with her, wave her wimple over her sleeping admirer?...Why, or wherefore, or with what purpose, who will venture to say?...

89. See Poems, pp. 224-5.

90. Previous editions read:

'And now tonight she laughs and speaks
And has a colour in her cheeks;
Christ keep us from such fantasy!
The air of the December night
Steals coldly round the chamber bright,
Where those lifeless lovers be...

91. North American Review, lxxvii, 12-17.

This page should be read after page 105.

of the children at play, condemned the work as:

sickly, feverish and withal terribly disjointed - affording no trace of that symmetry of design, the lack of which Mr. Arnold justly deplored.

Most reviewers, however, praised the poem, showing a preoccupation with beauty and nobility which was to ensure the success of the Idylls. Nor was there a voice raised against the mediaeval subject matter, suggesting that a germ of Arthurian enthusiasm was there for the cultivating.

One suspects, in view of the reviewers' placid acceptance of the legend, that Arnold's concern for the poem's intelligibility was not so urgent as the need for clarifying its meaning. His concept of passion as an enervating force, upsets and blurs the poem at all levels. There is no release or point of balance, merely a heightening of the depressive mood, which is too negative to be successfully conveyed in narrative. Consequently, Arnold found the work technically difficult to handle: action is negated; characters remain isolated and externally presented; the form becomes confused in an attempt to inject immediacy and the unity is diffused by the introduction of ornamentation to relieve the sombreness.

These factors do not disturb a reading of the poem immediately, but are perceived through an impression that individual characters are engaged in a significant and dramatically cohesive action. But on closer examination action and character are revealed as illusory. This is due to expectations aroused by the material, which are continually baulked by Arnold's contrary treatment of it. The sens of the poem works against the matière so as to deny what the material demands: Arnold's idea of passion promotes a stasis, manifested in his tendency towards set-pieces, whereas the legend provides a tense and restless narrative. It seems that the emotional state which first drew Arnold to the legend finally defeated the poem.

Indeed, this comment could characterize the impression of the whole work. But it could also characterize much of the Pre-Raphaelite poetry which was to appear six years later: the static, mournful qualities of Tristram and Iseult, together with its theme of mediaeval passion, languourously treated and half-realized, anticipate particularly the work of Morris and Swinburne's 'Queen Yseult'. This is not altogether surprising when one remembers that Arnold, in intellectually unguarded moments, reveals susceptibilities similar to those indulged by the Pre-Raphaelites.

Clough's criticism of the poem is sound. Even in the final version it lacks cohesion and definition, but in the 1852 version it was factually as well as artistically vague. Predictably, therefore, reviewers less acute than Clough avoided the crucial problems and fastened on the more lucid passages of description, much akin to Tennyson's 'word-painting'. A high proportion singled out the poem for individual mention, and almost all found the poem's most sentimental passages the most appealing.

The Christian Remembrancer⁹² is dubious about the poem's morality 'centering so much interest upon lawless love' and regrets the prevalence of immorality in the original romances, with which the reviewer seems to be acquainted, a criticism which underlines the prevailing attitude to the legend. Nevertheless he picks out Tristram and Iseult as his favourite, being the most 'original and picturesque' of Arnold's compositions and 'bearing more than any of them the marks of a distinct and individual style.' He quotes the sugary, and irrelevant passage describing the sleeping children to justify this encomium. The Eclectic Review⁹³ also singles out this passage, together with the description of the dead lovers as 'containing some of the richest writing that Mr. Arnold has ever permitted himself to pen.'

92. Christian Remembrancer, xxvii (April, 1854), 326-9.

93. Eclectic Review, ix, N.S. (March 1855), 282-4.

The Dublin University Magazine⁹⁴ similarly praises the unaccustomed richness of texture, relieved that Arnold can occasionally 'disenthrall himself from Classic trammels'. The review continues:

A sweeter romance has rarely been written in modern times than his Tristram and Iseult. It is quaint without being affected and abounds with passages of the deepest pathos.

The reviewer lights on the beginning of the third section as 'a scene prettily worked out' and comments that 'The hopeless, joyless widowhood of Iseult of Brittany is a very touching piece of writing, and exquisitely true to nature.' This last comment could only have originated from a deep sentimentality.

The Prospective Review⁹⁵ is slightly more penetrating, since although the reviewer considers Tristram and Iseult to be the best thing in the volume, and indulges himself in quoting the 'delightful picture' of Iseult of Brittany by Tristram's bed, he does confess himself to be perturbed by the Merlin and Viven episode, which presents 'a totally new and disconnected story lying at a tangent to the circle of the original one.' This point is picked up by Fraser's Magazine,⁹⁶ but the reviewer is mainly disturbed by the ending on the grounds of verisimilitude, since it is not a children's story, nor told in a mother's way. 'Although it is beautiful, exceedingly beautiful,' it has 'absolutely no business where it is.' More to the point, this reviewer is not overcome by the pictorial beauties of the poem, but views them objectively, concerned that they unbalance the structure:

94. Dublin University Magazine, xliii (June 1854), 739-40.

95. Prospective Review, x (February 1854) 107-8 and 110.

96. Fraser's Magazine, xlix (February 1854), 140-9.

Tristram and Iseult is exceedingly beautiful, though there are parts in it which contravene, we think, the very canon which Mr. Arnold has learnt so well from the Greeks. The parts are not subordinated enough to the whole; mere scene-painting - admirable scene-painting nevertheless - occupies too much space, especially in the last part, till one loses the human interest...there is at once too much and too little of the dramatic element, the form of the poem being changed again and again from dialogue to description and vice-versa, a method which for such subjects is certainly not classic, and can always be escaped by strict labour, working the whole into drama or narrative.

Like Clough this reviewer is concerned with meaning, coming to the problem through the medium of form, and like Clough he reaches the conclusion that Arnold's statement is obscured by a lack of incisiveness: his indecision regarding the unity of form betrays an indecision concerning his interpretation of the material. Rightly, the reviewer indicts Arnold of succumbing to the temptation of aesthetic effect, instead of thinking the intellectual problem through.

This criticism highlights the intrinsic difficulty of Tristram and Iseult. The poem seems to have been included in the 1853 volume in the face of Arnold's hardening critical beliefs, for in the Preface Arnold upholds strongly Goethe's principle of architectonice against the decorative poetry of the senses. His criticism of 'Isabella, or the Pot of Basil' could equally be applied to his own poem:

... almost in every stanza there occurs one of those vivid and picturesque turns of expression by which the object is made to flash upon the eye of the mind... But the action? The action itself is an excellent one; but so feebly is it conceived by the Poet, so loosely constructed, that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is absolutely nul.⁹⁷

In view of this emphasis on structure, which although not yet committed to print in the Preface, must have informed his thinking, the 1852 reviewers' praise for the beauties of the poem, must have been as embarrassing to Arnold as the Blackwoods review.⁹⁸ This, while succumbing to the description

97. Poems, p. 601 ll. 313 f.

98. Blackwoods, lxx (March 1854), 312.

Just as Tristram and Iseult is untypical of Arnold's work, so it is untypical of contemporary Arthurian literature. It is the first work since the mediaeval versions to be wholly devoted to the Tristan legend. Because it derives from Continental sources it seems far more modern than Bulwer-Lytton's King Arthur published in 1848, although there is still something of a theatrical concern with mediaeval properties. This modernity is particularly noticeable in Arnold's lack of conventional moralizing, since at the time the legend was still dogged by the charge of immorality, an attitude to which Tennyson succumbed in 'The Last Tournament'. In this Arnold moves towards the Pre-Raphaelite school and their mournful evocations of passion, although these lugubriously celebrate rather than condemn emotional obsession. He also looks forward to the work of Morris in the dramatic form used for the second section and perhaps owes something to Tennyson's attempt to internalize action in 'Sir Galahad'. Finally, Tristram and Iseult foreshadows the artistic difficulties Swinburne was to face in Tristram of Lyonesse, since both works show an individual interpretation coming into conflict with its original inspiration.

CHAPTER IV

Tennyson's 'The Last Tournament': the English view.

Arnold's poem had little immediate effect on the legend's popularity.¹ This lack of interest cannot be wholly explained by Malory's uncongenial rendering, and the answer would seem to lie in the public attitudes manifest in the contemporary popularity of Lancelot and Galahad. This not only obscured the Tristan legend, but indicates that it would have been highly unacceptable to the mid-19th century, since the popularity surrounding the stories of Lancelot and Galahad was due to inherent qualities which the Tristan legend actively denied.

Tristan, unlike Lancelot, was not renowned for chivalry: there was nothing to offset his relationship with Iseult, whereas Lancelot, whatever his sin, was still admirable for his knighthood. Moreover, Lancelot's sin is recognised as such: he is punished by failure in the Grail quest and implication in the downfall of the Round Table. Finally, he is exonerated by his repentance and holy death. The Tristan story makes no such concessions to morality. Passion may cause suffering, but it is not seen as indictable. Consequently Tristan's end is far from holy: he is either murdered in sordid circumstances or dies in a manner which elevates adulterous love above morality. Obviously, he has nothing in common, at this stage,² with Galahad, who appealed to the quasi-mystical sensibilities of the age.

These attitudes were forming even before the 1859 Idylls, with a fringe Arthurian literature, which indicated a general awakening of interest. They

1. Except with the Pre-raphaelites. Like Arnold Frederick Millard used la Villemarqué's account of the legend, taken from Les Romans de la Table Ronde (1860) for his privately circulated poem Tristram and Iseult (1870). This, however, differs from both Arnold and Tennyson in that it seeks to tell the entire narrative simply and swiftly, drawing extensively on Thomas, Béroul, Malory and the Celtic material provided by la Villemarqué: it constitutes recapitulation rather than interpretation, had no seminal influence and is only noteworthy in so far as it demonstrates, along with Swinburne's Tristram of Lyonesse, a greater awareness of the Continental sources.

2. In the fin-de-siècle Tristan literature, he becomes the erotic counterpart of Galahad.

were focussed and perpetuated by the Idylls of the King, which owed some of its success to the fact that the early Idylls particularly were in tune with an existing public temperament. It is not surprising, therefore, that a work so vast in its appeal should also represent the nadir of the Tristan legend.

While Arthur retained his force as a chivalric symbol, the emphasis passed from the pseudo-historical leader to the romance king, and as it did, interest widened to the satellite characters.³ Lancelot's status as best knight gained him an audience, but his adultery qualified their response, and finally his portrayal. The ambiguity of his position caused his devotees some embarrassment and this may be partly responsible for the failure of portrayals prior to 'Lancelot and Elaine' to confront directly the problem of character.⁴ Coupled with this reticence to present passion, there is also an apparent inability, and so most poets follow Arnold's example in substituting passivity for an examination of character.

Even the most ardent and unconventional of Arnold's supporters, Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne, found their portraits vitiated by a weary melancholy akin to that of Arnold's Tristram. The focal point for their enthusiasm was the Jovial Campaign, a project to decorate the Oxford Union with Arthurian frescoes. Rossetti, the leader, took as his subject:

Sir Launcelot prevented by his sin from entering the chapel of the
Sanc Grail. He has fallen asleep before the shrine full of angels,

3. Only a few works concentrate on Arthur in the second half of the century: Thomas Westwood's The Sword of Kingship (1866) deals with Arthur's accession; Sebastian Evans writes about the marriage of Arthur in 'Arthur's Knighting', Macmillan's Magazine, xx (August 1869), 321-7, and Arthur's self-recriminations in 'The Eve of Morte Arthur', In the Studio (1875). J.A. Blaikie portrays Arthur as tragic hero and moral example in 'Arthur in Avalon', The Magazine of Art, vii (1884), 433-4. Swinburne portrays Arthur's agony in an early fragment entitled 'The Day before the Trial'. See G. Lafourcade La Jeunesse de Swinburne, ii, 52.

4. Had Tennyson's 'Ballad of Sir Lancelot' been completed, early renderings of Lancelot might have been less flaccid, since Tennyson intended to expose his hero to moral criticism. See The Poems of Tennyson, ed. Ricks, p. 502.

109

and between him and it rises in his dream the image of Queen Guenevere, the cause of all. She stands gazing at him with her arms extended in the branches of an apple tree...⁵

Lancelot's struggle between the erotic and the spiritual drew Rossetti, because it was in some measure his own, and in the following year he began 'God's Graal'.⁶ He abandoned this in 1869, overtly because of the artistic problems,⁷ but also probably because the subject, deriving from the fresco, was difficult to animate.

Swinburne, in his 'Lancelot',⁸ also took the fresco as his starting point and also failed to delineate the necessary conflict in a poem whose mannerism demonstrates the dangers of second-hand inspiration. Between Lancelot and his vision of the Grail, rises a shadow 'Branched as a tree' which eventually becomes identifiable as Guenevere. Immediately the vision vanishes and Lancelot becomes wholly obsessed with his earthly love. This contemplation finally lapses into memories and weariness, which offer

5. Letter to Charles Eliot Norton, July 1858. The Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. O. Doughty and J.R. Wahl (1965-8), i, 337-8. Other subjects included Arthur carried away to Avalon by Hughes and Morris's Sir Palomides jealousy of Sir Tristram. The Jovial Campaign (Rossetti's term) ended in disaster: in mid-November 1857 Rossetti left Oxford and his incomplete fresco, followed by his confederates. Doughty, A Victorian Romantic, pp. 241-2. The paintings themselves disappeared almost entirely, owing to the application of paint directly on to the unprepared walls.

6. First published in The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. W.M. Rossetti (1911), p. 239. Rossetti also sketched five chapter headings after the style of Malory which cover Lancelot's career from his knighting to the parting with Guinevere. Rossetti had already painted all the subjects, except the knighting. Works, p. 587. He also painted Sir Galahad before the Shrine in this year.

7. Letter to Swinburne, 22nd March, 1870. Letters of DGR, ii, 823-4. The fragment begins in the style of the Old Testament and turns into a pastiche of a mediæval carol. The line, 'The apple tree's in the wood; together with the portrayal of the sleeping Lancelot point to the visual origin.

8. The Complete Works of A.C. Swinburne, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and T.J. Wise (1925-7), i, 63-73. Gosse's editing of the poem, contained in B.M. MS. Ashley 4442 (viii, 61-2), is highly unreliable, since he has interpolated certain sections wrongly. It was discovered and published privately in 1918.

no hope of resolution. The numb and melancholy mood springs, not from the triumph of Lancelot's earthly ties over his spiritual aspirations, but because there is no valid earthly relationship. Although the two works are artistically incomparable, it would be true to say that the same passive and static qualities imbue Swinburne's poem as that of Arnold, since both poets fail to confront the internal workings of their heroes.

Morris, on the other hand, like Owen Meredith,⁹ removed the emphasis from Lancelot and placed it almost entirely on Guinevere. In 'King Arthur's Tomb',¹⁰ which, incidentally, does not suffer on account of its pictorial origins,¹¹ the conflict takes place in Guenevere. When she attacks Lancelot for his disloyalty to Arthur, he does not retaliate, but remains, like Swinburne's character, sad and single-minded in his commitment. In 'The Defence of Guenevere' Lancelot disappears into the background, and while he gains in chivalric stature, loses all character interest. It is to be regretted that Morris avoided a delineation of Lancelot's conflict since his early Arthurian poems are unique for their emphasis on characters pressured within a specific dramatic context.

Tennyson, however, managed to retain the qualities of melancholy and exhaustion deriving from an illicit passion in his portrayal of Lancelot, but without allowing them to enervate his writing. In 'Lancelot and Elaine',¹² he balances the conflicting visions of Lancelot by presenting

9. In his 'Queen Guenevere' the focus is on Guenevere seen through Launcelot's uncritical eyes, and in 'The Parting of Launcelot and Guenevere' Launcelot accepts his dismissal passively. Clytemnestra and Other Poems (1855). Owen Meredith is a pseudonym for E.R. Bulwer-Lytton, first earl of Lytton and son of the author of King Arthur.

10. The Defence of Guenevere. Guenevere seems to have had far more appeal for Morris. His portrayal in 'The Defence of Guenevere' is in marked contrast with Tennyson's repentant queen of the following year.

11. Rossetti's Arthur's Tomb (1855).

12. In 1859 the Idyll appeared as 'Elaine'. This was changed to its present form for the 1869 edition.

him as a paradox, a man whose sin is inextricably bound up in his ideal. Thus Tennyson satisfies the imaginative need of the age for an heroic Lancelot, at the same time as showing him to be false; but because he is also seen to suffer for his sin, he remains sympathetic. However, Tennyson's account of Lancelot is assimilated into a large narrative structure, which removes the need for a close examination of his psychology and for a resolution to his situation.

After the publication of 'Lancelot and Elaine' this quality of flawed greatness often appears in portrayals of Lancelot, together with the predictable melancholy:

Fairest of all
And sinfullest,
Towering tall
Above the rest
Upon a coal black steed rode Lancelot
In sombre armour drest. ¹³

Indeed, the characters of Lancelot and Guinevere become set as temperamental mistress and brooding, unhappy lover.¹⁴ The only notable exception¹⁵ is Sir Charles Bruce's Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot, which is taken from

13. R.W. Buchanan, 'Mordred', St. James Magazine, viii (August 1863), 33-9. Here Lancelot has degenerated into an active traitor. Buchanan tended to see the legend in unsubtle moralistic terms. In his Fragments of the Round Table, published anonymously (Glasgow 1859) he concludes that the lust of Lancelot and Guinevere was the downfall of the Order. In Hawker's 'The Quest of the Sangraal' Lancelot's emblem is a broken lily.

14. Guinevere is generally treated more unsympathetically than Lancelot. Tennyson's confrontation between Guinevere and Arthur is prefigured in D.M. Mulock Craik's short story 'Avilion, or the Happy Isles', Avilion and other tales (1853). Westwood condemns Guinevere and shows her repentance in The Quest of the Sangraal (1868); G. Simcox emphasizes her remorse in 'The Farewell of Ganore', Poems and Romances (1869); and Evans reproaches her in 'The Eve of Morte Arthur'. Only in Buchanan's poems and Westwood's The Quest of the Sangraal is Lancelot seen as a sensualist.

15. R.W. Morgan in The Duke's Daughter: a classic tragedy (1867) shows Lancelot as the exponent of clemency and Arthur as an inflexible upholder of justice, but the plot is untraditional.

the German of Wilhelm Hertz¹⁶ and is therefore not susceptible to the trends which led up to and were prolonged by the protracted publication of the Idylls. Here the character of Arthur is sacrificed to the advantage of the lovers: at worst he is vindictive and at best pathetic. But because Arthur was the embodiment of chivalric idealism to mid-19th century England, this approach was generally out of the question.

While Lancelot's popularity arose out of a general interest in chivalry, the motivation for interest in Galahad was specifically the religious revival begun by the Oxford movement. Anglo-Catholicism brought with its return to high ritual a reconsideration of the mediaeval church in literal and spiritual terms: 'Gothic becomes not an amusement, but an article of faith'.¹⁷ The Quest of the Holy Grail, therefore, with its visions, holy maidens and spiritual chivalry, was ready-made in its appeal for those who were moved religiously and aesthetically by the revival. Inevitably Galahad, who in his achievement of the Grail is the measure of Lancelot's spiritual failure, became hero-elect of this area of interest.

Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad' preceded this growth of popularity in the 1850's and helped stimulate interest in the legend. Burne-Jones, in the first flush of mediaeval enthusiasm, wrote to a school friend while at Oxford, 'Learn Sir Galahad by heart; he is to be the patron of our order. I have enlisted one in the project up here, heart and soul'.¹⁸

This idea may have been inspired by Sir Guy in Charlotte Yonge's The Heir of Redcliffe (1853), who took Galahad as a model. Indeed, Yonge, who was much influenced by John Keble, extended her interest in Galahad as a moral

16. 1865. Hertz's poem Lanzelet and Ginevra (1860) shows no influence from the 1859 Idylls.

17. Graham Hough, The Last Romantics (1961), p. 85.

18. Kathleen Tillotson, 'Tennyson's Serial Poem', Mid-Victorian Studies (1965), p. 90. The 'one enlisted' is Morris.

force in another direction, since she included the first extended account of the legend in a Church journal which she edited.¹⁹ This account was further supplemented in the same periodical between 1859 and 1864 by a full narrative of the legend, from the origin of the Grail to the death of Lancelot.²⁰

But the enthusiasm of the Pre-raphaelites was founded on the aesthetics of the legend rather than its moral potential. They were particularly susceptible to the pseudo-mystical as is manifested in Morris's early poem 'The Chapel in Lyonesse',²¹ where obscurity is mistaken for a genuine evocation of transcendental experience. Nevertheless, in 'Sir Galahad, A Christmas Mystery',²² Morris discards this mode and gives us a portrayal of Galahad which highlights the flaw in all other renderings. Morris's hero is quite unlike the self-possessed mystic of other interpretations: he is a man whose sense of spiritual vocation is shot through with doubt and despair. His vision of Christ is accompanied, not by triumph or satisfaction, but by a terrible awe:

Right so I fell upon the floor and knelt
Not as one kneels in church when mass is said,
But in a heap quite nerveless, for I felt
the first time what a thing is perfect dread.²³

This is remote from the celestial composure of Tennyson's Galahad. The poem itself is uneven, but it is remarkable for the simplicity and humanity

19. The Monthly Packet (1853). This catered for young members of the Church.

20. Ellen J. Millington 'King Arthur and his knights'. Surprisingly, the earlier part of this account is taken from Continental sources.

21. First published in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine (September 1856). Republished in The Defence of Guenevere. The poem may originate from hints in Malory xiii, 13; xiii, 18; xv, 1. Sir Ozana le Cure Hardy appears in Guinevere's maying expedition, xix, 1, where Morris may have encountered the name during reading for his projected poem 'The Maying of Guinevere'. The Collected Works of William Morris, ed. May Morris (1910-15), I, xix.

22. The Defence of Guenevere.

23. 11. 89-92.

with which it treats the central character, who in all other works is above despair and exempt from spiritual and physical peril.²⁴

In 1863 R. S. Hawker wrote his fragment 'The Quest of the Sangraal',²⁵ which also demonstrates by contrast a reason for the monotony of most Grail poems: this time, their lack of intellectual structure. Hawker's poem takes a highly individual line through the Grail story. He admired Tennyson's poetry as can be seen in this letter from the Lincoln Collection written to Emily Tennyson in January 1870:

He has 'built into lofty verse' his former fragments and constructed for future ages the epic of King Arthur. That which Milton assayed Tennyson has fulfilled and I do personally exult that he has re-peopled the Courts of the grim castle of old Cornwall which stands in the distance before my daily view, with the achievements and marvels of former men.

But he remained uninfluenced by him and, indeed, by Arthurian literature and scholarship with which he was well acquainted.²⁶ His work is instead informed by his two main preoccupations, Hebraic theology and Cornwall, and thus possesses an internal reality which is not dependent on conventional responses.

For Hawker the implications of the Quest are far-reaching since the attainment of the Grail involves the restoration of God to the land, abandoned since the days of Joseph of Arimathea. Like Tennyson, Hawker has a sense of apocalypse, but unlike Tennyson he sees the Grail as a

24. Westwood's Galahad in The Quest of the Sangraal is rescued from a fairy imposture of his first love (unaccountably described as 'Isonde, the flower of Lyonesse') by a vision of grief-stricken angels.

25. First published privately at Exeter in 1864. Republished in Cornish Ballads (1869).

26. He lent Tennyson 'books and manuscripts about King Arthur' when they met during Tennyson's walking tour of Cornwall in 1848. See C.E. Byles, The Life and Letters of R.S. Hawker (Vicar of Morvenstow) (1905) pp. 190-4.

symbol of national salvation²⁷ and the Quest thus retains some of its old characteristics of freeing the wasteland. The Grail's achievement is presented as the crucial attainment of Arthur's reign, nor is Arthur's non-participation on the grounds of kingly duty presented as a calling higher than the Quest.²⁸ Indeed, the visions shown to Arthur by Merlin suggest that his rule is insufficient to stem the tide of chaos without the Grail.

This poem, unlike most Grail narratives, has a rugged quality deriving strength from its philosophical structure and demonstrating an ease in spanning large symbolic and visionary concepts which is reminiscent of Blake. It lacks characterization, but this is not a defect as the characters are mouthpieces of Hawker's doctrine of cyclic regeneration, and a sense of the specific is aroused through his evocation of the Cornish landscape. Whether Hawker would have been able to sustain his symbolism is difficult to say, nor can one estimate how much more of the poem he envisaged. But despite wilfulnesses of style and theological obscurities, it remains a fascinating experiment, completely outside the Pre-Raphaelite tradition, and in some ways superior to it.

It would be untrue to say that Tennyson unloosed the 1859 Idylls to a public completely unaware of the Arthurian legends. Obviously there was

27. Tennyson takes his view of the Quest as a social catastrophe from Malory xiii,7. An anonymous poem Arthur's Knights, an adventure of the Sangraie (Edinburgh, 1858) looks forward to this view in that the Grail Quest debilitates the Round Table to such an extent that civil war and the Saxons destroy the kingdom. Westwood's The Quest of the Sangreall also shows the knights' tattered return with tales of hallucinations presaging 'The Holy Grail'. 'Sir Galahad, a Christmas Mystery' contains a hint of social disaster resulting from the Quest. Hawker's contrary interpretation derives from his concept of the Grail 'as the type of the Gospel; and the loss and recovery are emblems of the failure of our Light and its Restoration'. Byles, op. cit. p. 412.

28. Hawker did not feel that Tennyson sufficiently revered the Grail 'as to win the Grace demanded in its scribe'. Letter to Godwin, 5th August, 1862. Ibid., p. 415. He may have felt this criticism to be borne out by Tennyson's interpretation of the Quest as a personal triumph at the expense of social disaster.

considerable difference between the tepid interest before their publication and the ensuing enthusiasm. But there is a sufficient body of literature to show that there were prevailing interests in and attitudes formulating towards the polar figures of Lancelot and Galahad which preceded the publication of 'Lancelot and Elaine', and 'The Holy Grail' later in 1869. Consequently it was a receptive audience which read the first Idylls. Moreover, it was an audience which was beginning to move towards an identification of the Victorian age with the chivalric vision.

How far Tennyson was aware of this growing state of receptivity, and whether it influenced his decision to recommence work on his Arthurian project in 1855, is impossible to decide. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that Tennyson's obsession with the Arthurian made it inevitable that he should produce something at sometime and that the temper of the public in 1859 was a fortuitous factor. Certainly Tennyson's conception had been developing over a period of nearly thirty years prior to publication and it must be regarded as coincidental that the Idylls corresponded so well to the imaginative needs of the age.

Tennyson became acquainted with Malory as a child. Dr. Tennyson's library contained one if not both of the 1816 editions, as well as a collection of romances, the works of Scott and books on antiquities, mythology and folklore.²⁹ These Tennyson read from his earliest years, his reading combining with his imagination to produce childhood games of knights and tournaments and stories of chivalry.³⁰

So great a hold over Tennyson had the romantic past, that, despite many other allegiances, he remained faithful to his early interests at Cambridge, where he recited Border ballads and regretted the passing of

29. E.g. Percy, Reliques (1823); Simon Pelloutier, Histoire des Celtes (Paris, 1770); Jacob Bryant, A New System or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology (1807). Sir Charles Tennyson considers this last to have helped formulate the mystical feeling in Tennyson's conception of the Arthurian legend. Alfred Tennyson (1949), pp. 32-3.

30. Hallam Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson: A Memoir (1897), 1, 4-5.

'the golden days of faerie'.³¹ Here also he made the acquaintance of John Kemble, the Anglo-Saxon scholar, who was 'buried in Gothic manuscripts' and would only talk 'of Runes and Eddas and the brave knight Siegfried'.³² Tennyson, however, had a particular nostalgia for Malory, which never left him. He confessed to Fitzgerald that he could not read other romances through, asserting that 'The "Morte d'Arthur" is much the best: there are some fine things in it, but all strung together without Art'.³³ Out of this early interest came the three Arthurian lyrics³⁴ which in themselves constituted a reaction against the earlier Arthurian narrative poem.

As early as 1833 Tennyson was contemplating a major Arthurian work as Milton, Dryden and even Wordsworth had done before him. All that remains of this scheme is a fragmentary prose sketch:

On the latest limit of the West in the land of Lyonesse, where, save the rocky Isles of Scilly, all is now wild sea, rose the sacred Mount of Camelot. It rose from the deeps with gardens and bowers and palaces, and at the top of the Mount was King Arthur's hall, and the holy Minster with the Cross of gold. Here dwelt the King in glory apart, while the Saxons whom he had overthrown in twelve battles ravaged the land, and ever came nearer and nearer.

The Mount was the most beautiful in the world, sometimes green and fresh in the beam of morning, sometimes all one splendour, folded in the golden mists of the West. But all underneath it was hollow, and the mountain trembled, when the seas rushed bellowing through the porphyry caves; and there ran a prophecy that the mountain and the city on some wild morning would topple into the abyss and be no more.

It was night. The King sat in his Hall. Beside him sat the sumptuous Guinevere, and about him were all his lords and knights of the Table Round. There they feasted, and when the feast was over the Bards sang to the king's glory.³⁵

31. Memoir, i, 34.

32. Ibid., i, 102.

33. Ibid., i, 194.

34. Tennyson also projected a poem on Lancelot and his Grail Quest, but it was composed mentally and subsequently forgotten. Ibid., i, 457.

35. Memoir, ii, 122-3. Hallam dates this around 1833 but Tillotson indicates some evidence that the prose sketch and scenario belong to the Cambridge period. Mid-Victorian Studies, p. 85, n.4.

This is totally unlike any previous conception of the Arthurian legend, and presents certain attitudes which were later to inform the Idylls. A unique aspect of this fragment is the vulnerability of Camelot, not merely on account of the encroaching Saxons, but because it is foredoomed.³⁶ Although Arthur is shown as victor of the twelve Saxon campaigns and lord of a splendid court, the symbolism of the mountain undermines his conventional position and establishes him as a possible tragic hero.

Tennyson drew this view of Arthur from Malory.³⁷ He found in the figure of the king an embodiment of his social, religious and humanitarian ideals, but he also found Arthur's inevitable defeat appealing to his congenital melancholy. Tennyson agreed with Layamon's sweeping statement that there was no such perfect man since Adam, his precise interpretation of this being 'a man who spent himself in the cause of honour, duty and self-sacrifice'.³⁸ Arthur, for Tennyson, was a man rather than a symbol, a man who, because of his vision of impossible perfection, was inevitably alone, fated to a victory-in-disaster and more akin to the exiles of the early poems than the king of romance.

Nevertheless, the perfection of Arthur's ideals necessarily brings him into a symbolic penumbra: he can be interpreted in the Idylls as 'the soul at war with sense', though, as Tennyson points out, this interpretation

36. The fragment, reminiscent of 'Kubla Khan' originates in the legend of lost Lyonesse. When Tennyson visited the Scillies in 1860 he spent the voyage trying to glimpse the submerged land. Hallam Tennyson, Materials for a Life of Alfred Tennyson (1897), ii, 311-12. See also W.D. Paden's comments on Tennyson's use of G.S. Faber's The Origin of Pagan Idolatry (1816), Tennyson in Egypt, pp. 79f.

37. 'The vision of Arthur as I have drawn him had come upon me when, little more than a boy, I first lighted upon Malory'. Memoir, ii, 128.

38. Memoir, i, 194.

must not be rigidly applied.³⁹ The bias towards symbolism is shown in a second fragment of the same period as the first, where the dramatis personae have fixed allegorical meanings, probably influenced by Spenser:

K.A. (sic) Religious Faith

King Arthur's 3 Guineveres⁴⁰

The Lady of the Lake

2 Guineveres y^e first primitive Christianity. 2nd Roman Catholicism.

Y^e first is put away and dwells apart. 2d. Guinevere flies.

Arthur takes to the first again but finds her changed by lapse of time.

Modred, the sceptical understanding. He pulls Guinevere, Arthur's latest wife from the throne.⁴¹

Merlin Emrys, the Enchanter. Science. Marries his daughter to Modred. Excalibur, war

The sea, the people) The S. are a sea people and it is theirs and
The Saxons, the people) a type of them.

The Round Table: liberal institutions.

The Battle of Camlan.

2d. Guinevere with the enchanted book and cup.⁴²

Here the allegory is specifically related to the spiritual progress of society through its institutions, its combination with legend being reminiscent of Bulwer-Lytton's King Arthur.

On a simple level this hard-edged allegory partially prefigures the more fluid symbolism of the Idylls. The main difference is that the allegory of the Idylls, if allegory it can be called, is microcosmic with social implications, whereas here it is wholly social. Given this difference, figures common to both can be seen as equivalents of each other. Nevertheless, it would distort and limit the Idylls to read them in the light of this

39. Tennyson had intended a symbolic interpretation for his Epic: 'The King is the complete man, the Knights are the passions'. Tennyson quoted by William Allingham, A Diary, ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford (1907), p. 150. However, Tennyson disapproved of close allegorical interpretation: 'I hate to be tied down to say, "This means that," because the thought within the image is much more than any one interpretation.' Memoir, ii, 127.

40. This may derive from the triad of the three Gwenhwyvars, found in Davies' Mythology and Rites of the British Druids.

41. This may be an echo of the triad of the three costly pillages. See E.K. Chambers, Arthur of Britain (1966), p. 79. If so, 'Enid' is not Tennyson's first excursion into Welsh literature for material. The exclusion of Lancelot supports the use of British sources.

42. Memoir, ii, 123.

early plan, and it is perhaps more profitable to see it as an indication of Tennyson's preoccupation with the conflict of Science or Intellect with Faith. (The alliance of Mordred and Merlin is not arbitrary, nor is it traditional.) Tennyson saw faith in the divine being eroded by the questionings of science and its demands for proof, or the logical observations of the intellect. In the Idylls the theme becomes dominant when the spiritual impetus of Arthur's Order has been lost and Tristram questions the king's right to bind and rule. Obviously here this is symptomatic of a universal degeneration with many resonances, whereas in the fragment the conflict appears to be isolated and set in a socio-historical context.

These two early fragments demonstrate the contrasting ways in which Tennyson responded to the Arthurian legend. On the one hand there is the mournful evocation of a doomed glory, its symbolism melding into the mysterious setting. On the other hand there is the intellectual transmutation of legend into allegory, where the emphasis lies on abstracted meaning rather than emotional response. The Idylls is not a calculated synthesis of the two methods, but both are inextricably present, since the starting point for both is the paradoxical figure of Arthur as 'Ideal manhood closed in real man'.⁴³

Possibly because of these two interpretations of the legend Tennyson had not decided on the epic form during this period, and considered the musical masque after the manner of Dryden. A scenario exists in the 1833-40 notebooks, again showing a preoccupation with the downfall of the Round Table:

First Act

Sir Mordred and his party. Mordred inveighs against the King and the Round Table. The knights, and the quest. Mordred scoffs at the Ladies

43. This line constitutes Tennyson's last alteration to the Idylls. In 1891 he inserted it in the Epilogue before the reference to the 'gray king' of legend. See 11. 38-41.

of the Lake, doubts whether they are supernatural beings, etc. Mordred's cringing interview with Guinevere. Mordred and the Lady of the Lake. Arthur lands in Albyn.

Second Act

Lancelot's embassy and Guinevere. The Lady of the Lake meets Arthur and endeavours to persuade him not to fight with Sir Mordred. Arthur will not be moved from his purpose. Lamentation of the Lady of the Lake. Elaine. Marriage of Arthur.

Third Act

Oak tomb of Merlin. The song of Nimue.⁴⁴ Sir Mordred comes to consult Merlin. Coming away meets Arthur. Their fierce dialogue. Arthur consults Sir L. and Sir Bedivere. Arthur weeps over Merlin and is reproved by Nimue, who inveighs against Merlin. Arthur asks Merlin the issue of the battle. Merlin will not enlighten him. Nimue requests Arthur to question Merlin again. Merlin tells him he shall bear rule again, but that the Ladies of the Lake can return no more. Guinevere throws away the diamonds into the river. The Court and the dead Elaine.

Fourth Act

Discovery by Mordred and Nimue⁴⁴ of Lancelot and Guinevere. Arthur and Guinevere's meeting and parting.

Fifth Act

The Battle. Chorus of the Ladies of the Lake. The throwing away of Excalibur and departure of Arthur.⁴⁴

Although Tennyson telescopes his material to accommodate the emphasis on the end of Arthur, his range is much wider, and is for the first time based on Malory, possibly because the form demanded action more straightforwardly dramatic. There are echoes of the previous fragment, particularly in the role of Mordred, but in the main the scenario looks forward to the Idylls.

It provides the origins, not only for the 'Morte D'Arthur', which corresponds with the fifth act, but also for three of the 1859 Idylls, the exception being 'Enid'. The parting of Arthur and Guinevere before the battle and after the discovery of Guinevere and Lancelot reaches full expression in 'Guinevere'. Merlin's enchantment by Nimue⁴⁴ is not shown in the scenario, but this is of secondary importance to the new conception of Nimue as the evil intriguer set against Arthur, and her collusion with Mordred in the discovery of the lovers is retained in 'Guinevere'. The

44. Memoir, 11, 124-5

Elaine scenes are only hinted at, being a later addition,⁴⁵ but Tennyson retains in 'Elaine' the vivid detail of Guinevere throwing the diamonds into the river to meet the funeral barge.

Although the scenario furnishes material for individual Idylls, there is a difference in overall conception. Here the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere merely precipitates a crisis impending before Arthur's marriage; in the Idylls their relationship creates an ever-widening web of rumour, lies and double standards, whereby Mordred eventually promotes his treachery. Here, however, the latter is the agent of disaster, and it is worth noting, in the light of Swinburne's later comments in Under the Microscope that Tennyson had considered planning the catastrophe around him. It is impossible to say whether Tennyson intended revealing the story of his birth, but in view of his deep-rooted interpretation of Arthur he probably saw Mordred as the antithesis of his hero, inevitably bound on a collision course, rather than an instrument of Nemesis.

These drafts probably precede Tennyson's recommencing work on the 'Morte d'Arthur' in or after 1835,⁴⁶ when he had determined on the epic form. In 1838 he remarked that if he 'meant to make any mark at all, it must be by shortness for the men before...had been so diffuse and most of the big things except "King Arthur" had been done before.'⁴⁷ The decision to make his 'King Arthur' a 'big thing' became subject to doubt after the trial printing, when he added the modern framework. Fitzgerald remarks that Tennyson did this 'to give a reason for telling an old-world tale',⁴⁸ but he may have gone further than that. In putting forward his case for and against an Arthurian epic, he may well have been testing the market for such a work.

45. Memoir, 11, 124.

46. Tillotson suggests 1835. Mid-Victorian Studies, p.86. Ricks favours the period 1833-4. Works, p. 585

47. Memoir, 1, 166

48. Ibid., 1, 194.

In the light of the fragments it is not surprising that Tennyson chose the ending of the order as his starting point; he seems to have been drawn to Arthur in the context of defeat. Here the overt allegory has disappeared and Arthur resumes his alternative role presented in the scenario as the great man in his darkest hour. Although Tennyson was aware of the historical sources, he did not choose to present Arthur as an historical probability. More important was the question of his credibility as a man, not to be confused with the question of his actual existence, which might have obtruded had Tennyson attempted a sixth century setting:

How much of history we have in the story of Arthur is doubtful. Let not my readers press too hardly on details whether for history or for allegory. Some think that King Arthur may be taken to typify conscience. He is anyhow meant to be a man who spent himself in the cause of honour, duty and self-sacrifice, who felt and aspired with his nobler knights though with a stronger and clearer conscience than any of them, "reverencing his conscience as the King".⁴⁹

Tennyson thus sets Arthur's final hour in a no-man's-land, imbuing the scene with a heroism and melancholy, which makes the ideal elements more accessible; Arthur's defeat brings us in closer contact with the perfection of his vision.

The reception of the 'Morte d'Arthur' was favourable.⁵⁰ However, John Sterling, although sympathetic to the 1842 volume, attacked the poem on the grounds of its non-relevance to contemporary life, commenting that 'such old supernatural beliefs...can make no direct impression on our feelings' and dismissing it as 'a mere ingenious exercise of fancy'.⁵¹ This criticism from a man whom Tennyson knew and admired, discouraged him. William Allingham mentions this twice in his Diary. As late as 1881 Tennyson remarked that Sterling's review had dissuaded him from continuing with his project, adding that when he 'took it up again' it 'was not as with the first inspiration'. Allingham loyally comments:

49. Memoir, 1, 194.

50. Eg., Examiner (28th May, 1842) p. 340; Morning Post (9th August, 1842), p. 6.

51. Quarterly Review, 1xx (September 1842), 385-416.

Blame or doubt in regard to his own writings always weighed with Tennyson more than praise. He often said that he forgot praise and remembered all censure.

Sterling's review, meant to be friendly, was a thin pretentious piece and of no value whatever: a pity it should have chanced to prove so mis-effectual.⁵²

It is impossible to know when Tennyson resumed work on the Arthurian material, and how far the Idylls represent a reworking of the epic plan. When the poet met Hawker in 1848 they talked of Arthur with enthusiasm and Tennyson was interested in gathering material and atmosphere. In an unaddressed letter of 1861 Hawker reveals 'the origin of the Idylls of the King':

When Tennyson was here he made earnest enquiry about King Arthur. I told him all I knew...He wrote ten lines a day, blotted, revised and preserved. He had girded himself for an Epic on the theme which divided long with Paradise Lost in Milton's mind over The Life and Death of King Arthur. But finding, as I infer, that he could not wait for the judgement and requital of A.D. 2004, and wanting, as I know, an income for Children and Wife, he broke up his purpose into Idylls, Fragments of the Great Theme...⁵³

It is doubtful whether Tennyson confided his intention of splitting the epic into Idylls to Hawker, since Hawker does not mention this in his account of the meeting. If he did, it is difficult to assess how far this new plan is reflected in the Idylls as we have them, for during the next seven years, Tennyson deepened his conception of Arthur. He visited Glastonbury, Salisbury, Amesbury and the New Forest, and came across his source for 'Enid' in Guest's Mabinogion. By summer 1856 he was sufficiently absorbed in Welsh literature to attempt to learn the language.⁵⁴

It seems probable that during this period Tennyson decided to put his four Idylls before the public as a test case, although, presumably, hoping that he could eventually present the whole cycle. Of the first four Idylls, three have their genesis in the scenario and had obviously been long in mind,

52. Diary, p. 314.

53. Byles, Life and Letters, p. 194.

54. H.G. Wright, 'Tennyson and Wales', Essays and Studies, xiv (1929), 80-103.

suggesting that they were not random choices. However, this is not to say that Tennyson had any idea at this time of what specific subjects he would use were he to complete the cycle.

Tennyson began writing seriously at the end of 1855 and finished the first Idyll, 'Nimue'⁵⁵ by 31st March, 1856. This Idyll was planned as one of a contrasting pair, to be published the following year in a trial edition entitled Enid and Nimue: the True and the False, a theme which was to become central to the Idylls. This is the only Idyll in which the action moves outside Britain; it is also the only Idyll in which Tennyson employs a French source in preference to a British one, since although the name Nimue comes from Malory, her character comes from the Roman de Merlin.⁵⁶ Tennyson intensified the repulsive traits found here in order to mark her out as a serious opponent to Arthur's rule.

On 16th April Tennyson began 'Enid'.⁵⁷ This proceeded more slowly, partly due, perhaps, to the change from dramatic confrontation to narrative, and partly to the fact that Tennyson had only recently come to the story of Enid, whereas Nimue had long held a place in his Arthurian schema. In addition work was interrupted by the summer tour of Wales and his Welsh studies, the latter being an unusual step for an Englishman, however interested in British antiquities.⁵⁸ While absorbing the literature, Tennyson also

55. Changed to 'Vivien' for the 1859 edition. Final title for the 1869 edition.

56. Despite la Villemarqué's article in Revue de Paris, Tennyson probably came across the legend in the Preface to Southey's Malory, pp. xliv-xlvi, or the notes to Guest's Mabinogion, i, 216. Tennyson used the latter for 'Enid', and the note accurately summarises the tone of Nimue's character together with the action of the Idyll: 'But Viviane "for her great treason" began to fawn and flatter him, and used many arguments to prove that he ought to perform her will whatever it might be'.

57. Materials, ii, 161.

58. Helped by local schoolmasters and a Welsh dictionary Emily and he began to read Hanes Cymru, the Mabinogion and the works of Llywarch Hen. Life and Works, ii, 247. See also P. G. Scott, 'Tennyson's Celtic Reading', Tennyson Research Bulletin, ii (November 1968).

absorbed the Arthurian associations of Wales.⁵⁹

'Enid' was virtually completed by mid-October, and while there are occasional imported details,⁶⁰ Tennyson keeps close to his original. There is, however, an important innovation, which indicates that Tennyson shifted the mainspring of the tragedy from Mordred to Lancelot and Guinevere.

(The remarks about Lancelot and Guinevere in 'Merlin and Vivien' were not added until 1875). In Geraint map Erbin Geraint leaves the court because his lands are threatened; in 'Enid' this is merely an excuse, the real reason being a rumour concerning Guinevere's guilty love. Consequently, when Geraint believes Enid unfaithful, the root cause lies in his suspicion that 'her nature had a taint' from the queen. This date does not necessarily pinpoint Tennyson's decision to shift the emphasis from Mordred to Guinevere, rather the effects of that decision. But it is interesting that it is in keeping with the attitude of the 1850's towards the legend.

From July 1857 to March 1858 Tennyson worked on 'Guinevere', which, while deriving from the scenario, owes very little to romance or history for its source.⁶¹ Instead, it constitutes a reaction from 'Enid', which shows the strictest adherence to source of all the Idylls. It also presents a contrast in subject matter between the faithful and the unfaithful wife; but this unfaithful wife is peculiarly singled out in that Tennyson had now determined that her sin should be responsible for the downfall of the Round Table.

In July 1858 Tennyson began 'Elaine' in which he elaborates further on his theme of illusion and reality. Elaine is a victim of self-deception and so her fidelity is chimaerical. Rather than face the truth of the

59. In his letter diary he records sitting 'like King Arthur in Caerlioni'. Life and Works of Alfred Tennyson ed. H. Tennyson (1898), ii, 247.

60. Eg., the reference to Gwydion's flower maiden from Math map Mathonwy. 'The Marriage of Geraint', ii. 742-3.

61. The attempted capture of the lovers is found in Malory xx, 3-4. Here Guinevere does not flee to Amesbury until after Arthur's death.

situation she prefers to die, and while her fantasy-life is indictable, her death affords her new status and sympathy. Lancelot is to a certain extent exonerated. Like Arnold's Tristram he is exhausted by his illicit passion and pinned by it in an untenable situation; there is no choice for either within their triangular relationships, since they are compelled to choose the wrong and abandon the potentially fruitful. The condemnation falls then on the jealous and vituperative Guinevere, whose portrayal leaves little room for sympathy.

'Elaine' was finished by February 1859,⁶² and the four Idylls were published on 28th June. They met with immediate success, although the reviews tended to be more reserved than the public.⁶³ Tennyson's friends were particularly enthusiastic.⁶⁴ But there were a few dissenters including Elizabeth Browning and John Ruskin,⁶⁵ and some doubts among the reviewers as to the morality and the material. The National Review,⁶⁶ for example, remained highly dubious of 'Vivien', the Idyll which was to prove the biggest obstacle to unqualified approval. Many reviews, however, were unreserved in their praise of Tennyson's tact: the North British Review,⁶⁷ in its eagerness to exonerate Tennyson completely, even suggested that contact with the marvellous rendered the immorality innocuous. Objections to the material were more easily overcome and the comment of the British Quarterly Review⁶⁸

62. Based on Malory xviii, 8-20. The account of the twelve battles is taken from Nennius's Historia Britonum, translated in Six Old English Chronicles, ed. J.A. Giles (1848), pp. 408-9.

63. Tennyson considered the most favourable to be: Spectator (23rd July, 1859), 764-6; Quarterly Review, cvi (October 1859), 465-83 (written by Gladstone, it mentions Creuze's poem as inferior); Edinburgh Review, cx (July 1859), 247-63. Memoir, i, 443-4. 10,000 copies were sold in the first week. Materials, ii, 241.

64. See the comments of Thackeray, Life and Works, ii, 284-5 and The Duke of Argyll, Memoir, i, 450 and Materials, ii, 236. Albert wrote that Tennyson's poems 'quite rekindle the feeling with which the legends of King Arthur must have inspired the chivalry of old...' Memoir, i, 455.

65. Mrs. Browning wrote 'The colour, the temperature, the very music left me cold'. Letters to William Allingham, ed. H. Allingham and E. Baumer Williams (1911), p. 104. Ruskin deferred his criticism until September 1860, when he wished that the nobleness of the Idylls 'had been independent of a romantic condition of externals in general'. Memoir, i, 452-4.

66. National Review, ix (October 1859), 368-94.

67. North British Review, xxvi (August 1859), 148-74.

68. British Quarterly Review, xxx (October 1859), 481-510.

that Tennyson was not 'the reviver of a dead worthy' but 'the dramatist who sets the immortal champion of British virtues before us' was fairly standard. And so, with a liberal application of the popular Victorian criteria of Beauty and Nobility, most reviews hailed the advent, if not of an epic, at least a major work of the century.

The response to the first Idylls indicates that Tennyson had fulfilled a need in his contemporaries. He had supplied them with a highly accessible form of Victorian Romanticism, for which there had been an increasing number of searches over the previous decade; he had provided a myth with which his age and race could identify, informed with the necessary idealism and morality. The increasing interest in the Arthurian, the quest for a unifying symbol and Tennyson's need to express a personal vision all combined to make the Idylls an unprecedented success. Thus in the sense that Tennyson's attitudes were broadly those of his contemporaries and in the sense that circumstances were right, he could be called the mouthpiece of his age. However, it must be emphasized that Tennyson's personal vision and the age's need for a point of identification increasingly diverged, and one senses in the general delight at surface colour and detail very little grasp of the broader outlines and a reluctance to investigate the chiaroscuro. The more explicit Tristan legend would have found no favour with such an audience.

It is surprising therefore to find Tennyson reading Malory 'with a view to a poem on Tristram and Iseult' in May 1859.⁶⁹ This is the second recorded instance of Tennyson's acquaintance with the legend, but he must have been aware of it for some time through Malory and Arnold's poem.⁷⁰ The passage read by Tennyson is identified by Emily Tennyson as that 'where Sir Lancelot behaves so courteously to Sir Palamedes and where Arthur goes to

69. Materials, ii, 215.

70. Tennyson had already referred to Tristram's adultery in 'Guinevere', 1. 485. He probably also knew the Trystan triad from Davies' Mythology and Rites of the British Druids, pp. 439-40. The Continental sources were accessible in summary from Scott and Dunlop.

see *La Belle Isoude*'. This passage is found in Malory x, 71-3, and it emphasizes Launcelot's friendship with Tristram, and the latter's chivalric prowess.

Considering the tone of 'The Last Tournament' and the rivalry and cynicism in the relationship of the two greatest knights, it is interesting that Tennyson begins here. There is also evidence that he returned to these chapters after the first reading, since he has marked two passages from them in his copy of Wright's edition of Malory which, according to the inscription on the fly-leaf, he did not receive from Julia Cameron until 15th August, 1859. The first of the two passages celebrates the supremacy of Launcelot and Tristram in their deeds and qualities,⁷¹ the second constitutes Tristram's tribute to King Arthur after his defeat by Palomydes:

'I' said Sir Tristram, 'ye know not yet my lord King Arthur, for all knights may learne to be a good knight of him, and therefore yee may bee sory of your unkind deeds to so noble a king.'⁷²

This is far from the mocking sentiments of the hero of 'The Last Tournament' and it is probable that Tennyson was merely experimenting with the material, having, at this time, no overall conception of the legend. Although he was considering adding to the *Idylls* he had no set idea of which episodes he intended to use, and this period marks a quest for suitable subjects.

In June 1859 Tennyson read the story of Pelleas and Ettarre⁷³ and later in the year he was encouraged to consider an Idyll on the Grail legend by the Duke of Argyll and Macaulay. Tennyson was, however, dubious about this and in February of the following year turned to Malory's account of Gareth and the damsel Linet.⁷⁴ In 1862 he reconsidered the Grail legend and was

71. 'Of clere knighthood and pure strength, of bountie and curtesie, sir Launcelot and sir Tristram beare the prise above all knights that ever were in King Arthur's dayes...' *The Historie of King Arthur*, ed. T. Wright (1858) II, clvii, 320.

72. Ibid, II, clviii, 323.

73. Malory iv, 21-3.

74. Ibid, vii. *Materials*, ii, 324.

again deterred by doubt lest the subject 'become irreverent',⁷⁵ possibly because he saw in the legend a spiritual goal manifested as a social evil. Eventually, and probably only marginally decided by Emily Tennyson's confidence, the Queen's wishes and the continuous promptings of James Knowles, Tennyson began preliminary work on the legend in spring 1868. During early September he had a burst of inspiration and composed the poem in just over a week.

'The Holy Grail' embodies Tennyson's most deep-rooted convictions in its portrayal of the mystical, but this portrayal is hedged round with qualifications. He commented to Hallam:

'The Holy Grail' is one of the most imaginative of my poems. I have expressed there my strongest feelings as to the reality of the Unseen. The end, when the king speaks of his work and of his visions, is intended to be the summing up of all in the highest note by the highest of human men. These three lines in Arthur's speech are the (spiritually) central lines of the Idylls:

'In moments when he feels he cannot die
And knows himself no vision to himself
Nor the High God a vision.'⁷⁶

Thus the insistent question of the Idylls as to what is truth is referred to a higher plane. But this plane has its illusions and only the chosen can attain the Grail; those who are not elected follow 'false fires', hallucinations, madresses and as a result the Round Table is impaired. While on the one hand asserting that 'the spiritual is the real',⁷⁷ Tennyson also points out that the mystic's way is an opting out of society, not a mass cure for social ills, since spiritually the personal cannot operate on a public level.

'The Holy Grail' was withheld from publication until there were more Idylls to accompany it, and it is fairly obvious that by this time Tennyson had decided to cover some sort of narrative cycle. He began 'The Coming of Arthur',⁷⁸ in December 1868 and had also made up his mind that the

75. Materials, ii, 342.

76. Life and Works, iii, 116-17.

77. Materials, iii, 99.

78. The trial printing, Ashley 2104, gives 'The Birth of Arthur' and 'The Death of Arthur'.

'Morte d'Arthur' was to form the conclusion despite its more archaic style. He therefore intended the Idylls to be read in some sort of order, rather than a set of contrasts clustered about a central theme.⁷⁹

'The Coming' could only be written when Tennyson had decided to use the 'Morte d'Arthur'. Using Malory and Geoffrey of Monmouth as principal sources,⁸⁰ Tennyson paralleled the strangeness of Arthur's end with that surrounding his beginning. Nevertheless, there is an imbalance, particularly as the two poems stood at the end of February 1869 when Tennyson finished 'The Coming'. In the 'Morte d'Arthur' there is mystery in the return of Excalibur but the only ambiguity resides in Arthur's departure to Avilion. 'The Coming', however, benefits from Tennyson's treatment of the mystical in 'The Holy Grail', since his use of ambiguity widens out to become an ambivalence working between spiritual and mundane planes. On the latter the ambiguity remains uncomplicated: either Arthur is the son of Uther or he is the imposter son of Gorlois or Anton. The ambivalence occurs through the agency of Merlin, who translates Arthur's coming into a riddling symbolism: it is not a question of whether Arthur is Uther's son or some sort of supernatural being, but rather that he is both, a compound of flesh and soul. The account of the coronation, the inscription on Excalibur and Leodegran's dream all emphasize the theme of 'truth is this to me and that to thee'. Tennyson felt that the answer to such a philosophy lay in the assertion of faith and spiritual intuition, and this may have led him to add the battle with the eleven kings, the swearing of Lancelot and Arthur, the marriage of Arthur and Guinevere and the battle hymn, all of which are overt acts of

79. Tennyson had previously contemplated a complete scheme. In 1862 he wrote, 'I have thought about it and arranged all the intervening Idylls but I dare not set to work for fear of a failure and time lost.' Materials, iii, 200. It is impossible to estimate how far this plan corresponded with the completed work either in composition of individual Idylls or the overall format.

80. For a discussion of the sources see J.M. Gray, Man and Myth in Victorian England: Tennyson's The Coming of Arthur, the Tennyson Society (1969).

faith and spiritual unity.⁸¹ The effect of these additions is, however, more complex since their feeling of rightness is vitiated with irony.

The next Idyll, 'Pelleas and Ettarre',⁸² was begun in May 1869 and is the first Idyll to show the catastrophic effects of the adultery on those not immediately concerned. Geraint suspects Enid because of rumours but the effects are not disastrous; Elaine is directly involved with the relationship; but Pelleas is an onlooker destroyed by disillusionment on learning the truth about his lady, his brother knights, and finally the embodiment of his ideals, Lancelot and Guinevere. Elaine dies with her illusions intact, but Pelleas is shattered by the destruction of his. This is the first Idyll to take a specific place in the overall pattern on its conception. The opening lines place it after the Grail Quest and the acid tone marks a new phase in the cycle's development. Tennyson's use of double meaning in 'The Coming of Arthur' here extends into a structure of ironies centred round the appearance-reality theme.

By September Tennyson had added 174 lines to the 'Morte d'Arthur', prefacing it with a description of Arthur's despair and the last battle, and closing with Bedivere's desolation and the dawning of a new year. The impact of the original poem is thus subtly modified; Arthur's heroism is offset by his initial despair and the horror of the battle fought in a mist of blind doubt; the context of ambiguity intensifies the effect of Arthur's doubts concerning Avilion; and the echoes of triumph, together with hope for a new cycle are qualified by Bedivere's mourning. The impression of fundamental uncertainty is thus deepened and the mood of the final Idyll is made to correspond with that of the other 1869 Idylls.

On 13th September Emily Tennyson records that her husband read the

81. Added 1873, 11. 94-133, 459-469, 475-502.

82. The trial printing gives 'Sir Pelleas' but was changed to the present form for publication.

Idylls in their proper order.⁸³ This is the first time we hear of an order for the poems and Tennyson was at pains to emphasize their relationship during publication. The changes in title, for example, suggest a less episodic structure and imply process rather than event, so strengthening the impression of organic unity,⁸⁴ and also stress relationships rather than individuals. The new Idylls were published in December 1869, together with a note on the order and the title 'The Round Table'.

Despite Alfred Austin's attack on the first four Idylls,⁸⁵ the reception of the new volume was favourable. As Tennyson had indicated that the individual poems constituted a cycle, manifestly possessing a beginning, a middle and an end, reviewers were unanimous in concluding that it was now complete.⁸⁶ In consequence, they were mainly concerned with its unity. Dean Alford replied to Austin's criticism in his discussion of overall design, showing each Idyll to be an allegory of the conflict between flesh and spirit.⁸⁷ This interpretation had already been intimated by Knowles:

Arthur...stands evidently for the Soul, the moral conscience, as the Round Table does for the Passions; and everywhere the struggle of the Spirit with the Flesh is painted...Everywhere the flesh is hindering and confusing the work of the Spirit, powerless only to overthrow the Soul itself, which, even at the end, departs but to refresh itself in the Unknown Peace...⁸⁸

Of those who remarked on the allegory not all approved. The British Quarterly considered that 'the thread of allegory...is too thin and fragile to support the real earthly pressure of the materials and here and there it

83. Materials, iiii, 132

84. Tillotson, Mid-Victorian Studies, p. 99.

85. Austin criticised their lack of substance, describing them as 'four exquisite cabinet pictures'. Temple Bar (May 1869), 179-94.

86. Eg., Edinburgh Review, cxxxi (April 1870), 504-39; Spectator, (25th December, 1869) p. 1531; British Quarterly Review, 11 (January 1870), 200-14.

87. Contemporary Review, xiii (January 1870), 107ff.

88. King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, 3rd edition (1868). Preface, pp. ix-x. Knowles reiterated this view in a letter to the Spectator (1st January, 1870), pp. 15-17, later incorporated into 'The Meaning of Mr. Tennyson's "King Arthur"', Contemporary Review, xxi (May 1873), 938-48.

sharply breaks through.'⁸⁹ Nevertheless Tennyson encouraged the allegorical interpretation, since it offset the tendency to regard the Idylls as decorative stories. This new light on the poem enhanced their claim to being a serious, connected work of art and also justified their claims to relevance. Unfortunately, the allegorical speculation sometimes became too fierce, a specific meaning being demanded for every detail, and this had the effect of again limiting interpretation.

Such was the situation when Tennyson began to write 'Gareth' in the October before publication. The overall scheme had taken shape and he was now beginning to fill in the structural gaps. His conception had darkened and become more subtle over the composition of the last four Idylls: his manipulation of the nuances concerning truth and illusion had become more complex, the ironies had tightened and the complete work was gaining in resonance. In addition, on the public level, the 1869 volume was about to be acclaimed in a more considered way than its predecessor, since the attractive surface was seen to be underlaid with a high morality.⁹⁰

Emily Tennyson records that 'Gareth' was written '(as was said jokingly) to describe a pattern youth for (Tennyson's) boys.'⁹¹ But it is difficult to know what, at this stage, Tennyson had in mind. There is evidence that Tennyson was going to place some emphasis on adultery, in particular that of Bellicent and Lamorack,⁹² and Tristram and Iseult. In this case he may have intended the Idyll to stand as a sequel to 'Pelleas and Ettarre'. This would however make his comment on Gareth a little inconsistent, unless

89. British Quarterly Review, 11 (January 1870), 205.

90. Church reviews in particular approved of 'The Holy Grail'. Only the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, xciii (April 1870), 358-60, complained of 'medieval superstition'.

91. Materials, 111, 133.

92. In the prose draft of 'Gareth', Houghton Library MS.Eng. 952 (40), ff1-2. Bellicent sends Gareth to the kitchens, hoping to learn of Guinevere's adultery in order to countenance her own. Swinburne mentions this adultery in the 'Sailing of the Swan' written in the same year.

he was considering a portrayal of Gareth as the white hope of a degenerate age, a direct contrast to Tristram.

How much of the latter's story Tennyson intended using in his projected Gareth Idyll before he decided to form a separate unit out of the material is unrecorded. In the draft of the Gareth poem, after a lacuna in the manuscript, the notebooks give the following account of Tristram:

Sir Dagonet, the king's fool, stood before the hall of Arthur. & the wind was blowing & the leaves flying in the wood below.
(And below him there past into the wood Sir Lamorack and his head was down, & his heart darkened for he had heard that Queen Bellicent was dead.)

And the dwarf skipt (deleted)

And below him riding three abreast there past into the wood Sir Gawain Sir Mordred & Sir Gaheris: & the face of Gawain was red as tho' with wine; & the face of Mordred was white but he had bitten his thin lips till they were bloody: & so they past away.

And about an hour after there rode into the wood Sir Lamorack & his head was down & his heart darkened for his old love Queen Bellicent was dead.

And the dwarf skipt upon the steps before the hall & out of the hall came Tristram & cried to him.

O fool why skippest thou?

And the dwarf pointed to the wood & said

'They are gone to keep the vows of the King'

And Tristram said who are gone.

And he answer'd the sons of the Queen: for Lancelot has kept the vows of the king, & Lamorack has kept the vows of the King & thou also: for ye have all lain by Queens so that no king knoweth his own sons.

Here follows a break and the following passage of verse, which expands a passage on the preceding page:

The kings we found, ye know we left them kings
And only bound them by the common bond
To break the heathen & uphold the X^t
And were any among them merciful,
Truthspeaking, brave, good livers, them we enroll'd
Among us & they sat within our hall.
But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name of king
As Mark would sully the low state of churl
And seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold
Return & meet & stay him from our eyes
For fear I lap him up in cloth of lead
Silenced for ever - cragen, a man of plots
and poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings
who dares not beard his foemen front to front -
No fault of thine. Let Kay the senschal
Look to thy wants & send thee satisfied.
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen.⁹³

The relationship of the prose passage to the succeeding verse passage is difficult to assess. The former has its full expression in the interview between Dagonet and Tristram in 'The Last Tournament';⁹⁴ the latter appears in 'Gareth and Lynette' with little alteration as Arthur's retort to Mark's attempt to buy a seat at the Round Table.⁹⁵ It may be that Mark's embassy was intended to form a preface to Tristram's murder, hence the emphasis on treachery; or it may be that Tristram's adultery and Mark's treachery were to be merely peripheral examples of the corruption spreading throughout Arthur's society; it may be that Mark's embassy sparked off what Tennyson intended as a separate work. The point is debatable as the manuscript is defective.

However, from the evidence of the notebooks and the two finished Idylls, it could be argued that the abandoned 'Gareth' may have been conceived as an amalgamation of the two poems. In Malory, Gareth's final opponent is the Red knight of the Rede Laundes,⁹⁶ who appears metamorphosed in 'The Last Tournament'. In 'Gareth and Lynette', however, the more cheerful knight of Death is substituted, creating a merry anti-climax. But there is evidence in the manuscript(f.8) that Gareth was to overcome the Red knight as the culmination of his traditional adventures, and it seems improbable that the two original opponents should have not come into contact before the Idyll was split into two. The Tristram story may have provided a subplot to this adventure, being linked by Mark's embassy and Lamorack's adultery with Gareth's mother. Perhaps therefore, Tristram's death was to be included as a parallel to Lamorack's murder. Thus the possible point of division seems to lie in the Red knight episode. Mark's request remains in 'Gareth and Lynette', the now unnecessary Lamorack story is omitted (unnecessary because its function was presumably to provide a link between Gareth and Tristram) and Tristram is

94. ll. 1-9, 240-58.

95. ll. 413-27. This episode appears three times in the manuscript.

96. vii, 15-18. The manuscript breaks off before Gareth sets out on his adventures.

introduced in a separate Idyll by means of the tournament.

Tennyson probably took the idea of linking Tristram and Lamorack from their close relationship in Malory. The deaths of Lamorack and Morgause at the hands of the Orkney brothers are recounted during Tristram's chivalric adventures. Morgause is killed on the occasion of her adultery with Lamorack, just after Mark's treachery towards Tristram.⁹⁷ Later Gareth, who abstained from the murders, laments with Tristram and Palomydes Lamorack's death, perpetrated on account of his adultery and a longstanding feud between the two families.⁹⁸

Although Lamorack had been spared because he was unarmed at the time of Morgause's murder, the brothers show no chivalry in his killing:

And when he was gyvyn the gre be my lorde kynge Arthure, sir Gawayne and his three bretherne, sir Aggravayne, sir Gaherys and sir Mordred, sette uppon sir Lamorack in a pryvy place, and there they slew his horse. And so they faught with hym on foote more than three owrys bothe byfore hym and behynde hym, and so sir Mordred gaff hym his dethis wounde behynde hym at his bakke, and all to-hewe hym...⁹⁹

In the passage from the notebooks Tennyson hints at this ambush. He changes the positioning of Lamorack's entry into the wood so that the three brothers¹⁰⁰ can lie in wait for him. The motive for the implied attack is given in the mention of Lamorack's love for Bellicent and reinforced by the Fool's bitter mockery in his scene with Tristram. Reference to Bellicent's death heightens the sense of foreboding. Although the placing of the passage concerning Mark is arbitrary in the notebooks, its inclusion in the projected Idyll emphasizes the idea of treachery and ambush.

Tristram and Lamorack are also linked in Malory through a parenthetical account of their deaths during the healing of Sir Urre: '...there was never

97. x, 22-4.

98. x, 58.

99. loc. cit.

100. Mordred's role makes Agravayne superfluous in the Idylls. There is no mention of him during the trapping of Lancelot and Guinevere; in Malory Launcelot kills him during this encounter. xx, 3-4.

none so bewayled as was sir Tristram and sir Lamerok, for they were with treson slayne...'¹⁰¹ In addition, they were respectively the second and third best knights in deeds of chivalry. Nor had it escaped Tennyson that these three best knights were all guilty of adultery with queens, hence Dagonet's remark in the manuscript fragment. There is a trace of this in Tristram's retort to Lancelot after the tournament of the Dead Innocence: 'Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine'.

Tennyson seems to have been attracted to the Tristram legend as much by the antithetical figures of Dagonet and Mark as by the lovers. The fool only appears in Malory's Tristram books, and is notable for his tricking of Mark, who fled from him believing him to be Sir Launcelot. This episode is marked by Tennyson in his Walker edition of Malory from the introduction of Dagonet as 'the best fellow and merriest in the world' to the end of the chapter which finishes:

For they would not for no good that Sir Dagonet were hurt for King Arthur loved him passing well, and made him knight with his own hands. And at every tournament he began to make king Arthur laugh.¹⁰²

(It is possible that this episode of the disguised Dagonet, suggested the deceptive appearance of the knight of Death in 'Gareth and Lynette'.) However, Dagonet's character both in the manuscript and in 'The Last Tournament' owes less to the merry fool of Malory and more to the 'all-licens'd fool' of King Lear, and it appears from the manuscript that this dark conception of Dagonet was settled from an early stage. In addition, it is worth noticing here that Tennyson changes his source in order to create a nexus of ironies in 'The Last Tournament': Dagonet is created a mock-knight by the giddy Gawain, rather than being knighted by Arthur as Malory has it.

101. xix, 11.

102. I, cxvii, 487-8.

Mark on the other hand provides Tennyson with an opportunity to compare Arthur with a peer as opposed to vassal knights. Both in Malory and Tennyson Mark is the antithesis of Arthur, and his jealousy of Tristram is well founded in the source. After Tristram is received into the Round Table, Mark, having 'Grete dyspyte at Sir Tristram' follows him to England in order to kill him.¹⁰³ In Tennyson he merely bribes Arthur for a like honour. However, the implications of his jealousy, not shown in the manuscript but evident in 'Gareth and Lynette', may have been intended as a preparation for his murder of Tristram in the projected Idyll.

The figure of Tristram himself is hardly portrayed at all in the manuscript and his encounter with Dagonet has no counterpart in Malory. The only time they meet Tristram is mad and throws Dagonet down a well.¹⁰⁴

If Tennyson intended a composite Idyll he leaves no indication as to why he abandoned it and developed his ideas into two contrasting poems. It is most probable that he felt the two extremes incompatible in one work, that there was too great a dichotomy between the characters of Gareth on the one hand and Tristram and Lamorack on the other to accommodate them in one unity. The hypothetical division of the Idyll, however, provided 'The Round Table' with an opening and a penultimate section, the one presenting fortitude and innocence, the other an uncontrolled dissipation.

The depressive period on 1870 may have orientated Tennyson temperamentally towards the gloom of 'The Last Tournament' rather than the sanguine mood of 'Gareth and Lynette'. This was a bad time during which Tennyson suffered the death of his close friend Sir John Simeon, Friewell's attack in Modern Writers Honestly Criticized, the nagging negotiations with

103. x, 7.

104. ix, 19.

Moxon's, his own ill-health and worry over the state of Europe.¹⁰⁵ But whatever the reasons, Tennyson abandoned 'Gareth' and by 8th November¹⁰⁶ had begun work on 'The Last Tournament', which was finished in the following May. Emily Tennyson records on 21st May that 'He read me his "Tristram", the plan of which he had been for some weeks discussing with me. Very grand and terrible.'¹⁰⁷ There are no other allusions to the work during the period of composition.

The emphasis on adultery and murder evidenced in the manuscript fragment probably suggested to Tennyson the idea of devoting a separate Idyll to its examination. The adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere had been responsible for the evils of previous Idylls, but 'The Last Tournament' is the only Idyll in which the focus falls on the sin itself, together with the violence arising naturally from it. However, it was not the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere that Tennyson wished to examine directly. Instead he illuminates this obliquely through the relationship of Tristram and Isolt, creating at the same time the sense of a spreading evil which worsens as it spreads. In order to convey the impression of a degenerating situation Tennyson had to use a new hero; Lancelot had too many associations of chivalry outside the Idylls, his portrayal in 'Lancelot and Elaine' was sympathetic and although he could be blamed for it, he could not be identified with the sort of brutality found in 'The Last Tournament'. Tristram, on the other hand, was relatively unknown, and free from Lancelot's chivalric associations. In any case, if the legend was known at all, with the exception of the Pre-Raphaelites, it was treated with an air of disapproval. If anything so vague could be called a trend, then it can be said that Tennyson was following it in his handling of the Tristram story in 'The Last Tournament'.

It will be noticed that the draft has some affinities with the finished

105. Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, pp. 388-90.

106. Memoir, ii, 100.

107. Ibid, ii, 104.

Idyll, particularly regarding detail. The following lines:

Sir Dagonet the king's fool stood before the hall of Arthur and the
wind was blowing and the leaves flying in the wood below...And the
dwarf skipt upon the steps before the hall and out of the hall came
Tristram and said to him O fool why skippest thou?

give rise to the opening lines of the Idyll:

Dagonet, the fool, whom Gawain in his mood
Had made mock-knight of Arthur's Table Round,
At Camelot, high above the yellowing woods
Danced like a withered leaf before the hall.
And toward him from the hall, with harp in hand...
Came Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?'

In the later version Tennyson gives more circumstantial detail to set the two characters in context and intensifies the connection between the woods and the fool's skipping: 'the leaves flying in the woods below' becomes Dagonet's dancing 'like a withered leaf', which picks up the connotations of 'the yellowing woods' in the previous line. But the fundamental relationship of the fool and the season is established in the original. In addition the reference to Mark's 'wayside ambushings' in the verse passage is echoed in Isolt's advice

and when thou passest any wood
Close visor, lest an arrow from the bush
Should leave me all alone with Mark and hell.¹⁰⁸

However, the main influence of the manuscript draft on the completed Idyll seems to have been structural; the entrelacement of the three separate stories of Gareth, Tristram and Lamorack is reflected in the six narrative threads of 'The Last Tournament'. Apart from the Tristram story these can be listed as the Dead Innocence, the Tournament, Dagonet, the Red Knight and Guinevere's flight.¹⁰⁹ This is the first time Tennyson interweaves originally unconnected stories within one Idyll, and, indeed, 'The Last Tournament' has the most elaborate structure of all the Idylls.

108. 11. 532-4.

109. See B. Litsinger, 'The Structure of The Last Tournament', Victorian Poetry, 1. (1963), 53.

The story of the child carried off by an eagle is a common folk tale. Tennyson's version is taken from an account by Johannes Tinnuth, who attaches the story to King Alfred. It is translated by Turner in his History of the Anglo-Saxons as follows:

One day as he (Alfred) was hunting in a wood, he heard the cry of an infant in a tree, and ordered his huntsmen to examine the place. They ascended the branches and found at top, in an eagle's nest, a beautiful child, dressed in purple, with golden bracelets, the mark of nobility, on his arms. The king had him brought down and baptized, and well educated: from the accident he named the foundling Nestingum.¹¹⁰

The account in 'The Last Tournament' agrees in outline with this, but differs in details. Tennyson changes the location from a wood to a mountain crag, which, together with the half-dead oak, the wind and rain, sets the desolate tone of the Idyll. Lancelot replaces the huntsmen, in order to emphasize the bond between himself and Arthur, and the child is transformed into a girl, presumably for a greater effect of frailty, for an easier identification of the child with Innocence, and because it is more appropriate for her to provide a woman's ornament. The golden bracelets therefore are changed into the ruby carcanet, thus establishing the pattern of reds which runs through the poem denoting passion, violence and chaos. The carcanet also forms a link with the 'ill-fated' diamonds of 'Lancelot and Elaine': both are prizes won with violence, offered to the wrong woman and associated with death. The parallels are, however, more dark and brutal in 'The Last Tournament'. Unlike Nestingum, the child reared by Guinevere dies, underlining Guinevere's identification with barren and destructive forces. The child's death also motivates the ironical title of the tournament and serves as an excuse for Lancelot's not entering the lists, thus explaining Tristram's victory.

The episode of the Red Knight, which constitutes the second narrative strand, is, as previously mentioned, found in Malory's account of Gareth's

110. II, v, 119.

adventures. There are, in fact, two Red Knights here,¹¹¹ but Tennyson based his rebel on the second, the Red Knight of the Rede Laundes. Having transposed the rebel from the Gareth story, and so initiated the red motif in the Idyll, Tennyson reverses his career from superior bandit to Round Table knight. Thus, he becomes the archetype of apostasy in order to further Tennyson's theme of degeneration. The implication is that the Red Knight is Pelleas,¹¹² but the lack of direct identification within the poem makes for a disturbing facelessness.

Like Tennyson's rebel, Malory's knight is a potentially good man gone to the bad. Lynet, commenting on his lack of mercy, says:

'...for trust nat, in hym is no curtesy, but all goth to the deth other shamfull mourther. And that is pyte,' seyde the damesell, 'for he is a full lykly man and a noble Knyght of proues, and a lorde of grete londis and of grete possessions.'¹¹³

There is a second similarity in that both direct their resources against the Round Table. Tennyson borrows a manifestation of this feud from Malory, who gives the following description:

And when they com nere the sege sir Bownaynes aspyed on grete trees, as he rode, how there hynged full goodly armed knyghtes by the necke, and their shyldis about their neckys with their swerdys and gylte sporys uppon their helys.¹¹⁴

Gareth is as shocked at this sight as Arthur's young knights are by the knight they find hanging on a 'grim dead tree'. Their reactions to the dishonouring of the 'gilded spur' are identical; they rush to blow the horn which summons the enemy. When the Red Knight finally appears, in both accounts he is dressed in 'blood-red' armour.

111. Gareth meets the first at vii, 10. There is a verbal echo of this episode in 'The Last Tournament' 1. 423, where the Red Knight's castle is described as 'machicolated': the castle of Malory's first Red Knight is 'well macchecolde all aboute'.

112. Tennyson's note, Eversley edition (1908), p. 501, n.1. Arthur's expedition may have been suggested by his invented foray against a 'bandit hold' in 'The Holy Grail', 11, 205-15. See the prose draft, *Materials*, 111, 143.

113. vii, 15.

114. loc. cit.

But despite the similarities, the episodes generate different moods. There is a coarsening and brutalising process at work which transforms Malory's ungentlemanly rebel into an evil force in 'The Last Tournament'. Even the setting is changed. In Malory 'there was grete noyse of mynstralsy' from the Red Knight's castle;¹¹⁵ in Tennyson there is 'A roar of riot' and 'an evil song'. The sea, which flanks the castle in Malory, becomes a slimy marsh and there is a complete lack of chivalric expectations: Gareth goes to rescue a lady; Arthur goes to raze a brigand stronghold.

As the maimed churl indicates, the Red Knight not only opposes Arthur, but has deliberately inverted his spiritual code. In Malory the Red Knight explains his rebellion as follows:

'Sir I loved onys a lady fayre, and she had hir bretherne slayne, and she tolde me hit was sir Launcelot du Lake othir ellys sir Gawayne. And she prayed me as I loved hir hertely that I wolde make hir a promyse by the faythe of my knyghthode for to laboure in armys dayly untill that I had mette with one of them, and all that I myght overcom I sholde put them to vylane deth. And so I ensured her to do all the vylany unto Arthur's knyghtes, and that I sholde take vengeance uppon all these knyghtes.'¹¹⁶

Although Tennyson's Red Knight has the same motive, he does not speak the same language:

'Slain was the brother of my paramour
By a knight of thine, and I that heard her whine
and snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,
Sware by the scorpion-worm that twists in hell,
And stings itself to everlasting death,
To hang whatever knight of thine I fought
And tumbled.'¹¹⁷

In contrast with Malory's Gareth, Arthur's young knights are infected by their adversary's evil, and instead of proving themselves true members of the Order, they descend to an equal bestiality.

The tournament is a parallel to this episode, since it demonstrates

115. loc. cit.

116. vii, 17.

117. 11. 447-53.

a decline in chivalric games, as opposed to chivalry on the battlefield. This decline is also directly related to Arthur's absence, and so the two narrative threads are linked regarding plot motivation.

It is impossible to trace the tournament to any one source. It may owe something to the tournament which Lamorak wins before his murder,¹¹⁸ especially in view of his connection with Tristram in the early draft. In addition Tennyson may have received a hint from the description of Dagonet amusing Arthur at the jousts. Moreover he could not fail to be struck by the number of tournaments, often minutely described, which occur in the Tristram books of Malory. Tristram himself gains honours in two of the three greatest.¹¹⁹ Both events are highest examples of chivalry and the two best knights demonstrate a mutual regard and friendship. The only tournament which does not maintain these standards is engineered by Mark in an attempt to kill Tristram.¹²⁰

The tournament of the Dead Innocence may, however, owe something to the decline in chivalry portrayed in Scott's The Bridal of Triermain, although there the motivation is different, being due to greed, not apathy and cowardice.¹²¹ In addition the tournament forms a link not only with the Diamond jousts but also with the tournament in 'Pelleas and Ettarre' where the prize is fairly won if not worthily awarded: here the prize is won by default, mockingly claimed, cynically given, and outrageously handed over to an adulterous mistress. It thus reflects obliquely on the two previous jousts, particularly that of 'Lancelot and Elaine'.

The interview between Dagonet and Tristram is, on the other hand, not even partially suggested by Malory, although they may have been linked in

118. x, 58.

119. The Castle of the Maidens tournament, ix, 30-5, and Lonasep, x, 67-76.

120. x, 50.

121. It may also derive something from Meliagraunce's cowardice in the trial by combat which decides Guinevere's innocence. xix, 9.

Tennyson's mind by their respective associations with tournaments. The implied equation of Tristram with true folly through contrast with Dagonet the fool is interesting, since Tristan in the French and German versions, both metrical and prose, disguises himself as a fool. Tristram in Malory is only remotely connected with the fool, but he does go mad and encounters Dagonet, as previously mentioned, having been 'clypped...with sherys and made ...lyke a foole.' Dagonet describes the meeting tersely: "And that foole and I, foole, mette togydir, and he had allmoste slayne me." But in 'The Last Tournament' Dagonet is also closely linked with the abandoned Arthur, which sets up a further train of ironies.

Guinevere's flight is heralded during the course of the Idyll by her growing dismay at the behaviour of the court, which indicates that Tennyson knew where he was going to place the Idyll and forged his links accordingly. The night of Tristram's murder becomes the night of Guinevere's flight, the circumstances of which had already been recounted in 'Guinevere'.

Chronologically the death of Tristram occurs before the downfall of Launcelot and Guinevere in Malory, but there is a significant mention of the former in the context of the latter, which may have suggested to Tennyson the idea of making them simultaneous. In the debate between Launcelot and his followers concerning ways of saving Guinevere, Launcelot asks where he should keep the queen, to which Bors replies:

'...how ded the moste noble knyght sir Tristram? By youre good wyll, kept nat he with hym la Beall Isode nere three yere in Joyous Garde, the whych was done by youre althers avyce?'

Launcelot perceives the dangers and ironies of this solution:

'That ys hard for to do,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'for by sir Tristram I may have a warnynge: for whan by meynys of trefte sir Tristram brought agayne la Beall Isode unto kynge Marke from Joyous Garde, loke ye now what felle on the ende, how shamefully that false traytour kyng Marke slew hym as he sate harpyng afore hys lady, la Beall Isode. Wyth a grounden glayve he threste hym in behynde to the harte...' 122

This constitutes the second of two brief descriptions of Tristram's death, and occurs just after the trapping of Launcelot and Guinevere. The parallel probably impressed Tennyson so much as to suggest combining the two stories, which are otherwise separate in Malory.

The Tristram story itself is pared down to an account of Tristram's death. This is easily extracted from Malory as the main narrative breaks off at Joyous Gard and the accounts of the death are isolated parenthetically in the last books. Thus, in Tennyson's version of the story there are almost no references to Tristram's early adventures and his previous relationship with Isolt. However, as Malory's account of the murder is bare of details, Tennyson creates a new set of circumstances without resorting to any other version.

In his Wright edition of Malory Tennyson has marked the following passage from the healing of Sir Urre, which is the first indication that the Joyous Gard episode ever came to an end:

...also that false traitour King Marke slew the noble knight sir Tristram as he sat harping before his lady La beale Isoud, with a trenchant glaive, for whose death was much bewailing of every knight that ever was in king Arthur's daies.¹²³

The passage continues to describe the death of Isoud, who dies 'sowning upon the corps of Sir Tristram',¹²⁴ but this is omitted by Tennyson as it would dissipate the shock of the murder and perhaps in part vindicate Isolt's adultery with its display of fidelity and sacrifice. As it is we are left to envisage Isolt left 'all alone with Mark and hell' as she feared. The lovers' deaths and the drinking of the love-potion raise the legend above moral criticism. The love-potion lessens the weight of individual responsibility and introduced the idea of a fated passion. The love-death

123. III, cxxxix, 264. Wright adds a note on the metrical account of the lovers' deaths.

124. The 1816 editions differ. Walker gives 'fawning' and Wilks 'swooning'. They both give 'corpse' instead of 'crosse' in the Caxton text. The latter may have suggested Tristram's encounter with 'one lone woman, weeping near a cross'. 11. 492f.

directly connected with the potion, proves the strength of tragic passion and sublimates disagreeables and inconsistencies. Even the most rationalized account of the death in the prose romance, in which Yseult dies with Tristan's last embrace, minimizes the effect of the murder's being a crime de passion by a flouted husband in a domestic tangle. Malory too, though he treats the episode summarily, restores the balance with mention of Isode's death, Tristram's chivalry and Mark's treachery. Tennyson, however, omits all mention of the potion, since the sinners must consent fully to their sin, and Isolt's death, since there must be no suggestion of a sublime passion. He presents merely the bare bones of the situation.¹²⁵

Any details which derive from Malory concerning Tristram's previous adventures either constitute traditional inconsistencies or are suitably darkened. Tristram's quarrel with Mark referred to by Isolt is taken from the incident of Sir Segwarides' wife, whence dates their enmity: 'But so long as kyng Marke lyved he loved never aftir Sir Tystrames: so aftir that, thoughe there were fayre speche, love was there none.'¹²⁶ Even in Malory the episode is somewhat unsavoury, but transformed in 'The Last Tournament', Mark and Tristram become two animals fighting for a mate. Tristram in Malory can be partially excused his lapse, since it occurred before the love-potion, but here Isolt picks on this amour as one of many, distinguished only by its originating the animosity between her husband and her lover. In addition, one feels that the sexual squabble is still continuing with only a change of object.

Previous to Isolt's reference to Segwarides' wife, Tristram remembers a subsequent episode in the tug-of-war between himself and Mark, and

...sent his fancy back to where
She lived a noon in that low lodge with him:
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish king,
With six or seven when Tristram was away,

125. Tennyson recognised the limitations of this treatment and considered 'weaving' the legend 'into a great stage drama'. Materials, iv, 242n.

126. viii, 14.

And snatched her thence; yet dreading worse than shame
 Her warrior Tristram spake not any word,
 But bode his hour devising wretchedness.¹²⁷

In Malory Tristram is wounded while hunting and the account continues:

And in the meanetyne hit was tolde unto kynge Marke how sir Trystrames and La Beale Isode were in that maner, and thydir he cam with many knyghtes to sle sir Trystrames. And whan he cam there he founde hym gone, and anone he toke La Beale Isode home with hym and kepte her straye, that by no meane she myght never wryght nor sende...And than sir Trystrames toke grete sorow and endured with grete sorow and payne longe tyme, for the arow that he was hurte wythall was envenomed.¹²⁸

Tennyson brutalized this version. In Malory Mark leads an expedition against Tristram, but in 'The Last Tournament' he is passing with a casual six or seven and retrieves Isolt like a lost chattel. Tristram's behaviour in Tennyson's version is execrable: since he fears to lose his life he remains silent on the subject, meanly plotting revenge. Tristram in the original is completely separated from Isode by his being incapacitated and properly suffers anguish at the separation. It seems that Tennyson's hero is more concerned at being outwitted.

This episode in Malory leads into Tristram's marriage. Unable to be healed of his wound by Isode he goes, on her advice, to Isode of Brittany where he is restored, wins her father's wars for him, and with persuasion and encouragement from father and brother eventually marries her.¹²⁹

Tennyson dissociates the two episodes, since where possible he deprives Tristram of his motivation in order to make him appear feckless. Consequently Tristram cannot say why he went to Brittany after Isolt's return to Mark; the nearest he comes to a reason is to suspect he was attracted by Isolt's name. In equally casual fashion he believes himself to love her, marries and leaves her. Inevitably his reunion with Isolt is one of recrimination on her part and shrugging assurances on his. In contrast their reunion in

127. 11. 379-85.

128. viii, 35.

129. viii, 36.

Malory, although Tristram's marriage is seen as an infidelity by Launcelot and Guinevere, is civilised and joyful.¹³⁰

The paring-down and building-up process whereby Tennyson reinterprets the action of the legend is also extended to characterization. He takes the bare essentials of Malory's Tristram, discards his conventional chivalry and extends his distinguishing idiosyncrasies until they become indications of character. Malory's knight does not have 'character' in the modern sense, but is generally agreed to be a good knight, ranking second to Launcelot and being further distinguished by his skills at harping and hunting. The degradation of his character in 'The Last Tournament' is primarily due to the removal of his conventional chivalry and Tennyson's interpretation of his remaining traditional attributes in terms of personality defects.

The removal of Tristram's conventional chivalry provides the greatest point of departure from Malory. In the source Tristram moves as in a pageant; he is seen against a pattern and as part of that pattern. His motives, his reactions are conventionally gracious and we find it puzzling when he acts against the predetermined mode of conduct, rather than enlightening: when Tristram marries Isode of Brittany there is a sense of disappointment rather than revelation. To remove any figure from this pattern is to expose him to a severe and realistic judgement. But in the case of Tristram, when Tennyson has already expunged all mention of the potion and Isode's death, this is disastrous; he becomes merely a fickle adulterer and there is little left in the story to redeem him with the removal of his chivalric prowess.

Consequently, whereas Malory's Tristram distracts attention from the inconsistencies of his position through knightly deeds, Tennyson's Tristram demonstrates that his knightly deeds are on the same level as his philanderings. During the tournament of the Dead Innocence he is allowed to

do as he pleases through the fear and apathy of the other knights. The same fear keeps Mark from confronting Tristram, and it is only Lancelot who longs to meet him, but not through friendly rivalry: Lancelot wants Tristram's death with hatred and bitter contempt. It should be noticed, however, that while Tristram's victory is minimized by the cowardice of others, it is equally minimized by his own arrogance:

Strength of heart
And might of limb, but mainly use and skill,
Are winners in this pastime of our King.
My hand - belike the lance hath dript upon it -
No blood of mine, I trow.¹³¹

Physically strong Tristram might be, but this strength is divorced from any code and is therefore capriciously used: he wins a tournament but will not attempt to rescue Isolt from Mark.

Tristram's lack of honour is related to his being a late addition to the Round Table as he is in Malory. Tennyson shows him as being initially moved by the presence of Arthur but unable to sustain faith, particularly in the face of the incipient corruption. This instability is the hall-mark of Tristram's character, and radiates from him throughout the Idyll, manifesting itself in Lancelot's lassitude, the shrill behaviour of the court, Isolt's emotional outbursts and the Red knight's rebellion. Instability pervades all private and public levels, and in Tristram's case is expressed through his hunting.

Tristram the hunter is found in Malory and various passages stressing this attribute were marked by Tennyson. The following passage from the Walker edition describes Tristram's welcome at Arthur's court:

'Welcome' said King Arthur, 'for one of the best knights and gentlest of the world and knight of the most worship for all manner of hunting thou bearest the prize; and of all terms of hunting and hawking ye are the beginner and of all instruments and music ye are the best.'¹³²

This is again marked in Tennyson's copy of the Wright edition of 1858 together

131. 11. 197-201.

132. I, xci, 457.

with another similar passage:

And so in harping and on instruments of musike hee applied him in his youth for to learne, and after as hee growed in his might and strength he laboured ever in hunting and hawking, so that we never read of no gentleman more that so used himself therein. And as the books saith, hee began good measures of blowing and blasts of venery and of chase of all manner of vermeins and all these termes have we yet of hawking and hunting.¹³³

The first time we see Tristram in 'The Last Tournament' he is wearing forest green¹³⁴ and bears on his arms a spear, bugle and harp, but his preoccupation with hunting becomes explicit during his ride to Cornwall. His continual distraction by the possibilities of game is similar to that of Frere's madcap Tristram in The Monks and the Giants, where the context is, however, comic. Here the continual distraction from thoughts of Isolt intimate the instability of his affection.

Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt
With ruby-circled neck, but evermore
Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye
For all that walk'd, or crept, or perch'd or flew.
Anon the face, as when a gust hath blown
Unruffling waters recollect the shape
Of one that in them sees himself, return'd;
But at the slot or fowrets of a deer
Or ev'n a fallen feather, vanish'd again.¹³⁵

This is the antithesis of Arnold's brooding Tristram who actively attempts to escape his obsessional love but finds the mental picture of Isolt returning spontaneously to exclude reality. A feather weighs more with Tennyson's hero than his mistress.

Tristram's inability to concentrate on anything other than what the present moment affords his senses informs his attitude to love. There is an isolated hint of this in Malory during the awkwardness of Tristram's marriage: 'And for because that sir Tristrames had suche chere and ryches and all other pleasaunce that he had allmoste forsakyn La Beale Isode.'¹³⁶

133. II, iii, 6.

134. Tristram wears green at Lonazep. x, 69.

135. II, 363-72.

136. viii, 36.

For Tennyson Tristram's concern with hunting not only reveals his willing surrender to distractions, but a mentality which finds more pleasure in pursuit than possession.¹³⁷ Just as he hunts in a motiveless, conditioned fashion, so he leaves Isolt on a whim:

But then what folly had sent him overseas
After she had left him lonely here? a name?¹³⁸

Equally casually he leaves his wife and drifts back to his mistress:

The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes
Had drawn him home - what marvel?¹³⁹

Lacking any spiritual or moral roots Tristram is aimless, a prey to the novelties of the moment and without any rationale for his actions. His love is little more than an irresponsible sensuality, devoid of any sense of passion or selflessness. This is epitomized in his song 'Free love - free field - we love but while we may', where we first encounter his philosophy.

This is made in defence of his own weakness. Incapable of keeping his vows to Arthur, his mistress or his wife, incapable of taking any decisive line of action as is shown by his dream, Tristram rationalizes his temperamental instability, using his observation of Nature as a justification. In his song he equates the change of the seasons with a change of love, and to Isolt he excuses his betrayal of Arthur's vows by calling them unnatural:

'...wordling of the world am I, and know
The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour
Woes his own end; we are not angels here
Nor shall be: vows - I am a woodman of the woods,
And hear the garnet-headed yaffingale
Mock them: my soul we love but while we may...'¹⁴⁰

As Arthur's code reaches out to what is above him, so Tristram's philosophy is derived from what is below him. It is inevitable therefore, that Tristram should see Arthur's attempt to inspire a spiritual unity as running counter

137. Isolt is Tristram's 'white hind'.

138. 11. 393-4.

139. 11. 403-4.

140. 11. 691-6.

to what he, from his hunting experience, considers to be the law of nature. Refusing to admit an afterlife, other than a cavalier reference to 'the dream to come', or a divinity, or indeed anything non-material, Tristram promotes instead a sensual opportunism which he considers far more realistic than weird legends and 'mystic babble'. It is ironical that the dissipated Tristram should see his rationalising as securely founded on solid fact and observation of the material world but consider Arthur's spiritual stability as based on the ephemeral:

'...He seemed to me no man,
But Michaël trampling Satan; so I sware,
Being amazed; but this went by - The vows!
O ay - the wholesome madness of an hour -
They served their use, their time...'141

His limited comprehension thus has to reduce all mystery to momentary illusion or utilitarianism.

Tristram regards his way of life as freedom, because he refuses to admit the existence of any bonds. In fact, it is the freedom of the jungle, and Tristram is aligned with the animals he hunts, a prime example of the thematic movement of man reeling 'back into the beast'. His career from 'rough Lyonesse' to Arthur's court and thence to the woods, parallels in microcosmic terms the progress of the kingdom from the bestial to the spiritual and thence through the adultery to a second state of chaos. Isolt makes this explicit in her comment on Tristram's lack of courtesy:

'Far other was that other Tristram, Arthur's knight!
But thou, thro' ever harrying thy wild beasts -
Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance
Becomes thee well - art grown wild beast thyself.'142

In 'The Holy Grail' the evolution of man is depicted in Merlin's sculptures:

'And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings...'143

141. 11. 667-71.

142. 11. 629-32.

143. 11. 234-7.

Tristram represents a backsliding from the third to the second state, with the shadow of the first looming over him, associated as he is with woods and wastes rather than the civilization of the court. Indeed, by this point in the cycle the symbolism is familiar. Characters who deviate from Arthur's ideal retire to the wasteland which mirrors their spiritual state, as is the case with Geraint, Balin, Merlin, Lancelot and Perceval in 'The Holy Grail' and Pelleas as the Red knight. It is a measure of Tristram's degeneracy that he does not regard his association with the wilderness as an exile but rather as an enjoyment.

Tristram the hunter who lapses into the animal is balanced by Mark the animal who becomes a hunter. From this metamorphosis arises the shadow of the first zone where 'beasts are slaying men'. The freedom Tristram advocates depends upon the ability to survive and Mark constitutes the threat to his survival. Tristram can act as he likes so long as he is strong and clever enough to escape the enemies he inevitably makes. But Mark is an arch-enemy of extreme cunning and evil. His cowardice and treachery are well supported in Malory and even the animal imagery which Tennyson uses extensively in his portrayal has a precedent:

But Sir Launcelot bade ever Sir Trystram beware of kyng Marke for ever he called hym in hys lettirs Kyng Foxe, as who saythe, he faryth allwey with wyllys and treson...¹⁴⁴

Although he is vicious and vindictive his cowardice forces him into devious ways. While his jealousy prompts him to have 'Scratch'd, bitten, blinded' Isolt, his fear of Tristram, the stronger animal, prevents him from harming her, but instead directs him to use such devices as poison and ambush. However, while Mark is beast-like, Tristram is the more despicable for having rejected the values which would have raised him above Mark's level.

As a hunter Tristram is associated with violent death and as an exponent of jungle freedom he is bound on a course of disaster. The figure of Mark

stalking behind the lovers emphasizes this and creates a dramatic tension which is released in the brutal violence of the murder. The killing has a parallel in the slaughter of the Red knight and his band, where a lair of beasts is hunted down by knights of the Round Table, who themselves descend to the animal level in the process. Here a hunter is killed by a beast, demonstrating how inextricably the two levels are involved. Once chivalry is removed from the concept of might there remains only a vicious and degrading battle for survival.

Tristram's second traditional attribute, his skill in harping, constitutes not so much an indication of character as a nexus of character and thematic movement. This is mainly apparent in the interview with Dagonet. Here the music has two interlinked symbolic values. Primarily it stands for order, as achieved through the observance of spiritual ties. Tennyson had used music in previous Idylls to connote a spiritual quality; for example, the Lady of the Lake and the Grail are attended by mystical harmonies. But around the time of writing 'The Last Tournament' and 'Gareth and Lynette' he chose to emphasize the symbol, showing Tristram as a false harper who breaks the music whereby the city is built. (Later, in 1873, Tennyson added the battle-hymn to 'The Coming' in order to strengthen the impression of spiritual unity.)

Tristram's skill in harping is well-substantiated in Malory. His youthful proficiency is stressed, he disguises himself as a harper on his first voyage to Ireland, where he teaches Isode music; in his madness he derives solace from the harp; and finally he is killed while harping to his mistress. In 'The Last Tournament' Tristram's harping is proficient technically but paradoxically stands for the spiritual discord of which he is a part. His song of free love, being an expression of a disharmonious life, is regarded as 'broken music' by Dagonet:

'For when thou playest that air with Queen Isolt,
Thou makest broken music with thy bride,

Her daintier namesake down in Brittany -
And so thou breakest Arthur's music too...¹⁴⁵

Arthur's music is not created by Arthur, but has its origin in heaven, and the vows, broken by Tristram, are expressions of a divine order. This is concisely pointed out by Dagonet who hears 'a silent music up in heaven' along with Arthur and the angels, and will only move in accordance with that, hence his refusal to dance to Tristram's playing.

Secondarily, the image comes by association to mean wisdom. This is heightened by the paradox of the fool and defined as being a quality outside the range of worldly wisdom represented by Tristram. Dagonet refers to 'the broken music of his brains', but spiritually this is a healthy state, since only by breaking through the rational can he apprehend the true music. He is only a mock knight and a fool, but he alone holds his vows, imposed in mockery but made in earnest, as sacred; the other knights, holding their sacred vows in mockery, infer that only a fool would maintain Arthur's code. Their wisdom, the rationalization of their betrayal of faith, is a compound of wit, sacrilege, materialism and expediency. Dagonet, the traditional exponent of wit, inveighs against this:

'...being fool and seeing too much wit
Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip
To know myself the wisest knight of all.'¹⁴⁶

It is this wit which has been the vehicle of corruption, risqué gossip and presumptuous questions eventually leading to permissiveness:¹⁴⁷

And Dagonet answered, 'Ay and when the land
Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set yourself
To babble about him, all to show your wit -
And whether he were King by courtesy,
Or King by right - and so went harping down
The black king's highway, got so far and grew

145. 11. 263-6.

146. 11. 246-8.

147. The theme of rumour's destructiveness runs throughout the Idylls, since it constitutes the vehicle whereby the corruption of Guinevere's adultery spreads: Geraint removes and suspects Enid because of it; Vivien uses it as her chief weapon; the court runs riot with speculation concerning Lancelot and Elaine; Etarre is bored because Pelleas cannot talk in a 'worldly way'.

So witty that ye played at ducks and drakes
With Arthur's vows on the great lake of fire.'148

This babble, manifesting itself in the loud mirth which follows the tournament, precludes any apprehension of the 'silent music' which moves Dagonet and Arthur in a spiritual rhythm opposed to the courtly frenzies. Consequently Arthur is linked with the fool ambivalently; he is considered a fool for his impossible idealism:

'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of fools
Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk
From burning spurge, honey from hornet-combs
And men from beasts - Long live the king of fools.'149

but, as Dagonet implies, while aping the cynicism of the court, what worldly cleverness sees as folly is here spiritual wisdom; and while Dagonet is wise in perceiving this, Arthur in attempting to practise his idealism is indeed only the king of fools.

Tristram's music is representative of this worldly wisdom, but it also incorporates the image pattern of the beast, and so interlocks his attributes of harping and hunting more firmly on a symbolic level. The beast imagery is particularly strong in this Idyll, and Tennyson extends its connotations by involving it in the 'broken music' theme: the beast is here a rational beast who has misused his reason deliberately to escape his spiritual responsibilities. Dagonet aspires to follow Arthur's music, having begun life as a 'swine'; Tristram, having regressed, plays 'broken music'.

The fool crystallizes the two themes in the image of Orpheus, a parallel to Tristram, in that he is a pagan harper:

'...swine, goats, asses, rams, and geese
Troop'd round a Paynim harper once, who thrumm'd
On such a wire as musically as thou
Some such fine song - but never a king's fool.'150

Those who move to Tristram's music are of the animal level, but the king's

148. 11. 338-45.

149. 11. 354-8.

150. 11. 321-4.

fool, having ascended from that level and acquired spiritual wisdom refuses to follow those who consider themselves superior. This concept is expanded by the explicit linking of hell with the pagan music through an extension of the Orpheus image. Tristram replies that the beasts had more wisdom than Dagonet, since Orpheus was such a master he could 'harp his wife up out of hell'. Dagonet retorts:

'And whither harp'st thou thine? down! and thyself
Down,' and two more: a helpful harper thou,
That harp'st downwards! '151

The damnation of the behaviour symbolized by Tristram's music is made explicit through this central image, which, together with the interchange itself, prepares the ground for the ensuing action within the thematic structure. It should be noted that this use of Tristram's traditional attributes as symbolic values marks an increasing sophistication in Tennyson's methods and goes far beyond the use Arnold makes of them.

The greatest change, however, which Tennyson makes in his original, lies in the quality of the love between Tristram and Isolt. In Malory it has its inconsistencies but one is convinced of its rightness as part of the chivalric order of things. In 'The Last Tournament' Tristram's love for Isolt is a relic of past passion, rather than a vital relationship. He returns to his mistress, not through overwhelming desire, but through habit combined with a roving instinct. Through its association with animal imagery, Tennyson intimates that the main raison d'être for the relationship is sensuality. Tristram shows no apprehension of Isolt's character or situation, but uses her selfishly, avoiding responsibility or commitment. Indeed, so strong is his desire to avoid commitment that he admits to not wanting her love - 'What if she loves me still? I would not that' - but his egocentricity cannot support the idea of her hate either. This parallels his indecision concerning the two Isolts demonstrated by his dream, in consequence of which he oscillates motiveless between them.

Isolt's love is also debased, since it stems from a hatred of Mark rather than a disinterested love of Tristram. Both emotions are inextricably involved:

'My God! the measure of my hate for Mark
Is as the measure of my love for thee.'¹⁵²

She only loves Tristram as he compares favourably with Mark and represents escape and protection;

'O were I not my Mark's by whom all men
Are noble I should hate thee more than love.'¹⁵³

She is painfully aware of his faults, having suffered from them, and even hails Isolt of Brittany as a fellow-sufferer, since she too has loved and lost him. As a result the meeting develops a mood of recrimination which intimates that Isolt's love and hate are not neatly divided between Tristram and Mark respectively, but that while Mark has none of her love, Tristram has some of her hate. She reminds Tristram of a former mistress, asks about his current one, blames him for leading her into sin, impresses on him her agonies during his sojourn in Brittany, rails against his discourtesy, demands his undying love and taunts him with the possibility of her infidelity. The sparring match is only resolved in their united mockery of Mark and reminiscences of their woodland interlude.

However, although Isolt recriminates with Tristram, she needs him as a refuge from her 'shambling king' and her conscience. She recognizes her need for forgiveness, despite the logic with which Tristram first incited her to sin:

'That Guinevere had sinned against the highest,
And I - misyoked to such a want of man -
That I could hardly sin against the lowest.'¹⁵⁴

But she is unable to muster the courage to flee to a convent - an idea which presages Guinevere's flight - and unable to relinquish Tristram for a life

152. 11. 535-6.

153. 11. 594-5.

154. 11. 566-8.

of hell with Mark. Consequently, she turns to Tristram for false comfort, which she recognizes as such, but needs nevertheless:

'Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,
Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,
Thy marriage and mine own, that I should suck
Lies like sweet wines: lie to me: I believe.'¹⁵⁵

She attempts to secure a future with Tristram in the face of transience, but she knows it is a doomed attempt because

'the power
Was once in vows when men believed the King.'¹⁵⁶

The breaking of this bond means the breaking of all bonds, and so Isolt cannot ensure their relationship.

Yet Isolt is prepared to fool herself, and this marks a further step in Tennyson's exposition of the theme of deception and fantasy. Elaine bestowed her love impossibly, but died with her illusions; Pelleas bestowed his unworthily, but was destroyed by disillusionment; Isolt has bestowed her love unworthily and unlawfully, and so seeks for some sort of consoling illusion to veil the reality. Tristram rationalizes his disloyalty as natural and therefore right, but Isolt tries to blot out hers with self-deception on the one hand and loathing of Mark on the other. Through her self-deception she attempts to see her relationship with Tristram as sound, and through her hatred of Mark she attempts to see it as justified. This neurosis is emphasized by her fantasy gestures. She imagines herself romantically dead at the feet of Isolt of Brittany, or fleeing to the arms of God. She flares up in rage at Tristram one moment and cajoles him the next. Her emotional instability reflects the lack of social stability and the scene between herself and Tristram indicates throughout the failure of their relationship.

The traditional lovers are disaster-bound because of the power of the potion; Tennyson's lovers are also disaster-bound, but because of the guilt

155. 11. 637-40.

156. 11. 643-4.

inherent in their love. Tristram is brutally cut off by Mark and Isolt is presumably left to his tender mercies. There is no honour and certainly no romance in their end, which is the culmination of a pattern of death and violence linking the narrative strands throughout the Idyll. Nestling dies; the churl is horribly disfigured; the Red knight and his works are obliterated; the bereaved woman receives only cynicism from Tristram; the two Isolts draw blood over the carcanet in Tristram's dream; Tristram's hands are bloodstained; Arthur's words menace Lancelot like 'birds of prey'; everything 'reels back into the beast'. Nor does this pattern carry with it a sense of excitement or energy released. Rather, it is permeated by a weariness, just as Lancelot is wearied by the fiasco of the tournament, or a sense of horror, as is present in the account of the massacre and Tristram's murder.

The overall effect is 'a shower of blood in a field of noir', since the pattern is intensified with references to mud and redness. The mud, which draggles the ladies' skirts, substitutes for wine in Dagonet's golden cup, constituted Dagonet's symbolic environment in Experience's nursery, and literally engulfs the corpse of the Red knight, adds to the depressive effect of the violence. The horror, however, seems to derive in part from the flashes of red throughout the Idyll: the ruby necklace, the Red knight, the 'frozen blood' of Tristram's 'red dream', the 'red-pulsing' fire which destroys the bandit's castle, and the red blood of manhood with which Tristram excuses his perjury. In contrast, whiteness is scorned: the ladies change thankfully from their virginal white into bright colours, Isolt of the white hands is 'pale-blooded' and so will yield herself to God, and

'The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour
Weos his own end.'¹⁵⁷

Innocence is equated with simple-mindedness and the tournament is aptly named.

As the theme of violence is a direct result of the pervasive decadence, it is closely associated with the eschatological overtones of the Idyll. The references to hell imply a judgement on violence and death, and relate brutality to the forces of spiritual darkness. The Red knight is a type of Satan, making his rebellion in the North and setting up a kingdom of evil which he alleges to be superior to Arthur's on account of its comparative honesty. Tennyson sets the Red knight in this unholy perspective with the Churl's entry:

'My churl, for whom Christ died, what evil beast
Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face? or fiend?
Man was it who marred heaven's image in thee thus?'¹⁵⁸

The idea becomes explicit in Arthur's reference to the heathen who 'Make their last head like Satan in the North.' When the Red knight speaks he aligns himself with darkness and profanity. Tristram describes his first impression of Arthur as 'Michael trampling Satan' which relates back ironically to Arthur's knights killing Pelleas:

There trampled out his face from being known,
And sank his head in mire, and slimed themselves.¹⁵⁹

The hell theme is also widened out in Dagonet's reference to Tristram's career, with the rest of society, down 'The black king's highway'. Here damnation is seen as a concomitant of worldliness and those within the Order are condemned equally with those who make open rebellion against it.

Besides setting up an awareness of hell and judgement the specific references to Satan emphasize the idea of damnation through rebellion. This is obvious in the case of the Red knight, but throughout the Idyll man is seen rebelling against his higher self, God, Arthur and his fellow men. The traditional amity of Lancelot and Tristram is changed to loathing; Tristram breaks his vows to Arthur, to his wife and his mistress; Isolt

158. 11. 62-4.

159. 11. 468-9.

breaks her vows to Mark; Guinevere flees from Arthur. The keynote of the Idyll is division and failure in relationships, mundane and spiritual. Innocence and integrity are a thing of the past, chivalry in contest, honour in war, and courtesy in love are dead. The burden of the poem is 'The glory of our Round Table is no more'. As spiritual unity is finally shattered, man, bereft of a scale of values, falls back on his primitive instincts. In consequence, a mood of mockery and cynicism prevails; the Red knight's rule is a mockery, Mark's kingship is a mockery, the tournament is a mockery, Tristram parodies Lancelot and even his relationship with Isolt is a parody of that between Lancelot and Guinevere, the present empty observances are a mockery of past glory. Ironically, the professional mocker and mock-knight is the only one who mocks the inverted standards.

Thus 'The Last Tournament' forms the nexus of the major image patterns in the Idylls. Although it is dangerous to probe the allegorical level, it is perhaps true to say that the action has more symbolic significance than in any Idyll written hitherto. Not only are the narrative threads astutely counterpointed, but actions and characters possess a value which transcends the immediate and specific. The Tournament of the Dead Innocence convinces as a localized event, but Lancelot's usurpation of Arthur's chair, the image of his weariness, the curse of the anonymous knight, the bedraggled whiteness and the dirge for past glory, lend the event archetypal connotations consistent with its title. Tristram carries weight as an individuated figure, but he is the focus of so many image patterns, that he attains another dimension of meaning. This is evident in a comparison with Geraint, for example, who is only loosely connected with the theme of doubt and whose adventures are described largely for their own sake. Everything Tristram does or says is concentrated on some facet of the decadence Tennyson is portraying.

This loading of symbolic value can perhaps be attributed to the fact that Tennyson had determined the place of the Idyll in the overall scheme before composition. From a narrative viewpoint it is firmly linked to

'Pelleas and Ettarre' and 'Guinevere': the results of Pelleas's disillusionment are seen in his rebellion, prefiguring that of Mordred, and the events leading up to the flight of Guinevere, intimated at the end of 'The Last Tournament' are fully recounted in 'Guinevere'. The thematic development benefits from this accuracy of placing as from Tennyson's deepening perception of the ambiguities and paradoxes lying beneath the surface of his subject.

With Pelleas's disillusionment the last flame of idealism is extinguished; Tristram represents the remaining 'hollow men'. The restraints on sexuality are cast off with the extinguishing of this flame, resulting in Tristram's self-interested advocacy of free love. It is important to see these two Idylls in sequence, since the linking of Pelleas's love with his idealism, and their subsequent destruction, illuminates the strong link between the beast theme and the materialistic cynicism in 'The Last Tournament'. With Pelleas's discovery of Gawain's unfaithfulness the whole order slides into a new level of decadence. Love is no longer possible, not even the illusory love of Elaine; only sensuality bereft of all courtesy remains. Arthur's speech in 'Guinevere' gains new point from the insertion of 'The Last Tournament':

'I made them lay their hands in mine and swear...
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth and all that makes a man.'¹⁶⁰

The breaking of these vows leads directly to the final stage of decadence.

In 'The Last Tournament' the emphasis falls on the general state. The

oppressiveness of the Idyll arises from the fact that the whole of society, with the one exception of Dagonet, is corrupt, and Tristram, in representing that corruption, acquires symbolic value. Thus the subject matter dictates this treatment to a certain extent, but it is the overall symbolic scheme which defines this in the first place: in the war of sense with soul 'The Last Tournament' represents the victory of sense, but a victory which carries with it the seeds of its own disaster.

This placing in the symbolic scheme is emphasized by the dripping autumn setting, perhaps the most forcefully and skilfully blended of the symbolic year portraits. It is impossible to say when this unifying framework was first considered. Tennyson may have intended it for his epic, but the winter setting of the 'Morte d'Arthur' may be attributed merely to an appropriate match of mood and action. The framework assumes no importance in the early Idylls since they were not then considered as part of a development.

Only in 1869, with his final decision to treat the Idylls cyclically, did Tennyson begin to stress his concept of the symbolic year: after deliberation he ended 'The Passing' with the line 'And the new sun rose bringing the new year'; 'The Coming' places the wedding of Arthur and Guinevere in May; 'The Holy Grail' takes place in summer, followed by the deceptive Indian summer of 'Pelleas and Ettarre'. This gives rise to the depressive autumn of 'The Last Tournament', a season Tennyson had already associated with disenchantment in 'The Lady of Shalott'. This autumn is not a time of fruition, but a bedraggled season which mocks with memories of better times, and heralds the barren winter of the last two poems.

But while 'The Last Tournament' is crucial to the symbolic scheme, and closely connected to the narratives which flank it, it nevertheless introduces via Tristram some unfamiliar material. Only two references in the previous Idylls give any clue to his identity. In 'Guinevere' Tennyson parallels his sin with that of Lancelot:

'Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
 Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
 Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
 And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
 Sinned also...'161

in 'Lancelot and Elaine' Tristram is only briefly mentioned:

...Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,
 And after Lancelot, Tristram and Geraint
 And Gareth, a good knight...'162

These references do not place Tristram in any recognizable context, nor could Tennyson rely on any general familiarity with the legend. It was necessary, therefore, to create an awareness of the Cornish ambience earlier in the sequence to enable some sort of identification and so make the details of the story more digestible. Consequently, Tennyson introduced Mark early in 'Gareth and Lynette', so that he focusses the otherwise nameless evils existing outside Arthur's jurisdiction. In 1875, having finished 'Balin and Balan',¹⁶³ Tennyson added the prologue to 'Merlin and Vivien', which shows Vivien as a second emissary from Mark to Arthur's court and explains her appearance in the former Idyll.

This creates a coherent subplot, since it unites the three perpetrators of evil, Vivien, Mark and Mordred, and gives their activities point. Previously Mordred and Vivien had been presented as conspirators in 'Guinevere' and the latter as Merlin's downfall in 'Merlin and Vivien'. This arbitrary state of affairs was tightened up after Tennyson's contemplation of Mark during the composition of 'The Last Tournament'. The episode in 'Gareth and Lynette' introduces him and gives him a motivation against Arthur. In addition, we are introduced to Mordred, a sinister creature generically related to Mark. Thus Tennyson establishes the external and internal forces which will eventually precipitate the disaster. The go-between is Vivien, a role which gives her seduction of Merlin a new dimension, since it is now

161. 11. 484-8.

162. 11. 553-5.

163. Written 1872-4. Published 1885.

seen as a major victory in a hate campaign against Arthur's order. The prologue added to 'Merlin and Vivien' shows Mark's cynicism about courtly love, and his apprehension of it as a vulnerable point. Just as Arthur inspires his knights to good, so Mark inspires his creature Vivien to corruption; but as Arthur's knights, while still uncorrupted, perform their deeds openly, Vivien acts under cover like the rat in the dyke. Her tactics constitute a feminine version of Mark's treacherous manoeuvres, but are more subtle, since she appears to be other than she is. Merlin's subjugation proves her strength against the wisest, and in the final addition to 'Balin and Balan' she easily overcomes those unsettled by doubt. Her alliance with Mordred is inevitable.

These additions deepen the effect of 'The Last Tournament'. Cornwall is no longer a neutral place, coloured only by the individual evil of Mark. It is the headquarters of rebellion and so has links with the Red Knight's stronghold, the difference being that the latter is an open defiance. An additional link is seen in 'Guinevere', for while Mark moves against Tristram, his confederates move simultaneously against the greater pair of adulterers. 'The Last Tournament' thus shows society caught in a pincer movement between its own decadence and the agents of destruction, who recognise that their opportunity for open action has arrived.

But the first readers of the Idyll, published in the Contemporary Review December 1871, did not have the advantage of these additions, and it was not until the following year that the figure of Mark was broadened out by the reference in 'Gareth and Lynette'.¹⁶⁴ Ironically, the only real accusation of a faulty integration came from Stopford Brooke after Tennyson had completed the additional links.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, T. H. Leary, who reviews 'The Last Tournament' most favourably, praises it on account of its internal

164. Published with 'The Last Tournament' 1872.

165. Stopford A. Brooke, Tennyson (1894), pp. 333-4.

and overall coherence.¹⁶⁶

Unfortunately, the Idylls no longer claimed rapturous attention and this, together with the dubious subject matter caused the work's summary dismissal. The reviewers were mostly unenthusiastic, though the majority agreed it to be a superior work to 'Gareth and Lynette'. Blackwood's, Chambers's Journal and the Fortnightly Review¹⁶⁷ all approach the third instalment of the Idylls with a sense of ennui. Blackwood's particularly emphasizes that the novelty has evaporated and wishes that someone would tell Tennyson to stop. Having totally condemned 'Gareth and Lynette', the reviewer then allows 'The Last Tournament' some of Tennyson's 'ancient force' and 'fragments of beautiful poetry' and finishes the article by suggesting that Tennyson is scraping the barrel.

Chambers's Journal is less sweeping and more prepared to be impartial, although the review begins:

It is a pity that our Laureate has been witched by Merlin, and pours his genius out so lavishly on such a worn-out theme as Arthur and his knights. Well as he has treated it, we own ourselves fairly tired of the 'table round'.

The reviewer prefers 'The Last Tournament' to 'Gareth and Lynette', finding it more 'interesting, although the tone is sad', noting the 'excellently told' dialogue between Tristram and Isolt, and finding it an admirable example of 'the bitterness and instability of illicit passion'. But while the Idyll is 'a noble fragment', contributing to a 'grand mosaic', the review closes with the qualification that the Arthurian is a 'threadbare subject'.

Whereas Chambers's Journal considers the work to be irrelevant to the 19th century, the Fortnightly Review states that Tennyson's central idea is 'a moral conception in the modern sense'. However, the reviewer continues:

166. Gentleman's Magazine, ccxxx (April 1872), 423-30.

167. Blackwood's, cxii (December 1872), 760; Chambers's Journal, cclxix (December 1872), 813-16; Fortnightly Review, xviii (December 1872), 757-8.

Mr. Tennyson seems to have introduced the poorer and not the finer part of modern ethics, till its effect on that side, in spite of episodes of partial beauty, tenderness and even dignity, is, on the whole, jejune, petty, unreal and undignified. In the case of the 'Last Tournament'... this quality comes out very painfully, in the treatment of the character of Tristram especially.

Apparently the reviewer cannot bear to enlarge on this, but perhaps it is a slightly more perceptive response than that demonstrated by the Athenaeum, which dwells on Isolt's beauty and comments on Tristram's end: 'Thus dies one of the most stalwart knights of the Round Table'.¹⁶⁸ There is a local conflict between those who find passages of 'Beauty' and 'power' in 'The Last Tournament' and those who find it repugnant. But generally this is overshadowed by a feeling of boredom.

The London Quarterly Review¹⁶⁹ also generates this feeling by opening with the weary hope that Tennyson has now completed his 'Arthuriad' 'and passed out of that atmosphere that has so long been the bane of his poetic genius'. He goes on to dismiss 'Gareth and Lynette', preferring the 'shorter and considerably better' Idyll of 'The Last Tournament'. This follows a familiar pattern, but suddenly we are presented with a new line as the reviewer champions 'the fine old romance of Tristram', scorning 'the inadequacy' of Tennyson's treatment, approving of Arnold's rendering and praying for a definitive Tristram poem from Swinburne.

Tennyson's degradation of the tragedy into a 'vulgar amour', produces the following outburst:

A common place man of mere brute strength, and of a thoroughly worthless nature, is no fit subject for the development of a tragic vein in high poetry; and the low level of the Laureate's Tristram robs of all high tragedy the lawlessness of his loves and the meanness of his fate... Why the Laureate should have chosen to depict a common bully... may be explained in various ways: probably the adoption of an allegoric system of moralizing had something to do with it; for under that system Tristram not unnaturally becomes the simple unmitigated type of that degenerate knighthood prevalent immediately before the 'passing of Arthur': his life and character disgust us; but his doom does not move us, and hence does not appeal.

168. Athenaeum (26th October, 1872), pp. 521-4.

169. London Quarterly Review, xxxix (January 1873), 394-405.

This dismissal of Tennyson's creation is interesting because it springs from a sense of injury done to the legend and not from a prudish disgust. It is the earliest instance of such recrimination, which became more prevalent with the legend's popularization, and is the more impressive for being unmotivated by Wagnerian enthusiasms: the reviewer's championship rests on the mediaeval sources.

Amongst later objectors Stopford Brooke feels that this 'invented Tristram' is 'admirably done' but objects:

...the old story of Tristram and Isolt is entirely changed and degraded. Tristram is not the Tristram we know, nor Isolt, our Isolt, they are both vulgarised. All the romance is taken out of them; their great and inevitable love is turned into a common intrigue. Their mighty sorrow, which has drawn the heart of the world to it, which so many poems have made into a purification of the soul, and to which Wagner gave all his strength, is left untouched by Tennyson... Noone has a right to alter out of recognition two characters in one of the great poetic stories of the world, and to blacken them. Tennyson ought to have had more reverence and more intuition... To make a great tale in this fashion the stalking-horse of morality, to use it for a passing shot at adultery, to degrade characters which are not degraded, is an iniquity in art.¹⁷⁰

This view demonstrates the strength of the reaction towards the legend which occurred in the last two decades of the century. It also demonstrates how distorted interpretation of the legend had become through Wagnerite enthusiasm. In fact, it is ironical that Brooke accuses Tennyson of changing the legend, since he is equally guilty: Tennyson altered what he found in Malory, Brooke, what is to be found in Gottfried. Each interpretation has a value, but neither is superior and, certainly, neither is more authentic, as Brooke implies. Indeed, one wonders whether a reading of Malory or Béroul unsupported by the Tristan cult would have produced the same convictions about 'inevitable love' and 'mighty sorrow'.

'The Last Tournament' thus never received the consideration it deserved. Peripheral issues such as disenchantment with the prolongation of the Idylls or the Tristan vogue distracted attention in many cases; in others, the

170. Brooke, Tennyson, pp. 332-3.

demand for Beauty and Nobility caused its rejection. However, it is a work of stature. It evokes poignantly the spiritual malaise of a decadent society, blending the opposites of lassitude and violence into a comprehensible pattern. The artistic dimensions are considerable, not merely for the emotional and pictorial elements, but also for the intellectual toughness which underpins the whole structure. It transcends any sociological concern or didactic intention, subsuming the moralistic, and constituting instead the penultimate act in a tragedy which embraces a society in all its aspects. One cannot therefore condemn Tennyson for distorting the legend, since what he creates is a unity which stands on its own terms. Instead, 'The Last Tournament' remains an object lesson in reworking such a source, since whatever Tennyson does to the legend, he gives his version far more significance and weight than the adulatory works which were to follow.

CHAPTER V

Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* : the Pre-Raphaelite reaction

Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* constitutes a reaction against Tennyson's approach to the legend. Nothing could be further removed from the tightly-structured moral criticisms of 'The Last Tournament' than the chaotic abandonment of Swinburne's paean to erotic love. But not only does the work revolt from the mainstream of mid-Victorian Arthurian literature, it also heralds the age of Tristan enthusiasm, since, by coincidence, it treats the legend in the same spirit as Wagner's influential music drama. A sense of release from the mundane, overtones of mystical experience and, above all, a celebration of a love beyond moral censure is common to both and hallmarks all renderings in the three subsequent decades.

This is partly due to the fact that *Tristram of Lyonesse* represents a new movement in the direction of Continental source material. Tennyson had relied almost entirely on British sources and early scholars for the Idylls, mainly because these were the most accessible to begin with, and later, when exotic material was more readily available, because they were more familiar and consistent with his conception. Swinburne, however, turned early to the metrical version of Sir Tristrem, and, for the composition of *Tristram of Lyonesse*, was drawn to the French sources, both verse and prose, which were better known at that later date, and which were more attractive to Swinburne's taste and temperament. But one cannot attribute the reaction entirely to difference in source material. It was also caused by the considerable influence of the Pre-Raphaelites on the young Swinburne, and it is, in fact, possible to see the revolt of the 1880's taking seed in the late 1850's before the publication of the first four Idylls. Thus, the fin-de-siècle enthusiasm can in some respects be traced back to the Jovial Campaign of 1857 when Swinburne came into contact with Rossetti, Morris and Burne-Jones.

The Pre-Raphaelites did not introduce Swinburne to the Arthurian legends. Writing to Paul Hamilton Hayne on the subject of his unfinished 'Tristram', Swinburne remarks: 'The story was my delight (as far as a child could understand it) before I was 10 years old.'¹ Rather, the early contact with the Pre-Raphaelites kindled a latent interest which was to remain with him throughout his life despite his strong predilection for the Hellenic. The Pre-Raphaelites themselves never achieved anything in the literary field which could challenge the Idylls. Their youthful response was incapable of attaining Tennyson's maturity of conception, immersion in the dramatic moment prevented an overall grasp; a crisp sense of detail and fidelity to the originals vied with a desire for mysteries and languors; the physical and spiritual became confused and decoration was mistaken for substance. But, however inadequately their feeling for the Arthurian legend manifested itself, it was nevertheless a unique compound of nostalgia and excitement. Swinburne added to this his own brand of eroticism which, in combination with his desire to shock, led him inevitably to side with the sinners and react against the nobility of Tennyson's 'blameless king'.

Although Swinburne developed definite ideas as to how the Arthurian cycle should be treated,² he never attempted his own version. Instead he concentrated on the Tristan legend. This must be attributed to the influence of Morris, whose interest in the legend was unique at the time, since, with the exception of Arnold's poem, Tristan rarely appeared in contemporary literature except as a name to swell the ranks of the Round Table.³

1. 2nd May, 1877. The Swinburne Letters, ed. C. Y. Lang (1959-62), iii, 332

2. Under the Microscope (1872).

3. Tristram has a supporting role in William Brough's extravaganza, King Arthur or the Days and Knights of the Round Table, performed at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, 26th December, 1863, with 'Miss E. Terrey' in the part. Tristram also appears in Hawker's Grail poem and there is a reference to the marriage of Mark and Iseult in Owen Meredith's 'Elayne le Blanche', Clytemnestra and Other Poems.

Morris, however, displayed an intense interest in the legend in his writing and painting around 1857.

This interest antedates his meeting with Jane Burden,⁴ whom he cast as his Belle Iseult, for he was already embarked on his contribution to the Union frescoes, Sir Palomedes' jealousy of Sir Tristram, when the encounter took place. Although his relationship with Jane Burden and his identification of her with Iseult must have heightened his feeling for the legend, Morris never cast himself in the role of Tristan. At this time he finished La Belle Iseult,⁵ but The Recognition of Sir Tristram by Iseult's Dog remained uncompleted, as did the project for the painting, Tristram and Iseult on the Ship.⁶ Instead it was the hopeless, faithful love of Sir Palomedes which commanded his sympathy. This is particularly noticeable in Morris's writings of the period, as though he could only intimate the lovers' communion obliquely through one who was forever excluded.

From the references to Palomydes in 'King Arthur's Tomb' and 'Sir Galahad' it can be seen that Morris is drawn more to the complexities of his character than the heroics of Tristan. In the abandoned opening to 'The Defence of Guinevere' Morris shows how

The lordly minstrel Tristram, nigh to death
From King Mark's glaive, sat brooding at his home.⁷

But more compelling is the mention of Palomydes trailing the Questing Beast, and it is the mystery of this lonely figure which Morris is at pains to uncover. Morris sees all Palomydes' actions as inspired by Iseult;

4. Rossetti discovered Jane Burden at the end of the long vacation, but the frescoes were begun in June. See Doughty, A Victorian Romantic, p. 237. She replaced Elizabeth Siddal as Rossetti's model for Guinevere.

5. Tate Gallery. Philip Henderson thinks this, Morris's only surviving oil painting, was originally entitled Queen Guinevere. William Morris, his Life, Work and Friends (1967), pp. 48-9.

6. Only a water-colour remains of The Recognition of Sir Tristram. Tristram and Iseult on the Ship may have been sold to T. E. Plint in 1858, or may never have reached completion. See Henderson, *ibid.*, p. 42.

7. The Collected Works, I, xx, ll. 14-15.

consequently he is in continual fear of failure, since this would be to fail his ideal. As Christ tells Galahad, who envies Palomydes' unquestioning devotion,

'needs must roll

The proudest destrier sometimes in the dust
And then 'tis weary work; he strives beside
Seem better than he is...'8

This perpetual attempt at best is an agony to Palomydes, for not only does he fear to degrade his love in defeat but also his hypersensitivity fears the scorn of other knights:

'he fear'd a scoff
So overmuch, though what true knight would dare

To mock that face, fretted with useless care,
And bitter useless striving after love?
O Palomydes, with much honour bear
Beast Glatysaunt upon your shield.'<9

This quotation from 'King Arthur's Tomb' is revealing. First it shows the desire to 'Seem better than he is' and his fear of derision, arising from his being the loser to Tristram for the love of Iseult. Secondly it demonstrates the symbolic link between his 'useless striving after love' and his impossible quest for the Beast Glatysaunt.¹⁰

This is elaborated in 'Palomydes Quest',¹¹ which describes how Palomydes, totally absorbed in his quest, day-dreams of capturing the beast and leading it in triumph through the streets of Camelot. But at the height of his exultation, he is overcome by the despair which had been kept at bay by the activity of the pursuit.

But saying this he sighed, for well he thought:
'When all this noble fame has been compassed
Shall Iseult's love be nearer to me brought?'¹²

8. 'Sir Galahad, a Christmas Mystery', ll. 116-19.

9. 'King Arthur's Tomb', ll. 339-44.

10. Palomedes in Malory is a continual loser to Tristram. At their first encounter during the former's courtship of Isode, Tristram defeats him in a tournament and forces him to leave off armour for a year. viii, 10. Finally Tristram causes him to be christened. xii, 14. Malory alludes only briefly to the Questing Beast. ix, 12.

11. Collected Works, xxiv, 70-1

12. ll. 38-40.

As the forest opens out into a fair and happy landscape, Palomydes thinks of his ideal of beauty with hopelessness. Thus the mood of determination is undermined by the realization of the quest's futility, the collapse occurring most poignantly at the imagined moment of achievement: he cannot hope to gain Iseult's recognition, whatever marvels he performs:

..... and therefore he laid down

His bridle and cried, 'How fair, how fair
You walk within the summer gardens ()
O bright Iseult! - having but little care
For Palomydes, as I ful well know.'¹³

The quest for the beast and the quest for love are indeed only symbolically related and the former has no practical bearing on the latter, for the attainment of the one does not involve the attainment of the other. But the despair which accompanies this insight is only a conscious expression of the bitter despair which underlies all Palomydes' striving.

This preoccupation with the casualties of the legend is extended further in the fragment concerning Iseult of Brittany, entitled 'St. Agnes' Convent'.¹⁴ Iseult and Palomydes are, in fact, complementary, since both attempt to impinge their loves on the central passion and both are repulsed by its inviolability. It is difficult, however, in these verses to determine whether Morris is portraying Iseult during her loveless marriage or after her jealous destruction of her husband.¹⁵ The fragment opens with a typically detailed description of the pleasant ordered life of the convent where Iseult spent her youth. This breaks off with Iseult's opaque recollection of her present miseries:

'... for though I fall
Yards, fathoms down into dull dreams, not at all
Do I the less know what I am and what
I want and shall not get ...

13. ll. 57-60.

14. Collected Works, xxiv, 68.

15. This would have to be taken from the metrical version. It is possible that Morris knew of it via Swinburne, but it would constitute a unique departure from Malory.

Moreover, like a thief
 Comes creeping through a dark house in the night
 My woe comes on me when I think I might
 Be merely wretched with the wind and rain,
 But not for any moment will my pain
 Grow softer even.¹⁶

The ambiguity of Iseult's situation necessarily detracts from this soliloquy as it is unknown whether it springs from a bitter repentance, or the pain of an unloved wife. Although Morris deals with a wife's repentance in 'King Arthur's Tomb' it is more probable that the latter hypothesis obtains here in view of the angle provided by his interest in Palomydes.

Morris's achievement in the Tristan field is hardly great, but it has the virtue of being original: although Arnold was drawn to Iseult of Brittany, he did not consider the outsider's position to the exclusion of the lovers themselves. But, similar to Arnold, Morris's works are suffused with a painful melancholy, which is perhaps more apposite here as Morris is exploring mental states which can have no resolution. This melancholy, as with Arnold, is more temperamental than autobiographical: to cast Rossetti and Jane Burden as the lovers, with Morris as Palomydes, the hopeless onlooker, is to misread later Pre-Raphaelite gossip.¹⁷ Rather Morris's predisposition towards the casualties of the legend was a product of what Doughty describes as 'his innate tendency to self-surrender and self-denial rather than passionate self-assertion'.¹⁸ a tendency which became more pronounced in his relationship with Jane Burden.

Although Swinburne's temperament was almost the opposite of this, Morris inspired him with a lasting enthusiasm for the legend. Predictably, however, it was the lovers themselves who captured Swinburne's interest, and he first attempted a retelling of the story in 1857. The poem, 'Queen Yseult', written in rhyming triplets, was planned in ten cantos according to the

16. ll. 131f.

17. See Doughty, *A Victorian Romantic*, p. 238 and pp. 649-50.

18. Ibid., p. 239.

synopsis which prefaces the manuscript in the style of Malory's chapter headings. These cantos were intended to cover the entire narrative from the birth of Tristram to the death of the lovers, including both traditional and newly-invented episodes.¹⁹

The manuscript of the poem exists in a 100-page notebook and some loose leaves.²⁰ Swinburne had probably finished canto six, 'How Queen Iseult kept her ring' when he came to the end of the notebook,²¹ but the loose leaves do not represent a continuation of the narrative. Rather they constitute a repetition of parts of the sixth canto framed by the poet's reverie while overlooking Carlyel. As there is no distancing technique or reference to the poet persona elsewhere in the work, this may be an attempt to finish the poem. If this is so, it may be assumed that the poem was abandoned at this point and not continued in some manuscript which was subsequently lost. In the quotation below Swinburne could be speaking of a work which is unpolished but complete, perhaps a work based on the outline plan of ten cantos; but it is credible, in view of the loose leaves of manuscript, that Swinburne saw canto six as a convenient place to end the narrative, since it

-
19. 'I Of the birth of Sir Tristram and how he voyaged into Ireland.
 II Of Queen Iseult and of the voyage to Cornwall.
 III How Sir Tristram and Queen Iseult loved each other by the space
 of three years.
 IV How Sir Tristram came to Brittany.
 V Of the bridal night of Sir Tristram and the Lady Iseult aux
 Blanches Mains.
 VI How Queen Iseult kept her ring.
 VII How Sir Tristram came to Joyous Gard.
 VIII How Sir Tristram warred against the Saxons.
 IX How Sir Tristram sent to Queen Iseult.
 X How Queen Iseult came to Sir Tristram.'

The spelling of Iseult in the manuscript was changed to Yseult for publication, probably because it looked more archaic.

20. B.M. MSS. Ashley 4351 and 4441. The 'Queen Yseult' manuscript was discovered in 1918 and published by Gosse in an edition of 30 copies.

21. It is uncertain whether this canto is finished, as it does not rely on any traditional action and constitutes an introspective passage. The last stanza picks up the first line of the canto and the last line of the twelfth stanza, which may intimate that Swinburne intended it as a coda-like ending.

deals with Iseult's grief at what she believes to be the death of Tristram.²²

The first canto of 'Queen Yseult', entitled 'Of the birth of Sir Tristram and how he voyaged into Ireland', was published in the first volume of Undergraduate Papers in December 1857. Swinburne was not happy with the poem and on 13th December he writes to John Nichol the editor, as follows:

... in reperusing my cantos I think they are too imperfect, feeble and unfinished to publish for a year or two. A thorough rewriting would be good for some of them to prevent a monotony of tone as they now stand ... Canto I stands well enough as a separate ballad, which the others would not do.²³

In consequence of this diffidence, the plan for publishing the whole work was reduced to the first canto. The Pre-Raphaelites were instrumental in confirming this change of plan; Swinburne continues:

I read it (canto i) one evening to Morris and the others and they seemed to agree with me... They all, however, praise the poem far more than I (seriously speaking) believe it deserves. Morris says it is much better than his own poem,²⁴ which opinion I took the liberty to tell him was absurd.

It is interesting to note that Swinburne singles out Morris's praise for comment.

The two young men met through Birkbeck Hill on 1st November, when Morris recited the recently completed 'Defence of Guenevere'.²⁵ The impact of Morris's personality combined with the strange novelty of his poetry had an immediate effect on Swinburne and within nine days he had embarked on 'Queen Yseult', as Hill enthusiastically records on 10th November 1857 :

22. The elegiac tones deepen and possibly Swinburne considered treating Tristram's death as fact, perhaps influenced by the third part of Tristram and Iseult. The line 'Pray, sweet saint, for him and her' is reminiscent of the interjections of Arnold's narrator.

23. Letters, 1, 12-13.

24. Possibly 'Blanche' or 'The Willow'. See G. Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne (1928), 1, 136-7.

25. Loc. cit. Lafourcade points out that Hill initiated the meeting, although, according to Cornell Price, Edwin Hatch made the introductions. J.W. Mackail, The Life of William Morris (1899), 1, 127.

Swinburne is writing a ballad of Queen Yseult from the *Morte d'Arthur*. I heard part of it this evening. He is already a true poet. I say it without exaggeration.²⁶

As the letter to Nichol suggests that the work is complete Swinburne must have produced six, or perhaps more, cantos in a maximum period of six weeks, during which he must also have spent time studying Sir Tristrem and Malory. This is proof of Swinburne's enthusiasm. It also argues a fluency in composition which is supported by the lack of correction and later revision in the manuscript.²⁷

Inevitably the poem clearly demonstrates Morris's influence in its ballad-type simplicity, its ritualistic movement and dream-like mood, but it has little artistic merit. The main feature is the monotonous rhyme scheme, hardly suitable for a long poem, which produces a 'dying fall' effect and contributes greatly to the sense of suspended animation which the work achieves. This form was probably suggested by Morris as he used it in one of his earliest poems, 'Twas in Church on Palm Sunday',²⁸ and was continuing to experiment with it in such poems as 'The Eve of Crecy' and 'The Wind'. But although Swinburne follows Morris technically, he does not achieve any of Morris's insight into character and dramatic action, nor does he catch the clarity of Morris's detail and his subtlety of description. He shows a tenacity in following through a long narrative, something which Morris was yet to achieve,²⁹ but in so doing he sacrifices any intensity of effect or structural tension. Admittedly, Swinburne is hampered by his verse form which allows no expansion, but he still fails to produce any of the ballad's dramatic qualities, which the form would allow. The main

26. Letters, I, 12, n.1.

27. There is no more correction in canto I, which was published, than in the other cantos.

28. Sent to Cornell Price in a letter describing it as 'exceedingly seedy'. Mackail, *op.cit.*, I, 53. Collected Works, xxiv, 76-7.

29. Morris probably projected his unachieved Arthurian cycle during this period, of which only fragments remain. Collected Works, I, xix.

difference between the work of the two poets is, however, that Morris follows a personal vision engendered by literary inspiration, whereas Swinburne merely follows a second-hand literary experience.

But although 'Queen Yseult' has no literary merit, it has a claim to historical fame as it constitutes the second reworking of the legend in the 19th century and represents a further step in that it uses the metrical version in an original form as its main source. Here Swinburne diverges from Morris, as the latter's preoccupation with the figure of Palomydes restricts him to Malory, whereas Swinburne only uses Malory as a subordinate source. This divergence is possibly attributable to the earlier influence, of Arnold's Tristram and Iseult which he read at Eton.³⁰ But the poem is not entirely dependent upon traditional sources since Swinburne includes invented episodes and alters some of those taken from the originals.

From the synopsis prefacing the manuscript and the lack of inconsistency within the work, it would appear that Swinburne planned his version of the legend with some accuracy. As it now stands the action appears to slow down after the separation of the lovers at the end of canto three, but this may have been a calculated relaxation before the reconciliation at Joyous Gard and the final events, since Swinburne retains this scheme in Tristram of Lyonesse. (Of course, this may be equally due to a loss of impetus in writing.) Compared with the latter, 'Queen Yseult' appears less faithful to the narrative outline of the originals, but this is not so much due to additions as to omissions and changes made in traditional episodes for consistency's sake.

It is difficult to decide whether the omission of characters was responsible for the omission of episodes or vice-versa.³¹ However, it seems to have been Swinburne's policy to reduce the number of characters in the poem

30. Lafourcade, La Jeunesse, 1, 95 and 131-2.

31. Swinburne may have omitted Bringwain and Meriadok because of the crudity of the substitution and the flour ruse in which they take major roles.

to four: Tristram, Mark and the two Iseults. Rohand and Meriadok³² both appear as anonymous knights with their roles considerably curtailed. The Moraunt episode is omitted, so that the first voyage to Ireland and the circumstances of the second are redundant.³³ Brengwain and Gouvernail do not appear and therefore the circumstances of the love-potion episode are altered³⁴ and the wedding night substitution left out. As in Arnold's poem, Iseult of Brittany is represented as an orphan, thus enabling the omission of Hoel's wars and the adventures with Ganhardin. In accordance with this policy Swinburne seems to have planned a new account of Tristram's wounding. In Sir Tristrem the hero is fatally wounded while attempting to rescue the young Tristrem's lady; Swinburne, however, substitutes a canto entitled 'How Sir Tristram warred against the Saxons' which comes between the Joyous Gard canto and that describing how Tristram sent for Iseult. Since Tristan does not take part in any Saxon wars in the originals, this must be a direct borrowing from Arnold. Lancelot and Guenevere are briefly included from Malory, but in view of Swinburne's determination to keep the characters to a minimum, it is doubtful whether their roles would have been enlarged despite the Arthurian setting of cantos seven and eight.

Where Swinburne does not invent he generally uses Sir Tristrem at least as a basis. In canto one his following of the text is comparatively

32. In Sir Tristrem, fyfte ii, Meriadok, Tristrem's companion, tries to outwit the lovers by the devices of the proposed pilgrimage, eavesdropping at the tryst and the flour on the floor. Swinburne omits this section, merely stating that after three years 'a knight they loved of old' betrayed them. Lafourcade is mistaken in thinking that the snow of canto iii is suggested by the flour on the floor, since Swinburne takes it from Sir Tristrem, ii, 74-6. Lafourcade, op. cit. ii, 46. J.O. Fuller comments on Tristram's passive role, but is inaccurate in stating that Iseult has no motivation, since she carried him to avoid his footsteps showing in the snow. Swinburne: A Critical Biography (1968), pp. 39-40.

33. Tristram goes openly to Ireland on a wooing mission. Swinburne omits the original cause of enmity, the Moraunt fight, and thus can leave out the healing voyage, the secret wooing expedition, the dragon fight and the recognition.

34. Tristram offers the potion in mistake for wine after Iseult's song in canto iii. In Sir Tristrem, ii, 50, Brengwain inadvertently gives the potion after Tristrem's exertions in the storm.

close, extending to such details as the blow delivered by Morgan and the ring given to Tristram by Blancheflour. This fidelity to the source understandably lapses during the introspection of canto five, and canto six is a complete invention which has its fulfilment in 'Iseult at Tintagel' in Tristram of Lyonesse. At times Swinburne adds details from Malory, but these are more incidental: Blancheflour's forest death has more impact than the childbed death of the metrical version;³⁵ Tristram's attraction towards Iseult before the potion may be an echo of Malory;³⁶ and the Arthurian associations in canto four also derive from this source as do the projected Joyous Gard canto and canto eight which would presumably have made use of Arthur's continental wars in Book five.³⁷

In view of this, Lafourcade's statement to the effect that Swinburne could not have used Malory at all - 'noms propres, marches des événements, tout est différent' - must be modified. He continues:

A la fin de 1857 Swinburne n'avait pas lu Malory, ou avait jugé (avec raison) que sa version du roman de Tristram (Livres VIII à XII) était incomplète et de qualité inférieure.³⁸

Considering Swinburne's remark concerning his long acquaintance with the legend, it seems unlikely that he had not read some Malory, as this was the version most available to a child. However, it does seem fairly certain that he did not read the whole of Malory's account at the time in view of his later comment to Burne-Jones: 'I imagine that the M.A. includes all of the ^{huge} prose romance of Tristram which I should want to make use of.'³⁹

35. Alternatively, Swinburne may have taken the details directly from Arnold, or perhaps been directed to Malory, viii, 1, via Tristram and Iseult, ii, ll. 82-8.

36. viii, 9.

37. It might be argued that Swinburne took all these details from Arnold without recourse to Malory, but it is unlikely that he would have planned a complete canto on Joyous Gard on the brief reference found in Tristram and Iseult, i, ll. 202-3. Neither Dunlop nor Scott includes the episode.

38. La Jeunesse, ii, 45.

39. 4th November (1869), Letters, ii, 50.

Swinburne may have read parts of Malory and rejected the version as unsuitable, despite Morris's enthusiasm for Malory and Swinburne's admiration for Morris. He may have chosen the metrical version for the very reason that his friend was working from the prose. He may have taken details which appear in the poem second-hand from discussion with Morris. But whatever the case, it is too sweeping to state that Swinburne had no contact with Malory or had rejected the work entirely; it is perhaps more profitable to state that the metrical version of the legend suited Swinburne's purposes better than the chivalric prose rendering.

Lafourcade's assumption concerning Swinburne's use of Michel's edition of the Tristan romances is also misleading. There is no evidence that Swinburne used the French fragments; certainly there is no textual evidence that he knew Bérout at this time,⁴⁰ as Lafourcade states, although internal proof of Swinburne's ignorance of Thomas in the original is more difficult to substantiate owing to the similarity of Sir Tristrem.⁴¹ Lafourcade rests his case on the fact that Swinburne refers to the work in a critical note to Ballads of the English Border, and on the erroneous assumption that

c'est uniquement dans les extraits de Thomas donnés par F. Michel que Swinburne pouvait en 1857 puiser le récit de la mort de Tristram, récit qui fut d'abord projeté, comme le montre la liste des dix chants...⁴²

The evidence of the ballads is inconclusive, as the collection was compiled between 1859 and 1861.⁴³

40. The reference to the love's duration for three years at the beginning of canto iii is not a memory of Bérout, but is taken directly from Sir Tristrem, ii, 96.

41. Swinburne does not reach the final episode, so it is impossible to know whether he would have used Ellis's account in preference to Scott's continuation. There is no proof of Swinburne's using Michel's text in preference to Sir Tristrem.

42. La Jeunesse, ii, 45.

43. As these were not published until 1909 by W.A. MacInnes, Swinburne could have added the note at any time. But even if he inserted the note during the period of research, there is no reason to suppose that he knew Michel's edition two years earlier.

Moreover, Scott's edition does, in fact, contain two accounts of Tristan's death: Scott's own continuation⁴⁴ and the account of the Douce fragment by Ellis. In the letter to Burne-Jones quoted above, Swinburne mentions Michel's edition as source material for Tristram of Lyonesse, but his description of the Greek fragment⁴⁵ suggests that this is a relatively new discovery: 'Besides the French poems, there is one...in mediaeval Greek of the canine dialect which is at least a good lark.' In any case, it is doubtful whether Swinburne would have had time to read the French version and Sir Tristrem, since he planned the work and began writing within a maximum of ten days.

Considering his relative unfamiliarity with the legend, Swinburne shows an assurance in reducing it to a coherent whole, rather than reproducing all the episodes. But although he cuts through large areas of action, he does not compensate for the loss by emphasizing the interplay of characters. The result is a flat and colourless narrative. Obviously Swinburne's interest lay with the lovers themselves rather than events, but he was at this time unable to communicate his fascination. Gosse rightly dismisses 'Queen Yseult' as without inherent value,⁴⁶ although it is interesting as the earliest example of Pre-Raphaelite influence on Swinburne's work. Later Swinburne himself admits with shame to 'some awful doggerel on the subject of Tristram and Iseult', continuing

If ever you do see these worthless rarities, please remember that they were literally a boy's work - legally an infant's...When I think of the marvellous work that Rossetti...had done at the same age, I am ashamed at the recollection of my rubbish.⁴⁷

But instead of revising the poem, as he suggested to Nichol, Swinburne began a new version of the legend in the following year. He writes to Hatph

44. Curiously Lafourcade goes on to mention Scott's continuation, which undermines his case for Swinburne's use of Michel. *Op. cit.*, ii, 46.

45. Michel, ii, 274ff.

46. Life of Swinburne (1917), p. 44.

47. Letter to Thomas Wise, 27th April, 1888. Letters, v, 235-6.

on 17th February, 1858: 'If you like, and if it prospers, I will send you specimens of a new poem on Tristram, which I am about.'⁴⁸ This was presumably the work represented by the fragment entitled 'Joyeuse Garde'⁴⁹ and the unnamed fragment in the Wise collection reproduced by Lafourcade.⁵⁰ There is no evidence that the work progressed further than this. If 'Queen Yseult' does end at canto six, then Swinburne may have turned to composing a separate poem dealing with the later events of the story. On the other hand, it may be fortuitous that the fragment deals with Joyous Gard, since it was an episode and place which attracted Swinburne. These fragments more probably represent an attempt at an episodic poem on the same lines as 'King Ban' and 'Lancelot' rather than a full-scale narrative work.

The pieces are examples of what were regarded by Lafourcade as Swinburne's deliberate attempts to reproduce Morris's style during the period 1858-60. But according to Lafourcade's conclusions, the Morris poems imitated were not those which were finally published in The Defence of Guenevere, rather 'un groupe important de compositions qui furent omises ou rejetées dans le recueil par Morris comme trop hachées ou moins importantes.'⁵¹ This seems to strengthen the argument for the episodic quality of these fragments, which may have their genesis in such pieces as 'St. Agnes Convent'. One must modify, therefore, Lafourcade's statement that 'Joyeuse Garde' 'n'est qu'une continuation ou un recommencement de Queen Yseult!'.⁵²

It seems reasonable to assume that the two fragments are part of the same poem: the interlacing rhyme-scheme is the same, as is the bitter-sweet mood-painting, the convoluted style and the languorous effect which muffles any emotional impact. The influence of Morris is evident, not least in the

48. Letters, i, 17.

49. Complete Works, i, 104-6. Joyous Gard is a former name for Bamborough castle in Northumberland. See Fuller, Swinburne: A Critical Biography, p. 42. Also 'Northumberland', Complete Works, vi, 256-7.

50. La Jeunesse, ii, 49-50, n. 41.

51. Ibid., i, 146.

52. Ibid., ii, 48-9.

attempt to model Iseult on the same lines as Guenevere. But although stylistic evidence relates the fragments to each other, there is no means of determining their relative positioning, since there is no internal evidence to relate them to the traditional narrative. Apart from the lovers themselves, all that is established is Mark's hatred and Palomydes' worship of Iseult. Instead of retailing events, Swinburne develops the introspective trend seen in 'Queen Yseult', here concentrating on psychological exposition. Consequently it is impossible to say whether Tristram's sad recollections of Iseult's conversation about love and death precedes or follows the meeting and proposed separation.

Whereas 'Queen Yseult' is simple to the point of monotony, these fragments are complex to the point of obscurity. Without such a plan as the narrative framework of the former provided, Swinburne seems unable to control his poetic material. As a result of this, coupled with his attempt to reproduce Morris's stylistic contortions, the effect of these fragments is similar to the confusion of 'St. Agnes' Convent'. Morris's best work in this period arises from his delineation of a character under pressure, but Swinburne is affecting Morris's more languid style, demonstrated in 'Praise of my Lady', and applying it to dramatic situation. Thus expectations of the dramatic are continually baulked by the heavy atmospherics, which are at variance with the nervousness of the characters: Iseult's warning of Mark's hate is pervaded by a dreaminess which renders it unreal. The attempt at psychological exposition is muddled and the sensuality becomes mawkish:

Her grave shut lips were glad to be in sight
 of Tristram's kisses: she had often turned
 Against her shifted pillows in the night
 To lessen the sore pain wherein they burned
 For want of Tristram...⁵³

Detail and imagery are blurred and irrelevant:

Also when Mark is sleeping she will rise
 At midnight; the white flowers inside the moat

Seem in the darkness like wide-open eyes
 Where the dead water swings about the boat.
 Yea, oftentimes her bosom beats too quick
 And a dull sob seems altering her throat...⁵⁴

Essentially the faults spring from imitation. Morris's careful dovetailing of detail, his measured tones, his quiet attempts to touch some core of pain in his characters, are alien to Swinburne's more extrovert style, and his attempt at compression merely results in a lack of definition.

There are, however, two minor points of interest in the unnamed fragment relating to the interpretation of the legend. The first is the apparent use of Arnold's Tristram and Iseult, suggested by the description of Iseult's misery amidst the Cornish court, the dimming of her beauty, the helpless grief reminiscent of Arnold's Iseult of Brittany (an impression reinforced by Swinburne's reference to the fading winter snowdrops), and the tranquillity of death. The second is the reference to the love-death and afterlife: Iseult, in the fullness of her love wishes that she and Tristram could go into a church and there lie down to die together. This simultaneous death was probably suggested by Arnold and the church may have had its origin in the bells and masses of Scott's continuation, or in Weber's account of the death in Heinrich von Freiburg's continuation, which takes place in the cathedral.⁵⁵

The Pre-Raphaelite interest in the trappings of religion and sensual love are brought crudely together. In The House of Life Rossetti attempts in such sonnets as 'Lovesight' to integrate the physical and spiritual aspects of Love through the language of religion taken from the Italian mediaeval poets. Swinburne, on the other hand, works for sensation; the church setting gives the death emphasis by releasing undertones of sacrilege and the macabre. The dead faces shining under the lighted altar are only

54. La Jeunesse, II, 49, ll. 1-6.

55. Sir Tristram (1811), pp. 261-2.

described for surface effect and are not used for any deeper perception into the nature of love or death.

The idea of death being the culmination of love is not new: Swinburne had to look no further than Othello's dying 'upon a kiss'. It was prevalent among the Romantics; Keats writes to Fanny Brawne:

I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the world: it batters too much the wings of my self-will, and would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of it.⁵⁶

This mystical-sensual complex attains one of its highest forms of expression in Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, but it is interesting to see the same idea in its embryonic state in this early fragment. Though Arnold may have given Swinburne the idea of the simultaneous death, it was Swinburne who interpreted it as the climax of love, influenced by Rossetti's vision of transcendental beauty and certain profane conversations such as that alluded to in a letter to Hatch.⁵⁷ Nor was this idea of a Liebste ephemeral, since he elaborates on it in canto two of Tristram of Lyonesse.

The Pre-Raphaelite ethos undoubtedly brought Swinburne to the sensual vision of the after-life which follows the description of the death. The mixture of the physical with conventional Christianity has an obvious affinity with Rossetti's 'Blessed Damozel' despite the inverted situation:

But you far up in heaven would feel me grieve
And hear my heavy tears drop always fed
With some new pain for ever, you would come
With a smooth aureole on your calm head
Clothed round with solemn colours, and speak some
Strange word of comfort till I fell on sleep ...⁵⁸

In addition this passage is reflected in the letter to Hatch cited above, where Swinburne, involved with Browning's Sordello, conjectures on it as follows:

56. 25th July, 1819. The Letters of John Keats, ed. M.B. Forman (1960), p. 32.

57. 17th February (1858). Letters, 1, 17-18.

58. 11. 36-41.

Did the first time Palma's mouth trembled to touch his in the golden rose-lands of Paradise, a sudden power of angelic action come over him? I suspect not utterly companionless...But I suppose he slept years off before she kissed him. In Heaven she grew too tired and thin to sing well, and her face grew whiter than its aureole with pain and want of him. And if, like any other Saint, she wept, the tears fell upon his shut lids and fretted the eyes apart as they trickled.

The idea of passion across the barriers of death seems to have appealed to Swinburne's sense of 'blasphemy and sensuality' which he admits to in the same letter, and which delighted in the idea of heaven comprising a 'rose-garden full of stunners'. Though much can be attributed to Swinburne's youthful facetiousness, he nevertheless shows an enduring and serious interest in the combination of spiritual and sensual. Indeed, this interest may have played its part in bringing him back to the legend ten years later, and it was this confluence of material and poet which marks a new development in the legend, prefigured briefly in this fragment. Independent of, but parallel to Wagner's treatment, the legend becomes a vehicle for erotic mysticism with its hero challenging morality and conventional religion with an undying passion.

It was inevitable that Swinburne should come into collision with Tennyson's interpretation of the Arthurian legend, and that Tristram of Lyonesse should stand as the antithesis of the Idylls, with its elevation of the laws of Amor against the Christian ethic. Swinburne did not formulate his response to the legend in defiance of Tennyson, since this was already developing before the publication of the 1859 Idylls, but the composition of Tristram of Lyonesse did gain impetus from Swinburne's competitive spirit. The Prelude, which exalts Love and his martyrs, among whom is Guinevere, was inspired by an unfavourable reaction to 'The Holy Grail'. He writes to Rossetti:

I am impelled to write on the instant to say how delighted I am to find the Tennysonian seed ('if seed it may be called that seed has none- distinguishable in member joint or limb') bearing the same fruit in your mind as in mine. Having read a few pages of the 'Grail' I fell at once tooth and nail upon Tristram and Iseult and wrote at

an overture of the poem projected, all yesterday. My first sustained attempt at a poetic narrative may not be as good as Gudrun - but if it doesn't lick the Morte d'Albert I hope I may not die without extreme unction.⁵⁹

It is interesting that the Idyll inspired the same spirit of revolt in Rossetti, who had re-embarked on 'God's Graal', a work intended, as he later said, 'to emphasize the marked superiority of Guinevere over God'.⁶⁰

Swinburne's early enthusiasm for Tennyson, seen in the impatience with which he awaited Tennyson's 'finest work',⁶¹ the Idylls of 'Enid' and 'Nimue', sobered after his Pre-Raphaelite phase. In 1865 he dismisses the Tennyson Selection,⁶² with the exception of 'Boadicea',⁶³ as containing some 'new things which are worth looking up',⁶⁴ although in the earlier letter he does go on to praise the Enoch Arden volume of the previous year 'as a new triumph worth any of the old'. It was the establishmentarian side of Tennyson's work which irritated Swinburne and his main quarrel was with the Idylls. On the day he began the Prelude to Tristram of Lyonesse, he writes: 'How admirable is Tennyson's new-style Farmer - and how poor his old style Idylls of the Prince Consort - Morte d'Albert.'⁶⁵ But his objections to the Idylls extended beyond a disapproval of the association between the work and the royal family.

In Under the Microscope Swinburne elaborates the reasons for his dislike and puts forward his own conception of the Arthurian cycle:

It seems to me that the moral tone of the Arthurian story has been on the whole lowered by Mr. Tennyson's mode of treatment. Wishing to

59. 22nd December (1869). Letters, ii, 72-3.

60. Letter to Swinburne, 9th March, 1870. Letters of DGR, ii, 812. On 28th December, 1869, Swinburne had written to William Rossetti, pleased 'that Gabriel...has been stimulated to fresh Arthurian exertion by the completion of Tennyson's Morte d'Albert'. Letters, ii, 78.

61. Letter to John Nichol, 11th February, 1857. Letters, i, 10.

62. A Selection from the Works of Alfred Tennyson, Moxon's Miniature Poets (1865).

63. Letter to Lady Trevelyan, 15th March (1865). Letters, i, 117.

64. Letter to Lady Trevelyan, 10th December, 1865. Ibid., i, 142.

65. Letter to Thomas Purnell, 21st December (1869). Ibid., ii, 72.

make his central figure the noble and perfect symbol of an ideal man, he has removed not merely the excuse but the explanation of the fatal and tragic loves of Lancelot and Guinevere. The hinge of the whole legend of the Round Table from its first glory to its final fall, is in the incestuous birth of Mordred from the connexion of Arthur with his half-sister, unknowing and unknown; as surely as the hinge of the Oresteia from first to last is the sacrifice at Aulis.⁶⁶

Swinburne sees the legend in terms of Greek tragedy: the hero, having made unwittingly a fatal error, awaits the inevitable doom foretold by Merlin. Tennyson, according to Swinburne, debased the legend by creating as hero a 'wittol', 'who remains to the very last the one man in his kingdom insensible of his disgrace.'⁶⁷ It is typical of Swinburne that he must exonerate the lovers, but he does so at the expense of the traditional legend by presenting Guinevere as a woman 'unloving and unloved'. But there is no evidence in the sources that Guinevere was unloved, and Tennyson's viewpoint is as equally valid as Swinburne's; the former exonerates Arthur and the latter excuses the lovers. Swinburne does not discuss whether the Idylls fail within terms of Tennyson's conception, but merely states that 'by the very exaltation of his hero into something more than man he has left him in the end something less.'⁶⁸ The contention thus resolves itself into a temperamental difference with Swinburne's wilder Hellenism opposing the restraint of Tennyson's Virgilian affinities.

Swinburne may have formulated his Greek tragedy theory in 1869 while writing the first canto of Tristan of Lyonesse, and it may well have arisen out of the mistaken impression that the Idylls embodied establishmentarian attitudes. Certainly, Swinburne was irritated by 'the blameless king' and his implied link with Prince Albert. In a letter to Burne-Jones he announces

66. pp. 36-7. This idea had already been put forward by Herbert Coleridge in a prefatory essay to Furnivall's edition of Le Morte Arthur (1864), p. xxxix.

67. p. 37.

68. p. 39.

his intention of keeping his poem 'based on notorious facts':

It must be acceptable for its orthodoxy and fidelity to the dear old story, so that Tristram may not be mistaken for his late Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, or Iseult for Queen Charlotte, or Palomydes for Mr. Gladstone.⁶⁹

But it was Tennyson's moralistic approach which really roused him. In a letter to Rossetti, Swinburne outlines his plan for a section of canto one:

On board ship I mean to make the innocent Iseult ask Tristram about the knights and ladies, and him tell her of Queen Morgause of Orkney and the 'blameless king' and other larks illustrative of the Alberto-Victorian purity of the Court: but delicately, sparing respectfully the innocence of her who was to make the first and greatest scandal there of all time.⁷⁰

Despite the flippancy, there is here a real delight at the prospect of shocking those who have accepted Tennyson's interpretation as definitive.

The passage itself consists of a passionate and sombre exposition of Arthur's incest with Morgause and the impending doom:

'yet in sooth
His age shall bear the burdens of his youth
And bleed from his own bloodshed; for indeed
Blind to him blind his sister brought forth seed,
And of the child between them shall be born
Destruction: so shall God not suffer scorn
Nor in men's souls and lives his law lie dead.'⁷¹

However, despite its relevance to the fate theme of the main narrative, it seems interpolated. There is a lack of subtlety in the introduction of the Arthurian context which gives the passage an undigested quality. This probably arises from its being written in defiance of the Tennysonian approach, rather than as essential to the unity of Swinburne's conception.

Swinburne had begun work on Tristram of Lyonesse or a similar poem in 1868, so his initial idea was not conditioned specifically by a reaction against the Idylls of 1869. The Athenaeum noted in the Weekly Gossip that

69. 4th November (?1869). Letters, II, 50. This letter refutes Fuller's unsupported contention that Swinburne began the first canto in 1875, as he quotes II. 689-722.

70. 22nd December (1869). Letters, II, 74-5.

71. II. 395-401.

Swinburne is composing a poem on Tristram and Yseult and writing an essay on the women of the Arthurian romances for the Early English Text Society, in which Tennyson's views will not be adopted.⁷²

Of these two schemes the latter never materialized and the former suffered a set-back when Swinburne lost some manuscripts in a cab between 15th April and 10th May. William Rossetti identifies these as containing Bothwell and Tristram and Yseult.⁷³ Hotten placed an advertisement in the Times and the Telegraph on 18th June, but there is no evidence that they were ever recovered.⁷⁴ Consequently, it is impossible to say whether this work was a draft of the poem as we know it, although in view of Swinburne's later study of the sources, it is more likely that it was not.

About eighteen months later, in November 1869, Swinburne was again at work on the Tristan legend. He writes to Burne-Jones thanking him for the loan of his Malory⁷⁵ and outlining his proposed sources:

Many thousand thanks for the precious loan - I hardly liked to ask for that little copy, knowing its nearness and dearness to you... I imagine that the M.A. includes all of the huge prose romance of Tristram which I should want to make use of, and that with 1) Malory, 2) Scott's chaos (as to the sweet bits in the notes whereof I quite agree with you) and - if I can get it - 3) Michel's collection of every metrical fragment on Tristram extant, published by old Pickering, I shall have stuff enough to build my poem on.⁷⁶

Some weeks later, on 28th December, Swinburne applies to William Rossetti for

72. Athenaeum (14th March, 1868) p. 394. It is interesting to see Swinburne associated with the new movement in English scholarship.

73. Rossetti Papers: 1862-70 (1903), p. 319.

74. Letters, i, 299. Hotten's advertisement described the loss as '10 to 20 BLUE FOOLSCAP LEAVES OF PAPER, roughly written upon in verse (partly dialogue)'.

75. Lady Burne-Jones identifies the copy bought in Oxford, which presumably is the copy referred to here, as 'Southey's reprint'. Memorials of Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1912), i, 116. There are verbal echoes of the Southey text's version of Malory viii, 34 in 'The Maiden Marriage', where the Stansby texts have variant readings. For example, Southey reads 'thou shouldst be my kinsman', where Wilks and Walker read 'best friend'. Swinburne follows Southey with a reference to 'that kinsman knight'. l. 76. Swinburne does refer to 'that little copy' which seems more consistent with the 1816 editions, but he is probably using 'little' ironically or as a term of endearment.

76. 4th November (?1869). Letters, ii, 50. Michel's edition does not contain every metrical romance of Tristan, as it omits the German and English versions.

any information on other mediaeval sources for his 'moral history of Tristram' and wonders whether the 'Early English people' had unearthed anything.⁷⁷

He then announces his intention of looking at the prose romances of Meliadus, Lancelot and Tristan in the British Museum. It is evident from this that Swinburne was assimilating his source material at the same time as writing the Prelude and canto one, instead of digesting, planning and composing, as was Tennyson's practice.

It can also be seen that Swinburne paid far greater attention to his sources than any previous poet, probably due to the influence of Morris, whose Arthurian poems contain careful detail from the originals. In the letter to Burne-Jones quoted above, Swinburne insists that although he does not intend to include 'a tithe of the various incidents given in the different old versions', he nevertheless wants

'to have in everything pretty that is of any importance, and is in keeping with the tone and spirit of the story - not burlesque or dissonant or inconsistent.'

He continues:

The thought of your painting and Wagner's music drama ought to abash but does stimulate me: but my only chance I am aware will be to adhere strongly to Fact and Reality - to shun Fiction as perilously akin to lying, and make this piece of sung or spoken History a genuine bit of earnest work in these dim times.

Thus, like the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne refuses to compromise with his age, as he felt Tennyson had done in the Idylls. Instead, paradoxically, he determines to be faithful to the sources in order to produce an independent work of art, as well as a work less capable of distortion by contemporary readers. But, it should be noticed, this fidelity is inconsistent, since it only operates according to the dictates of Swinburne's aesthetic concept of the story. In attempting to build up a composite work in this way, Swinburne is at variance with Tennyson, whose method involved a pruning down of material,

77. Letters, ii, 78.

until it formed a coherent and economical shape consistent with his overall conception.

While his Pre-Raphaelite associations led him to the mediaeval sources, they also dictated Swinburne's predilections. It is almost inevitable that the Prelude, begun on 21st December, 1869 and finished by 12th February, 1870, should be a paean to Amor, in view of Rossetti's affinity with the early Italian poets. These writers evolved a type of amatory metaphysics, and Rossetti, while tending to discard the metaphysics, eagerly took up the idea of love as a transcendental force with its own mystique and its own religion, as can be seen in his interpretation of Beatrice. Swinburne turned automatically to these ideas for his Prelude extending the concept of Amor by combining it with his own pantheistic vision, so that Love becomes both immanent and transcendental.

However, Swinburne was also conscious that this concept was not only mediaeval, and therefore justifiable, it was also sacrilegious. Indeed, as Rossetti had loosened the metaphysical from the sensuous, it probably appeared more so. In a letter to Rossetti Swinburne writes:

My poem begins with saying how Love brought these two chosen lovers through

Quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio,⁷⁸

to everlasting hell and honour; between Paris and Helen (as Dante saw them) and Paolo and Francesca, down in

The poor pale world too deep for sun or star
To live in etc.⁷⁹

Thus the voluptuaries of Dante's Inferno become the saints of Amor's calendar.⁸⁰

78. Inferno, v, 113.

79. 22nd December, 1869. Letters, ii, 74. Swinburne quotes down to l.194 of the complete version. This passage must represent some of the very earliest work on the Prelude, since Swinburne implies that he only began it the previous day. Rossetti's interest in Dante drew Swinburne to the Inferno, which in turn developed his interest in the Prose Lancelot via the story of Paolo and Francesca. In this letter Swinburne also deals with peripheral details: the main title, the titles of the first and last cantos; the 'Topsaically' named Palomydes and the need for 'some short telling episodes'.

80. With the exception of Semiramis.

With the Prelude finished Swinburne writes to Rossetti describing the scheme:

I hope you will like a bit in it where I have described Love as having a year with months and signs of the Zodiac of his own, a stunner for each month as sponsor... I have given each stunner a typical jewel-colour or flower-colour for the light of her 'particular star'. I have put as much fancy and light and play of colour into the prologue as possible, to throw out the tragic effect...⁸¹

But Swinburne cannot sustain the seriousness and continues:

and by the grace of the Devil I hope to make the copulative passages of the poem more warm and provocative of sinful appetite than anything my chaste Muse has yet attempted... I trust that my present work may be the means (under Satan) of turning many a heart to perdition.

Even allowing for the tone of this passage, it does demonstrate the attraction which the legend's sensuality held for Swinburne, sensuality which he flamboyantly intended to emphasize for its own sake, rather than subsuming it into the concept of Amor. It may also indicate that he was looking ahead to the end of canto one and 'The Queen's Pleasance'.

After this first enthusiasm, reminiscent of the spirit of the Jovial Campaign, there seems to be a sudden tailing-off of interest, and there are no more references to mediaeval sources or the poem itself for eighteen months. Indeed, it is doubtful whether Swinburne added much more to the poem during this time, since he only completed the Prelude and canto one during the first period of composition, and the letter quoted above suggests that he was contemplating the ending of the latter. The next we hear of the work is a dispassionate reference in a letter to Purnell on 24th August, 1871:

I have some thoughts of publishing separately in some Magazine the 'Prelude' to my unfinished poem of 'Tristram and Iseult' - itself a separate poem of some considerable length and importance, being several hundred lines long. I think I should ask not less than £50 from the

81. 12th February, 1860. Letters, ii, 90. According to Rossetti, Swinburne read his 'Tristram' poem in London during March 1870. At this time he confessed himself baffled by the burden of 'God's Graal' and his abandoning the poem may have dampened Swinburne's enthusiasm. Letter to Swinburne, 22nd March, 1870. Letters of DGR, ii, 823-4.

English magazine in which it would appear; and I should like it to appear simultaneously in America, so as to secure the profits there, whatever they might be.⁸²

The plan was carried out at Christmas of the same year and the *Prelude* appeared in J. H. Friswell's collection entitled Pleasure: A Holiday Book of Verse and Prose, coinciding with the publication of 'The Last Tournament'. Swinburne, replying to Locker's news about this last event, said that he 'did not know Tennyson was about to handle *Tristram*'.⁸³ Moreover, he apparently was not interested. He makes no comment on the work and the antipathy which inspired him to write the *Prelude* seems to have dwindled into indifference. It is ironical that Tennyson's encroachment on his own territory raised no creative response in view of the fevered reaction to the 1869 Idylls.

Before Swinburne recommenced work on *Tristram of Lyonesse* he wrote *Bothwell*, *Erechtheus*,⁸⁴ and the second series of *Poems and Ballads*, *Mary Stuart* and the poems contained in *Studies in Song* and *Songs of the Springtides*, together with some scholarly work on the Elizabethans.⁸⁵ He retained a sporadic interest in the legend, considering a poem in French on the *Prelude* to Wagner's music drama in 1872⁸⁶ and three years later inquiring about a work on *Tristan* in mediaeval art by Hucher⁸⁷ whose uncompleted edition of the

82. *Letters*, ii, 156.

83. 15th November, 1871. *Letters*, ii, 171.

84. He became so involved with *Erechtheus* that the Arthurian characters faded from his mind. Letter to Watts-Dunton. *Letters*, iii, 58.

85. *George Chapman* (1875); *A Study of Shakespeare* (1880).

86. Swinburne mentions in a letter to his mother, 24th July (1872), that a French journal has approached him for a poem: 'I am writing them one on some music of Wagner's....' *Letters*, ii, 182. On 2nd August he identifies the journal as the *Renaissance* and the music as the *Tristan Prelude*. Letter to Powell, *Letters*, ii, 183. As there is no evidence for Swinburne's personal contact with the music, it may perhaps be assumed that his motivation was the Wagnerian literary cult in Paris. See E. Zuckermann, *The First Hundred Years of Wagner's Tristan* (New York, 1964), pp. 83f. There is no trace of this projected poem, but there is a roundel in English on the subject. *A Century of Roundels* (1883).

87. E. F. Hucher, *Lettre à Paulin Paris sur les représentations de Tristan et d'Yseult dans les monuments du moyen âge* (Le Mans, 1871). Letter to Andrew Chatto, 9th September, 1875. *Letters*, iii, 68.

Grand Saint Graal he was currently reading. If his Tristram occupied him at all it was mainly on account of its financial potential. In 1873, when Swinburne was £200 in debt, he wrote to Purnell in desperation:

I am at least that much behind the world, and must soon raise it somehow. Can you suggest any way? say by publishing somewhere the first canto of Tristram separately? If the Prelude was worth £50 this ought to be worth at least three times as much.⁸⁸

Nothing came of this, but the equation of length with money dogs Swinburne's subsequent references to the poem. In 1876 he writes to Watts:

There are 782 lines in the Sailing of the Swallow - for the 'Prelude to Tristram', which has I think just 250 lines in it, King at once offered and paid £50. If this were the normal rate of pay one might manage to live.⁸⁹

A month later Swinburne capitulates ungraciously to the pressure of his financial difficulties:

As to the £50 to be asked for the Sailing of the Swallow, I shall of course be glad to get it - *faute de mieux* - if Chatto is ready to give it - though it is worth at least twice as much as the Prelude (mine, not Wordsworth's) in size and importance.⁹⁰

In view of these depressing negotiations, it is not surprising that Swinburne does not mention the work for the next five years.⁹¹

What is surprising is the fact that he not only mentions the work five years later but also resumes composition. It is impossible to determine what stimulus caused him to take up the poem again after completing Mary Stuart.⁹² The first indication of renewed composition appears in a letter to Watts, written on 21st October, 1881, in which Swinburne states that 'All the second and a great part of the third canto, book or fytte of Tristram

88. 26th November (1873). Letters, ii, 259.

89. 9th October, 1876, Letters, iii, 206. Watts added his mother's name, Dunton, in 1896.

90. Letter to Watts, 10th November, 1876. Letters, iii, 218.

91. With the minor exception of a letter to Paul Hamilton Hayne, in which he anticipates the latter's comments. 2nd May, 1877. Letters, iii, 332.

92. Nor was this subject exhausted, as he contemplated writing her biography on finishing Tristram of Lyonesse. Letter to E. C. Stedman, 4th April, 1882. Letters, iv, 265.

is now transcribed in extensibus and revised ad unguem...⁹³ Work proceeded swiftly. In April of the following year Swinburne writes to Stedman with the news that he is engaged on the last canto.⁹⁴ Later he confesses to Burne-Jones that the arrangement of the whole was problematic, which suggests that he did not compose in narrative sequence and that some sections appearing later than canto one may have been composed before the work lapsed:

I only hope you will like the whole compogician - of which the arrangement gave me some trouble - as well as the separate and disjointed fractions. I have tried to make it a harmonious narrative throughout with as little manipulation as was possible of the different versions of the story - having found in each something too good to lose.⁹⁵

But in spite of this, it seems likely that Swinburne composed at least part of 'The Sailing of the Swan' last, since the whole poem was sent to press in the same month after various details had been checked. On 2nd June he despatched 'the last sheets of the last revise'⁹⁶ and the edition came out in mid-July.

There is a possibility that Watts prevailed upon Swinburne to modify at least the passage in 'Joyous Gard' where the fable of the hawthorn is substituted for the episode of the daring water.⁹⁷ This is suggested by Swinburne's reassurance to William Rossetti:

I think I have treated the legend of Tristram and his virgin wife with all the delicacy consistent with straightforwardness; so I trust there is nothing that could really 'alarm' your sister in that poem.⁹⁸

However, it is doubtful that he modified all the 'copulative passages'. On 17th April he writes to Scott: 'I cannot expect the approbation of the British Matron for certain passages - or indeed for one entire canto - of the leading poem 'Tristram of Lyonesse'...'⁹⁹

93. Letters, iv, 240.

94. Ibid., iv, 265.

95. 22nd ? July, 1882. Ibid., iv, 267.

96. Letter to Lord Houghton, 6th June, 1882. Ibid., iv, 275.

97. ll. 49-56. See Lafourcade, Swinburne, p. 242.

98. 24th May, 1882. Letters, iv, 272-3.

99. Ibid., iv, 268.

and on 6th June he writes in the same vein to Lord Houghton, after the poem had gone to press:

If the British Matron can get over two cantos (the second and fourth) of my 'Tristram', I expect the Mothers of England to rally round a book containing 44 'songs of innocence'...¹⁰⁰

The reception of the poem was, in fact, mixed, but by no means horrified. Among his own circle Burne-Jones seems to have enjoyed Swinburne's readings of such sections as 'Joyous Gard' prior to publication.¹⁰¹ Morris was, however, generally unfavourable, ironically so in view of the fact that he had first inspired Swinburne with the subject. He writes to George Burne-Jones:

As to the poem, I have made two or three attempts to read it, but have failed, not being in the mood, I suppose: nothing would lay hold of me at all. This is doubtless my own fault, since it certainly did seem very fine. But to confess and be hanged, you know I never could really sympathise with Swinburne's work; it always seemed to me to be founded on literature, not on nature.¹⁰²

Morris goes on to champion art 'which is rooted in the deepest reality', apparently unaware of the anomalous position of his own work in the light of this criterion.

On 19th July Swinburne sent Arnold a copy of the poem with apologies for venturing on his territory. He excuses himself on the grounds that

the old legend was so radically altered in its main points by your conception and treatment of that subject, and especially of the circumstances which bring about the catastrophe in all the old French forms of the romance, that the field was really open to a new writer who might wish to work on the old lines.¹⁰³

Arnold, who disliked Swinburne's poetry, wrote to Grant Duff ten days later that Swinburne's habit of using 'a hundred words where one would suffice' always offended him, and that he had not yet faced the poem.¹⁰⁴ Henry Taylor, author of Philip van Artevelde, capped Arnold's charge of verbosity with his

100. Letters, iv, 275.

101. Letter to Burne-Jones, 13th July, 1882. Ibid., iv, 283.

102. Henderson, William Morris, p. 239.

103. Letters, iv, 286.

104. Letters of Matthew Arnold, ii, 200.

own charge of obscurity. Swinburne defended himself on the grounds that it was difficult to recognize the fault in one's own work.¹⁰⁵ Tennyson's reaction is not recorded, but from his previous responses to Swinburne's work, he could not have approved.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, he may not have read it at all.

Adverse comment on Swinburne's style also appeared in the reviews. The Westminster Review¹⁰⁷ echoes Arnold's complaint of 'undue lengthiness', complaining that ideas become

the theme of complicated and endless variations, tortured, twisted, enlarged upon and reiterated, in language always melodious, often eloquent, but also often obscure and forced...

Thus the charge of verbosity leads inevitably to Taylor's charge of obscurity. The Saturday Review¹⁰⁸ likewise criticizes 'the rhetorical overloading of ornament' which 'compels one to read passage after passage several times over before the meaning becomes distinct.' The Pall Mall Gazette,¹⁰⁹ while not expecting the narrative lucidity of Morris, does point out that Swinburne dedicates '200 lines to transcendental reflection while the life of his hero hangs in the balance.' J.A. Symonds, writing for the Academy,¹¹⁰ while appreciating Swinburne's method of telling the story 'in a series of brilliant pictures and elaborated studies', finally regrets that Swinburne had not used the more 'direct and rapid' method of Ariosto.

Swinburne defends his mode of narration in the Dedicatory Epistle to the complete edition of his poems, where he maintains that his aim was to

105. Letter to Taylor, 1st October, 1882. Letters, iv, 302.

106. Tennyson was disgusted by Swinburne's 1866 volume. See Oscar Browning, Memories of Sixty Years at Eton, Cambridge and Elsewhere (1910), pp. 117, and Letters of DGR, ii, 607-8.

107. Westminster Review, N.S. lxi (October 1882), 586-7.

108. Saturday Review (29th July, 1882), pp. 156-7.

109. Pall Mall Gazette (29th July, 1882), p. 4.

110. Academy, (5th August, 1882), pp. 93-4.

present the material

not in the epic or romantic form of sustained or continuous narrative, but mainly through a succession of dramatic scenes or pictures with descriptive settings or backgrounds: the scenes being of the simplest construction, dialogue or monologue without so much as the classically permissible intervention of a third or fourth person.¹¹¹

He underlines the point by referring to The Tale of Balen as his 'only narrative poem'. It must be suggested, however, that Swinburne's statement may have been made as a result of hindsight; at the least he must have modified his idea of the poem's narrative structure on his resumption of the work in 1881, for in 1869 he mentions Tristram as his 'first sustained attempt at narrative' alongside Morris's Gudrun and the Idylls.¹¹² Indeed, he still refers to his 'narrative poem' as late as April 1882,¹¹³ although this may be a loose term rather than a reliable definition.

But while Swinburne seeks to defend his presentation of the material, he does not defend himself against the stronger charge by the reviewers, that of the suitability of the subject matter. The Saturday Review leads the attack by asserting that the legend is tainted by 'the fantastic morality and paradoxical casuistry of the Courts of love'. Its archaism, therefore, ensures that

the ideas of love which are so copiously illustrated in the legend of Tristram can no longer win sympathy and are scarcely even intelligible ... But Mr. Swinburne has chosen to stand on the ancient paths, and has rarely avoided even the parts of the legend which are least apt for modern handling. The result only confirms our opinion that the story of Tristram and Iseult were better let alone by poets...the tale is one of low intrigue...

The British Quarterly¹¹⁴ is more blunt in its charges, stressing not the incomprehensibility of the lovers' conduct, but its immorality: 'the subject is scarcely fit for modern treatment, and Mr. Swinburne has been only too faithful to the most repulsive phases of it.'

111. The Poems of A. C. Swinburne (1904), I, xvii.

112. Letter to Rossetti, 22nd December, 1869. Letters, II, 73.

113. Letter to Stedman, 4th April, 1882. Ibid., IV, 265.

114. British Quarterly, LXXVI (October 1882), 476-8.

Indeed, Swinburne renewed doubts concerning his 'ethical tendencies' by heightening the legend's sensuousness:

He is as impassionedly erotic as it is possible to be - the imagination at one or two points seems to become giddy and reel in the realization of indulgence, and recovers itself only under the restraint demanded by the verse.

The Academy considers more sympathetically the suitability of the subject, passing lightly over the crudities, but concluding that the poem fails because of the non-integration of mediaeval material with modern method, seen, for example, in the incongruity of the love-potion. As there was an animus against the legend, either on moral or artistic grounds, Swinburne's adherence to its action was thus seen as unfortunate, and the Saturday Review praised the circumspection of Arnold and Tennyson in their alteration of the originals. However, none of the reviewers, with the possible exception of Symonds, looks further than the retailing of traditional episodes to consider where Swinburne has imposed a different interpretation on his material.

There were, nonetheless, some supporters. The Gentleman's Magazine¹¹⁵ was highly enthusiastic, particularly regarding the heroic set-pieces, commenting that 'Nothing in its way finer or more poetical than this can be found in English literature'. The Athenaeum¹¹⁶ comments on the 'heroic splendour of the erotic passages', but it is significant that the reviewer is already a devotee of the legend and shows considerable knowledge of the sources, upholding Gottfried's version as the finest. Although he congratulates Swinburne, it is possible that he would have been less sympathetic had he been less committed to the legend. The reviewer for the Pall Mall Gazette, on the other hand, is a devotee of the poem for its own sake, despite finding the 'amorous passages a little overdone'.

Had Tristram of Lyonesse appeared a decade or so earlier, Swinburne

115. Gentleman's Magazine, ciii (September 1882), 384.

116. Athenaeum (22nd July, 1882), pp. 103-5.

would have risked comparisons with Tennyson, but with the waning of enthusiasm for the Idylls, there are very few instances of such a comparison. The Westminster Review looks in vain for the 'strange, wild sweetness of the Idylls', but finds the lack compensated by the finely drawn characters and Tristram's heroic dimensions. In consequence, the poem has a much fairer hearing, the metrics in particular coming in for a considerable share of attention, with most reviewers remarking on and in some cases analyzing the way in which Swinburne gives new fluency to the heroic couplet. But, while the poem does not suffer from competition with the Idylls, its beauties and its versification are viewed rather as saving graces than the final touches of perfection.

With the exception of the Gentleman's Magazine, no review is unreservedly enthusiastic. The Westminster Review considers the work 'a little less than perfection' which appears a relatively extreme judgment. A more representative view would seem to be that embodied in the doubtful comment by the British Quarterly Review that 'Mr. Swinburne's new volume will, we think, add to his fame'. Various factors confused the issue, and with the possible exception of Symonds, none of the reviewers attempted any courageous or unorthodox approaches. The high standing of the poet, despite his past reputation as an enfant terrible, seems to have induced a caution which obviated a coming to grips with his style and the amatory-heroic treatment of his subject. In addition, the subject itself complicated the issue, as those who were less familiar with, or prejudiced against, the legend, were less likely to condone the poem. Publication a decade later would have probably encountered more success because of the growing Tristan enthusiasm.

With the exception of the Tristanites,¹¹⁷ later critics also seem bemused; there is a prevalent feeling that the poem just misses the mark of greatness,

117. Jessie Weston, for example, considered it 'beautiful', comparing it favourably with Wagner's Tristan. The Story of Tristan and Iseult (1899) I, xiv.

but the reasons postulated are various. Symonds at the time of publication demonstrates the sort of confusion which was to prevail. He argues on the one hand that the poem fails because mediaeval matter and modern method are at variance; but on the other hand he states that the poem is essentially modern, as it represents 'an epic of human passion, viewed in its enduring elements, treated with modern subtlety and a modern sense of the paramount importance of emotion',¹¹⁸ a view which suggests the aforementioned conflict has been resolved. Gosse finds the answer to the poem's comparative failure in the fact that Swinburne's genius was lyrical and not narrative:

There is a total want of energy in the narrative...there are no exploits, no feats of arms; the reader, avid for action, is put off with pages of amorous hyperbolical conversation between lovers, who howl in melodious couplets to the accompaniment of winds and waves.¹¹⁹

This implies that Swinburne has failed to write a conventional narrative poem, balked by a lyrical tendency over which he had no control. Some years later Harold Nicolson, wondering how the poem 'just fails to be a masterpiece', surmises that its sense of lethargy derives from the long lapse in composition.¹²⁰ He does not prove this, however, by demonstrating that the Prelude and first canto are any less lethargic than the rest, nor does he take into account the fact that Swinburne must have been re-inspired in some way to have contemplated finishing the work at all. And Lafourcade seems to be advocating some sort of mediaeval pastiche when he criticizes the poem's 'fleshpainting' as nearer the Renaissance in feeling than the Middle Ages; he unaccountably 'regrets a little the awkward unfinished ballad which Swinburne composed at Oxford'.¹²¹ The main problem seems to be that Swinburne frustrates expectations of a mediaeval-type narrative, with an imbalance of lyricism

118. Academy (5th August, 1882), p. 93.

119. Life of Swinburne, pp. 262-3.

120. Swinburne (1926), p. 178.

121. Swinburne: A Literary Biography, p. 292.

and the introduction of elements which are not reminiscent of the Middle Ages.

Moreover, it would appear that these expectations are justified, particularly in view of his declaration in the Dedicatory Epistle:

My aim was simply to present that story, not diluted and debased as it had been in our own time by other hands, but undefaced by improvement and undeformed by transformation as it was known to the age of Dante wherever the chronicles of romance found hearing, from Ercildoune to Florence...¹²²

His scrupulous attention to sources confirms this. However, because his method involves 'a succession of dramatic scenes or pictures' the action tends to be telescoped between tableaux, soliloquies and dialogues. Consequently, while the essentials of the action are in most cases traditional, the effect is often one of unfamiliarity and confusion.

In 'The Sailing of the Swan' we learn of the rudderless boat, Tristram's tuition of Iseult, the recognition, and the Morolt fight, all in a retrospective parenthesis. Moreover, this is the order in which we learn of the events so that Tristram's anonymity appears at first mere caprice. These episodes are taken from Sir Tristram,¹²³ but Swinburne then turns to Malory for his revelation of Morgause's incest¹²⁴ and probably to the prose Merlin for the story of Merlin's birth.¹²⁵ The prose Lancelot provides details of Lancelot's upbringing by Nimue and the Galehaut episode.¹²⁶ After this wealth of information has been retailed by Tristram to Iseult, the canto ends

122. Poems (1904), I, xvii.

123. Swinburne takes the pattern of events from Malory, however, telescoping the two voyages and omitting the dragon fight. The recognition thus leads on from the healing of Tristram's wound. Swinburne invents a peace during which Tristram fetches Iseult as Mark's bride, whereas in both Malory and Sir Tristram Tristram is purposely sent into peril on the pretext of a wooing mission. Malory viii, 19; Sir Tristram, ii, 20-3.

124. i, 17.

125. Ed. H.B. Wheatley, EETS, x, xxi, xxxvi, (1865, 1866, 1869).

126. Rossetti retailed an account of the Galehaut episode to Swinburne, taken from a 1533 edition on sale at Molini's. See letter to Swinburne, 9th March, 1870. Letters of DGR, ii, 812.

with a description of the storm and the drinking of the love-potion, derived from Sir Tristrem.¹²⁷

'The Queen's Pleasance' opens with the longest stretch of straight narrative until the penultimate canto. This comprises the arrival in Cornwall, the substitution of Brangwain¹²⁸ and an amalgamation of the Irish harper episode from the metrical version with Palamedes' abduction of Iseult from the prose.¹²⁹ Swinburne substitutes the more heroic battle of the latter for the trick whereby Tristrem regains Ysonde in the former and omits the various ruses which he employs to come to her. Then he runs the Palamede episode straight into the Morrois interlude, suggested by the week's forest idyl, which follows the Irish harper episode in Sir Tristrem.¹³⁰ But despite Swinburne's omissions this first section of the poem represents a studious compilation from the sources and reflects Swinburne's desire to include 'everything pretty'. Hereafter Swinburne seems more content to follow the main lines of the narrative and exclude background detail, a shift of emphasis which probably coincides with the later resumption of the work.

In 'Tristram in Brittany' the narrative lapses badly.¹³¹ We are not informed why Tristram has not seen Iseult for three years, although we gather that he is banished. Somewhat ineptly the reasons for Tristram's banishment occur retrospectively during his internal debate in 'The Maiden Marriage'.

127. ii, 49-52. Swinburne attempts to tighten the casual motivation in the sources by having Iseult take the potion from the sleeping Brangwain.

128. Sir Tristrem, ii, 54.

129. Ibid., ii, 63-74; Malory, viii, 30-1.

130. Sir Tristrem, ii, 73. Between this and the Morrois episode occur the events which lead to the ambiguous oath, the Urgan expedition, Tristrem's recall and the reawakening of suspicion.

131. The lines 'Iseult my love, Iseult my queen twice crowned/ In thee my death, in thee my life lies bound' in the episode of the ambiguous song recall Gottfried's 'Isot ma drue, Isot m'amie/ en vus ma mort, en vus ma vie'. This is the only example of a possible knowledge of Gottfried, and it could be that Swinburne found the lines quoted elsewhere.

Here, after dropping the ring, Tristram swiftly remembers the discovery in the woods,¹³² the return and betrayal, and finally the chapel leap.¹³³ Whereas this does supply the missing causal link between the second and third cantos, it inevitably distracts from the dramatic situation of Tristram's wedding night dilemma. In the Sneyd fragment, which Swinburne probably knew, Tristan is obsessed in the long deliberation passage with the image of Isolt, while, at the same time trying to justify his marriage.¹³⁴ Swinburne's Tristram, on the contrary, mentions Iseult of Cornwall once, and instead belatedly reviews his past history.

'Iseult at Tintagel' is non-traditional,¹³⁵ but possibly owes something to the last canto of 'Queen Yseult', together with Swinburne's dramatic predilections. 'Joyous Gard', however, follows the structural pattern of the first and fourth cantos, in that it reviews past events within a traditional episode, recounting Ganhardine's discovery of his sister's virginity, his reproach to Tristram and their journey to Iseult within the context of the Joyous Gard sojourn.¹³⁶ 'The Wife's Vigil' balances 'Iseult at Tintagel' and is Swinburne's own creation, anticipating the revenge of the last canto.

'The Last Pilgrimage' moves away from this introspection and presents a fairly coherent and consecutive narrative. As Malory abandons the lovers

132. Sir Tristrem, ii, 20-5. Swinburne omits the details of Mark's glove and the dividing sword. The latter causes inconsistency in view of the sensuousness of canto ii.

133. Malory viii, 32. Tristram's speech to his captors and his attack on Andred constitute the only example of sustained dependence on a source. Swinburne runs the escape straight into the Brittany episode, omitting the intervening events in Malory.

134. Michel, Receuil, iii.

135. Swinburne visited Tintagel in 1864.

136. The daring water episode is altered, but Ganhardine's reproach, ii, 38-40, echoes Sir Tristrem, iii, 56. Ganhardine's mistaking Brangwain for Iseult derives either from the first Strasbourg fragment, Michel, op. cit., iii, or Weber's account of Heinrich von Freiburg's continuation. The reactions of Lancelot and Guinevere to Tristram's marriage and Joyous Gard are taken from Malory viii, 36-7; x, 52 and 86.

at Joyous Gard, Swinburne returns to Sir Tristrem and makes use of the Urgan episode which occurs just after the ambiguous oath as a means of separating his main characters.¹³⁷ In his description of the battle he faithfully includes the severing of Urgan's hand, the bridge, the cleaving of Tristram's shield, and the two final blows. Likewise the circumstances of the young Tristram episode which follows are also taken from Sir Tristrem,¹³⁸ even down to the curious detail of the suppliant's being barefoot. From the evidence of this canto and the account of the betrayal and chapel leap in 'The Maiden Marriage' it would appear that Swinburne leant most heavily on his sources when describing heroic action.

The events of 'The Sailing of the Swan' come from the Douce fragment originally, probably via Scott's continuation rather than Ellis's account. Like Scott Swinburne omits the storm and calm which hamper Iseult's journey and his account of the two deaths, omitting the speeches, is swift and effective. Mark's burial of the lovers may have its origin in Weber's article rather than Arnold's poem, as the 'Branching tracery' seems to be an echo of the briar legend.

It will be seen from this analysis that Swinburne uses a wide range of sources with fidelity. However, this fidelity is limited and Swinburne is mistaken in thinking that his poem represents the legend 'as it was known to the age of Dante'. Firstly, he selects from the available material in accordance with his aesthetic, so that his omissions inevitably alter the balance of the legend: the omission of the tricks and disguises, common to all versions, removes the quality of desperation and degradation, for example. Secondly, he selects from two distinct branches of the legend, the prose and the metrical, where fidelity to the one is only achieved at the expense of the other, as is seen in the two differing accounts of the death. Consequently

137. Sir Tristrem, iii, 1-9.

138. Ibid., iii, 91-5.

Swinburne's aim as presented in the Dedicatory Epistle must be qualified, since it could only be effected by a recapitulation of one of the originals. What Swinburne does achieve is a new combination of traditional details.

This combination is dictated by Swinburne's conception of the legend, which was alien to the mediaeval vision. It might represent the essence of the legend for Swinburne, but this is not the same thing as being mediaeval. In fact, Swinburne's conception of the legend is synonymous with his conception of the love as a transcendental passion. The mediaeval writers, however, although their interpretations vary considerably, agree in placing an emphasis on the conflict between love and society. Swinburne sees the legend in inflated terms, the passion being sublime, the lovers heroic and their career doomed, whereas the mediaeval sources set the action against certain systems and institutions so that the lovers' dimensions never become disproportionate. As a result Swinburne can only select from the originals those episodes which are consistent with his vision, such as Tristram's three heroic fights. Thus, his desire for authenticity achieves only a very limited result, since his overall interpretation is at variance with that of the versions whence he draws his material.

This manifests itself in an essential dichotomy: the narrative becomes divorced from the lyrical-dramatic areas of the poem. Swinburne's interpretation of the legend tends towards an introspective, philosophical and static treatment. As a result the action is separated from the generative force of the poem, the delineation of passion, and is mostly relegated to the function of setting and explaining the individual scenes. This does not apply to the central action, the love-potion, marriage and death, as here the action is directly connected with the quality of the love itself, rather than with practical situations brought about by the love. But for the most part Swinburne's lovers are fixedly contemplative and not driven to risk life and honour for physical desire, although their love is undeniably sensuous.

They communicate on a spiritual level, symbolized by fires, sunsets, roses and waves, but their passion is not released into action. Consequently the narrative element is crowded out and comes to seem unnecessary to the central area of the work. Hence arises the impression that there are two poems present, one narrative and one lyrical-dramatic.

Hence also arises the sense of frustrated expectations. The narrative is often little more than a gloss on past events to give the present scene some context. The recognition scene and the Morolt fight for example are summarily dismissed, whereas in the original versions they are crises of suspense. At other points the action seems to be something of an indulgence: the Urgan and young Tristram fights are set pieces for Tristram's heroism but they seem tangential to the centre of the poem. Consequently, interest through narrative is either completely lacking or is aroused to no profitable end, since the meaning of the poem stops short of the external action.

Swinburne's vision of transcendental love also precludes the dramatic delineation of character. In 'Queen Yseult' Swinburne reduced his dramatis personae to four. Here he adds Brangwain and Ganhardine, but because they have little to do with Swinburne's treatment of the love they only appear as the exigencies of the narrative dictate. Mark too has only a minor role and his attitude remains undefined, since Swinburne is not concerned with conflict. Iseult of Brittany has a necessarily enlarged part in the later stages of the poem, but her transition from a colourless bride to a jealous and vindictive woman is not described. This apart, it is with Iseult of Brittany that Swinburne makes his most successful attempt at integrating character with action.

He demonstrates her terrifying change of heart in 'The Wife's Vigil' which balances 'Iseult at Tintagel'; in the latter Iseult of Ireland battles with her God on account of her love and in the former Iseult of Brittany enlists the support of her God on account of her hate. Her enforced virginity

has generated a fanatical loathing and she regards her revenge for betrayal as righteous and just. This bitterness is sustained through the end of 'The Last Pilgrimage', where she is identified with images of dark and death, and through the counterpointed duet of love and hate in 'The Sailing of the Swan'. Finally the accumulated emotion is released in the fatal lie of the black sails. Although the pounding insistence of her monologue is substituted for any more subtle development, the character does have a comparative tension and definition which maintains interest.

It is unfortunate that as the delineation of the lovers has no definition, Iseult of Brittany makes a greater impact. The paradox of her situation, the virgin-wife, finds no answering paradox in the situation of the lovers, because Swinburne has abandoned any view of their love which could lead to this. They begin as conventional heroic figures and they remain so. Having been divorced from the traditional plot and counter-plot, they have nothing to do but talk of their love. After drinking the love-potion they are happy together and miserable apart, although Tristram discovers pantheistic consolations, but their joy and distress do not mould them into individuals. In an attempt to elevate their love Swinburne removes all external and internal pressures so that the characters inevitably become unfocussed.

This at times leads to contradiction. Although Tristram and Iseult are the vehicles of love, they have little internal compulsion to be together. This is particularly true of Tristram. While he abstains from consummating his marriage, in 'Joyous Gard' he does not return to Iseult because he cannot live without her, but because he wishes to justify himself to Ganhardine. Admittedly this follows Sir Tristrem, but there are many occasions there when Tristrem does act under the compulsion of the potion. In Tristram of Lyonesse the only point where he seems impelled by the potion is in 'The Sailing of the Swan' where he awaits Iseult's coming, but even so

the tension is not sufficient to sustain the impact of the love-death. Indeed, it has not the significance of the originals, since nowhere have the lovers demonstrated that they would risk death rather than separation.

The fact that there is no psychological exposition of the lovers, because they are identified with a transcendental state, again leads to a frustration of the reader's expectations since most of the poem involves monologue or dialogue. Swinburne evidently saw the poem as possessing dramatic qualities as he refers to it in terms of the Classical theatre, and the form supports this. But the form and the content are at variance, since the content appertains largely to the quality of love or the philosophy of nature, rather than arising inevitably from the stresses of character in a specific situation. Separated from Iseult, Tristram considers man, fate and the natural world; separated from Tristram, Iseult considers God, death and sin; together they contemplate absorption into the elements of nature. Nowhere do they consider each other directly and one remains unconvinced of a relationship. In addition, partly because of the irrelevance of the external action, and partly because the characters have no internal tensions, one remains unconvinced of their being in the grip of an inexorable fate.

Although Swinburne's concept of love frustrates expectations of narrative and dramatic interest, one could perhaps forgive this if the concept itself were sufficiently compelling. However, it is only vaguely thought out and is confused by attempts to make it arrestingly heroic. In a letter to Isa Blagden Robert Browning comments: 'As to Swinburne's verses, I agree with you. They are "florid impotence" to my taste, the minimum of thought and idea in the maximum of words and phraseology'.¹³⁹

139. 22nd March, 1870. Critical Comments on A. C. Swinburne and D. G. Rossetti, ed. T. Wise (1919), pp. 6-7.

This lack of intellectual centre obtains here. Swinburne does not work out a metaphysical system analogous to that of the mediaeval Provençal poets, whereby to express the gradations of love from physical to spiritual. Instead he introduces metaphysical concepts for their emotive value rather than as a means of analysis.

In the Prelude Swinburne sees love as a deity, having his own heaven and his own martyrs; but he fails to place him in any sort of hierarchy, nor even in a consistent relationship to the lovers. In 'Iseult at Tintagel', Iseult does not pray to Amor, but prays instead to the conventional God in a defence of her profane love. This conflict with the Christian code, with all its powerful overtones of hell and heaven, inevitably lends the passion a weight and significance far outside the scope of a prayer to Amor. But as there is no defined relationship between God and Amor, confusion results, especially as the Prelude suggests that the latter is in some sense an aspect of the former.

This is heightened by the introduction of pantheism. Amor is represented as both immanent life force and transcendental deity in the Prelude, but Swinburne chooses to ignore the latter. Consequently instead of relating the lovers' talk of death in 'Joyous Gard' to the dark heaven of the lovers metamorphosed from the Inferno, he relates it to an absorption into Nature, personified somewhat surprisingly in the figure of Nimuë.¹⁴⁰ Just as Swinburne discards the idea of Love's heaven, so he discards Christian eschatology after Iseult's monologue and one feels the problem of morality versus unlawful love has been raised merely for the aggrandisement of the passion.

This undermining of the 'Iseult at Tintagel' canto through lax

140. This reinterpretation of the Merlin and Nimuë legend may have been originally suggested by the association of the two stories in Arnold's Tristram and Iseult.

thinking is unfortunate since it is the nearest the poem comes to a sustained conflict between love and a comparable force. Here Swinburne is on characteristic ground. Iseult bargains with her God for Tristram's reprieve from damnation at the cost of her own, although this is confused by her final plea against separation. In channelling outlawed love into the ways of self-sacrifice Swinburne implicitly indicts the moral laws of Christianity and the God who demands their keeping. This canto represents yet another variant on the conflict expressed in 'Hymn to Proserpine', and despite its substitution of refrain for structure, is the nearest Swinburne comes to demonstrating love in action.

The doctrine of pantheism, however, provides the poem with no tensions. It enables Swinburne to use imagery of heat and light, flowers and foam with some relevance to the general theme of nature, but it also encourages a mechanical associational usage:

But as the maiden mountain snow sublime
Takes the first sense of April's trembling time
Soft on a brow that burns not though it blush
To feel the sunrise hardly half aflush,
So took her soul the sense of change, nor thought
That more than maiden love was more than nought.¹⁴¹

Whereas this use of imagery lends itself to the lyric, it cannot sustain a work of this length. The lack of definition, modulation of tone and variety of effect create a monotony. Because the poem continually aims for the transcendental level, which does not lend itself to delineation but rather to intimation, the imagery seems limited and predictable, although paradoxically it is striving continually for expansive and emotive effects. The recurrent images do not gel into patterns, illuminating central relationships; instead they substitute decoration for elucidation. It is not sufficient to associate Tristram with flame and light in such a way as to blur the distinctions between the components of the image, since they should relate under tension.

Although this slackness is a feature of Swinburne's writing, it is exaggerated in Tristram of Lyonesse because of the lack of intellectual centre. The doctrine of pantheism is used to elevate the passion, to give it an evocative context and by placing it squarely in the realm of nature, to remove it from moral censure. But it does not explore the relationship between man and nature because Swinburne merely states that the spirit of love permeates all life. He does not go further than this, and to describe the lovers' feelings in terms of natural phenomena only reiterates the basic premise.

In addition, the introduction of pantheism makes the greatest contribution towards the poem's failure as a love story, since it dissipates the lovers' relationship and gives them an outside point of reference. This is particularly true of Tristram. In 'Tristram of Brittany' he is relieved of his Weltschmerz by some sort of pantheistic experience, which accords awkwardly with the fact of his hopeless separation from Iseult. The origins of Tristram's philosophical development are therefore extraneous to his passion, and the two have no fundamental connection. In 'Joyous Gard' Tristram indoctrinates Iseult, who finds comfort in the idea of being subsumed into the universe after death. Finally, in 'The Last Pilgrimage' he reaches not only the peak of his heroic stature but also his closest communion with the life forces of nature, completely independent of Iseult. The pantheistic elements are thus at variance with a delineation of passion for two main reasons: first they provide a diversion and consolation for the passion, which inevitably lowers its credibility, and secondly, they dissipate the human element by blurring the distinctions between man and nature, life and death, thereby reducing the emotional impact.

Contemporary reviewers felt the pantheistic elements to be unfortunate, but on the grounds of their being unmediaeval:

The most undramatic and anachronistic passages are those where Mr. Swinburne puts into the mouth of Iseult longings for adoption into the great whole, too much after the manner of George Eliot...¹⁴²

Swinburne defends himself in the Dedicatory Epistle by saying that the philosophical passages are no more anachronistic than the 'lecture of Theseus after the obsequies of Arcite'.¹⁴³ This comment is just, and indeed, mediaeval writings were far more philosophical in outlook than Swinburne's poem. There can be no quibble with the introduction of philosophy into a mediaevalistic poem; but as the pantheism isolates Tristram and obscures his relationship with Iseult it has no place in retelling the story, despite its part in creating an heroic dimension.

The central problem of the poem is that Swinburne has no clear idea of what he means by a transcendental passion. When the first series of Poems and Ballads came out, the Saturday Review¹⁴⁴ commented that Swinburne's 'ideal of the God of Love (was) a sort of Moloch, lapping up blood like wine'. Here there is little of the bitter and perverted lust found in the earlier poems, although Swinburne set out in 1869 with the gleeful intention of shocking his public. Instead, he attempts to describe a passion which he sees as great and tragic in terms of greatness and tragedy, without the human elements essential to a discussion of love. Apparently at a loss as to how to present a reciprocated love, Swinburne makes continual attempts to impress the reader with unrelated ideas of fate, Nature, God, Amor and man, without allowing the passion to speak for itself. This makes for a lack of coherence and development.

142. British Quarterly Review, cxxvi (October 1882), 477.

143. Poems (1904), p. xvii.

144. Saturday Review, (17th November, 1866), pp. 600-1.

The poem thus deteriorates into a series of set-pieces. In consequence, the reader, looking for some major focal point, is continually frustrated.

Tristram of Lyonesse is in many ways the antithesis of the Idylls but not as Swinburne hoped: Tennyson's work has a toughness, variety and progression to it whereas Swinburne's is overwrought and flaccid. This springs from Tennyson's emotional and intellectual commitment to the central themes of the Idylls, which controlled his material. Swinburne, on the other hand, has only an aesthetic commitment to the material; he wants to include 'everything pretty', and so his work becomes a heterogenous collection of elements whose raison d'être is to impress the reader with a rarified emotional effect. Indeed, Swinburne's aestheticism leads him into just as much distortion of material as he accused Tennyson of in Under the Microscope: he omits the ruses because they are not pretty, while Tennyson omits Arthur's incest because it is not consistent with his concept of Arthur's spirituality.

Strangely enough, however, Swinburne's poem has affinities with Wagner's music drama. Like Swinburne Wagner concentrates on an exposition of sublime passion with a minimum of action, relegating much of the traditional material to a recapitulation of previous events, as in Isolde's narration. The reduction of the legend to essentials is compensated by the psychological exposition in the music and the philosophical content of the libretto, which coalesce thought and feeling. Swinburne has only words at his disposal, and in attempting to create verbally something analogous to the dimension of music, loses their meaning and definition.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, the scenes in 'The Queen's Pleasance' and 'Joyous Gard' which correspond to the love duet of act two, have none of the development,

145. The Saturday Review commented: 'We have some difficulty in taking this kind of thing seriously. Any man who abandoned his mind to it could reel it off for hours together.'

intellectual or emotional, of the latter.

But Swinburne and Wagner have similar responses to the legend, however successful or unsuccessful their means of presenting them. For both the drinking of the love-potion is a crucial event which puts the lovers on an exalted level, although Wagner develops this to demonstrate the conflict between the worlds of night and day, while Swinburne merely indicates that the lovers participate in a transcendental experience. But because the lovers are separated from the common world, they are inevitably Todgeweihten. Wagner underlines this with Brangaene's substitution of the Liebestrunk for the death drink. Swinburne, picking up echoes from the mediaeval sources, describes the effects of the potion as follows:

And all their life changed in them, for they quaffed
Death; if it be death so to drink, and fare
As men who change and are what these twain were.¹⁴⁶

For Wagner's lovers death is a longed-for release into night, an idea which Swinburne reiterates in the Prelude, but does not develop within the poem:

They have the night, who had like us the day
We, whom day binds shall have the night as they,
We from the fetters of the light unbound,
Healed of our wound of living shall sleep sound...
Blind is the day and eyeless all its light,
But the large, unbewildered eye of night
Hath sense and speculation.¹⁴⁷

Instead, Swinburne releases his lovers fully into the world of nature.

But although there is this difference in their approach to the life beyond death, it is worth noticing two things. Firstly, that both Wagner and Swinburne, having conceived a passion of superhuman dimensions, need

146. 'The Sailing of the Swallow', ll. 784-6. Swinburne may have come upon this idea in the Douce fragment: 'El beivre sud la nostre mort...'. Michel, Recueil, ii, 57, ll. 1223f. Alternatively he may have taken the comment of the Prose Tristan: '...ils ont beu leur destruction et leur mort'. Michel le Noir (1520), f. xli.

147. ll. 199f.

to postulate a sphere beyond death where this passion can be fulfilled. Previously, with the exception of the early fragment, writers had seen the love as leading to a tragic end with no spiritual reunion. Thus, both change the sens of the legend radically. Secondly, both Swinburne and Wagner use the sea as an erotic symbol connoting passion and death, combined in deep mystery.¹⁴⁸ After the literal sea-journeys and the figurative sea-storms of emotion, Wagner's heroine finally drowns in her transfiguration:

ertrinken -
versinken -
unbewusst -
höchste Lust.

Swinburne uses the sea with less melancholy since for him it manifests the life-force into which the lovers are finally dissolved: Tristram reaches the heights of his pantheistic experience when he immerses himself in it. But given this difference, its symbolism remains the same. At the end of 'The Sailing of the Swan' the lovers are taken into the sea which saw the birth of their passion:

And these rapt perforce from earthly ground
These twain the deep sea guards, and circles round
Their sleep more deep than any sea's gulf lies...
For the strong sea hath swallowed wall and tower,
And where their limbs were laid in woful hour
For many a fathom gleams and moves and moans
The tide that sweeps above their confined bones...
But peace they have that none may gain who live,
And rest about them that no love can give,
And over them, while death and life shall be
The light and sound and darkness of the sea.¹⁴⁹

This spiritualized and consequently dehumanized conception of the legend prevailed over the next three decades. Inspired by Wagner, the

148. See Zuckermann, Wagner's Tristan, pp. 181-5.

149. ll. 529f.

fin-de-siècle responded emotionally to the power of his music, producing poems, articles and plays, which, in attempting to convey the feel of his Tristan, achieve a tone similar to that of Tristram of Lyonesse. Thus, although Swinburne's poem cannot be said to be the progenitor of the Tristan enthusiasm, since Wagner provided the main impulse, it bears a generic resemblance to the literature which succeeded it, because both Swinburne and the Aesthetes derive their literary modes from the Pre-Raphaelites. But there is an important difference between Swinburne's poem and the works of his successors since it sprang from a response to the originals uncoloured by Wagner's music.¹⁵⁰

150. Swinburne may have been involved in Wagner's Albert Hall concerts in 1877, since Burne-Jones was an enthusiast. Henderson, William Morris, pp. 169-70. But his chief contact seems to have been literary, especially in view of his French interest. Baudelaire, for example, sent him a copy of Wagner et Tannhäuser in 1863. Zuckermann's observation that the roundel on the Tristan Prelude begins with the verbal equivalent to Wagner's opening chord - 'Fate, out of the deep sea's gloom...' - is inconclusive as canto ix begins with the word 'Fate' and is dominated by the sea. The roundel may therefore be based on memories of this. Swinburne also wrote roundels on the death of Wagner and the Lohengrin Prelude, published in A Century of Roundels (1883). There is no record of his attending the London performance of Tristan in June 1882.

CHAPTER VI

The Florescence of Tristan Scholarship

The end of the 19th century saw not only the rise of the Tristan legend, but also the gradual emergence of English scholarship in the mediaeval field. As, with the exception of BETS, activity had hitherto been extremely limited, the scholars who began to make a positive contribution during the 1890's still remained in the minority. Predictably, this is in direct contrast to the situation on the Continent, where an early and serious interest was shown in old literature, particularly the Arthurian. The French, especially, were outstanding in their production of definitive texts coupled with imaginative scholarship, while the Germans concentrated on textual and philological studies with great thoroughness. This Continental advance highlights the lack of work done in England.

In 1899 Jessie Weston wrote deploring the state of English Arthurian studies:

But in all this labour it is regretfully to be acknowledged that we, in this land, still lag behind. Of late years the study of romantic literature in general, and of the Arthurian cycle in particular, has made immense strides on the Continent, but anyone interested in the matter cannot fail to be struck by the paucity of English works of solid value as compared with the mass of French and German critical literature.¹

She goes on to describe how, out of 236 works referred to at the end of a German monograph on the Grail published in 1898, only seven of any critical weight were by English authors.² This sort of academic insularity was no longer excusable, since Continental Scholars by no means limited research to their own literatures, as can be seen by the work of Foerster on Chrétien,³

1. King Arthur and his Knights, p. 11.

2. The Grail legend was the most thoroughly studied branch of the Arthurian legend in England, inspired by the 1860's Galahad enthusiasm combining with the incipient Celtic vogue.

3. Cligès, ed. W. Foerster (Halle, 1884); Der Löwenritter (Yvain), (Halle, 1887); Erec et Enide, (Halle, 1890); Der Karrenritter (Lancelot) und Das Wilhelmsleben (Halle, 1899).

Kölbing on Sir Tristrem,⁴ and Bossert on Gottfried.⁵

But the English remained far behind. Out of all the editions of Arthurian literature published in England over the second half of the century, I have only been able to discover two which deal with non-English texts, both edited by F. J. Furnivall for the Roxburghe Club.⁶ Until the foundation of EETS, however, even indigenous Arthurian works were neglected. Sir Frederick Madden, the only scholar of the mid-century with any real stature, went on after his edition of the Gawain romances to edit Layamon's Brut in 1847, but his commitment to the Manuscript Department of the British Museum ironically prevented him from expanding scholarship in other directions.⁷

It was the founding of EETS in 1864 which consequently marked the real beginning of mediaeval studies, and in particular the Arthurian, as a fully-fledged academic subject. Unlike the exclusive and somewhat aristocratic book-clubs, the aims of the society were to reach a wide public and arouse a general interest. There were no limits on members or copies, the price of publications was minimized by such means as dispensing with paid staff,⁸ and the annual subscription was kept down to a guinea. The society's function was simple and necessary: it was to continue more efficiently the work of the Philological society, and to deal with manuscript works

4. Die nordische und die englische Version der TristanSage, ed. E. Kölbing, ii, Sir Tristrem.

5. A. Bossert, Tristan et Iseult. poème de Gotfrit de Strasbourg, (Paris, 1865).

6. Sevnt Graal or the Sank Ryal (1861-3). This comprises Lovelich's Holy Graail and the parallel French text. (The English text was reprinted in EETS, xx, xxviii, xxx and xcv.) Also La Queste del St. Graal (1864).

7. His article on Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia, Archaeological Journal, xv, (1858), 299-312, is an exception.

8. This was not an original idea as it had been the practice of the Camden Society, founded 1838.

hitherto unpublished, rare printed works for which there were no extant manuscripts, and manuscript works already printed, which were to be re-edited from the manuscript previously used, or, where possible, from earlier sources. The more localized aims concerning this material were three-fold, comprising the publication of all Arthurian works, the illustration of dialect and the elucidation of the religious element in mediaeval literature.⁹

Madden promised the society any of his edited texts, with the exception of Havelok, which he was considering revising himself. However, this gesture, prompted by a request from Furnivall, was accompanied by private reservations:

I do not think the scheme will succeed, nor do I place much confidence in Mr. F. and his friends. However, I shall subscribe to the undertaking as the motive is good, whatever the result is.¹⁰

It is regrettable that Madden and Furnivall later became such implacable enemies, since the society could have benefitted considerably from Madden's vast resources of knowledge and expertise. Madden's dislike was ostensibly grounded in a stylistic quarrel, since he inveighs against Furnivall's 'Windy, childish, absurd and disgusting' prose, and the 'ambitious, confident tone' of Morris, who had approached him with a view to re-editing Gawain.¹¹ One suspects, however, that his sense of injured merit was the real cause.

Despite Madden's objection to Morris, Gawain appeared in the first year of EETS, together with Pearl and Purity, thus set in its literary, as opposed to its thematic, context.¹² In the same year Furnivall edited

9. See the Edinburgh Review, cxxv (January, 1867), 219-52. The reviewer, while praising the aims of the Society, draws attention to the advanced state of French scholarship.

10. Friday, 12th February, 1864. Journals, xxxviii, 37.

11. Tuesday, 24th September, 1867. Ibid., xli, 203.

12. Early English Alliterative Poems, ed. R. Morris, EETS, i, (1864).

the Arthurian poem contained in the Bath manuscript. Publication of the major Arthurian poems¹³ was completed the following year with Perry's edition of the Alliterative Morte Arthur, which greatly improved on Halliwell's inaccurate edition of 1847, and the editions of Merlin and Lancelot of the Laik, contributed by Wheatley and Skeat respectively.

Although this rate of publication slackened as the society turned towards non-Arthurian areas, it demonstrates a new seriousness towards Arthurian studies, a seriousness which found its motivation not so much in Continental academicism, as in the prevalent Arthurianism of the 1860's. In clearing the textual ground EETS performed a valuable service, and for once put English scholarship ahead of the French, for the analogous French society was not founded until 1875.¹⁴ In addition, it was instrumental in promulgating an attitude towards mediaeval literature compounded of discipline and appreciation, such as that indicated by the Edinburgh Review:

No student of English has been thoroughly taught who cannot read a 14th century romance for his own pleasure without finding the old forms of language an impediment to the enjoyment of the story and a fair apprehension of the way of telling it.¹⁵

But because EETS marked the beginnings of any professionalism in English mediaeval studies, scholarship tended to confine itself to the establishing of the texts themselves, rather than the implications of those texts.¹⁶

13. The two minor poems on King Arthur's death in ballad metre were published by J.W. Hales and F.J. Furnivall in their edition of Percy's Folio Ms. (1867-8), i, 497-507.

14. Société des Anciens Textes Français, established by Gaston Paris and Paul Meyer.

15. Edinburgh Review, cxxv (January, 1867), 235.

16. This is substantiated by the relative lack of learned journals. In France Revue Critique appeared in 1866 and Romania in 1872 under the presiding genius of Gaston Paris, who is reputed to have written complete editions of the former single-handed under pseudonyms. In Germany Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie appeared in 1869, and was followed by Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie and Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur in 1879. In England, however, Modern Language Notes did not appear until 1886.

The advantages of the society, therefore, were some time in making themselves felt.

When a wider academic interest in the Arthurian arose belatedly at the end of the century under the auspices of Nutt, Rhys and Weston, it developed a decidedly Celtic flavour. Coincident and interinvolved with the Celtic literary vogue, it became orientated towards the ancient literature of Ireland and Wales, thirty years after Arnold's plea for the recognition of Celtic studies. Sources, therefore, became the main area for research in Arthurian territory, assisted and encouraged by the Continental investigations which were current at the time. However, while French research tended towards theorising based on specific texts, the English school came to represent a late flowering of the mythological-anthropological¹⁷ approach promoted earlier in Germany and Wales.

George Cox's Mythology of the Aryan Nations, published in 1866, was the first English work of note to postulate the derivation of romance and fairy stories from the Aryan heritage,¹⁸ a theory propounded earlier by Jacob and Carl Grimm. But it was the work of John Rhys, which probably provided the main impetus. Primarily a philologist, he had a strong interest in folklore and the analysis of Celtic tales on mythic lines.¹⁹ Not only was he strategically placed in the academic hierarchies, becoming Professor of Celtic Studies at Oxford in 1877 and Principal of Jesus College in 1895, but Rhys was well equipped with the new tools of Arthurian academicism: philology and a knowledge of Celtic literature. Nutt had the latter, but as Joseph Loth points out,²⁰ his moderate linguistic ability

17. This is demonstrated by Nutt's re-establishing the journal Folklore in 1890 (originally Folk Lore Record, founded 1878), which intensified an awareness of the relationship between folk-lore and early literature.

18. See Madden's discussion of this work and mythology in general, Sunday, 25th September, 1870. Journals, xliii, 72.

19. Studies in the Arthurian Legend (1891); Celtic Folklore (1901).

20. 'Des nouvelles théories sur l'origine des Romans arthuriens'. Revue Celtique, xiii (1892), 477-8.

often placed his theories on a tenuous basis; and Bédier's work on the archetype is flawed, according to Schoepperle, through his failure to recognise the fullweight of the Celtic evidence.²¹

The earlier extravagances of Welsh scholars had sobered by this time, the improvement perhaps being heralded by Thomas Stephens' The Literature of the Kymry in 1849. By the end of the century Celtic studies were established as a reputable and fashionable area of research. This may be partly attributed to the continuation of the French-Welsh collaboration demonstrated, for example, in de Jubainville's work on Revue Celtique.²² (Indeed, his work, together with that of Loth, helped to provide the high standards of scholarship in the field.) But indigenous Welsh studies were also stimulated by the centralization resulting from the foundation of the new Welsh colleges,²³ and terminating the isolation which had previously restricted scholars to an amateur status. But partly also Celtic studies benefitted from the Celtic renaissance, which, joining forces with the current Aesthetic movement, imparted a fascination hitherto unknown to the Irish Sagas and the Mabinogion. Indeed, so strong was the Celtic bias that Arthurian studies in Britain were subordinated to one aspect of a wider study: Nutt and Rhys, two of the three foremost scholars, were more concerned with Celtic researches in general and only produced one work apiece which deals specifically with Arthurian literature.²⁴

Jessie Weston was alone in confining her work to Arthurian romance,

21. Tristan and Isolt, i, 1-3.

22. See also Cours de littérature celtique, ed. de Jubainville and Loth (Paris, 1883-1902).

23. Aberystwyth founded 1872; Cardiff 1883; Bangor 1884.

24. A. Nutt, Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail with especial reference to its Celtic origin (1888); J. Rhys, Studies in the Arthurian Legend (1891).

with particular reference to its Continental forms. But although much of her work is concerned with the immediate sources of extant early works in France, since her hypothesis postulated that the great era of Arthurian romance existed before Chrétien, Weston gravitates towards the current trends in scholarship in her work on the Grail.²⁵ Here she employs the anthropological approach. In the Legend of Sir Perceval she uses the Adonis cult to illustrate the mysteries of the Grail,²⁶ having obviously been influenced by Frazer's The Golden Bough, and she subsequently develops this theory in The Quest of the Holy Grail,²⁷ and her last book, From Ritual to Romance, published in 1920.

But even considering this late development of English Arthurian studies, compared with the activity on the Continent, the field remained the province of only a few. Paradoxically, the Arthurian legend became extremely popular with the general public, spreading in fame as it moved from the early 19th century library to the late 19th century nursery. The motivating and sustaining factor was, inevitably, the Idylls, but the popularity of this work prompted many to capitalize on it with editions, modernizations and reworkings of Malory. Thus Tennyson's work buoyed up many others, which in turn kept alive the Arthurian enthusiasms which the former had engendered.

Between Southey's edition in 1817 and Thomas Wright's Stansby text in 1858, there were no editions of Malory. But after the 1859 Idylls, copies

25. She also contributed various articles on Celtic sources, See 'A hitherto unconsidered aspect of the Round Table', Mélanges offerts à M. Maurice Wilmette (Paris, 1910), ii, 883-94. Also her review of Two Irish Arthurian Romances, ed. and translated by R. A. Stewart MacAlister (1908), Folklore, xx (1909), 361-3.

26. Legend of Sir Perceval, i (1906), pp. 329f. This theory was more fully expounded in her paper 'The Grail and the Rites of Adonis'. See Folklore, xviii (1907), 283-305.

27. 1913. pp. 75f.

of Malory, or Malory-based works proliferated. Nor did interest flag after the extended publication of the Idylls and the advent of the Celtic preoccupations, but continued to gain strength until the first decade of the 20th century.

Wright's edition outshone those of 1816 as it was outshone by Strachey's ten years later. He used the Stansby text because he considered Caxton's language to have no philological value and to 'be repulsive to the modern reader'.²⁸ The 1634 text was, as Wright saw it, sufficiently antique in style to possess 'a certain clothing of medieval character' and yet remain familiar in its vocabulary and orthography.²⁹ This was the first edition of Malory to give variants, since Wright collated the Stansby and Caxton versions, the text remaining unaltered except where there are misprints or omissions.

Predictably Wright's cursory preface demonstrates no very informed grasp on Arthurian literature. He summarily dismisses the question of origins,³⁰ and dates the prose romances over the reigns of Henry II and Henry III. These he sees as providing the source for 'a crowd of writers in different languages' who used parts or 'abridged the whole and published them in verse and in more popular forms'. Describing Malory's work as 'a good comprehensive condensation' of the cycle, Wright continues in a cautious tone: 'Although a similar class of incidents are perhaps too uniformly repeated, yet these romances are full of life and activity, and are often picturesque.'³¹

28. Introduction, p.xiv.

29. Ibid., p.xv.

30. Wright states that as the source of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia is a Breton book, Brittany must be the cradle of the Arthurian legend.

31. Ibid., p. xvii.

He also feels the need to excuse the low moral standards of the chivalric code as 'the morality of feudalism'.

When Sir Edward Strachey brought out the first Caxton text since 1817 in 1868, he dismissed the question of republishing the Stansby version on the grounds that 'nothing can justify the reprinting of the most corrupt of all the old editions, when the best and first was within reach'.³² He did, however, follow Wright's principle of accessibility in modernizing the spelling and expurgating those parts which he considered 'not in accordance with modern manners'.³³ Although Strachey took some pains in collating the Southey text with the Althorp and Osterley copies, and although he provided a full introduction and glossary, his edition is useless for scholarly purposes because of these alterations and improvements. Thus, Malory's situation becomes similar to that of Percy's ballads in the previous century: reformed for general taste, but consequently deprived of the opportunity for academic appraisal.

It is therefore not surprising to find that although there was an academic edition produced in England, it was by a German scholar. Oskar Sommer, encouraged by Alfred Nutt and financed by the Prussian government, pursued his research in the British Museum, finally bringing out his edition between 1889 and 1891. This comprised text, notes, and a study of the sources, and became responsible for raising Malory studies from an insularity and obscurity, which had been due not only to the absence of a reliable text and a comparative neglect of the prose romances, but also, more fundamentally, to lack of scholarly motivation. Sommer's work has now been outdated by the discovery of the Winchester manuscript³⁴ and

32. Introduction (1891 edition), p. xxxiv. The work was reprinted twenty times by 1912.

33. Op. cit., p. xxv. Strachey was the first editor to realise Malory's value as an educative work, and at the same time be embarrassed by its lapses.

34. Discovered by W. F. Oakeshott in 1934. See his 'Finding of the Manuscript', Essays on Malory, ed. J. W. Bennett (1963), pp. 1-6.

Vinaver's editions, but it remains a scholarly achievement in its period.

Before Sommer's edition Paris remarked that Malory was used too little in Arthurian studies.³⁵ It seems paradoxical that the work should be so well known to the layman, and yet remain outside serious critical consideration. But Sommer gives an insight into the academic complacency which prevailed at the time, when he reports how the secretary of 'a distinguished learned society', on hearing of his projected work enquired 'plaintively' if Sommer were not acquainted with Southey's 'splendid edition'.³⁶ By upsetting this complacency somewhat with a demonstration of the breadth and value of Malory as a research field,³⁷ Sommer managed to institute a serious study of a work which had previously been regarded as popular fiction. He also, on the other hand, modified some of the Tennyson-inspired expectations focussed on the work, by pointing out its inequality, in both the handling of the sources and their selection.³⁸

Popularity hindered the academic study of Malory, and, in complete contrast to Sommer's edition, one finds a proliferation of popularized versions which take Malory as a point of departure and move in the general direction of Tennyson's Idylls. James Knowles was the first to bring out a retelling of the Morte D'Arthur, as opposed to a modernized text, which he dedicated to Tennyson.³⁹ In 1861 Knowles, who at that time did not

35. 'Le Conte de la Charrette', Romania, xii (1883), 498.

36. Malory's Morte D'Arthur, III, vii.

37. The potential breadth of the field is exemplified in one area of Sommer's work: the discovery in the British Museum of a fragment of the Suite de Lancelot in the major Tristan manuscript (MS. Add. 5474), which supported Sommer's hypothesis that Malory used this source for his Lancelot section. Ibid., iii, 272-8. Vinaver refutes this in his edition of Malory, postulating instead several sources, instead of the single source proposed by Sommer. The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, 2nd edition, (1967), iii, 1408-11. The potential value of the study is indicated in Sommer's claim that Malory is the sole authority for several portions of the cycle. Op. cit., iii, 293.

38. Op. cit., iii, 294.

39. The Story of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table (1861).

know Tennyson personally, wrote to him asking permission for a dedication and describing his work as '... a popular re-introduction to the Arthur legends - an "argument" as it were for the great unlettered public to the Idylls of the King.'⁴⁰ This work proved extremely successful, running to its third edition in six years and subsequently to many reprints.

In 1868 Conybeare attempted to popularize Malory,⁴¹ rather than the Arthurian legend as Knowles had done. He abridged and revised the text, expurgating coarse passages and attempting to impose an order through abbreviation and division, since he considered the apparently chaotic nature of the work would hinder its popularity. Conybeare justifies this policy by pointing out the poor reception of Wright's edition and blaming the inherent obscurity of the work:

Indeed the work in its original form could never be a general favourite at the present day. Its great length, the confusion and want of system are impenetrable obstacles to popularity; and in spite of the attention which the Idylls of the King have attracted towards the Arthurian romances, Mallory's book has never become generally known, and though it may be read and esteemed at its true state by some few, remains essentially unpopular.⁴²

Conybeare's work, which can hardly be called an edition, but could possibly be termed a popularization,⁴³ demonstrates the anomalous position of Malory: outshone by its progeny, remodelled for public recognition and subsequently

40. 13th August, 1861, Lincoln MS. (uncatalogued).

41. La Mort D'Arthur, abridged and revised by E. Conybeare.

42. Editor's Preface, p. iv.

43. This genre is exemplified by La Mort d'Arthur, ed. B. M. Ranking (1871); Selections from Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur, ed. A. T. Martin (1896); Selections from Malory, published by E. Arnold (1905), Arnold Prose Books, v.

neglected by scholars.

This remodelling was not only motivated by a desire to popularize Malory, but was also closely associated with a didactic intention. As the Arthurian came to be acknowledged as an appropriate area for youthful interest, so the necessity for an ennobled text intensified. Frith, who was the first in England to design his work especially for boys,⁴⁴ openly admits to rewriting the original for the sake of his readers:

We have thus endeavoured to preserve the consistency of the narrative while purging it of any questionable matter, and 'toning down' motives and conduct, which, if painted in their true colours would offend... Writing for boys, we have preserved all the vigour and valour of the action and as much of the original as our limits permitted, with a due regard to good taste and their improvement.⁴⁵

Thus the tradition of expurgation begun by Wilks in 1816 continued, and revisers of Malory found themselves in the ambiguous position of submitting a work as an example to young people, which contained many dubious passages. The result was a sacrifice of unity, and, at times, sense, to a didactic intention.⁴⁶ At the same time as Sommer was attempting to discover the academic truth concerning the Morte D'Arthur, the material itself was becoming increasingly distorted through dissemination.

It is interesting to note that, as in the area of scholarship, the popularity of Arthur did not wane with the onset of the Celtic twilight, but, in fact, at times combined with it to become something wilder and more mysterious than the Tennysonian ethos. Ernest Rhys is the prime example

44. H. Frith, King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, (1884). This was preceded by Sidney Lanier's The Boys of King Arthur, published in Baltimore in 1880, which does not acknowledge its revisions.

45. Preface, pp. iii-iv.

46. For example, in Frith's work Merlin helps Uther woo Igraine after the death of Gorlois. There is no mention of Uther's shape-shifting and the conception of Arthur. In this version of the Tristan story, there is no love-potion and no adultery.

of a Celtic enthusiast of the Arthurian. In the preface to his abbreviated edition of Wright's text, Rhys considers doubts as to Arthur's historicity as 'blasphemous', claiming that only a 'hopeless sceptic' visiting Cerrig Cennan Castle would doubt that 'King Arthur or some of his knights had listened ... to the mysterious tones of Merlin, or the wailing music of the minstrel's harp or autumn wind.'⁴⁷ His attitude to the romance is equally highly coloured, but interesting in that he relates, however vaguely, the Arthurian legend to the 19th century in terms other than the moral and educative. Although he sees the dissipation of Malory's 'fateful coherence' in the Idylls as reflecting the age, he sees the general Arthurian enthusiasm as a spiritual therapy, showing

... in these times of realism, healthy and morbid, how the artistic spirit inevitably repairs to the ideal and tries in this case to solve the problems of the 19th century by a reference to the romance problems of timeless Camelot.⁴⁸

He goes on to describe Malory as 'full of poetic and spiritual significance', eschewing 'latter-day morbid sentimentalism' and containing lessons for the artists of the age. Thus, the focussing of new sensibilities on the Arthurian resulted in its being seen to have a fundamental value and relevance divorced from its moralistic interpretation of the mid-century.

While the Arthurian legends were being relayed in these various forms, the main facts concerning Arthur were broadcast, not only through the prefaces to these works, but also through reviews and critiques of the Idylls. Necessarily on a limited scale, they inevitably put forward the pros and cons of Arthur's historicity, a question which was of greater

47. Malory's History of King Arthur and the Quest of the Holy Grail (1886), Introduction, pp. xxx-xxxi.

48. Ibid., p. xxx.

interest than the provenance and transmission of the romances. The Contemporary Review⁴⁹ is typical in quoting the evidence of Nennius against the silence of Bede, and then turning to the later fictional works of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace and Layamon. To explain this development into romance the reviewer cites la Villemarqué's solar myth theory, which remained axiomatic long after his other work had been discredited.⁵⁰ The transmission problem, on the other hand, generally resolved itself into a brief statement that the legend passed from Wales to Brittany, thence to France, and finally to England. As there was little reference to contemporary scholarship on the Continent, with the exception of Maccallum's work on the Idylls,⁵¹ theories were accepted unquestioned and the great areas of academic controversy were consequently never recognised.

In view of this scholarly unconcern regarding the Arthurian, which was far more popular, it is not surprising to find Tristan almost totally neglected. Had Madden been able to obtain a copy or an account of the Tristramssaga, the situation might have been different, since he saw it as crucial in the establishing of a stemma:

It would be important to have an analysis and extracts of this version as we might judge with certainty the character of the original French text of the beginning of the 13th century or earlier.⁵²

It was astute of Madden to place this emphasis on the Saga, although he knew so little of it, since it did prove to be the key in relating the

49. Contemporary Review, vii (April, 1868), 497-514.

50. Les Romans de la Table Ronde (Paris, 1860), pp. 8f. As in The Poetry of Tennyson by H. Van Dyke, 2nd enlarged edition (1892), p. 145 and Essays on Tennyson's Idylls of the King by H. Littledale (1893), pp. 3-4n.

51. M. W. Maccallum, Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Arthurian story from the 16th century (1894). He follows the usual route from Celtic myth to chivalric literature, but displays a unique knowledge and grasp of Continental research.

52. Sunday, 16th December, 1855. Journals, xxix, 391.

Thomas fragments to their derivatives. In 1863, however, he obtained an abstract of an article by Brynjulfsson on the Saga, which substantiated his opinion 'as to the priority of the French text over the English version.'⁵³

Madden then goes on to list Brynjulfsson's conclusions, to which, with the possible exception of the authorship of Sir Tristrem,⁵⁴ he gives his 'unqualified assent'. These conclusions, therefore, define Madden's position. Brynjulfsson first isolates what he considers to be the three main versions: the Douce fragment,⁵⁵ supported by the Saga; the Prose Tristan, which he mistakenly accepts as being composed around 1170 by Luce de Gast and enlarged by Helié de Borron at the request of Henry III; and Bérout, which he, following Fauriel, attributes to Chrétien,⁵⁶ deriving it in part from the Prose Tristan, and postulating it as the source for Eilhart. He deals with the translations: Sir Tristrem is seen as being closely derived from Thomas, and Gottfried's coincidences with the Saga are discussed, while it is noted that the avowed source is the French original of Thomas von Britanje. Finally, he points out the great similarities between the Saga and the Anglo-Norman poem.

Brynjulfsson's work is a mixture of old misconceptions and new ideas, whose full significance is never stated. Although he ascribes Sir Tristrem to the Douce fragment, and notes the close relationship of the latter with the Saga, and then the Saga's close relationship with Gottfried, he leaves the question of Gottfried's source in the air. But despite this, the

53. Saturday, 23rd May, 1863. Journals, xxxvii, 147.

54. Brynjulfsson attributes it to Kendal on the testimony of de Brunne.

55. As Madden points out, Brynjulfsson is ignorant of the Sneyd manuscript contained Michel's Receuil, iii, 7-8.

56. 'Origine de l'épopée chevaleresque du moyen âge', Revue des deux Mondes (1852), p. 180.

Tristan romances can be seen drawing into a recognisable overall relationship, consisting of three main categories, through this timely examination of the Saga. In the long run this expansion into a new area of research is more valuable than the confusion of details which results from Brynjulfsson's repetition of long-standing mistakes.

After this entry in his Journals Madden makes no further extended reference to the Tristan group, and apparently he remained satisfied with Brynjulfsson's hypotheses. However, one must regret that Madden was unable to acquire the relevant material, since he might well have reached the conclusions of Bossert and Kölbing first. Certainly, he was the only English scholar of his age capable of producing any real contribution to Tristan research.

This is corroborated when one compares Madden's edition of the Gawain romances nearly fifty years previously with McNeill's edition of Sir Tristrem,⁵⁷ which had the distinction of being the only British work on the legend since Scott. As Kölbing had already brought out his definitive edition, there was much less ground work to be done, but McNeill makes little constructive use of this, or any other work done on the Continent, and his preface remains amateurish.

He traces the legend from Wales direct to Southern Europe, misled by the troubadour allusions, and having thus dealt with the problem of transmission, dismisses Thomas as a seminal version with consequent historical interest but no literary value. He criticizes Eilhart's version for its formality which 'restrains the natural wildness of the tale' and then goes on justifiably to praise Gottfried and, less justifiably, Brother Robert. After this doubtful critique McNeill skims through the later versions, incidentally condemning the Prose Tristan, and finishes with a brief survey

57. Sir Tristrem, ed. G. P. McNeill, Scottish Text Society (1886).

of the 19th century reworkings, the best of which he considers to be Wagner's Tristan.⁵⁸ The third section of the preface gives textual information of a limited kind, drawn mainly from Kölbing, and the fourth section deals at greater length with the problem of authorship. McNeill discards Wright's theory⁵⁹ that the author interpolated the name of Thomas of Ercildoune for the original Thomas. Instead he follows Scott in taking the authorial evidence at face value and evolves the remarkable hypothesis that it is just as probable that there were three Thomases as it is that there was one.⁶⁰ Finally, he deals with the unique form of the poem and attempts to mitigate the charge of obscurity by suggesting that the audience would be familiar with the story and that the performer's gestures and expressions would have clarified the meaning.

Compared with foreign editions, whose main concerns are the authority of the text and the interrelationship of versions, this is a poor piece of work. Its insularity and vague literary preoccupations are much akin to the style of the more serious work done on Malory before Sommer's edition. However, together with Scott's Sir Tristrem, it represents the sum total of textual work on the Tristan legend in Great Britain during the 19th century.⁶¹

The academic complacency which hallmarks McNeill's edition was only eradicated by the publication of contemporary foreign scholarship, first

58. 'This drama recalls the older versions vividly, and the spirit of the original story is rigorously preserved.' Introduction, pp. xxiv-xxv.

59. See Warton's History, ed. C. Hazlitt (1871), ii, 85n.

60. i.e. Thomas of Ercildoune referred to in Sir Tristrem; Thomas referred to in the Douce fragment; and Thomas von Britanje referred to by Gottfried.

61. J. A. H. Murray, Romances and Prophecies of Thomas of Ercildoune EETS (1875), p. xxiii, promises an early reprinting of Sir Tristrem in EETS, but nothing materialized.

undertaken by Jessie Weston in her Legends of the Wagner Drama. This was published in 1896 when Wagner's Tristan was in the ascendancy, and holds a position analogous to Maccallum's work on the Idylls. Weston traces the origins of the legends used by Wagner and comments on the differences between his works and the mediaeval sources, but without prejudicing the latter as so many Wagner-orientated works did.

In dealing with Tristan Weston outlines Zimmer's theory of Pictish origin, together with his reconstruction of the historical ground work of the legend, which distinguishes Iseult as a Viking princess from Dublin.⁶² She then mentions the transmission theories held by Zimmer and Paris,⁶³ which stress the importance of the Norman Conquest in the diffusion of the legend. This is subsequently seen as undergoing a literary development in the form of lays, which attracted to themselves Northern, Classical and Oriental elements before being combined into an epic poem somewhere in the 12th century. Finally, Weston adds a brief reference to the mythic interpretation of the legend but this is not emphasized since she feels that the romance has all but obliterated the myth.

Although Weston performed a valuable service in making foreign ideas current and accessible,⁶⁴ it is to be regretted that she never produced any creative work in the field, especially when the original thinking of others was either sadly wrong-headed or overlooked. Leith's paper on the mythic origins of the Tristan legend⁶⁵ falls into the first category. The

62. H. Zimmer, 'Beitrage zur Namenforschung in den altfranzösischen Arthurspen', Zs. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt., xiii (1891), 1-117.

63. Zimmer, *ibid.*; Paris, 'Tristan et Iseult', Revue de Paris (15th April, 1894) pp. 138f.

64. Weston again retails summaries of predominant theories in King Arthur and his Knights: A Survey of Arthurian Romance (1899).

65. E. T. Leith, On the legend of Tristan. its origin in Myth and its development in romance, read before the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 9th April, 1868. See also Paris's review, Revue Critique (1869), pp. 221-2.

influence of Grimm and Creuzer in the early 19th century had led German scholars to attempt an elucidation of the origins of the Tristan legend through a comparison with the mythic deification of the powers of nature and the primitive combat between dark and light. Leith, apparently influenced by these arguments, evolved an hypothesis in which Tristan is identified with a Persian serpent-slaying hero. This idea seems to have been largely inspired by the 'wonderful resemblance' between the names Trita and Tristan. In addition Leith is conversant only with pre-Michel scholarship. The result is an academic curiosity.

It is ironical, however, that the apathy which fortunately consigned Leith's paper to oblivion, should also obliterate the one sound new theory to arise from English scholarship during the period. In his well-known Popular Tales of the West Highlands, J.F. Campbell puts forward the idea that the Tristan legend represents 'a phase of the story which Irish and Scotch Gael have worked into so many forms, the story of Diarmaid and Grainne'.⁶⁶ He compares the Irish legend with the Lancelot and Guinevere relationship and the Tristan narrative, but seems sadly unaware of any version of the latter other than Sir Tristram. Nevertheless, despite the generalization and the tenuous links, the idea constitutes a new step in Tristan scholarship, which was not fully developed until Schoepperle made it one of her arguments for the existence of the Tristan legend among the Celts in an advanced form.⁶⁷

Just as the scholarly side of Malory was ignored, so the scholarly

66. 1860-2, ii, 261ff.

67. Alfred Nutt draws attention to another important theory in Campbell's work, which had been equally neglected, concerning the Celtic origin of Perceval. He comments that had this been known to a scholar who was also familiar with Kurt Simrock's observations on the Great Fool Märchen in his translation of Parzival (Leipzig, 1842), there would have been no need for his own research. Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail, pp. 102-3.

approach to the Tristan legend did not exist in England at this time, But just as Arthur and his knights were popular figures because of Tennyson, so Tristan and Iseult became familiar through the agency of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde,⁶⁸ and just as Bowdlerized Malorys and retellings of the stories sprang up in the wake of the Idylls, so translations of Wagner's libretto and summaries of the Tristan story proliferated with the Wagner cult. However, just as Malory became unacceptable in its starkness against the apprehensible splendours of the Idylls, so the refinements of Wagner's Tristan precluded an appreciative attitude towards the mediaeval versions.

Consequently, translations of the original versions were comparatively few. Predictably one of these translations was by Jessie Weston, who had a more balanced approach to the originals, and who published her translation of Gottfried in 1899.⁶⁹ One can see in her preface the reaction against Tennyson's moralistic version, which was current at the time:

It is incomparably the worst version of the story ever given to the world - a gross libel on the lovers and on King Mark. For Tennyson's own sake it should be excluded from any future edition of his works: it is little to his credit, either as man or poet, that in the most famous love-tale of all time he could see nothing but the lowest and most sordid of intrigues.⁷⁰

However, it is apparent that the moral line has merely been replaced with an aesthetic fastidiousness, and that the originals must still be tempered accordingly. Concerning the blood on the bedclothes episode, Weston comments that 'Not all Gottfried's skill could make this incident other than unpoetical and distasteful to modern readers',⁷¹ and she condemns Gottfried

68. Composed 1859. First performed in Munich in 1865.

69. The Story of Tristan and Iseult. Weston follows the continuation of Heinrich von Freiburg, but interpolates the meeting of the two Isolts from the continuation by Ulrich von Türheim.

70. Ibid., introduction, pp. xiii-xiv.

71. Ibid., Note to p.75, ii, 157.

for including the ambiguous oath and indulging in 'sarcasm regarding the duping of the Deity who becomes the accomplice of sinners.'⁷² She modifies Gottfried's comments accordingly.

The following year Bédier brought out his reconstruction of the legend from Thomas and Béroul.⁷³ Apparently untouched by the Wagner cult, Bédier's version is unapologetic in its use of the originals and has a welcome simplicity. It was first translated by Florence Simmonds,⁷⁴ and then, more popularly, by Belloc in 1913, when the Tristan vogue was beginning to wane and the public were more receptive to a less transcendental interpretation.

Translations of the originals were, predictably, far outnumbered by translations of Wagner's text. The first of these appeared in 1882 and was reprinted in 1890 and 1895.⁷⁵ Others abounded from this last date onwards and included various experiments such as A. Forman's rendering in 'mixed alliterative and rhyming metres'.⁷⁶ In addition there were works on Wagner in general, such as Weston's Legends, and Tristan in particular, such as G. A. Hight's Tristan und Isolde: An Essay on the Wagnerian Drama.⁷⁷ The latter contained summaries of the story according to Wagner, and sometimes summaries from Gottfried.

As the Wagner cult grew, so retellings of the stories of his works began to appear, analogous to the reworkings of the Idylls narratives.

72. Op. cit., Note to p.84, ii, 157.

73. Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut (Paris, 1900).

74. The Romance of Tristan and Iseult, (1910).

75. Tristan and Isolde, translated by H. and F. Corder (Leipzig, 1882).

76. Tristan und Isolde (1891). Reprint of a privately circulated edition.

77. 1912. In addition, some German works on Wagner were translated, such as Tristan und Isolde by Richard Wagner, explained according to the musical development of its motives by A. Heintz, translated by C. Bache (1892),

Some of these were fanciful, like C. Maud's Wagner Heroines;⁷⁸ some were close renditions, like A. B. F. Forman's The Wagner Stories published in 1907; some were informative, like V. Taylour's Stories from Wagner,⁷⁹ which briefly sketches some of the scholarly background to the legend; and some were expurgated versions for children, like those of W. H. Frost⁸⁰ and J. W. MacSpadden.⁸¹ Finally, there were at least two retellings in verse.⁸²

Without being forewarned by the position of Malory, it is at first sight surprising that so little is said about the mediaeval versions. However, Tristan enthusiasts of the time wanted their legend unpolluted by crudity, of which the originals appeared to have an abundance. Wagner's version had all the fascination of unbridled passion and yet no immorality, since it removes most of the elements of conflict. Wakeling Dry expresses well the current attitude:

Godfrey, with all his art, could not rise above the sordid display and portrayal of passion. It is intensely human, as may be seen from his careful description of all the tricks Isolde used to conceal her inconstancy from her husband, but it is gross. In a word, Wagner, by omitting the second Isolde and by emphasizing throughout the drama that longing for death to which the lovers constantly give utterance, purges the dross from the gold.⁸³

As the Arthurian legend became Bowdlerized during its popularization, so the Tristan legend also became emasculated, but in the standardized form

78. 3rd edition, 1905.

79. 1899. This mentions the theory of Pictish origin and shows a knowledge of Paris's work. It also gives an account of Gottfried's version, but with the middle episodes glossed as 'adventures'.

80. The Wagner Story Book (1894).

81. Stories from Wagner (1905).

82. R. le Gallienne, Wagner's Tristan und Isolde (New York, 1909). This is a close rendering. In the introduction E. Ziegler follows the usual lines of deprecating Gottfried and dismissing Tennyson's 'The Last Tournament'. Also R. Fynes and L. N. Parker, Parzifal and Tristan und Isolde (1914).

83. Nights at the Opera (1902), pp. 111-12.

of Wagner's music-drama. Commensurate with this, there was a very marked lack in the appreciation of the artistry of the originals, which were sacrificed for Der Meister's sake on the altar of 19th century sensibilities. G. A. Hight's view of Gottfried, though extremely expressed, is nevertheless, representative:

The plot is trivial in the extreme, and the characters are contemptible: the most contemptible of all are the hero and heroine ... Add to this the constant obtrusion of the poet's own personality, with his moral reflections and trite philosophy, one can only wonder how the much admired epic can ever have been listened to with patience.⁸⁴

Needless to say, Wagner's Tristan is 'the loftiest paean of pure and holy love ever conceived by a poet.'

It would be incorrect to assume, however, that the Wagner cult necessarily impeded the critical appraisal of the Tristan legend, since the Tristan fanaticism began in France in the 1860's⁸⁵ and developed concurrently with the florescence of Tristan scholarship. Likewise it would be incorrect to assume that the general popularization of a work inevitably made it an object of academic disdain, since France and Germany both researched and popularised their mediaeval masterpieces.⁸⁶ It must, therefore, be conceded that the English had an in-built reluctance to confront the originals and were content with modern interpretations more consistent with their image of the romance world, a situation deriving on the one hand from a lack of tradition in mediaeval studies, and on the

84. Wagner's Tristan und Isolde (1912), pp. 136-7.

85. See E. Zuckermann, The First Hundred Years of Wagner's Tristan, pp. 83f.

86. La Bibliothèque Bleue, ed. A. Delvan (Paris) brought out modernizations of 12-16th century romances, which proved so popular production was accelerated from one publication to two or three per month. 'Tristan de Léonois' came out in 1859. Paulin Paris published modernized versions of the Prose cycle in Les Romans de la Table Ronde (Paris, 1868-77). In Germany the 1844 edition of Gottfried, Tristan und Isolde, translated by H. Kurz, was reprinted in 1877. Wilhelm Hertz brought out another translation of Gottfried in the same year with translations from Thomas, and Kurt Simrock's translation of 1855 ran to a second edition in 1875.

other hand, a recent strong tradition is mediaevalism. Enthusiasm in England was consequently encapsulated in the more accessible popularizations and reworkings, whereas on the Continent it generated, and was generated by, scholarly enquiry.

In view of this, it is not surprising to find a strong drive towards the reinstatement of the legend in its non-Wagnerian form coming from the French scholars. The most influential work in this campaign was Bédier's reconstruction of the legend,⁸⁷ which functioned on both scholarly and popular levels. Ferdinand Lot in his memoir praises Bédier for performing this service at a time when 'la merveilleuse histoire était inconnue du public français qui ne la connaissait que sous la forme monstrueuse de fausseté que lui avait donnée le génie de Wagner.'⁸⁸ Gaston Paris, too, while remaining somewhat indifferent to the music-drama,⁸⁹ saw its attractions and inserted the following warning in his preface to Bédier's work:

Il faut savoir, quand on passe devant les grottes des Sirènes, se tenir fermement attaché au mât, sans renoncer à entendre la divine mélodie qui fait entrevoir aux mortels des félicités surhumaines.⁹⁰

It was the human element in the legend, which Bédier, guided by Paris, set about restoring in his reconstruction.

It is perhaps surprising to find two such distinguished scholars involved with what became a popular work, particularly in view of Paris's disapproval of his father's modernization of the prose cycle. But, unlike the popularization of Malory, this is primarily a scholarly work, instigated by Paris, Bédier's teacher and predecessor at the Collège de France, and

87. Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut (Paris, 1900).

88. Joseph Bédier. 1864-1938, (Paris, 1939), pp. 8-9.

89. In his article for Revue de Paris (15th April, 1894) Paris remarks that the words of the Liebestod are 'belles à leur façon, mais en quoi sont elles d'une amante?' p. 273.

90. p. 15.

led directly to Bédier's great work on Thomas.

Although Paris never produced anything of length on the Tristan legend, it remained his constant preoccupation, and he directed and moulded many studies in the area. He saw the legend as embodying the eternal truth of passion, describing it as

un mélange unique de vétusté immémoriale et de fraîcheur
toujours nouvelle, de mélancolie celtique et de grâce
française, de naturalisme puissant et de fine psychologie.⁹¹

Paris was not afraid to enthuse over mediaeval literature, and the Tristan legend brought out all his personal sensitivity and lyricism of style. But his enthusiasm was by no means uncontrolled, since it was directed and supported by two greater qualities: keen literary insight and scientific objectivity. These combined to produce a brand of criticism which had popular potential, while at the same time did not compromise its scholarly aims. Although the reconstruction was compiled by Bédier, the inspiration is obviously derived from Paris.

Paris's technical approach caused a revolution in French mediaeval studies. He demanded that scholars regard works of art as historical documents to be analysed in order to reconstruct the past. He demanded method, objectivity and an overriding desire for knowledge, and in order to effect these principles, he demanded radical and imaginative reforms, extending to University education, the perfection of academic methods and the renewal of impetus in all historical and philological disciplines. Paris became the magnet for influential colleagues such as Paul Meyer, co-founder of Revue Critique and Romania, and pupils such as Bédier, who would disseminate his teachings. His position in the field of mediaeval studies in France was analogous to that of Tennyson in the field of

91. Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut, Preface, p. 17.

Arthurian popularization in England.

The flaw in Paris's approach resided in the sometimes uneasy alliance of objectivity and subjectivity in his work, and that of his pupils. This is seen in Bédier's reconstruction, which aimed to represent 'le premier Tristan qu'ait connu le public français d'Angleterre, puis de France au XII^e siècle',⁹² from an amalgamation of Béroul and Thomas. But there is no explanation as to Bédier's criteria for selection; Lot merely describes Bédier as 'se fiant à sa connaissance des textes et à son tact littéraire'.⁹³ The same problem of predilection overriding scientific technique is seen more clearly in Bédier's work on Thomas, where, as Schoepperle demonstrates,⁹⁴ his personal taste causes him at times to run counter to his methodology.

It is perhaps easier to see this fault in Bédier than in Paris himself, since the latter produced only one full length work early in his career,⁹⁵ and for the rest of the time worked either on articles or through others. This is seen in his initial impact on Tristan studies, which were suddenly impelled into a new era with the 1886 volume of Romania.⁹⁶ This was devoted entirely to work on the legend by Paris's pupils at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes after a summer conference, and includes articles by Lutoslawski on the Folies, Bédier on the relationship of the Prose Tristan to Eilhart, and Söderhjelm on the authorship problem in the Thomas version. The conference was also attended by Mugst, who produced an article on

92. F. Lot, Joseph Bédier, p. 9.

93. Ibid., loc. cit.

94. Tristan and Isolt, 1, 7-8.

95. Histoire poétique de Charlemagne (Paris, 1865).

96. Paris's first work on the Tristan legend is an article on the question of Breri's identity. Romania, viii (1879), 425-8.

Eilhart the following year,⁹⁷ and Löseth, whose research on the Prose Tristan was to appear five years later.⁹⁸ At this time Meyer was contemplating an edition of Béroul, later achieved by Muret,⁹⁹ and Vetter had been planning an edition of Thomas, subsequent to his study of the texts, which appeared in 1882 and which was dedicated to his professor, Gaston Paris.¹⁰⁰

There was, however, a major advance in Tristan scholarship before this activity, but its implications only came to be recognized then. This was Bossert's Tristan et Iseult, poème de Gotfrit de Strasbourg published in 1865. It constitutes the first detailed study by a Frenchman of the foreign versions of the legend, and marks a considerable advance in the establishing of a relationship between the Tristan romances. In his work Bossert propounds the dependence of Gottfried on the Thomas poem, a conclusion which Brynjulfsson was on the point of making, but failed to arrive at. As Bossert was apparently ignorant of this article, he reaches the conclusion independently, using Sir Tristrem as his intermediary instead of the Saga, which had not been edited.

Bossert's method of establishing the relationship between Gottfried and Thomas is as simple as it is fortuitous. He discovered that the two versions have a passage in common, dealing with Tristan's debate on his wedding night.¹⁰¹ In chapter five he compares the two passages, showing

97. E. Muret, 'Eilhart d'Oberg et sa source française', Romania, xvi (1887), 288-363.

98. E. Löseth, Le Roman en Prose de Tristan (Paris, 1891). Dedicated to Gaston Paris.

99. Le Roman de Tristan, par Béroul et un anonyme, SATF lxxviii (Paris, 1903).

100. F. Vetter, La légende de Tristan d'après le poème française de Thomas et les versions principales qui s'y rattachent (Marburg, 1882).

101. Contained in the first Sneyd manuscript. See Michel's Recueil, 111, 7-8.

how Gottfried elaborated on Thomas. He does not seem to be aware of the existence of the Cambridge manuscript discovered by la Villemarqué,¹⁰² which would have strengthened his case as it marks another correspondence.

The comparison alone is not conclusive. However, Bossert first deals with the relationship of Gottfried and Sir Tristrem, demonstrating the substantial similarity between them in the facts of the narrative, if not the style, and pointing out that Gottfried's poem is often needed to elucidate Sir Tristrem's obscurities. He disagrees with the idea of an English source for Sir Tristrem on tenuous linguistic grounds and adopts instead the view that Thomas von Britanje, cited by Gottfried as his source, and Thomas of Erceeldoune, the source of Sir Tristrem, are, in fact, the same person, whose work is represented by the Douce, Sneyd and Strasbourg manuscripts. This he achieves by comparing the fragments with Sir Tristrem and deducing that the author of the fragments is the source for the English poem. Therefore, because of the link previously established between the latter and Gottfried, he must also provide the source for the German work.

Like Brynjulfsson, Bossert places the Bérout version outside the Thomas group, but unlike Brynjulfsson he does not attribute it to Chrétien. Both link it with Eilhart's version. Bossert considers that this group represents a more primitive rendering of the legend, while the Thomas version 'paraît représenter la véritable forme chevaleresque du sujet'. Thus, he places Eilhart before Gottfried chronologically and links it with the German prose romance, a point which Bédier takes up in 1886.¹⁰³

Bossert also innovates in his discussion of the Celtic and mythic

102. The fragment was later mentioned by Meyer in an article on the Cambridge manuscripts. Romania, xv (1886), 349. See Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas ed. Bédier, i, 248-53.

103. 'La mort de Tristan et Iseut d'après le m. fr. 103 de la B.N. comparé au poème allemand d'Eilhart d'Oberge', Romania, xv (1886), 481-510.

traits, which anticipates the work of Schoepperle and Rhys. His sensitivity towards Celtic literature is reminiscent of Renan, while at the same time looking forward to Paris's style. A marked feeling for the mysterious is found, for example, in his discussion of the rudderless boat episode, which he believes to be of Celtic provenance.¹⁰⁴ According to him, mythic traits are represented by such episodes as the swallow's hair in Eilhart and the dwarf Procin in Gottfried. Although this is necessarily vague it is interesting to note that Bossert is the first scholar to claim the antiquity of the Béroul-Eilhart group supported by this kind of evidence, which had not yet come into vogue.

However, the work is predictably not free from error, particularly the self-perpetuating errors of previous scholars. For example, the mistake concerning the dating of the prose romances is reiterated with the comment that the cycle 'donna l'éveil aux trouvères français'.¹⁰⁵ According to Bossert the latter did not use the material of the prose conteurs but turned to British sources, and they in their turn were utilized by the poets writing later. This is more or less the idea propounded by Duval¹⁰⁶ which persisted until the prose cycle was more closely studied. Despite this, his scholarly achievement, logical methods and sympathetic approach to the literary content, mark out Bossert's work as the beginning of modern scholarship on Tristan in France.

But for approximately twenty years after Bossert's study, work on Tristan stood still in France, while research in Germany went rapidly ahead. After the early editions of Gottfried only a modicum of scholarly interest

104. Tristan et Isolt, p. 129.

105. Ibid., p. 33. Bossert is also misled by Scott concerning Thomas of Ercildoune's authorship of a Tristan poem, since, although he equates Thomas of Ercildoune with Thomas of Britain, he is still bound by the former's dates.

106. 'Fragments des poèmes sur Tristan', Hist. Litt. de la France, xix (1838), 687-704.

had been shown, although the legend was quite well known generally.¹⁰⁷ In 1869, however, Bechstein began something of a renaissance in Tristan studies with his edition of Gottfried.¹⁰⁸ This was followed by even greater contributions from Lichtenstein and Kölbing who were the first to edit Eilhart¹⁰⁹ and the Tristransaga¹¹⁰ respectively. The former was a particularly challenging task owing to the textual problems and the latter was of major importance in establishing the validity of Bossert's theory. Finally in 1885 Golther re-edited Gottfried.¹¹¹

Demonstrably, the Germans' great contribution lay in the editorial field and this gave added impetus to their philological work.¹¹² As a result of this advance in textual work, definitive editions of the German versions of the legend appeared before the French. However, with one exception, all the ground was covered by the beginning of the 20th century, when three major works appeared within five years of each other: Bédier produced his study of Thomas by 1905, followed by an edition of the Folies,¹¹³ and Muget contributed the first authoritative edition of Béroul. The one great lack, however, was the Prose Tristan, despite its headstart in the early 19th century, and because it presents such vast editorial problems no edition has so far been completed. Löseth's work was the only study

107. In addition to Gottfried, the Volksbuch was also made accessible through various editions beginning with that of G. Harbach in 1838.

108. Gottfried von Strassburg. Tristan, ed. R. Bechstein (Leipzig, 1869). In 1877 he brought out Heinrich von Freiburg's continuation. See C. Bartsch, Deutsche Dichtungen des Mittelalters, v.

109. Eilhart von Oberg, ed. F. Lichtenstein (Strassburg, 1877).

110. Die nordische und die englische Version der TristanSage, ed. E. Kölbing, i.

111. Tristan und Isolde, ed. W. Golther (Berlin, 1885). See J. Kürschner, Deutsche National-Litteratur, iv.

112. For example, Lichtenstein's article on the cruces in Eilhart, Zs. f. d. Alt., xxvi (1882), 1-18 and W. Röttiger's Der Tristan des Thomas, ein Beitrag zur Kritik und Sprache desselben (Göttingen, 1883).

113. 1907. The Oxford Folie had been previously edited by Michel in his Recueil, ii, 89ff., together with the Berne Folie, i, 215ff., and was later edited by H. Morf, Romania, xv (1886), 558-74.

of value in the period, and comes late compared with research developments in other versions.

The value of these textual studies in the decade prior to the flowering of Tristan scholarship in France is self-evident. But perhaps Kölbing's edition had the most far-reaching significance, since it established the interrelationship of the Thomas group on the lines proposed by Bossert.¹¹⁴ The Saga's supreme value lies in its being the only complete translation of Thomas, and therefore constitutes the chief means whereby missing parts of the poem can be reconstructed, particularly in view of the predictability of Brother Robert's narrative technique. As Bédier demonstrates in his work on Thomas, discrepancies between two witnesses can be elucidated by reference to the Saga, and coincidences confirmed.

With the interrelationships of the Thomas group thus established, French scholars in the later 1880's began to concentrate on the relative positioning of the various groups of romances. This inevitably led to a consideration of the origins of these groups, and thence to the possible means of reconstructing them. Bédier initiated this movement, if one discounts Heinzel's formulaic approach, with his work on the interrelationship of Eilhart with the Prose Tristan contained in B.N. MS. 103.¹¹⁵ Paris first put forward the theory that the prose version was nearer the Bérout-Bilhart group than the Thomas in a lecture at the Collège de France in 1883, and

114. This refuted Heinzel's theories as to the formulaic nature of Thomas and the partial derivation of Gottfried from Bérout, Zs. f.d. Alt., xiv (1869), 272-447. It also caused a reassessment of Gottfried, who had previously been revered. See Bechstein's edition, pp. 281-4. Vetter summed this up in his review of Kölbing's edition by saying 'La mérite de Gottfried de Strasbourg ... est donc singulièrement diminué et Gottfried n'est qu'un traducteur de beaucoup de talent.' Romania, viii (1879), 283. There was a later reaction against this view, embodied in F. Piquet's L'Originalité de Gottfried de Strasbourg (Lille, 1905).

115. J. Brakelmann had already seen the connection between the two versions, but he was killed in 1870, and his work remained unknown until it was published by Zacher. Zs. f.d. Phil. xviii, (1886), 81-94.

later, with customary insight, suggested to Bédier that further research in the area might be fruitful. The result was the article in the Romania of 1886.

Here Bédier takes the black sails ending in both works and compares them. His thesis is that the two versions must have had a similar source, which he designates as Bérout or quasi-Bérout, and which, in turn, together with the Thomas version, is derived from a floating tradition. Thus, a comparison of the two derivatives with Thomas should elucidate the corresponding passage in the common source. Traits common to the Prose Tristan and Eilhart belong to Bérout or quasi-Bérout; traits common to the derivatives and Thomas belong to the source, but derive from floating tradition, and this also applies when one derivative matches up with Thomas. Nevertheless, Bédier does contradict his method when his intuition dictates otherwise, as is the case in his discussion of the jealousy of Isolt of Brittany,¹¹⁶ where he upholds Eilhart as embodying the older version, despite evidence to the contrary from the other two witnesses.

This continues the method of enquiry first instituted in Paris's work on Charlemagne, and paves the way for Bédier's later work. The basic premise demonstrated in the stemma is debatable, and therefore invalidates the results. But the article is more interesting for the way in which it foreshadows Bédier's archetype theory: if it is possible to indicate traits from a common source, and even what lay behind that source, then it

116. Bédier sees a difference in the motives of Eilhart's Isolt and the motivating jealousy in Thomas and the Prose Tristan. But he considers the former to represent the older tradition, on the grounds that later poets explained the obscurities of their predecessors, and it is therefore difficult to imagine anything so positive as jealousy developing into inadvertence. He justifies this contradiction of method with the theory that the idea of jealousy came independently to Thomas and the author of the prose version.

must be possible to reconstruct not only the common source, as he did with Thomas, but also the version which lay behind it. This, in turn, implies that the latter must be more concrete than floating tradition.

The following year Muret continued the study,¹¹⁷ dealing with the whole of Eilhart up to the last part covered by Bédier. He dismisses the idea of Eilhart's derivation from Béroul in his discussion of the source, stating that it could equally obtain vice-versa: as the German sometimes seems older, it is credible that Béroul could have copied from a work whose original was known to Eilhart. Dismissing the idea that Eilhart used an English source, on the philological evidence of the name Isalde, Muret agrees with Paris that the Prose Tristan is likely to be founded on the lost Tristan of Chrétien de Troyes, although not directly because of the stylistic differences.¹¹⁸ He then hypothesizes that the poet responsible for Eilhart's source may have been the enigmatic Li Kievres,¹¹⁹ but his main thesis is that the discrepancies and rapports between the versions can be explained by the activity of conteurs and the floating tradition.

This theory of floating tradition persisted under the auspices of Paris and necessarily involves the question of transmission. Paris, influenced by Sudre's remarks on Waldef,¹²⁰ concludes that the Tristan

117. Romania, xvi (1886), 288-363.

118. Paris states that the Prose Tristan derives its style from the Prose Lancelot, likewise elaborated from Chrétien's work. 'Notes sur les Romans relatifs à Tristan', Romania, xv (1886), 597-602.

119. See J. D. Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance, i, 156n.

120. L. Sudre, Romania, xiv (1885), 604-8. Review of K. Warnke's edition of Marie de France. See Paris, Romania, xv (1886), 597-602. In 1888 Paris clarified his position in an article in Hist. Litt. de la France, xxx, where he envisages British songs passing from Welsh musicians to the Anglo-Saxons, and after the Conquest being circulated to the Normans by both Welsh and English. The indigenous musicians then passed into Northern France with their 'breton lais'. This gives rise to two stages, the pre-France stage being demonstrated by Béroul and Thomas, and the later by Chrétien, which may have had Béroul as its source.

story came into French via an English intermediary, and that Brittany played no part in the formulation of the romances. Later Zimmer and Foerster championed the Breton cause, but until the progress of transmission was evolved, the floating tradition theory was a convenient means of shelving the knottier problems concerning the interrelationship of the versions. Heinzel was partly responsible for this theory, which persisted after his views were discredited, since his case rested on the formation of extant versions from pseudo-biographies, derived in turn from various episodic lays.¹²¹

In the 1890's the question of Arthurian provenance and transmission in general became controversial. There was a movement away from the theories of Paris headed by Foerster and Zimmer, who postulated that Breton bards popularized Arthurian material in France prior to Chrétien and that Chrétien's works were only British in name.¹²² Loth and Lot replied in favour of the indigenous Celts.¹²³ This further confused the question of floating tradition, as it became increasingly difficult to see where traditions arose and whither they were transmitted.

With these larger issues gathering head, work continued both on individual romances and their groups, and appropriately, in view of Muret's work on its relationship with Eilhart, the main achievement in this later period was Löse's work on the Prose Tristan. Paris, having already called

121. See Bédier, ii, 170.

122. See Zimmer's arguments in Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen (12th June, 1890), pp. 488-528 and (20th October, 1890), pp. 788-832; Zs. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt., xii (1890), 231-56. Der Karrenritter, ed. W. Foerster, cxi-cxxiii. See also E. Brugger, 'Ueber die Bedeutung von Bretagne, Breton in mittelalten Texten', Zs. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt. xx (1898), 79-162.

123. J. Loth, 'Des nouvelles théories sur l'origine des Romans Arthuriens', Revue Celtique, xiii (1892), 475-503; F. Lot 'De la provenance des lais dits bretons', Romania, xxiv (1895), 513ff. and 'La patrie des lais bretons', ibid., xxviii (1899), 321ff.

into question the validity of the internal evidence for dating and authorship,¹²⁴ put the research topic in the hands of Löseth and accordingly limited his article in Histoire Littéraire de la France to a discussion of the metrical versions.

Following broadly Paris's arguments, concerning the dependence of the Prose Tristan on Chrétien's lost work, Löseth, nevertheless, allows for the scope of the prose writers' imagination. However, he does not explain everything with this formula, denying that the Arthurian elements, which he dates between 1215 and 1230,¹²⁵ could have come from Chrétien on the evidence of Tristan's absence from the roll-call in Brec. In addition, Löseth follows Bédier in suggesting some derivation from the Béroul-Eilhart group, although much changed from the original form, and also suspects an affinity with Thomas on the evidence of Palamedes' abduction of Isolt, and the dragon fight in B.N. MS. 103. But although he raises some fascinating issues in his introduction, Löseth does not follow them up and his discussion of sources other than Chrétien remains limited.

The study itself gives a modernized rendering of the Prose Tristan with variants, and in so doing clears much of the ground as far as the Paris manuscripts are concerned.¹²⁶ Its main contribution lies in the examination

124. Romania, xv (1886), 597-602; Kuth-Merlin, ed. G. Paris and J. Ulrich (1886), I, xxxiiff.

125. Löseth places the work between the Prose Lancelot and Palamede.

126. Löseth's study confines itself to the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Later he examined those in the British Museum which, apart from Sommer's work on Malory, had only been examined by C. Estlander for his study of MSS. 2329 Add. and Egerton. e. 49, 'Pièces inédites du roman de Tristan', Acta Societas Scientiarum Fennicae, viii (18th May, 1866). (This is something of a curiosity, but its assertion that the source of the Prose Tristan was not a Latin version but local British traditions, we see the floating tradition theory in embryo.) See Le Tristan et le Palamede des manuscrits française du British Museum (Christiana, 1905); also Le Tristan et le Palamede des manuscrits de Rome et de Florence (Christiana, 1924).

of the manuscripts rather than any general conclusions, which were understandably influenced by Paris, and also of a necessarily inconclusive nature since Löseth was still in no position to have an overall view of all the manuscriptal families.

In the same year as Löseth embarked on the only remaining uncharted area of Tristan literature, Zimmer sparked off the controversy of the 1890's with his theory of Pictish origins.¹²⁷ This was based on the philological evidence of the names Drust and Talorg, and had the advantage of providing something more tangible than the vague Celtic speculation hitherto. In support of this theory Zimmer evolved a possible historical background in which Tristan appears as Drust, heir to the Pictish throne, having inherited through his mother, who leaves his dead father's fiefdom for his uncle's lands in the East. Iseult, meanwhile, features as the daughter of a Viking king in Dublin because of the Germanic origins of her name. As there were Irish immigrant settlements in Western Scotland, it can be assumed that the marriage between Iseult and a Pictish king was the viable result of a treaty.

Zimmer saw the legend as forming before the Armorican migration, but remaining limited to the Northern Celts until the Bretons in the army of William I disseminated the legend, not only through the British Isles, but also into Brittany, and thence into the courts of Normandy. This Zimmer regarded as explaining why the names in Arthurian romance are, as far as he is concerned, Breton in origin rather than Welsh.

The controversy lasted until the capitulation of Joseph Loth in 1924,¹²⁸

127. *Zs. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt.*, xiii (1891), 58-86.

128. 'Un parallèle au roman de Tristan en Irlandais au X^e siècle', *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, pp. 122-33. Zimmer's theory of Pictish origin is now generally accepted, although his transmission theory is not, as the whole question is still in dispute. For an earlier discussion of Zimmer's work by Loth see *Revue Celtique*, xiii (1895), 475ff.

when he rescinded his theory of Cornish provenance. Nutt, while not specifically supporting Loth, opposed Zimmer on the grounds that the Tristan legend was pan-Celtic and that generally Zimmer placed too much emphasis on the Breton influence in the formation of the Arthurian cycle, at the expense of the insular originals. In his view Zimmer's theories on the Tristan legend undermine his main tenet; as the legend can be traced in Wales before 1081, and probably before 1072, when it was unknown in Brittany, this would firstly invalidate Zimmer's transmission theory, but secondly, if the Tristan romances are merely Bretonized versions of insular originals, as Zimmer claims, then no reliance can be placed on any Breton trait in other branches of the cycle as proving non-insular origin.¹²⁹

Inevitably the controversy spread to the general questions concerning the provenance and dissemination of the whole Arthurian cycle, and this channelling of interest may be responsible to some extent for the lack of specific work on the Tristan legend during the 1890's. Textually very little work was produced, despite promises of editions of Bérout and Thomas from SATF, and Tristan scholars of the previous decade appeared to have forsaken the field.¹³⁰

The one exception was Paris, who, in 1894, wrote an article for Revue de Paris, which, while it contains no new ideas, is valuable as an example of his method and his love of the legend, besides constituting a statement of his most cherished ideas later to be abandoned on account of

129. 'Celtic Myth and Saga', Folk-lore iii (1892), 406-11. See also Rhys's objections, The Arthurian Legend, pp. 370f.

130. Bédier produced nothing until his reconstruction in 1900. Muret produced nothing between 1888 and his edition of Bérout in 1903. Lutoslawski and Vetter abandoned the field. Löseth did not follow up his work on the Prose Tristan until 1905. Gelther produced nothing valuable between his work on the legend in 1887, Die Sage von Tristan und Isolde, and his article on the interrelationships of the versions in Zs. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt., xxii (1900), 1ff. Röttiger summarized work already done in Der heutige Stand der Tristanforschung (Hamburg, 1897), but added nothing which really advanced studies.

evidence produced by former pupils. It opens with a defence of the Celtic provenance of the legend, the Celtic world being seen as a matrix for disparate traditions and narratives. He then replies to the objection that the assimilation of traits from Classical and Oriental literature must have taken place in France with reference to the oral tradition: as the relevant texts were unavailable or inadequate in 12th century France, extra-Celtic traits could only have gravitated towards the legend through the agency of oral transmission.¹³¹ In this way Paris argues for a British epic source, not as a specific archetype, but as a currency of narratives compounded from these various elements.

Although his theory of transmission is virtually unchanged from that put forward in Histoire Littéraire de la France, there seems to be more emphasis on the Breton part played in dissemination, while still maintaining his theory of the English intermediary. He then divides the versions into the English, represented by Thomas, and the French, represented by Béroul, the latter being contaminated with the Arthurian as it moves away from its source and comes into contact with the French contours. Thomas's work, despite its innovations, therefore comprises the purer version. This constitutes an advance, as previously Paris had designated both Thomas and Béroul as Anglo-Norman, without differentiation.

Paris then shows the gradual civilizing of the legend through Béroul and Eilhart, where Tristan becomes more chivalrous and sympathetic, to Thomas, where the approach is more psychological, and finally to the prose version where Tristan is a fully-fledged knight of the Round Table. He concludes the article with an unfavourable comparison of Gottfried with Thomas, a critical summary of Wagner's Tristan, and an exposition of the

131. See Bédier's reply, II, 139.

conflict between passion and social convention, which the legend embodies.

However, perhaps the most outstanding feature of the article is not found in its intellectual content, but in the emotional commitment manifest in its rhetoric. Paris feels the legend with a fervour which is undeniably poetic; the story is

... une conception de l'amour telle qu'elle ne se trouve auparavant chez aucun peuple, dans aucun poème, de l'amour illégitime, de l'amour souverain, de l'amour plus fort que l'honneur, plus fort que le sang, plus fort que la mort, de l'amour qui lie deux êtres l'un à l'autre par une chaîne que les autres et eux-mêmes sont impuissants à rompre ou à relâcher, de l'amour qui les surprend malgré eux, qui les entraîne dans la faute, qui les conduit au malheur, qui les amène ensemble à la mort, qui leur cause des douleurs et des angoisses, mais aussi des joies et des ivresses tellement incomparables et presque surhumaines que leur histoire, une fois connue, resplendit éternellement au ciel de souvenir d'un éclat douloureux et fascinant ...¹³²

This lyricism is reminiscent of the intensity of feeling aroused by Wagner's Tristan in England, and it highlights the fact that at the same time as Wagner was there being eulogized to the detriment of the originals, on the other side of the Channel the originals were being hailed in the same terms. When compared with the situation in England, it becomes even more extraordinary that the speaker should be, not an artist, but a scholar dedicated to the application of scientific method.

This rhapsodic appraisal of literary content inevitably caused some intellectual caprice, evident when compared with the work of Bédier, who nevertheless retained some of his teacher's grace in style and subjectivity in approach. The trend away from Paris's critical mannerisms and towards his pure ideals can be seen continuing in the work of Gertrude Schoepperle, who refuted Bédier, as Bédier before her had refuted Paris.

The first and most fundamental change in thinking on the Tristan legend in the second wave of scholarship was the postulation of the archetype

132. Revue de Paris (15th March, 1894), p. 154.

theory. This put forward the general idea that the extant versions of Tristan are derived, not from a conglomeration of lays, unified for the first time in the oldest compositions, but from a single literary source. It was perhaps a natural critical development from the floating tradition theory, formed in the earlier days of Tristan studies, when the profusion and haphazard nature of the material was more evident than any pattern. However, as Bédier points out, the material, in fact, breaks down into three seminal versions, comprising Eilhart, Thomas and the Prose Tristan, whence all other versions, except Béroul and the Berne Folie,¹³³ derive. This simplification into four primary sources, evolved from the research of Bossert and his successors, made the archetype theory viable.

The first scholar to propose this idea was Brugger in 1898,¹³⁴ who surmised in a note that the first literary form of the legend was a romance or epic, probably similar to the romances of Horn and Kudrun. Brugger did not follow this up, but in 1900 Golther, who had previously upheld the floating tradition theory, produced a stemma tracing the extant versions back to a single source, which he defines as Chrétien's lost poem.¹³⁵ In the same year Bédier brought out a conjectural scheme for the reconstruction of Thomas, which prefigures the method he employs for reconstituting the archetype.¹³⁶

Although Bédier did not bring out the second volume of his work on Thomas until 1905, and Golther, though he had formulated his version of the

133. Bédier, ii, 188-9.

134. Zs. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt., xx (1898), 134n.

135. Ibid., xxi (1900), 23.

136. 'Spécimen d'un essai de Reconstruction conjecturale du Thomas de Tristan', Forschungen zur Romanischen Philologie (15th March, 1900).

archetype before this, did not publish until 1907,¹³⁷ the theory was sufficiently current by 1902 to make Paris reconsider his position. Consequently, while defending Thomas's precedence over Chrétien's Cligès against Foerster, he comes, rather abruptly, to the conclusion that the basis of all the French poems is a lost and incomplete English work.¹³⁸ As Bédier explains,¹³⁹ Paris had transferred to the archetype Suchier's arguments for the unfinished source of Béroul and Eilhart.¹⁴⁰ The nationality of the postulated source was predictable in view of Paris's long championship of the Anglo-Saxon transmission, and is supported by three arguments: the presence of English words in French poems, the testimony of Waldef, and the fact that Béroul, Thomas and the prose writer must have worked from a foreign source in order to explain the discrepancies.

Bédier refuted this, however,¹⁴¹ since he believed that the archetype was a polished literary work belonging to the first half of the 12th century and composed in French:

Ce n'est pas une vulgate informe, mais déjà un de ces organismes supérieurs dont toutes les parties sont liées par une synergie telle que toutes souffrent de la moindre atteinte à l'une d'entre elles.¹⁴²

This Bédier considers to be the source of all extant versions. Having reconstructed Thomas, he goes on to reconstruct this archetype through a table of concordances, which as Schoepperle points out, permits a subjective

137. Tristan und Isolde in den Dichtungen des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit, (Leipzig, 1907).

138. Journal des Savants (June 1902), p. 301m.

139. Bédier, ii, 315-16.

140. See Paris's review of Suchier's Französische Literaturgeschichte (Leipzig, 1901) in Journal des Savants (November 1901), 702-8, in which he dismisses Suchier's theory.

141. Bédier, ii, 316-17.

142. Op. cit., ii, 186-7.

element to operate.¹⁴³ In addition, Bédier minimizes the Celtic traits in the archetype, since he maintains that the story could not have existed in its tragic form on the evidence of Celtic tradition.¹⁴⁴ This again seems based on a priori reasoning.

Although he notes the innovations Thomas made, Bédier derives this directly from the archetype, guided, no doubt, by Paris, and postulates a lost intermediary source (y) for the Béroul-Eilhart version, since these two authors are independent of each other. This he does on account of the potion's limitation in the latter works. He surmises that the author of postulated source (y) introduced this factor to make the passion appear more spontaneous and natural.¹⁴⁵ Schoepperle argues against this,¹⁴⁶ supporting the Béroul-Eilhart version as being more faithful to the estoire,¹⁴⁷ that is, to the source for the major versions of the legend with the exception of Béroul II and the Prose Tristan.¹⁴⁸

She finds it improbable that Thomas should contain the original version of the love-potion's duration when Bédier himself has shown Thomas altering all other major details in order to make the material consistent with his ideal of love. The estoire according to Schoepperle showed the lovers as guilty, returning penitent to court after their sojourn in Morrois and the abatement of the potion. This would have been unpalatable to Thomas, who depicts them returning innocent, exonerated by Mark's

143. Tristan and Isolt, 1, 66-8.

144. Bédier, 11, 144-5. He eliminates all but four of the traits suggested by Paris in Revue de Paris as having mythic origins, together with his transmission theory, 11, 144-55.

145. *Ibid.*, 11, 236-9.

146. *Op. cit.*, 1, 75-84.

147. Taken from Béroul's allusion, 11. 1789-90.

148. *Op. cit.*, 1, 9-10, 11, 439-46.

witness to their sleeping divided by a sword. But as the estoire shows the lovers separated on their return, Thomas has to invent an episode whereby this is effected, hence the orchard scene where Mark discovers the lovers together. Thus, although the three poems are derived from the same source, Thomas's version represents a revision of the model which is more faithfully followed by Eilhart and Béroul I.¹⁴⁹

Schoepperle was by no means convinced that the estoire was as perfect as Bédier thought it was, and her argument represents a modification of the archetype theory, which has some affinities with Paris's conclusions. She traces the legend back to its Celtic sources, but not by the method previously used of relating single traits to earlier analogues.¹⁵⁰ Instead, she takes a wider sweep, and taking what she considers to be the essence of the legend, relates it to the Irish elopement stories, particularly those of Diarmaid and Grainne, and Deirdre and Naisi. This examination constitutes the main strength of her work.

It was pointed out by de Jubainville¹⁵¹ that the conflict between love and society represented a later stage in civilization than that indicated by the Irish sagas, which would seem to support Bédier's contention that the significant creation of the Tristan story belonged to the French. But Schoepperle maintains that the Morrois episode has no parallel in French romance, while, on the other hand, having distinct affinities with the

149. Bruce in his review of Schoepperle considers it unlikely that the estoire poet should change his source, which, on the evidence of Diarmaid and Grainne contained an unlimited potion, and that Thomas, while working from the estoire, should restore this. It seems more likely that this variation in Eilhart and Béroul is due to a secondary source, the author of which limited the potion in an attempt to explain the long separations in the second half of the narrative. MLN, xxix (1914), 213-14.

150. *Op. cit.*, I, 3, for her explanation of the arc qui ne faut.

151. Revue Celtique, xv (1894), 407ff.

Irish Aitheda.¹⁵² Although there are similarities of detail between the stories of Tristan and Diarmaid, such as the separation of the sleeping lovers, the parallels in the main outlines are striking: both involve a hero versed in woodmanship and cunning, who, as a result of an imposed compulsion, is in love with the wife of his lord, and who, having fled with her into the forest, is pursued and caught by the wronged husband. Although it is possible to adduce evidence to indicate that adultery and divorce were lighter matters in the Irish sagas, the legends of Deirdre and Grainne have a tragic tone resulting from the conflict of familial and feudal ties with passion, which reflects that found in the Tristan legend.

Schoepperle does not suggest how the legend reached France, but she does admit that when it arrived it had to be reworked for contemporary taste, and that the estoire represents such a reworking, but not necessarily the first nor the only one.¹⁵³ This obviously lays a different emphasis on the estoire from that imposed by Bédier on the archetype, which he saw as a finished work, incorporating a few Celtic traits, but mainly of French inspiration. Schoepperle saw the estoire as necessarily inconsistent and fallible, since it was attempting to fuse disparate elements. Consequently, where Bédier sees flaws in the extant versions as misinterpretations of the archetype, Schoepperle sees the estoire itself as an imperfect intermediary.

Having surmised that the estoire is one of a number of versions antedating the extant versions, Schoepperle is not bound by Bédier's terminus ad quem of 1154.¹⁵⁴ She sees evidence of the pastourelle, a form not

152. Op. cit., II, 391ff.

153. Op. cit., II, 470-3.

154. The date attributed to Bernart de Ventadour's reference to the legend. Op. cit., I, 112-17.

earlier than the late 12th century, in Kaherdin's wooing of Camille, traces of the chanson de mal mariée, belonging to the same period, in the episode of Kaherdin and Gargeolain, and of the chanson à personnages in Iseult's repentance. In addition, Schoepperle considers that the influence of amour courtois can be seen in such details as the power that an appeal in Iseult's name has over Tristan.¹⁵⁵ She concludes, therefore, that the estoire must have been composed in the second half of the century, just prior to the extant redactions.¹⁵⁶

Schoepperle's work is by no means the solution to all problems in Tristan scholarship. Some of her conclusions, such as the late dating of the estoire, have been rejected, and even her concept of the estoire itself is debatable. However, in demonstrating the Celtic sources of the legend and opposing Bédier's theory of the perfect archetype, Schoepperle squarely advanced Tristan scholarship into an area that it had vaguely acknowledged and skirted since the days of la Villemarqué.

The publication of Schoepperle's work represents the end of an era in Tristan studies. All the major texts had been edited by this time, and all the major theories evolved. Controversies and general work on the legend continued after this date, but in less abundance and with less revolutionary impact. There is a verve and excitement about this thirty-year period of Tristan research which is partially due to the material itself, which holds so many secrets and surprises, and partially to Gaston Paris, who communicated his own inspiration to others. His work in this

155. Op. cit., I, 120-36.

156. Op. cit., I, 182-3. F. Lot argued against this evidence in Romania, xliii (1914), 128ff. As the date of Thomas is not fixed and the date of Eilhart is now thought to be about fifteen years earlier than Schoepperle argued, her post-Chrétien dating of the estoire is controversial. For a bibliography of the Thomas-Cligès debate see Les Fragments du Tristan de Thomas, ed. B. H. Wind, pp. 14f. K. Wagner first postulated an earlier dating for Eilhart in his edition, p. 21.

field is not remembered for its accuracy, nor even, at times, its plausibility, but for its fearlessness in taking conjectural leaps, and for its powerful allegiance to the legend. It was a combination of these two qualities which provided the motivation for French Tristan studies during this time.

Just as Sommer's work on Malory had nothing to do with the Arthurian revival in England, so this outburst of Tristan scholarship had nothing to do with the Wagner cult, which was more or less coincidental with it. It is refreshing to find an area in the period where an admiration of the legend is not founded on Tristan und Isolde, but is firmly centred on the mediaeval versions. There had been for some time in French scholarship an approbation of the Tristan romances, but this period saw its florescence, and, remarkably, at the same time as scholars were concerning themselves with minute and detailed analysis. But this affection for the legend by no means remained confined to academic circles: once the Wagner enthusiasm had died down, English writers turned to the Celtic ethos revealed by the French scholars a few years earlier for fresh material and new inspiration.

CHAPTER VII

The Impact of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde.

From 1882 onwards there was a steady increase in the popularity of the Tristan legend, which reached its peak around the turn of the century. This renaissance was strongly motivated by the Wagnerian cult, which spread from the Continent in the 1890's and became part of the Aesthetic climate. Extremes of sensibility, enthusiasms for the romantically vague and a feeling for other-worldliness thus provided a general background for the legend's revival, while the Celtic twilight and a decadent Pre-Raphaelitism provided a more specific stimulus. But the main impetus was Wagner's Tristan, whose influence, during this period, was virtually impossible to avoid.

Although the Tristan legend threatened to eclipse the Arthurian, and to constitute an Aesthetic reaction away from earlier Victorian standards, the Arthurian cycle still managed to hold its ground by aligning itself with new interests, while at the same time, not disassociating itself from its Tennysonian affiliations. Consequently, while interest in the Idylls and Malory increased after Tennyson's death,¹ the Celtic and Wagnerian enthusiasms allowed the cultivation of new sensibilities towards what was no longer unfamiliar material. Thus the earlier Pre-Raphaelite reaction, crystallized in Tristram of Lyonesse, became developed and extended, while existing alongside, on the one hand, Arthurian works inspired by traditional Tennysonian attitudes, and, on the other hand, Arthurian works which partook of the new vogues.

1. Apart from popularizations and retellings, there were at least six editions of Malory between 1897 and 1913, including the edition by Sir John Rhys in 1893 illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley, and that illustrated by Russell Flint in 1910.

The main characteristic of reworkings during this period is the predominance of the dramatic form. Previously the only serious attempt at dramatizing the Arthurian legends had been G. J. Riethmüller's Launcelot of the Lake in 1843. This dearth was not only due to the deplorable state of the theatre for much of the 19th century, but also to the fact that the prevalent form, for the Arthurian, as for all legendary and romance subjects, was the long narrative poem popularized by Scott and Byron, and reaching its apotheosis, if not epic status, in the Idylls. But while Tennyson was responsible for a mid-century resurgence of the narrative poem, he also assisted largely in the resuscitation of the verse play as a respectable literary form.² The ensuing reaction against the narrative poem makes Swinburne's Tale of Balen appear somewhat anachronistic in 1896.

However, although the Arthurian plays, written in verse without exception, represent an advance so far as treatment of the legend is concerned, they do not mark an advance within terms of theatrical development. Just as the narrative poem appears a reactionary form beside the novel in the 19th century, so these verse dramas appear a reactionary theatrical form beside the socio-realistic plays of Robertson, Pinero and Galsworthy. They remain firmly in the quasi-Elizabethan mould, which characterizes almost all 19th century verse plays and which gained additional popularity in the latter part of the century on account of awakened interest in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Nor do they owe anything to the renascent Irish drama, although they are analogous in their presentation of national legends, and, unlike the Tristan dramas, they were not susceptible to any Wagner-inspired experimentation. In fact, while these plays represent a formal reaction against the Idylls, they do, in the main reflect in

2. Sir Henry Irving, who was greatly responsible for the revival of the classic theatre, produced and took the lead in Tennyson's The Cup in 1881 and Becket in 1893.

theatrical terms characters and attitudes very similar to those created by Tennyson.³ This may be partly due to the influence of Tennyson's verse plays, but it was also inevitable that the theatre, which relied on popularity, should follow the well-proven Tennysonian trend of the Idylls before moving on to new modes of presentation. The Tristan legend during this period was fortunate in this respect, since it was not hidebound by a previous popularity.⁴

Although the Arthurian plays break no new ground dramatically and have a Tennysonian flavour, the new form inevitably causes some shift in focus. The emphasis now falls on the interplay of characters and the tragic action. The symbolism which gives the Idylls dimension is abandoned, as are the trappings of mediaevalism, the creation of atmosphere, the explanation and underlining of the chivalric ideal, all of which are found in the Arthurian narrative poems as means of rendering the material more immediate to the imagination. The supernatural, and particularly the religious supernatural, is considerably cut down: the Holy Grail is mentioned occasionally and the Quest makes for a plot-point in two of the plays, but the 1860's enthusiasm has passed.⁵ Indeed, Galahad only inspires the occasional lyric⁶ and one short stage work during this later period,⁷ being eclipsed by Wagner's heroes Lohengrin and Parsifal, who assimilate elements of Christian mysticism

3. M. Steynor's Lancelot and Elaine, produced at the Bijou Theatre 8th April, 1909, is almost completely dependent on 'Lancelot and Elaine'.

4. No version of the Tristan legend derives from 'The Last Tournament', although Dagonet appears in some of the Arthurian plays and Tristram and Isolt by Martha Kinross (1913), contains some details in Act I.

5. J. C. Carr, King Arthur (1895); Francis Coutts, The Romance of King Arthur (1907), Part III, 'Launcelot du Lake'.

6. Notably E. Sweetman's 'Pastoral of Galahad'. Pastorals and Other Poems (1899).

7. E. Rhys, Masque of the Grail, performed at the Court Theatre, 3rd July, 1908.

into a romantic mysteriousness.⁸ However, while there are a few works on the peripheral characters of Arthurian legend,⁹ the main area of dramatic interest is the fall of Arthur through the infidelity of Lancelot and Guinevere and the machinations of Mordred.

It is here that the main shift of focus occurs. In the Idylls the love of Lancelot and Guinevere is viewed through its effects and subordinated to a delineation of the chivalric ideal which it destroys. It hardly exists as a relationship, but is seen rather as a source of disintegration. Tennyson could not afford to arouse any sympathy for the lovers, since this would unbalance the figure of Arthur and negate the spiritual levels of the poem. The dramatists, however, could hardly show Arthur's fall without involving the lovers' crucial relationship, which releases Mordred's evil. Concerned with action, the drama confronts squarely the more localized problems which Tennyson skirted in his attempt to create a universal panorama.

As a result Arthur tends to become isolated in a secondary position, since the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere is obviously better stage material than Arthur's more passive role. W. Wills¹⁰ and J. C. Carr,¹¹ who were also motivated by the fact that they were creating the part for Irving, attempt to overcome this difficulty by placing Arthur in

8. W. Forster, The Legend of Lohengrin, a narrative poem (1894); I. Hearne, Queen Herzleide, a play (1911); R. C. Trevelyan, The Birth of Parsifal, a play (1905), and The New Parsifal, an 'operatic fable' (1914).

9. Eg., E. Rhys, Enid (1908); L. Dalkeith, 'Sir Gareth of Orkney', Little Plays (1909).

10. King Arthur. See F. Wills' biography. W. G. Wills, dramatist and painter (1898), pp. 232-62.

11. King Arthur, derived from Wills' play and performed at the Lyceum, 12th January, 1895. Sets were designed by Burne-Jones and the music composed by Sullivan.

Lancelot's role as Guinevere's champion. Francis Coutts rationalizes Arthur's failure as a husband by emphasizing his devotion to England, but this does not improve his dramatic impact. In fact, in the drama Arthur becomes something of a dispossessed monarch. His glamour as the instigator and model of knightly conduct is much more easily demonstrable in poetry than it is on the stage, where it tends to be in the hands of the director and stage manager rather than the dramatist. It is interesting that the only two occasions on which Arthur becomes the centre of action occur during those plays which adopt Swinburne's interpretation of the legend and show Mordred as the child of Arthur's incest.¹²

Mordred, too, is a stereotype except in these two plays where his relationship with Arthur provides him with more weight and interest. Generally he is thinly motivated by ambition and a passion for Guinevere, and in four plays is guided in his villainy by Morgan la Fée.¹³ In Dillon's play he is at least differentiated by his situation, and in Newbolt's Mordred he is further characterized by his cunning. But in the main his potential is wasted, either because he has no specific link with the central situation, or because he is overshadowed by Morgan, who is generally presented as an Ortrud figure.

Of the two lovers Lancelot is the less interestingly treated. His competition with Galahad has ended and he ceases to be complicated by failures in spiritual chivalry. The internal conflict between his two earthly loyalties remains, but surprisingly loses substance in the transition from poetry to drama. The brooding hero of previous decades is not essentially dramatic, since, like Arnold's Tristram, he exists in circumstances incapable of resolution; his conflict renders him inactive and the only

12. A. Dillon, King Arthur Pendragon (1906); E. Newbolt, Mordred (1895).

13. See the plays of Wills, Carr and Coutts, together with E. Rhys's Guinevere, performed at the Coronet Theatre 13th November, 1905.

opportunity to release his suffering into action is provided by the Grail Quest. In the drama Lancelot is simplified by the absence of the Quest, sometimes to the point of becoming passive and two-dimensional.

Consequently it is with Guinevere that the motivating action lies. Previously condemned as a scarlet woman, she now rises in stature to the rank of tragic heroine.¹⁴ This is partly due to the lessening of Arthur and the chivalric ideal together with the absence of the Grail Quest, which established her as God's opponent in the struggle for Lancelot's soul. But it is also partly due to the introduction of the final repudiation scene,¹⁵ previously treated only by Morris and Owen Meredith. Because she forms the nodal point for the other three characters, Guinevere is crucial to the action. She is also the character most capable of development since she comes to see her love in the perspective of ruin, repents, and proves the strength of this in the rejection of Lancelot.

The repudiation scene is most positively responsible for reinstating Guinevere's reputation, although one must not overlook the importance of Ellen Terry in the role as early as 1895. In this scene Guinevere re-establishes the moral order with a conscious act of self-denial. It is used by Wills, Rhys, Coutts and Steynor and provides a more dramatically satisfying action than Tennyson's forgiveness scene, since the lovers are now the focal point of the legend. The forgiveness scene still appears in the works of Wills, Carr and Steynor under various guises, but it seems from a theatrical point of view more formalistic than organic. Although the emphasis of the conclusion alters, however, the moralistic attitude of previous decades crystallized in the Idylls continues to permeate the drama.

There are, nevertheless, two exceptions to this moralistic conclusion,

14. Her dominance is paralleled by the dominance of Iseult over Tristan during this period.

15. See Malory xxi, 9.

which constitute a deliberate rejection of tradition. The first occurs in Dillon's play King Arthur Pendragon where the lovers, overcome by the horrors they have precipitated, go off to drown themselves in Cornwall. The second, in Hill's Guinevere,¹⁶ is more significant in that the lovers exculpate themselves by dying together in a manner reminiscent of Tristan and Iseult - Lancelot of a wound incurred while defending Arthur and Guinevere because she cannot be parted from him. Thus the claims of love and loyalty are both fulfilled and the reaction in favour of the lovers is extended further.

With these exceptions, the main lines of the plays come, predictably enough, from Malory. All but King Arthur Pendragon begin with the marriage of Arthur and Guinevere, and establish the domestic peace and political amity which are to be shattered. The chivalric adventures and the Grail Quest are omitted; but the post-Grail books of Malory are used extensively, particularly from Book twenty onwards. That dramatists often worked directly from Malory can be seen in the amount of close reference used in such scenes as the betrayal in the bedchamber.¹⁷ Dillon, for example, with some incongruity of style, even quotes parts of the interchange between Lancelot and Guinevere.

Historically, the King Arthur of Comyns Carr is probably the most important Arthurian drama, since it had a publicity and success, which must have inspired subsequent versions. Originally Irving had bought Wills' King Arthur for £800 around 1888, but it was never performed. After Wills' death Irving called in Carr to rework the play, but the latter preferred to write his own version, drawing on some of Wills' ideas and using a similar structure. As it was written specifically for the Lyceum company the

16. G. Hill, Guinevere (1906).

17. Malory, xx, 3 and 4.

pseudo-Shakespearian manner is inevitable.

The play begins with a prologue in which Arthur acquires Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake. It also presents a spectacular of lake spirits, sounds notes of coming doom,¹⁸ and ends with a speech of mystical patriotism. In the first act Morgan and Mordred¹⁹ reveal themselves as villains, determined to ruin Arthur through the love of Lancelot and Guinevere. The lovers then confess their hitherto concealed passion, and the act closes operatically with Guinevere successfully beseeching Lancelot to refrain from the Grail Quest, while the knights sing the Grail chant in the background. In the second act the villains reveal their alliance with Mark and Ryons, who are besieging Caerlioni, and spy on the lovers, who vow undying love amid significant thunder. In the third act Morgan and Mordred confront Arthur with Lancelot's treachery, which Guinevere refuses to deny. Arthur in noble passion refuses to harm Lancelot, and, leaving Guinevere to the care of Mordred, goes out to fight his enemies.²⁰ Then follows a tour de force for Ellen Terry, during which the imprisoned Guinevere rejects Mordred's offer of marriage and scorns his threats. Finally, Arthur, acting as the accused queen's champion in a scene of pathos and grand gestures, is fatally wounded by Mordred, who, in turn, is killed by the dying Lancelot.²¹ Arthur and Guinevere are reunited before Arthur's death

18. Taken from the first act of Wills' play, where in a similar scene Merlin warns Arthur of the inexorability of fate.

19. This alliance is taken from Wills, where they are represented as mother and son.

20. Shaw considered that Irving reached the heights of his art in this scene but was let down by Carr's script - 'the talk of an angry and jealous coster-monger'. Our Theatres in the Nineties (1932), i, 15. First appeared in the Saturday Review, 19th January, 1895.

21. Arthur's championship derives from Act III of Wills' play. Here the conflict is averted but a confrontation between Mordred and Arthur ends in Mordred's death and Arthur's wound at the hands of King Mark. In the last scene Guinevere rejects Lancelot on the battlefield, and Arthur, having recovered Excalibur, forgives her and bids her farewell. Carr adds a coup de théâtre but the ending of his play follows similar lines.

and the play ends with Merlin's prophecy of his second coming, a vision of Avalon and a patriotic chorus.

Carr's work is competent. It shows a good sense of action, which, apart from the quasi-Elizabethan comedy, does not flag. In this way it reflects Wills' play which is at pains to keep events moving. The climaxes occur with predictable regularity and are underlined with obvious theatrical effects. Indeed, the theatricality of the piece tends to obscure, especially where the delineation of character is concerned, since the emphasis lies on external effect rather than internal psychology in an attempt to achieve Shakespearian weight and ring. The literary style is inevitably inflated and, while generally managing to keep clear of bathos, fails to avoid echoes of Shakespeare's tragedies.

King Arthur may have been a convincing piece of theatre, tailor-made for the lavish production and grand acting style of the Lyceum. The distinguished names connected with the production ensured that it was a memorable theatrical event, sufficient to warrant a commemorative book giving illustrations of the play's highlights. But it is not a convincing play. It has no depth, no significance, and is, in the final analysis, a colourless and conventional mixture of Tennysonian sentiment and pseudo-Shakespearian style.

Coutts and Steynor write firmly within this tradition; Newbolt and Hill, while reorientating the plot, use the same style. Rhys, although writing in a lyrical vein, which renders his Guinevere more redolent of the Celtic mode, as one might expect, includes elements of the Carr tradition in the Maying scene, the Morgan-Merlin antagonism and the vision of Arthur's return. Dillon's play is alone in standing outside this tradition, though this too uses a mock-Elizabethan style.

Dillon's interpretation derives from the opinions of Herbert Coleridge and Swinburne. Coleridge draws a distinction between Malory's version and

that of Geoffrey of Monmouth, the 'historical' version, pointing out that in the former

by means of Arthur's early sin and his ill-omened alliance with Guinevere, the legend acquires a kind of dramatic unity: it exhibits, in Aeschylean phrase, the working out of an Ate, a retribution long delayed, but surely developing itself at last ...²²

Swinburne enlarges on Coleridge's analogy with Greek tragedy, comparing the unwitting sins of Arthur and Oedipus and the ensuing evils they bring on the entire kingdom. He continues in defiance of the Idylls:

This presence and imminence of Ate inevitable and invisible throughout the tragic course of action can alone confer on such a story the proper significance and the necessary dignity: without it the action would want nobility ...²³

Carr, following Wills, pays brief homage to the doom-laden view of the legend in the opening scene of King Arthur, where Arthur sees and accepts his fate, which is involved with Guinevere, not his incest with Morgause. However, there is no sense thereafter of a doom hanging over the action, with the characters working blindly towards it: the subsequent action merely proves the formula of the Prologue. Dillon, on the other hand, attempts to dramatize consistently the view of the legend presented by Coleridge and Swinburne.

He fails because he does not create the sense of the numinous which Swinburne describes. The action begins in medias res with the death of Morgause at the hands of her sons, a significant enough place considering her partnership in Arthur's incest. But the court is already such a sink of corruption that there is no sense of tragic fall, nor, indeed, any conflict of good and evil. The characters evoke little response since they are enervated by their consciousness of guilt. Thus there is little scope

22. Prefatory essay to Furnivall's edition of Le Morte Arthur (1864), p. liv.

23. Under the Microscope, p. 40.

for dramatic irony, particularly in the character of Arthur, where there is not even a sense of ambiguity. There is not sufficient tension to release into a universal vision, nor any sense of an unfolding doom, apparently disproportionate to the initial sin. Instead Dillon substitutes the trappings of Jacobean tragedy, doubtless prompted by the theme of unnaturalness, but as the horrors never find a larger, unifying significance, they become monotonous.

Like Carr, Dillon's style obtrudes in that it is continually reaching after generalized dramatic effects. Nor does he refine the legend into a tightly knit structure, but instead adds as much as possible from Malory. The resultant effect is incongruous: on the one hand the style is inflated and untraditional, but on the other hand, the action follows the conventional lines. The reception of Tristan and Iseult, the chamber fight, the condemnation and rescue, the deaths of Gareth and Gaheris and the subsequent siege of Joyous Garde and the final catastrophe are all represented. Only the suicides of Lancelot and Guinevere break with tradition, probably influenced by the deaths of Tristan and Iseult in the sub-plot. But Dillon's fidelity to his source fails to create any advantage. As it is at variance with his conception of character and fate, it merely creates an overcrowded work, which prevents any realization of fate in action.

This is, however, the only Arthurian drama which portrays Tristan and Iseult in any detail. In the plays of Wills and Newbolt Tristram appears briefly as a knight of the Round Table, divorced from his story as he was in the Arthurian poems of the mid-century. In Coutts' 'Launcelot du Lake' he is cited as a bad example of slothfulness, although incongruously he is also referred to as deriving his heroic power from Iseult in the same way as Launcelot derives his from Guinevere. Perhaps because of his presentation in the Idylls Mark is more firmly established than Tristram. He is shown as the villain by Wills and Carr, and in Coutts' 'Launcelot du Lake'

he is celebrated as a coward in Dagonet's song.

Dillon treats the Tristan story with comparative fulness and also with less dependence on Malory than in the main plot. The lovers' arrival at Camelot and Lancelot's hospitality, together with Mark's treachery and his collusion with Andred all derive from the source, but Dillon elaborates considerably. In an attempt to interweave the two plots more closely he follows Wills and Carr in showing Mark in alliance with Mordred at the final battle. Tristan and Iseult are more closely linked with Lancelot and Guinevere, being present at Joyous Gard at the time of Guinevere's rescue and being reconciled with Mark at the same time as Arthur takes back Guinevere. They die on the scene of Lancelot's fight with Gawain.

To provide the motive for the lovers' separation after their reconciliation with Mark, Dillon has to invent: Mark has Tristan poisoned with the key to his treasury - a touch strongly reminiscent of Webster - and Iseult is blamed. Tristan, thinking Iseult has joined with Mark against him, returns to his wife. At this point Dillon reverts to the metrical version for the final events.²⁴ The dying Tristan writes to Iseult for healing since she is versed in her mother's arts of sorcery. Iseult in a monologue forgives Tristan his doubts and his marriage, and prepares for Brittany. In the next scene Iseult of Brittany, having learnt the secret of the sails, betrays Tristan, who dies believing Iseult to be false. She enters, is confronted by the triumphant Iseult of Brittany and dies with the Wagnerian sentiment

O mortal prison, let my immortal love
Out of me.

This scene is the only evidence of dramatic irony in the entire play and

24. It is difficult to determine whether Dillon used Weston's translation of Gottfried, or Bédier's reconstruction, although the confrontation of the two Iseults suggests Weston's account of the episode from Ulrich von Türheim.

is, significantly enough, ready-made by tradition.

Tristan and Iseult are used ambiguously here. They support the main plot and provide secondary examples of adultery. Thus far they are used in Tennysonian fashion as illustrative of corruption. On the other hand, Dillon is careful to point out that their responsibility is negated by the potion, and in using the metrical ending, he gives their love a colouring of pathos. Besides, their love brings no ruin to a kingdom, and is to some extent mitigated by Mark's villainy. In consequence, they do not truly reinforce the love of Lancelot and Guinevere, but, being more sinned against than sinning, rather undermine it. Dillon reveals too much of the legend to allow a repeat of Tennyson's treatment.

Apart from these exceptions, however, Arthurian drama remained stereotyped throughout this period. Its lines had been firmly laid down; its lineaments were familiar. Rhys's Guinevere was the only attempt to explore its Celtic resonances. Otherwise it mainly looked back to the Victorian past. The only change in interpretation effected by the change in form is the romantic emphasis, which is more dramatically viable than the chivalric ideal. But this can be seen as auguring well for the reception of the Tristan legend: if Lancelot and Guinevere could accrue sympathy to themselves after the previous condemnations, then Tristan and Iseult could also be given a hearing. Of course, it must be remembered that there is no sop to morality in the Tristan legend equivalent to Guinevere's renunciation of Lancelot, but this is counterbalanced by a growing awareness of the metrical ending where Iseult's renunciation of life transcends moral considerations.

As Dillon's play shows, the Tristan legend, cannot be used to reinforce censure of Lancelot and Guinevere with any fidelity to the originals. Consequently, aided mainly by Wagner, it became a symbol of the anti-Tennyson reaction. Swinburne was the first to use it as such, but with

the growing popularity of Wagner's Tristan, the legend reached a wider range of devotees, including the intellectuals, who were relatively untouched by the Arthurian popularizations proliferating at the turn of the century, and who idolized Wagner far more than they ever had Swinburne. The climate of Aestheticism was right for a revival of the legend as interpreted by Wagner, if not in its mediaeval form. The emphasis on passion for its own sake, refined into a mystical experience, contributed to and was itself defined by the popularity of the legend. This has its roots in Pre-Raphaelitism, and it is interesting that the mystical and sensual characteristics of the earlier heroes, Galahad and Lancelot, combine in the later image of Tristan, and that the artistic preoccupations of Morris with the legend are reflected in the famous illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley.²⁵

The link between Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes is Swinburne and so it is fitting that Swinburne's Tristram of Lyonesse and Wagner's Tristan should appear in England within a few weeks of each other: the poem was at the printers in its final form by 2nd June, appearing in mid-July, and on 20th June the first performance of Tristan took place at Drury Lane under the baton of Hans Richter. 1882 thus marks the turning point in the career of the legend, with the combining of Pre-Raphaelite and Wagnerian currents. On 7th and 8th September the J. H. Stringer and E. G. Osborne Company performed the 'new drama' Tristan by Ben H. Hilton at the Liverpool Playhouse. As this is the first Tristan drama it is unfortunate that it has been lost, but the spelling of the title suggests Wagnerian influence, since 'Tristram' was the more popular variant at the time.

Hilton's Tristan was the forerunner of many dramatic revivals of the

25. Particularly those to the Morte D'Arthur. Beardsley's Wagnerian interests are also seen in his illustrations of Siegfried and Das Rheingold, and The Wagnerites in the Yellow Book, iii.

legend, as it was affected no less than the Arthurian by the sudden predominance of the theatre. But, in addition, it was, unlike the Arthurian drama, inevitably influenced by Wagner's treatment, and thus opened up to experimentation.²⁶ Nevertheless, it must be remembered that enthusiasm for the legend did not begin immediately, but gathered real force around the turn of the century when it rivalled the Arthurian as a literary subject, and became identified with the Aesthetic trend, just as the Idylls had been identified with the Victorian middle class.

Wagner was the greatest single cause of this enthusiasm. In music the theme and treatment of Tristan und Isolde became difficult to avoid,²⁷ and in literature the work also had a sphere of influence, where it was usually represented as a dark force, fatal to extreme sensibilities. D'Annunzio established the dangers of Tristan on a susceptible and unstable character in his Trionfo della Morte in 1889. These sinister implications of the music drama were further explored by Thomas Mann in Tristan in 1902, and Buddenbrooks the following year. Here the neurotic reaction of his over-sensitive characters to the powerful music results in their decline and death; within a literary frame, the boundaries between art and life are thus broken down as Wagner's death-devoted lovers draw others to disaster. In England D. H. Lawrence continues this trend with a reflection of the Liebestod in his Wagner-saturated novel, The Trespasser,²⁸ which contains a

26. Ronald Firbank satirizes the fashionable Tristan experiments in Vainglory (1915).

27. Chausson found it difficult to avoid when writing Le Roi Artus, begun 1886 and finished 1903. Chabrier's Gwendoline (1886) contains a Liebestod and many other borrowings. D'Indy also inserted a Liebestod into his opera L'Etranger (1903) and Debussy considered writing an opera based on Bédier's reconstruction. Frank Martin realized this project in his oratorio Le Vin Herbé (1941), which studiously avoids Wagner and attempts to project the mediaeval ethos of the legend. See E. Zuckermann, The First Hundred Years of Wagner's Tristan (New York, 1964), pp. 115-22.

28. Lawrence's second novel, 1912.

literary version of the love-duet, heavy insistence on the themes of Night, Sea and transcendental love, set in a general background of Der Meister's myth and music.

George Moore, one of the many enthusiasts who pilgrimaged to Bayreuth, portrayed in 1898 his eponymous heroine of Evelyn Innes as an erstwhile prima donna who had triumphed in the part of Isolde. There is a link here with D'Annunzio, since Moore, in a letter to Edward Dujardin, mentions the latter's notes on Tristan, promises him a translation of the love scene from his novel and advises him to read Trionfo della Morte.²⁹ The following year he writes thanking Dujardin for his suggestions, around which he had rewritten the scene which begins with an evocation of the climax of the Tristan love-duet:³⁰

'Eternal night, oh holy night of love.' Rapture succeeded rapture and the sounds of the lovers rose nearer the surface of life. In a shudder of silver chords he saw them float away like little clouds towards the low rim of the universe.³¹

Arnold Bennett, another Wagnerian, was enthusiastic about the prima donna theme and commented that, had he handled it, he would have made it more central.³²

The retellings and critiques of the music drama described in chapter six also helped to promote the legend in its Wagnerian form, but at the expense of the mediaeval originals. These were ridiculed as telling a boring story in a salacious fashion; Wagner, however, was extolled for fashioning something pure and transcendental. This body of literature is distinguished

29. 3rd November, 1897. Letters from George Moore to Edward Dujardin, 1886-1922, translated and edited by J. Eglinton (New York, 1929), p. 41

30. 28th September, 1898. Ibid., pp. 43-4.

31. 1898 version, chapter xxii, p. 291.

32. 9th June, 1898. Journal of Arnold Bennett, ed. Newman Flower (1932), 1, 78.

from the Tristanesque novels by its adulation of the work as great and elevating rather than obsessive and ultimately destructive. The former attitude, which confronts Tristan und Isolde in a more limited way, was more influential among those who reworked the legend than the dark interpretations of the novelists.

While largely responsible for the legend's popularity, the disadvantages of Wagner's influence are obvious. His rendering of the story concentrates on the characters' spiritual life, subsequently cutting the action down to a minimum and removing much of the bite and tension of the originals. There is nothing in the outcrop of Tristan reworkings which approaches Bérout's dilemma over God and the law on one hand and an immoral passion on the other. There is little sense of a deadly and primitive game of nerves played out under an elaborate social ritual. And perhaps most noticeably, there is no equivalent presentation of human degradation and suffering. Wagner's lovers are bent on death as a means to union; the mediaeval lovers are bent on maintaining a precarious existence together. The reworkings of this period insist on the transcendental nature of love and its close affinity with death, thus replacing the mediaeval concept of inevitable destruction wrought by a passion at odds with society. Bédier's reconstruction of the legend, and the subsequent English translations by Belloc and Simmonds, were not sufficient to redress this interpretative imbalance, although sometimes they were used for additional material and constituted a subsidiary factor in the legend's popularization.

On the other hand, Wagner's work had the overwhelming advantage of bringing the legend to public notice, even if the public was more select than that which enthused over the Idylls. In addition, its non-literary form and minimal action forced writers to find some alternative way of representing the legend, however faithful they remained to Wagner's interpretation. The moral stigma which had been attached to the legend, and

which culminated in 'The Last Tournament', was now erased, and the internalization of the action impelled consideration of the possible implications of the legend, rather than its external circumstances.

The emphasis on experimentation which resulted from Wagner's influence is seen in the first Tristan play of this period still extant: Michael Field's³³ The Tragedy of Pardon, written during 1901 and 1902, subsequently altered and published in 1911. This marks a distinct departure from the staid Arthurian drama, as one might expect from the authoresses' temperaments and wide-ranging interests: they were religious, and highly strung, but very much aware of currents in contemporary art and thought, and their circle included Robert Browning, Arthur Symonds and Thomas Sturge-Moore. Yeats considered them as 'of another feather from these London litterateurs'.³⁴ Almost inevitably they were Wagner enthusiasts.

In 1898 Michael and Henry, as they called themselves, began work on Deirdre.³⁵ This is noteworthy firstly because it shows them engaged in a fashionable field³⁶ and secondly because the Deirdre legend was later shown to be analogous to the Tristan story.³⁷ At the turn of the century the writers were immersed in anthropology, another fashionable area, and made abstracts of various passages from Frazer's Golden Bough in their journal, Works and Days.³⁸ Although their enthusiasms were genuine, they undoubtedly reflected the pattern of the period, and so it is perhaps predictable that they remained unattracted to Arthurian subjects. Indeed,

33. Katherine Bradley (Michael) and Edith Cooper (Henry) were aunt and niece.

34. Letter to Katherine Tynan, 31st May, 1887. The Letters of W. B. Yeats, ed. A. Wade (1959), pp. 39-40.

35. Completed 1903, published 1919.

36. This was a popular subject of the Celtic renaissance, being treated dramatically by Fiona Macleod (1900), AE (1902), W. B. Yeats (1907) and J. M. Synge (published posthumously by Yeats 1910).

37. Schoepperle, ii, 441-4.

38. B.M. MS. Ashley 46789, p. 340. Entry 16th December, 1900.

early in 1900 in an outburst against Burne-Jones 'walking in Avalon', Henry suggests a positive dislike, especially from the creative point of view:

The Arthurian legends have no power of buoying up the creator; they do not support the artist as the Greek legends do - the passion must be introduced into the cold narrative by the artist himself. Wagner did this once in Tristan - in Parsifal the Arthurian legend nearly gobbled him up.³⁹

This would seem to indicate that Henry did not find the emotional flash-point within the Arthurian material, which was so necessary for the release of her imagination.

It is therefore surprising to find her recording the inception of The Tragedy of Pardon on 5th October of the following year:

Wagner's Tristan is a mighty lyric - but drama is not touched and Tristan is the most dramatic subject the whole world of story contains. Shakespeare never had so rich a subject. All my powers of construction dance with exaltation at the opportunities it offers.⁴⁰

The precise cause of this volte-face is unknown. It seems probable that Wagner played some part on account of his exemption in the first quotation and the excited recognition of his dramatic deficiencies in the second. Also Henry writes that their 'magnificent drama' is taken from Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan and Iseult, and this may have influenced them, perhaps first coming to their attention as Wagner's source and later being read in Weston's translation. The authoresses did not read Bédier's reconstruction until some time afterwards.⁴¹

From the beginning Henry was the dominant partner in the composition.

39. MS. Ashley 46789, p. 111.

40. MS. Ashley 46790, p. 265.

41. Henry appears to disapprove: 'The whole of Bédier may be founded upon these fragments, but the invisible interstices are full of modern air'. MS. Ashley 46792, p. 264. Entry 6th September, 1903.

Most of the entries in Works and Days concerning the play are made by her and reveal an intense emotional involvement with the work. Michael found herself slightly irritated by Henry's being 'a huge Tristan-matrix'.⁴² Nor did Henry's enthusiasm flag: when she returned to Tristan after a stretch of work on Julia Donna⁴³ in the following year, Michael reported 'a glory in her face'.⁴⁴ But the most amazing proof of Henry's total identification with the legend came after nearly two years' work on The Tragedy of Pardon, when, just as this work reached completion, she suddenly conceived the whole of Tristan de Léonois: 'Suddenly the whole of Tristan de Loonois has swept down on Henry - every line from the spurting heart-blood of the story...'.⁴⁵ A year later Henry's relationship with the legend was still so intense that she apprehended in a visionary fashion a new final scene for The Tragedy of Pardon.⁴⁶

This emotional strain on a delicate constitution produced a nervousness which inevitably showed in the writing. Henry describes the exhausting process of composition as follows:

I have finished the Love-scene at the beginning of Act III drawing from experience which is always the heaviest of labours because to go deep into one's actualities is to delve through pain or excitement and if those actualities have been profound they force one to go deeper still to the ultimate point one's human forces can reach. Last night I collapsed and had to go to bed with a rocking headache and deadly fatigue.⁴⁷

But although Henry found her own experience an interpretative medium through which to come to terms with the legend, because she had such an elemental

42. MS. Ashley 46790, p. 313. Entry 8th December, 1901.

43. Julia Donna was the last play in a trilogy about the decline of the Roman Empire, and was published in 1903. The first two plays, The World at Auction and The Race of Leaves were published in 1898 and 1901 respectively.

44. MS. Ashley 46791, p. 198. Entry Midsummer Day, 1902.

45. MS. Ashley 46792, p. 198. Entry 9th June, 1903.

46. MS. Ashley 46793, p. 173. Entry 6th June, 1904. Henry finishes her account of Tristan's death with the words 'I saw no more'.

47. MS. Ashley 46790, p. 315. Entry December 15th, 1901.

conception of the work, the result was strangely dehumanized. The reciprocal relationship between experience and imagination made for a highly-strung 'unhuman' existence, especially when this relationship suffered an imbalance and experience became drawn into the vortex of the plays, ceasing to exist for its own sake. Henry's version of the final scene, for example, occurred to her during, and consequently includes, a thunderstorm. At the end of 1901 Henry writes:

... all we could imagine of anguish between us twain if we were severed - all our joy in the forest, all our contrition before death mingle in the substance of this beloved work...⁴⁸

and a year later she comments that 'Much of the emotion of this year has grown into Tristan - of the sap of our lives in this blossom ...':⁴⁹ the distinction between intrinsic and literary significance becomes blurred.

In addition the actual process of composition was intimately bound up with the writers' religious feelings.⁵⁰ From occasional references in Works and Days it seems that they experienced moments of vivid inspiration, which they regarded as God-given. On 8th October, 1901, for example, Michael writes: 'A piece of Iseult was given me this morning. Heaven make my memory gold.'⁵¹ In consequence they regarded their labour as sacred, thus creating a greater emotional strain for themselves:

And have we got as we intended to God? No - but tended to Him and once or twice been in his light as we are now in this flame of genesis creating a Mark and Tristan and Iseult and Melot more real than living men.⁵²

48. MS. Ashley 46790, p. 331. Entry 31st December, 1901.

49. MS. Ashley 46791, p. 367. Entry 'last night of the old year', 1902.

50. The sensuality inherent in the legend seems to have combined curiously with religious preoccupations, which probably originated with the Pre-Raphaelites. It can be seen in the Ordeal scene in The Tragedy of Pardon, and it is perhaps not irrelevant that Evelyn Innes becomes a nun.

51. MS. Ashley 46790, p. 269.

52. Ibid., p. 331. Entry 31st December, 1901.

This visionary method of composition also contributed to the inhuman quality of their work, which originates partly in the constant striving after a rarefied spiritual quality intimated in the phrase 'more real than living men'.

Michael, who was less touched by the legend, was less involved in the work. She collaborated on The Tragedy of Pardon, contributing among others the orchard scene⁵³ and that in which Iseult of Arundel curses Tristan.⁵⁴ Henry considered that Michael had never 'done work so sovereign - so full of anguish and pity, of passion, of beauty and noble invention.'⁵⁵ But Michael was not at one with the story, and although at first borne along by Henry's enthusiasm, later expressed misgivings:

But my heart has never been with the legend. It is no story of true love. It is the story of a strong physical attraction. It has nothing to do with the love of Jacob - 'and it seemed to him but a few days for the love he bare her' - or Ruth's 'thy country shall be my country - thy God, my God!' ⁵⁶

Michael's active participation in Tristan de Léonois was negligible and this accounts partly for the neurotic and over-mystical tenour of the play, since Henry's imagination was allowed free reign. In The Tragedy of Pardon the hysterical note is more under control.

By 15th October, 1901, ten days after the first mention of the play, the scenario of The Tragedy of Pardon was completed.⁵⁷ The scenes were not constructed in sequence, but as the writers' moods dictated, and by the end of the year they had composed the scene in which Mark reveals Tristan's marriage to Iseult, the forest scene, the love scene in Act three and the

53. MS. Ashley 46790, p. 324. Entry 25th December, 1901.

54. MS. Ashley 46791, p. 19. Entry 19th January, 1902.

55. Ibid., p. 367. 'Last night of the old year' 1902.

56. MS. Ashley 46792, p. 132. Entry 10th June, 1903.

57. MS. Ashley 46790, p. 284. Henry writes: 'Even the gods cd. not have had a theme that cd. reach it in splendour.'

orchard scene. In February of the following year they concentrated on the second act, and by March the first four acts were in typescript. Work on the play was then suspended until the end of June, while the writers turned to Julia Donna. On 31st December Henry announced the play's completion. However, the play was still under discussion during 1903, and as soon as it was bound Henry conceived a 'fresh sailing scene' for it, before directing her energies into Tristan de Léonois. The latter was under way by July, the second act completed by October and the whole, though needing revision, was finished by the end of the year. But it seems that Henry found it difficult to let the subject alone and both plays were still under reconsideration at the end of 1904.

From such a genesis, demonstrating the unusual combination of prolonged composition and intense creativity, it may be conjectured that whatever their faults, the plays must be different from the conventional poetic drama. Like Swinburne, the writers were more faithful to the originals than any other writer in the genre. And, again like Swinburne, the writers managed to impart a totally original flavour to the legend, despite this fidelity.

The action concentrates on the middle section of the legend where the stresses of the triangular relationship are most pronounced. The first act contains the love-potion and substitution episodes from Gottfried, and the second act follows the source equally closely with the pilgrimage ruse and tryst scene. In the third act the ordeal is motivated by general rumour rather than the flour on the floor and the fourth act deals with the lovers in the forest, closing with the orchard scene and Tristan's departure. The last act opens with the obscure episode at the grave of Rual, but at this stage Gottfried's narrative breaks off and the play continues with the closing events taken from Bédier rather than Weston's account of the

continuations.⁵⁸ Although Henry maintains that the last three acts were written away from the 'Chronicle and its tyranny',⁵⁹ they still show an outline remarkably faithful to the sources.

Not only does the play follow the general shape of the legend, it also contains many details taken directly from Gottfried. Some of these are merely translated from the source, such as Mark's suggestion during the pilgrimage discussion that he banish Tristan to Parmenie. Some are given more weight, as when Tristan brings the cup to Mark and Iseult after the substitution of Brangaena: Gottfried's reaction is an urbane consideration of social custom, while the play uses the incident to project Tristan's agony at Mark's deception. But perhaps the most striking example of the imaginative transmutation of detail occurs in the orchard scene.

Here Gottfried portrays Isolt luxuriating on a bed of gold brocades in the orchard at noon. Immediately prior to this occurs a didactic passage on the perversity of women from Eve onwards, which is picked up in the ensuing action when Tristan is likened to Adam taking the fruit. The starting point for the writers seems to have been the gold brocade. They had an immediate reaction to gold: they possessed a gold room, had the play bound in gold and because of this scene called it the 'gold Tristan'. Consequently, the gold brocade becomes Iseult's wedding dress and the colour mingles with Gottfried's suggestion of sun and languor to evoke an impression of a dangerous, hot glitter emanating from Iseult and encircling Tristan with a kind of enchantment. This effect is reinforced by fire images and by linking the sparkle of the gold with that of the love potion. This in turn becomes bound up in Gottfried's references to the forbidden fruit:

58. In the continuation of Heinrich von Freiburg Kurwenal is entrusted with the mission to Iseult, but in Bédier, and subsequently The Tragedy of Pardon, the messenger is Kaherdin.

59. MS. Ashley 46792, p. 360. Entry 11th November, 1903.

It is so sweet to fall into temptation,
 and to draw down, to lead
 Down to the edges of the precipice.
 You see it is the charm ...
 O ecstasy - the serpent in the grass
 And the stillness of the dazzle.

From these few details in the source, the scene is built up through the writers' response to their associations into an extraordinary display of atmospherics.

This emotional alchemy produced a perversely original work, despite its reliance on the mediaeval versions. But the originality stems from the constant striving after an elemental quality which is totally at variance with the dramatic form. When Henry asserted that the characters were 'more real than living men', she did not mean that they were more real in the dramatic sense; rather that they belonged to a different dimension altogether. Michael echoes this when she says

I feel that our people must not be strutting actors on the stage - but carriers of symbols - flames and flasks, sceptres and garlands - each the symbol of the soul's martyrdom. Fires, the smothering of fires; this is tragedy.⁶⁰

Delineation of specific character and motivation, in fact, ran counter to the writers' aim, being regarded as dross which must be purged off before the true meaning can be revealed.

They sought instead a heightened presentation of moods and voices, interweaving disembodied symbol and emotion to present a spiritual history. This emphasis on a rarefied internal life, at the expense of the dramatic externals, in this instance, is an Aesthetic creed, but it is also indebted to the influence of Wagner. In the summer of 1901, before the first sketch of The Tragedy of Pardon, Henry writes as follows:

We want to express the movements of the soul, its affinities, its revolts, its secrets ... Now no one can say - I will invent a form. The great man find(s) one already growing and well-known and compels it to his genius. We of this age

60. MS. Ashley 46791, p. 24. Entry 19th June, 1902.

find only one form of poetic drama contemporaneous - the Wagnerian. What did Wagner do? Make his scenes long enough, single enough to express the Soul's life and as a Chorus to express not as with the Greeks the World's comment on a crisis of Fate, but to express the voices of those emotions and mysteries that surround the soul, he used Music. We poets have a harder task. We have to take the Music Drama and make it a Poetic drama, verse instead of orchestration being our Chorus. The movement and suggestiveness of our language must accompany the interplay or expansion of psychic forces in the subject we dramatize.⁶¹

It is not sufficient, therefore, to judge the two plays according to the criteria of conventional drama, since they were written as an attempt to find a literary form analogous to the music-drama.

Although it is evident that the writers aimed for a work displaying psychic rather than human conflicts, in which poetry was particularly important in the adumbration of the spiritual, it is difficult to decipher any critical theories concerning the new form. This is mainly due to the fact that they tend to speak in images. It is very difficult to comprehend what Michael means, when, for example, she says "'business" must be thrown over ... one must simply be with the fires blazing about the lovers' hearts.'⁶² She is obviously ruling out the sort of theatricality favoured by Carr, but fails to explain practically how she intends to convey intense emotional experience dramatically without attention to external action.

The Diaries do, however, give a little insight into the writers' criteria regarding structure. The most important unit is the scene. Only rarely do the writers speak of characters, but they constantly refer to scenes.⁶³ It appears that in their attempt to express the stresses of the spirit through a spectrum of emotional colouring each scene represents a distinct, self-contained component in the total effect. Nor is the

61. MS. Ashley 46790, p. 188.

62. MS. Ashley 46791, p. 23. Entry 19th January, 1902.

63. Eg., MS. Ashley 46792, p. 360. Entry 11th November, 1903.

character of the scene designated by its action, but rather by its mood. Action in these two plays is analogous to narrative in Tristram of Lyonesse: while adhering closely to the original, it is, in fact, comparatively unimportant. Circumstances inaugurate the mood of the scene, and this builds up to a high-pitched emotional level which alone makes sense of the ensuing action. Henry expresses this inevitability of identity as follows:

All the scenes except the death scene have reached that point where an element utters itself - that point in emotion which, like the cloud that must thunder, the cloud must rain, the season that must be spring, the season that must drop every spoil, need becomes actuality.⁶⁴

But this process is not dramatic, since the emotion by-passes the characters and becomes a force in its own right.

In the more successful scenes this building of tension achieves its actuality by obtruding on and manipulating events. In the orchard scene, for example, the atmosphere of magic woven round Iseult forces Mark to submit; Iseult herself does not force the submission. The power lies in the web of images which create the mood of the scene, not in any magnetism inherent in the character. The characters seem to move in accordance with some inapprehensible psychic vibration and must consequently remain faceless repositories for the power of the love-potion, since it is this - 'the inevitableness of passion'⁶⁵ - which the writers are attempting to express, rather than the dilemma of three people caught in a hopeless triangular situation.

In discussing the structure of these plays it seems more appropriate to use terminology of colour rather than shape, since neither play builds up in an architectonic sense, but is constructed more like a mosaic. The

64. MS. Ashley 46793, p. 164. Entry 'Trinity Sunday' May, 1904.

65. MS. Ashley 46791, p. 24. Entry 19th January, 1902.

scenes therefore appear encapsulated, so that the overall pattern remains obscure and arbitrary. Characters and action provide no answers, and interest in them is decreased as they are subordinated to the power of the potion. It is this which the overall pattern seeks to define, but because there is no point of identification, there is no way in which the pattern can be comprehended or assessed. The numinous power at the centre of the plays thus remains an insistent but capricious emotional pressure.

From this stems the inhuman element, which permeates all levels of the plays. But while it generates a wealth of emotion, paradoxically it is alien and incomprehensible. In an attempt to define this unearthly power through identification rather than analysis and contrast, the writing betrays an unremitting nervousness which often lapses into neurosis. The resultant high-pitched emotion does not, however, permeate the characters; it merely washes over them, giving them an external significance, but, paradoxically, in view of the writers' aims, no internal life. The overall impression is that the works are overcharged with an emotion which fails to communicate, since it is not located in character, but springs instead from some undefined symbolic centre. Dramatic expectations are consequently frustrated and nothing apprehensible is offered as a substitute.

Of the two plays The Tragedy of Pardon is superior. Tristan de Léonois was written in three weeks as the result of some extraordinary inspiration and preserves all the faults of the first play, with none of its more finished virtues. It has its origin in the Oxford Folie Tristan, which episode Bédier includes in his reconstruction.⁶⁶ The first act of the play is devoted to this encounter between Iseut and Tristan disguised as the fool, and Henry makes good use of the exposition in the original where Tristan impudently recounts his past, while asserting his real identity.

66. Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut, pp. 247-66.

She follows action and dialogue closely, sometimes to the extent of translating direct, and the resultant text is consequently more consistently faithful than that of The Tragedy of Pardon. Because of this the effect is one of comparative lucidity and simplicity. But because the source is self-contained the act becomes dislocated from the rest of the play, which is almost totally original.

The second act takes place on the sea journey to Brittany. The resumé of the intervening action is taken from Thomas via Bédier, and from this point on, with the exception of the storm and calm the play effectively parts company with the mediaeval sources. As the storm and calm pass, so Iseult becomes more of an elemental being with the magical power of the potion working through her to bring about her destruction.⁶⁷ The act closes inconclusively after a bewildering number of enchantments and mood changes. This frenzy continues throughout the last act, which takes place in Brittany. Iseult of Brittany breaks Tristan's harp-strings, symbolising her desire to destroy the love which excludes her; Iseult of Cornwall enters with a 'mystic company', having died between the acts in obscure circumstances; her malevolently triumphant phantom drinks again with Tristan, and the play ends with the fading of the spirits, the entry of Iseult's funeral cortège and the magic music.

From this summary it can be seen that the oppressive sense of otherness which permeates The Tragedy of Pardon has here become uncontrolled, dominating the play with caprice and whimsy. The symbolism of the cup and the music, appearing also in the first play, fails to coordinate with the dramatic action. The first act is dramatically competent because the

67. There is a marked tendency in Tristan drama for Iseult to become demonic, and, being associated with Wagner's music, she seems to assume some of its compulsion. She also has her genesis in the femme fatale of the period, epitomised by the Salome of Wilde's play and Beardsley's illustrations.

symbolism is kept at bay by the source, but when Henry's imagination takes charge of the action, the work founders under a weight of incomprehensible imagery.

This use of symbolism is an attempt to translate Wagner's Leitmotive into literary terms.⁶⁸ It fails because Wagner's music is a much more subtle and fluid medium, nor does it impede the dramatic action, but rather gains emphasis and shape from the latter. In these plays of Michael Field the imagery is constantly trying to express something nebulous and half-realized at the expense of the action. Indeed, the writers did not find a literary extension of the music drama, as they intended. Rather, in seeking a corresponding medium for the music they lost contact with the fundamental conflict of drama. The 'flame-coloured wings of desire and life',⁶⁹ may be productive of some moments of weird power, but the experiment was doomed to failure through an insufficiently rational approach to the problems of form and balance. Despite its pomposity, the pronouncement on Michael Field by John Heath-Stubbs has the ring of truth:

If it were not for the misdirected energy which led them to put most of their best work into dramas ... and their failure (too common among women poets) completely to subdue their form to their emotions, we might cite them as furnishing a pointer from Aestheticism to a wider poetic vision.⁷⁰

In 1904 the ladies received a post card from Thomas Sturge-Moore in Rome which read as follows:

I met Arthur Symonds yesterday. Duse has accepted a play of his on Tristan and Isolde and is going to begin to study it in May. I feel so angry with him.⁷¹

Rather spitefully Henry later reports Michael 'betting a box of chocolates

68. There is little direct borrowing from Wagner. The nearest the writers come to this is The Tragedy of Pardon, V, vi, which echoes the scene between Kurwenal and Tristan in Act III.

69. MS. Ashley 46791, p. 367. Entry 'Last night of the Old Year' 1902.

70. The Darkling Plain (1950), p. 202.

71. MS. Ashley 46793, p. 74. Entry 24th February.

that Duse will not play little Arthur's Tristram.⁷² In fact nothing did come of it, and eventually it was published in 1917 with a dedication to the actress.

It is evident that Symons wrote his Tristan and Iseult under some of the same influences which inspired Michael Field. He was a Wagner enthusiast and published a long essay on Wagner's critical theories shortly after finishing his play.⁷³ In this he considers the assertion that a play appeals not to the intelligence but to the emotions, through its presentation of a self-consistent life, an idea extended in the theories of the Symbolist movement, which interested him deeply. In an article for Harpers he defines the aims of Symbolism and distinguishes it from Impressionism:

What both seek is not general truth merely, but la verité vraie, the very essence of truth - the truth of appearance to the senses, of the visible world to the eyes that see it; and the truth of spiritual things to the spiritual vision. The Impressionist, ... would flash upon you in a new, sudden way so exact an image of what you have just seen ... The Symbolist, in this new, sudden way, would flash upon you the 'soul' of that which can be apprehended only by the soul - the finer sense of things unseen, the deeper meaning of things evident ...⁷⁴

Although Michael Field, despite a meeting with Verlaine, did not display much interest in the Symbolists, there is an obvious tendency in their Tristan plays towards the same heightened presentation of psychic content described here. But their creed seems to have been assimilated from the literary climate of the day and the dictates of their own sensibilities. Symons on the other hand, through his contact with the Rhymers' Club and the French poetical movement,⁷⁵ hitherto unknown in England, had a far more intellectual grasp on 'the strange and recondite forms of beauty'⁷⁶ attempted

72. MS. Ashley 46793, p. 78. Entry 3rd March.

73. 'The Ideas of Richard Wagner', Quarterly Review, cciii, (July 1905), 73-108.

74. 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', Harpers, lxxxvii (November 1893), 85.

75. Symons wrote The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899) and translated from Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarmé.

76. Graham Hough, The Last Romantics, p. 209.

by fin-de-siècle artists.

Symons' interest in Wagner, reinforced by his links with the Continent, his association with Michael Field and particularly his position in the van of culture, made it inevitable that he should be drawn to the Tristan legend, which was coming to be associated with the Aesthetic movement and its experiments. But while Symons was influenced by this trend, he only strengthened it in a limited fashion, since the play was not published until later and knowledge of it was restricted to his own circle.

The source of Tristan and Iseult is less immediately obvious than that of The Tragedy of Pardon, since Symons is much freer in the use of his material. He innovates in order to tighten the structure: Iseult of Brittany, for example, is introduced in the first act as Iseult's cousin, so that she does not seem to appear inconsequentially towards the end of the action; Symons also invents Meriadoc, son of Morolt, who seeks vengeance for the death of his father and finally achieves it, thus making for an added element of suspense. The traditional episodes, such as Melot's dream and the confrontation of the two Iseults over Tristan's corpse, are taken from Weston's translation of Gottfried. But the sens, and, indeed, some of the matière, are inherited from Wagner.

The first act deals with that part of the narrative covered by Isolde's exposition in the first act of the music drama. Iseult, already fascinated by Tristan, finds herself unable to kill him when she learns he is the slayer of her uncle. The vengeance motif becomes crystallized in the symbolic dagger given to Meriadoc, which eventually brings about Tristan's death. This sets up a tension with the theme of attraction expressed, as in Wagner, through the gaze image. Tristan, accorded mercy because he is a guest, is granted Iseult's hand in marriage on Mark's behalf.

The second act takes place on board ship. Iseult is angry and suicidal, but will not allow Meriadoc to take revenge. A scene with Tristan ensues

similar to that in the first act of Tristan und Isolde: Iseult reproaches Tristan for arranging the marriage, and Tristan offers Iseult his sword with which to kill him; Iseult refuses and suggests they make peace, sealing the pact with a drink. Unwittingly they drink the love-potion and, like Wagner's lovers, experience an awakening. Symons then introduces the death motif, which replaces the revenge theme, and swiftly establishes its inextricable connection with love. As in Wagner Brangaene laments the deed and reveals that the draught was the love-potion. The act finishes with the cries of the sailors and Iseult's preparation to meet Mark. Obviously the music drama pervades the act, but there is one main difference: Iseult does not plan to kill Tristan and herself with the drink. Instead, Symons includes the scene with Meriadoc, which stresses the idea of death and vengeance, but which does not provide the irony and tightness of Wagner's symbolic structure.

Symons returns to Gottfried for the beginning of the third act where Melot betrays the lovers to Mark and devises the hunting ruse which Wagner also employs. Instead of the orchard scene which follows in the original, however, Symons gives his lovers a version of the love duet in which they discuss love, honour and death. Brangaena warns them of Mark's approach and Iseult welcomes the discovery with the same fatalism as Tristan's 'Der öde Tag zum letzten Mal' in the music drama. Mark enters and, like his Wagnerian counterpart, expresses a dignified anguish. Tristan then goes into banishment as he does in Gottfried after discovery by Mark in the orchard. The plot points are thus provided by Gottfried where Wagner is deficient in dramatic action, but, as far as mood and thematic development is concerned, the chief model is the second act of Tristan.

The last act adheres more closely to the traditional version. Tristan has married Iseult of Brittany after fighting in her father's wars, and now lies dying of a wound given him by Meriadoc, who has attempted to

revenge his father's death. (This motivation is, of course, original.) The act is mainly occupied with a long scene between Tristan and Iseult of Brittany, who has learned that the physician expected is her rival. Like Wagner's hero Tristan lapses into delirium, but, instead of the anguished Kurvenal, he is attended by a wife suddenly gripped by jealousy and bitterness. Here the Wagnerian and the traditional blend since Tristan's delirium, Wagnerian in feeling, is counterpointed by Iseult's traditional rage, which eventually culminates in her fatal lie. After Iseult's death the play concludes with Brangaena's revelation and Mark's lament.

Symons is much more at ease portraying the heights of passion than exposition and swift action. The first act is thus inferior to the other three. It might be argued that Symons is more confident in the presentation of lyric passion because he relies heavily on Wagner. This is not altogether just. While Symons takes many ideas from Wagner, particularly the central love-death theme, he does not linger upon them nor lapse into mere imitation. Mark's oration, for example, although it covers the same ground as its parallel in Tristan und Isolde, has more attack, and his obvious pain gives weight to the love-honour conflict which still troubles Tristan; in Tristan und Isolde the world of honour cannot compete musically or dramatically with the world of love. The preceding love scene in Symons' play also shows a divergence from Wagner, despite the essential similarity of material. The sensuality, the exploration of the boundaries of love and pain, the inevitability of death through passion, the conflict of love and honour, all have their origins in Wagner, but the attempt to find a literary equivalent to the musical effect invests these themes with a new identity. The imagery of dawn, roses, blood and flame builds up a different impression from that of Wagner's love duet, where hero and heroine discuss such metaphysical problems as 'dieses Wörtlein "und"',

while the music describes their interior lives.

Even if the play's overall effect is one of rarefied passion, insulated in fin-de-siècle style from common experience,⁷⁷ Symons must be given some credit for using his Wagnerian sources with discretion, in that he avoids Aesthetic languors and, presumably due to the influence of the Symbolists, attempts to portray transcendental emotion tightly and economically. However, the play still fails because of artistic problems arising from its Wagner-motivated central conception.

One of the main difficulties in combining a Wagnerian interpretation of the legend with the dramatic form lies not so much in attaining the poetic heights as in coming off them, in integrating action with an essentially wordless spiritual communion. Poetically it presents difficulties as can be seen in the work of Rossetti; dramatically it is even more problematical. Michael Field attempted to solve the problem by remaining on the heights and absorbing the action into the emotion, thus producing consistency of texture at the expense of clarity. Symons achieves clarity but his work is uneven. It presents events and passion, but rarely do the two combine into a dramatic unity. The fourth act is probably the best because Iseult's jealousy naturally releases into action. The first act is least successful because Symons attempts to deal with events and emotion simultaneously. The middle two acts compromise by sandwiching emotional interchanges between dramatic action. This failure to integrate his work is further underlined by his stylistic lapses at crucial points in the action such as Tristan's death.

The lack of unity is reflected in a problem of character which Symons fails to resolve. Instead of dismissing the possibility of creating

77. P. Thouless argues in her Modern Poetic Drama (1934), pp. 130-3, that removing the love story from life renders it more universal. I would argue that it makes it more remote and undermines the dramatic form.

individuality as Michael Field appears to have done, Symons attempts to make his lovers dramatically credible in the first act. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Iseult of Ireland, who borders on the virago with her desires for vengeance and liberty. Tristan is far more of a non-entity, having his traditional attributes but no character. After the drinking of the love-potion, however, the lovers cease to have any contact with the audience, since they are made anonymous by their passion. Symons tries to rectify this by giving Tristan a conflict between love and honour and by making Iseult demonic, but because there is no means of demonstrating their love there is no means of establishing it dramatically. Consequently the minor characters attain a semblance of life denied the lovers because they exist on a more accessible level.

Both Symons and Field attempted the impossible in trying to derive a successful dramatic version of the legend from Wagner's work. Field was more concerned with finding a verbal equivalent to the music and Symons was more concerned with expressing Wagner's concepts. But both fail because basically the music drama offers a dualistic medium which the conventional drama cannot simulate. In addition the stress on emotion, which Wagner's music creates, reflects itself in these plays in the isolation of emotion from the dramatic action; it exists almost for itself, without reference to the needs of the drama. This is exacerbated by the fact that Wagner's interpretation of the legend allows the lovers no identity, and consequently there is no opportunity for the emotion to be generated from the tensions of character in action. Likewise, the Wagnerian concepts of transcendental passion, echoed in Symons' play, are stated but not demonstrated. The mediaeval versions of the legend would have provided a preferable model, since they at least maintain an element of suspense, and it is ironical that even when they were faithfully followed by Michael Field the sublimities of Tristan und Isolde vitiated the action.

None of these plays so far discussed had actually been performed by the time of publication. Comyns Carr, however, followed up his success with King Arthur at the Lyceum with Tristram and Iseult at the Adelphi on 4th September, 1906. According to Mrs. Carr her husband regarded this as his dramatic masterpiece,⁷⁸ but although it was well received at its first performance, it did not attract so much notice as the Irving production, probably on account of its less distinguished cast.

Mrs. Carr recalls her husband's researches:

... in respect of the whole range of the Arthurian legend, on which subject he became an authority; he devoured everything in English and French that he could find when he was writing his plays of King Arthur and Tristram ...⁷⁹

But this is probably exaggerated, since there is no evidence of his having read the metrical romances, or even the Prose Tristan, for his second play. The main source is indisputably Malory, which he had already used for King Arthur, and it would seem from the occasional reference that Carr's studies in the French versions were probably limited to Bédier's reconstruction. Inevitably he used Wagner.

The first two acts are taken from events in Malory. But in the third act, which deals with the drinking of the love-potion, Carr makes no attempt to conceal his Wagnerian appropriations. After failing to kill Tristram with his sword, Iseult shares the potion with him under the impression that it is poison. They stand transfigured during a sailors' chorus and when they speak it is in the familiar terms of Wagner's symbolism:

Tristram: They sing of day.

Iseult: Yet 'tis the night that comes ...
Can this be Death's rough road?

Tristram: An if it be
Then Death and Life are one, and Death and Love.

78. Alice Carr, Stray Memories (1920), p. 68

79. Loc. cit.

Mark then enters amid Brangwaine's lamentations and another sailors' chorus. In view of this obvious dependence on Wagner, the Academy's adverse judgement on this act is surprising, since the reviewer is a confirmed Wagnerite.⁸⁰

In the last act Carr synthesizes Malory and Bédier, adding the occasional Wagnerian touch. The first scene shows the intriguers' betrayal of Tristram to Mark. This is confirmed by the dwarf Ogrin,⁸¹ who substantiates Carr's use of Bédier. The second scene begins in Iseult's bower where she awaits Tristram's signal prior to the first orchard scene, again as in Bédier, though Brangwaine's signal with the light is reminiscent of Wagner. The shadow of Mark which falls across the reunited lovers has its genesis in Bédier's tryst scene, but Tristram's death at the hands of Andred just as he is about to fight Mark has the spirit of Malory plus a hint from the end of the second act of Tristan und Isolde. The vision of Iseult of the White Hands as a symbol of healing and death is Carr's own device, but the final lines of the play as Iseult falls dying with Tristram recall the white sails episode.⁸²

Carr's choice of material, arbitrary as it may seem, and taken from three completely different interpretations of the legend, was governed by the overriding principle of theatrical viability. In this he presents a total contrast with Michael Field and Symons, and his work is unashamedly, if crudely, dramatic by comparison with their word-operas. Carr was not impelled by a desire to express vivid moments of a spiritual history, or to find a new vehicle for Wagner's erotic symbolism. He borrows from Wagner

80. Academy (13th October, 1906), p. 368.

81. A conflation of Melot the dwarf and Ogrin the hermit.

82. Tristram: What sail comes o'er those seas? Dost cry 'tis black?
May, look again. It shines as white as snow.

his most theatrical moments, such as the motivation of the love-potion, but does not seek to recreate the Wagnerian ethos. Instead of a cultured élite, Carr wrote for actors and an audience, and his work thus gains a solidity denied to other dramatic versions of the legend.

This is manifest in the character-drawing. Iseult is not the dominant partner; she is not the combination of virago and witch that seems to characterize the femme fatale of the period, but rather a woman in an impossible situation. Tristram benefits from this portrayal of Iseult, in that he loses the passivity of his Wagner-based counterparts. His chivalry is actively demonstrated in the second act, and his misplaced trust in and devotion to Mark give an ironic edge to what he considers a betrayal of his honour. Mark himself is a much subtler villain than his original in Malory and Tristram believes him sincere. In this way Carr overcomes the problem of the hero's treachery against lord and uncle, but without forgoing the tension of Tristram's internal conflict between passion and duty.

Mark's treachery also provides an element of suspense in the plot, which is established at the beginning and resolved at the end. This is more successful than Symons' attempt with the character of Meriadoc, since he is only peripheral to the action and fades out after the second act, his climactic vengeance being accomplished behind the scenes. Each act of Carr's play has, as the Times reviewer points out somewhat patronizingly 'a nice little dramatic problem'⁸³ within the overall scheme delineated by Mark's hostility. The action consequently possesses a dramatic cohesion, quite different from Michael Field's nervous tension, and moves forward evenly. Carr resists the temptation to sacrifice the dramatic content

83. Times, Weekly edition, (7th December, 1906), p. 566.

for patches of purple poetry, with the result that the third act, for example, catches the urgency of Wagner's opening dramatic situation, while minimizing the doom-laden atmosphere. Admittedly Iseult has a monologue on transcendental love in the fourth act, but even this is underscored by a foreshadowing of danger.

Carr also displays his theatrical abilities in the presentation of his main theme. This is the wound-healing/love-death complex which runs throughout the play, adding to the significance of the action without impeding it. Its progress is traced from the wounded Tristram healed by Iseult on a physical level, through Tristram wounded spiritually by love for Iseult, to Tristram the lover seeking in death healing of the spiritual wound, by means of the physical wound inflicted by Andred. It is typical of Carr's sense of theatre that he should use a dramatic device - the transformation of Iseult of the White Hands into a symbol of death and healing - to reinforce and resolve this theme, rather than spoken verse. In consequence the play finishes up on a major chord, similar to the ending of King Arthur, with the vision of Iseult paralleling that of Avalon, and ties up its poetic theme with a coup de théâtre.

The play is not good literature, but it is passable drama, especially when compared with the Wagnerian renderings. As the Times critic says, 'it is just honest, workmanlike Comyns Carr. That is to say, it is the very thing which the Adelphi public will like.'⁸⁴ Max Beerbohm, reviewing for the Saturday Review, and although himself a Wagnerite, is even more appreciative of Carr's craftsmanship:

The legend of Tristram and Iseult is safe in his hands. He knows, and never for an instant, mars, the beauty of it. His verse has not the rapture and rush of great poetry; but it is always felicitous and well-graced, always in touch with the spirit of his theme. And he has admirably accomplished the task of selection of scenes, and of general construction. He

84. Loc. cit.

has welded parts of Malory and parts of Wagner into a simple and coherent whole ...⁸⁵

Only the Academy⁸⁶ reviewer is ungracious. It is interesting to note that he follows the trend of the afficionados of the time in denigrating the mediaeval legend to the advantage of the music drama, and, almost inevitably, concludes the article with the opinion that only Wagner's music can redeem the legend, Carr's verse being 'not of so high an order to be palatable.'

Michael Field, Arthur Symonds and Comyns Carr are the most noteworthy Tristan dramatists in this period and illustrate, in their individual ways, the Wagnerian influence. But there were during the first years of the 20th century other dramatic attempts less distinguished. Likewise most of these demonstrate an experimental quality⁸⁷ denied to Arthurian drama and derive, more or less directly, from Wagner. Even the plays by Maurice Baring⁸⁸ and Martha Kinross⁸⁹, which follow Bédier and Malory-cum-Tennyson respectively, are not exempt. The former contains a quasi-love duet, and the latter, which begins, as one would expect from the sources, with a moralistic bias, ends with the portrayal of a transcendental passion.

The formal problems arising from attempts to combine the mediaeval with the Wagnerian are, as has been shown, formidable. Some of the

85. Saturday Review (15th September, 1906), p.329.

86. Academy (13th October, 1906), p. 368.

87. Shaw describes an experimental play based on Tristan in which the leading lady marries her double, commenting that he felt momentarily a horrible misgiving that he 'had at last broken through that "thin partition" which divides great wits from madness.' Review of Slaves of the Ring by Sidney Grundy, performed first at the Garrick Theatre on 29th December, 1894. Our Theatres in the Nineties (1932), 1, 3. First appeared in Saturday Review (5th January, 1895).

88. 'Tristram and Iseult', Collected Poems (1911), pp. 235-82. Written about 1902.

89. Tristram and Iseult (1913).

dramatists, therefore felt it incumbent upon them to explain their intentions. Antonia Williams in her preface to Isolt. A New Telling⁹⁰ puts forward a symbolical scheme of the legend, which, although managing to eschew Wagner's action, nevertheless centres on his concept of love. This scheme has very little to do with the play in which she attempts to portray an ecstatic passion in a manner quite incomprehensible, with or without the preface. T. H. Lee also fails to carry out the intentions stated at the beginning of his play The Marriage of Iseult.⁹¹ He aims at combining a Classical theme with the 'swift, natural movement of romantic tragedy' in an abbreviated form, considering Wagner's Tristan to be the only viable full-length treatment. But his play nowhere attempts to meet his intentions since it lacks both characterization and structure - the two qualities he was attempting to combine. In its heavy dependence on Wagner,⁹² the work is a typical example of the bad influence the music drama had on writing.

Although Wagner promoted the popularity of the Tristan legend, his direct influence was not beneficial. It encouraged writers to rely on one extreme interpretation and to reiterate what was fashionable rather than to rethink the material. Moreover, it led writers to dramatize an interpretation which is essentially non-dramatic. Swinburne found it difficult enough to reconcile transcendental lyricism with narrative verse, but in the drama the hiatuses caused by compartmentalizing the inner and outer lives of the characters are impossible to resolve.

90. Published by the author, probably 1915.

91. The Marriage of Iseult and Other Plays (1909).

92. There is also a secondary dependence on Shakespeare, particularly the parting scene from Romeo and Juliet, on which Symonds also draws for the love scene in his Tristan and Iseult.

The combination of Wagner and the Tristan legend, however, suited the mood of the time. But the first world war saw the end of this mood, and with it the attempts to capture the indescribable passion and power of Wagner's Tristan.⁹³ The legend parted company with the music drama and its surrounding cult, with the result that the originals came to be regarded in a more balanced fashion. After the attempts to portray spiritual history, the overworked imagery of day and night, the emasculation of the legend into fantasy and pseudo-mysticism,⁹⁴ there was a welcome return to simplicity, which seems to have been motivated by a new appraisal of the sources. Massfield's Tristan and Isolt,⁹⁵ for example, includes the swine-keeping episode from the Triads, which would have been unthinkable twenty years previously. Hardy's The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall,⁹⁶ despite its Classical form and the Wagnerian theories lying behind its production, returns to folklore roots in that it is written for mummers. The emphasis in both these works is on character motivation and credibility, reverting in some measure to the tensions of the mediaeval versions.

This reaction is partially prefigured in the Tristan poetry of the period, despite its being a minority interest. Compared with the drama, the poetry was negligible, as the poetical impetus had worn itself out by

93. There are vestiges of the literary Tristan vogue in Eliot's quotation from the libretto in The Waste Land.

94. The non-relevance of these attempts is characterized by Henry Brewster's reaction to Maurice Baring's Tristram and Isolt recorded in his diary: 'you are floating quietly in blue space and you cannot even hear the flapping of the wings. It doesn't seem to matter much what happens; you are as willing to go to the right as to the left when you glide through the air with such exquisite ease and the sky is a haze of gold ...' Rome, 12th November, 1902. See Ethel Smythe, Maurice Baring (1938), p. 67.

95. Published 1927.

96. Published 1923. Performed in 1924 at the Glastonbury Festival by a group founded by Rutland Boughton to further the music drama in Britain. Boughton, who composed the music for the play, also wrote in collaboration with Reginald Buckley an opera, The Round Table, which was performed the following year.

the time the last of the Idylls was published. As far as the Arthurian is concerned, the few poems produced in this period show Pre-Raphaelite and Tennysonian influence, and at times the impact of the Aesthetic movement.⁹⁷ The long narrative poem had ceased to exercise any interest and the works divide into lyrics, ballads or episodic poems. Predictably, the main source is Malory, and, unpredictably, in view of the dramatic emphasis on the lovers, the main preoccupation is with Lancelot on the Grail Quest.

The Tristan poems are likewise insignificant in output, but the fact that there are nearly as many poems on Tristan as on other Arthurian topics demonstrates the extent of the legend's gain in popularity. In this area also the long narrative poem has given way to lyrics and ballads, on the whole, much shorter than their Arthurian equivalents, and showing a range of influences from Malory in Rhys's Lays of the Round Table⁹⁸ to the vogue for reinterpreting legends as nature myths in Andrew Lang's 'In Tintagel'.⁹⁹ With the exception of Baring's 'Tristram and Iseult',¹⁰⁰ there is little Wagnerian influence. Instead, one can detect a tendency toward simplicity, which at its most pronounced is reflected in a ballad style,¹⁰¹ and not only anticipates the folk element in the drama, but also

97. 'Sir Launcelot at the Forest Chapel' by Maxwell Gray, Atalanta, vii (October 1893), 35, owes considerable debt to Morris's treatment of Malory. 'The Madness of Lancelot' by Kaufmann Spiers, Fortnightly Review, xlii (August 1909), 345-8, is staidly Tennysonian; and 'The Parting of Launcelot and Guinevere' by Stephen Phillips, New Poems (1908), p. 165, demonstrates the Aesthetic pose of the '90's when it was written.

98. 1905. Most of the Tristram ballads deal with the periphery of the story: 'The Song of Dinadan'; 'The Lady called White Hands'; 'The Battle of the Two Knights'; 'The Two Fools'; 'The Lay of King Mark'.

99. Poetical Works of Andrew Lang, ed. Mrs. Lang (1923), iii, 136. First published 1911.

100. The Collected Poems of Maurice Baring (1911), p. 32. See also the sonnet on Wagner, p. 63.

101. See for example Constance Lounsbury's title poem in An Iseult Idyll and Other Poems (1901).

looks back to Swinburne's 'Queen Yseult'.

One work which demonstrates this tendency is Laurence Binyon's Ode 'Tristram's End'.¹⁰² With this poem we come almost full circle, in that its movement away from the inflated and Wagnerian brings us back, not to the simplicity of 'Queen Yseult', but to that of Arnold's Tristram and Iseult. Superficially the similarities are obvious: both styles are unobtrusive, with a predilection for falling cadences; both structures follow the same pattern of exposition, dialogue and epilogue; and both works concentrate on the final events of the legend, with foregoing episodes seen in retrospect. There is also a similarity in detail: both poets use the sea, show the lovers as faded and contrast Iseult's peace in death with the tensions of court life. But the most important likeness is the poets' response to the love story.

They both see the legend in human terms, deploring and sympathizing with the waste caused by a hopeless love. Arnold shows Tristram harassed and despairing; Binyon's Tristram regrets the 'strife, and tears, and failure, and dismay', advising Iseult to regard their lives as significant only in that they have led them to die together. Arnold inveighs against all passion, whereas Binyon is only concerned with this specific situation, but both show death as a welcome release from a painful existence. There is no sense in either work that the lovers are anything but physically united in death, yet the relief death brings is sufficient satisfaction.

However, Binyon's poem is not a pastiche of Tristram and Iseult. Arnold presents a demoralizing stalemate resulting from the potion, while

102. First appeared as 'The Death of Tristram' in Odes (1901), pp. 29-48. Reprinted 1913 with the changed title and a few minor alterations.

Binyon presents a tragedy stemming from human error. Tristram and Iseult are seen as lovers before drinking the potion,¹⁰³ but Mark makes Tristram swear to fetch her for himself and Tristram yields 'his life to a lie' for 'the truth of a word'. Tristram's anguish thus arises from a conflict between his love and his loyalty, not from the accident of the potion. In this way Binyon can create a set of internal dynamics which are denied to Arnold's melancholic hero, since the latter can only suffer the effects of a passion imposed by fate. It is this reinterpretation which gives 'Tristram's End' its originality, and postulates another way of approaching the legend besides the despairing and the transcendental.

This is not to say that the work is superior to Arnold's. Binyon's execution is unequal to his conception and in consequence the tragedy is commuted to pathos. But the lines of his work are sound, and, with the reservation that he retains part of the tradition superfluously,¹⁰⁴ his version of the legend is convincing. At a time when the Tristan drama was exclusively concerned with attempts at the symbolic and the sublime, it is refreshing to find a work which restores the spirit of the originals in that it restores their concern with humanity. In this avoidance of the supernatural and the spiritual, and the positive movement towards psychological examination, 'Tristram's End' can also be seen as foreshadowing the modern renderings of the legend.

103. In the tradition of Malory and the Prose Tristan.

104. Notably the potion, and the black sails episode, which is unnecessary to the action and confuses the position of Iseult of Brittany.

105. Eg., E. A. Robinson's Tristram (1928).

CHAPTER VIII

The Tristan Legend in the 19th Century

The 19th century gave rise to three concepts of the Tristan legend. The first is the academic Tristan: this constitutes the accumulated body of information concerning the mediaeval redactions of the story, which ranges from an awareness of its pre-literary roots to an appreciation of the artistry of the originals. The second can be termed a popular consciousness of the events of the Tristan story as manifest in the works of Arnold, Swinburne and Arthur Millard, where there is no academic concern with following the narrative pattern of one particular version and episodes are amalgamated and juxtaposed according to their availability and viability. The third concept of the legend is more difficult to define and arises out of the Wagnerian period. It seems to constitute the concentration of the legend into a popular image for fated love, only possible when one particular interpretation of the material had become generally accepted: before the advent of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde images of the lovers could range from Tennyson's condemnation to Swinburne's adulation, but subsequently they gravitated towards a central concept of a passion dedicated to death.

The academic Tristan developed steadily on the Continent during the century, absorbing into itself those enthusiasms for mediaeval literature which in England, owing to the absence of a scholarly tradition, would have been channelled into the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Consequently, while there is a comparative lack of reworking in French literature, there is a great deal of imaginative scholarship, whereas, conversely, in England there is no scholarship, but by the end of the century an artistic enthusiasm for the legend rivalling the Arthurian. However, as scholarship progressed on the one hand, and the imaginative preoccupations on the other, there is an increasing divergence between the two concepts of the legend which results at the climax of both movements in the rejection of the Wagnerian

interpretation by French scholars and the original versions by the Tristan enthusiasts.

Without the academic Tristan further concepts of the legend would have been impossible, but it must also be seen to exist in its own right as a body of exploration. Indeed, the development of scholarship in this field involves as many vicissitudes, personalities and interpretations as the artistic side. It encompasses careful research and wild surmise; it moves in full circle from the Picto-Celtic origins proposed by Scott to those postulated by Zimmer; and it has its own cults and preoccupations. Certain phrases are, however, clearly marked. At the beginning of the 19th century the general image of the legend was dictated by the prose version. This gave way to accommodate the discovery of the metrical romances and accumulated some Celtic overtones in the early association with Welsh researches. After passing through an analytical stage where the various versions were related to each other and the primary works pinpointed, the legend underwent an investigation into the primitive traditions lying behind it, which allowed some influence from the current Celtic twilight. At the end of the period, therefore, the corpus of mediaeval romance had been set in its background, traced through its development and fully considered in all its manifestations. Thus scholarly activity gave to subsequent generations a new and unique body of literature, not only researched with thoroughness but also appreciated and admired.

This persistent activity also touched at points on the world of contemporary English literature. But as it took place mainly in France and Germany the points of contact are more fortuitous than if the research had taken place in England. Consequently, the artistic view of the legend does not describe the same developmental pattern as that of the academic Tristan: it is more haphazard and subject to different cultural influences.

However, it is true to say that the progress of scholarship dictated the progress of the popular interest in the legend as narrative in the sense that it provides a terminal point. Swinburne's interest in the metrical version, for example, is limited to the English and French poems edited by Scott and Michel and the Celticism which attracted Arnold to the legend was not that of the later scholars, but the rudimentary work of la Villemarqué.

While primarily making accessible the mediaeval versions to the literary world, the development of Tristan scholarship also fulfilled a secondary function. With the work of Zimmer and Schoepperle the legend acquired a 'local habitation', a primitive British setting, which provided an alternative to the previous rather vague mediaeval setting and found favour and form among the Celtophiles.¹ This heralds the legend's movement back to some sort of realistic treatment and gives rise to the Irish setting of Fiona MacLeod's Tristan and Iseult,² the Cornish location of Quiller-Couch's unfinished novel,³ which is closely structured around the theories of Joseph Loth, and the early British ethos of Massfield's play. Thus the later scholarship was instrumental in giving a direction to the anti-Wagner reaction.

But despite this the academic Tristan cannot be said to have had any direct effect on the legend's popularity. Scholarship made the material available but it did not shape it to the taste of the age. Instead the legend came to public notice through Wagner's music drama and it is at this point that the link between the academic Tristan and the popular image

1. This reverses the progress of the Arthurian legend which began in the early 19th century with a quasi-historical interpretation and worked towards a romance setting.

2. Written 1899. Unpublished. National Library of Scotland MS. 8776, fos. 220-45.

3. Castle Dor. Completed by Daphne du Maurier and published 1962. See also Memories and Opinions, an unfinished autobiography by 'Q' (1945), p. 65.

becomes most tenuous; it is also here that the popular concept of the legend as story mutates into an idea of the legend as symbolizing a distinct kind of Romantic passion. Up to this point writers who used the legend had to return to the sources, since there was no one version sufficiently compelling and comprehensive to provide a model. Consequently a link between the two areas was maintained. But with the arrival of Wagner's Tristan this link became minimal. The Schopenhauerian interpretation became fixed; the Wagnerian imagery became inevitable. If writers needed more detail they resorted to Bédier or Weston but without disturbing the central concept. The public was thus subjected to a unanimous view of the legend which saw the lovers, not as characters within a sharply defined action, but as representatives of an erotic mysticism.

This divergence between the originals and the contemporary image of the legend is not unique in the 19th century, since it had already occurred in the field of Arthurian literature. Tennyson had provided the mid-Victorian era with a highly-wrought, idealistic vision of legendary chivalry in the Idylls, which appealed to the current criteria of Beauty and Nobility. It was moral, melancholy and decorative. The Idylls thus coincided with a nexus of attitudes and sensibilities, illuminating and fulfilling them, to provide the age with a glorified image of itself. But when the public turned to Tennyson's source in the hopes of discovering more of this romance world they were disappointed. By comparison Malory was starkly unromantic and even after modernizing, expurgating and illustrating, it still could not equal the attraction of Tennyson's ready-made chivalric vision.

Wagner equally provided the fin-de-siècle with an image which reflected its Aesthetic sensibilities, and to which they were particularly susceptible. The age lived through Arts

It can teach us now to escape from our experience and to realize the experiences of those who are greater than we are. The pain of Leopardi crying out against life becomes our pain. Theocritus blows on his pipe, and we laugh with the lips of nymph and shepherd. In the wolf-skin of Pierre Vidal we flee before the hounds, and in the armour of Lancelot we ride from the bower of the Queen.⁴

Life was too gross, disorganized and meaningless to be the centre of experience. It is therefore appropriate that an interpretation of the legend as a rejection of the world on the wings of a consuming passion, unconsummated except in death, should find favour. The moral dilemma of the originals is completely discarded. There is no question of adultery, only the realisation of the Aesthetes' many faceted ideal of beauty in the 'music as identified with love, woman, night and the yearning for death'.⁵ Inevitably after the sublimities of this treatment the mediaeval versions were soundly condemned. It seems that the 19th century could only tolerate romance on its own terms.

It was an age which dealt in images, ransacking the past for some accessible myth which would make the present more palatable and less real. Victorian architecture, particularly under the auspices of Pugin, is a wholesale expression of this search for some touchstone which would transform railway stations into Gothic cathedrals. The Middle Ages, although it grew up among minor cults and was finally overborne by Greek paganism, persisted throughout the age as a main area for image-making. For the mid-century it generally provided a vision of chivalric action linked to a defined system of ethics and surrounded by an aura of religiosity. For the Pre-Raphaelites and their Aesthetic successors it provided the two related but conflicting imaginative areas indicated by Pater:

4. Oscar Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', Plays, Prose Writings and Poems, Everyman edition (1962), p. 43.

5. Paul Bekker, Richard Wagner, His Life and Works, translated by M.M. Bozman (1931), p. 292.

its mystic religion at its apex in Dante and Saint Louis, and its mystic passion, passing here and there into the greater romantic loves of rebellious flesh, of Lancelot and Abelard.⁶

But wherever the emphasis lay it promulgated a string of enthusiasms from the Eglinton tournament⁷ through the Jovial Campaign to the naming of locomotives after champions of the Round Table.

Perhaps the secret of the Middle Ages' appeal lay in the reason for its accommodation of so many facets - its vagueness. It was a new area for consideration, previously dismissed as barbaric, and therefore redolent of romance. Indeed, one senses that despite the Pre-Raphaelite concern for detail, the romance was more assiduously cultivated than the historical reality. This would explain why there is such a discrepancy between the popularity of the Arthurian recreations on the one hand and the original literature on the other. It also explains why the 19th century held at the centre of its mediaeval image heroes who were legendary, or whose historicity was so vague it ceased to be an issue once they had assumed their romance personae. This reluctance to confront the reality of the Middle Ages may originate in Caliban's rage at his own image,⁸ but it persists throughout the century as an 'indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact'.⁹

6. Walter Pater, 'Aesthetic Poetry' The Religion of Beauty, ed. R. Aldington (1950), p. 90.

7. The attempt to revive the art of tourneying was made by the earl of Eglinton in 1839. See Disraeli's Endymion (1880), chapters 59 and 60.

8. 'The nineteenth-century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.' Wilde, Preface to Dorian Gray, Plays, Prose, Writings and Poems, p. 69.

9. Matthew Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', Lectures and Essays, ed. R. H. Super, p. 372.

Thus, predictably, the mediaevalism of the 19th century bears little relationship to the products of the Middle Ages. When artists and writers turned to mediaeval sources for inspiration the material underwent metamorphosis, often unnoticed, which cut it off from its point of origin. This is not only seen in Swinburne's unaccountable conviction that his Tristram accurately reflects the originals, but in Rossetti's translations of Villon, in Morris's Sagas,¹⁰ in Burne-Jones' stained glass windows and in Carlyle's golden image of the mediaeval artisan.¹¹ Nor does fidelity to the sources or careful attention to detail promote authenticity as can be seen in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, where it remains decorative rather than organic. There is a self-conscious delight in 'quaint chambers in quaint palaces where angels creep in through sliding doors'¹² which is alien to the mediaeval mind and indicates a revelling in the creation of some romantic haven.

It is here that one touches on the primary factor in the transmutation of the mediaeval into an accessible romantic image - a nostalgia for some refuge from the 'six counties overhung with smoke',¹³ which Pater identifies as 'that inversion of home-sickness known to some, that incurable thirst for the sense of escape, which no actual form of life satisfies...'¹⁴ This longing for the 'far, far away' does not merely remove mediaevalistic art

10. See D. M. Hoare, The Works of Morris and Yeats in Relation to Early Saga Literature (1937), pp. 50-76.

11. Past and Present (1843).

12. James Smetham on Rossetti's painting The Wedding of St George and the Princess Sabra. Quoted by William Gaunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy (1965), pp. 70-1.

13. William Morris, 'The Wanderers', The Earthly Paradise, 1.1. Collected Works, III, 3.

14. Loc. cit.

from the ethos of the Middle Ages; in all but the works of Tennyson and Browning, who arbitrate between past and present, it effects a dislocation from all forms of immediate experience. But it also operates on a deeper level and the desire to live in

A nameless city in a distant sea,
White as the changing walls of faërie,
Thronged with much people clad in ancient guise¹⁵

manifests itself in the fin-de-siècle refusal to re-emerge from the organized world of Art and confront the painful formlessness of life. Consequently, it is not the mediaeval material itself, and certainly not the failure of artists to produce mediaeval pastiches, which causes the flawing of so much art in this area, but rather the motives which lie behind its choice.

This desire to use the mediaeval as a vehicle for romantic escape highlights the problem inherent in treatments of the Tristan legend up to the Wagnerian epoch. During this period the legend became attached to the mediaeval area due to its Arthurian associations. But it is, in fact, not at all susceptible to the sort of treatment which turns from direct and personal experience, since it constitutes a portrayal of passion. It is not essentially chivalric, nor is the love it portrays conducted under the canons of amour courtois. In the originals it is a story of illegitimate love, unafraid in its narrative of contact with crudity, humour and realism. In order to conform to the 19th century image of the mediaeval it was thus necessary to unfocus the legend.

Although 'The Defence of Guenevere' demonstrates that the mediaeval does not automatically exclude the treatment of passion, in general it is diluted into a languorous melancholy. As early as the poems of Owen Meredith, which precede the Pre-Raphaelite cult, one can trace the substitution

15. 'The Wanderers', ll. 17-19.

of an inarticulate and weary yearning for a dynamic relationship, and later the response became automatic. Tennyson, on the other hand, did not succumb to this sort of mannerism in the Idylls, but simply avoided the subject on moral grounds. He presents a whole range of emotion in the work, but omits an investigation of the central passion of Lancelot and Guinevere, demonstrating instead its side-effects: the queen's possessiveness and the burden of Lancelot's guilt. Thus the movement which saw no moral bar to the presentation of passion was generally disqualified by its attitude to the mediaeval, and the poet of the Idylls, who was artistically capable of such a presentation, was held back by his moral position.

The treatments of the Tristan legend consequently divide roughly into two categories, the romantic and the condemnatory, both of which avoid the real core of the story. Arnold is perhaps nearest the sources in his approach, condemning the passion as a 'diseas'd unrest' but, out of his own experience, sympathizing with the lovers. However, he is unable to animate the relationship and an influx of mediaevalistic romance obscures any exposition of the mainsprings of desire through an over-melancholic treatment of its effects in an over-ornate setting. This, despite his condemnation of 'some tyrannous single thought, some fit of passion', places Arnold's poem in the romantic category, since he does at least suppose that, however painful, such a passion exists and that its anguish is sufficient to mitigate any charge of immorality.

But Tennyson, in the context of the Arthurian ideal, does not. He removes all emotion from the story, together with all exonerating factors, and recreates it as situation with the lovers reduced to the level of casual adulterers. 'The Last Tournament' is a masterpiece, but it must be admitted that this limited treatment removes the problems which confounded Swinburne. Tennyson is released from the task of conveying a

sense of powerful desire between two people; indeed, he eradicates purposely all trace of an attachment other than that born of habit and indecision. He does not have to interpret or excuse the events of the legend, nor is he driven to seek ways of making the lovers significant and their passion universal, since their only significance and universality lies in their representing the degradation of Arthur's order. It is ironical, therefore, but also predictable that Tennyson's interpretation of the legend is technically the best, and that his characters, untrammelled by any artistic reverence, have a much greater sense of sparking off one another than in any other rendering which attempts to adhere more closely to the bias of the originals.

Swinburne's Tristram of Lyonesse belongs firmly to the romantic category and fails for all the reasons that 'The Last Tournament' succeeds. Begun specifically as a counter to Tennyson's moralistic interpretation of the Arthurian legend, it prefigures the ecstatic response to the legend by the fin-de-siècle. But it also represents the culmination of Pre-Raphaelite mediaevalism in that, mistakenly attempting to acquire an authenticity, Swinburne includes as much detail from the originals as is consistent with his ideal of the lovers' passion.

Swinburne's lovers are the protagonists of sensuousness, but it is a refined sensuousness whose moral implications are blurred. They do not defy a social code so much as rise above it; their passion is refined into philosophy and the characters themselves are obscured by a nimbus of high-minded ideas. The legend becomes for Swinburne an aesthetic experience, but part of its aesthetics belongs to its mediaeval origins. While he does not strain for an archaic effect he wants to include all that is 'pretty' from the sources at his disposal without, however, enquiring whether the appeal of the narrative coordinates artistically with the appeal

of the central concept of a contemplative passion. The result is that much of the original action is tucked inconsequentially around the edges of lengthy attempts to persuade the reader of the sublimities of the subject.

This inflated treatment of the legend is typical of the later Tristan enthusiasm and establishes the lovers as a symbolic value rather than participants in an action. With the onset of the Wagnerian influence interest in the mediaevalism of the legend declines and the emphasis shifts to the excitements of a transcendental passion. As with Swinburne's poem Wagner's music drama focusses on philosophy rather than action, but in the latter the superfluousness of mediaeval trappings and external action is recognized. Passion does not exist any more as worldly experience;¹⁶ it is continually striving to reach a larger dimension beyond death, and so time and place are essentially immaterial. Instead of taking its place within the range of apprehensible human emotion it becomes a nexus for ideas of erotic mysticism. The lovers are no longer two people struggling with a desire outlawed by society, subject to fear of discovery, pain at separation and a longing for each other which motivates all action and thought. Rather, they float above the concerns of Day, sexless and characterless, in a limbo of Night where Love and Death mingle and finally annul each other. This may make for one splendid music drama, but it obliterates the originals and their humanity for thirty years.

The mood of the fin-de-siècle ensured the success of Wagner's interpretation, conceived nearly half a century earlier out of the ethos of German Romanticism. This success automatically had a disastrous effect on attempts to re-create the Tristan legend during the period, since the

16. Wagner's motivation for conceiving Tristan implies this: 'But as I have never in my life known real happiness in love, I am going to erect to this most beautiful of all dreams a memorial in which from beginning to end this love shall for once drink its fill. I have outlined a Tristan and Isolde in my mind.' Letter to Liszt, December 1854. Quoted by Ernest Newman, Wagner Nights (1949), p. 201.

Tristan dramatists merely recapitulated Wagner's ideas, while vainly trying to find some equivalent to the force of his music:

'That's where the musicians have the pull, for music has wings, and when she says "Tristan" and he says "Isolde," you are on the heights at once.¹⁷

The plays consequently strive to arouse echoes of the Wagnerian response with obligatory love-potion scenes, verbal love duets and constant allusions to the imagery of the music drama. Apart from this crippling lack of artistic enterprise the dramas fail because the form demands an alignment of motivation and action, while the Tristanesque interpretation moves towards a state of almost total passivity. Dramatists were forced to go to Weston and Bédier for additional material, but this does not alter the fundamental idea of the death-devoted lovers and merely heightens the dichotomy between it and the action. Without this consistency of interpretation, however, the lovers could not have acquired their symbolic status.

The passion of Tristan und Isolde is an internal and verbally incommunicable experience; the action takes place in the music, not conventionally through the characters on stage.¹⁸ This represents the successful realization of what is, in the literary versions, the source of much artistic failure. From Arnold's poem onwards reworkings veer towards a stasis, originating in the misalignment of passion and action and resulting from an overly romantic conception of the legend. Wagner's Tristan, however, safely discards action because of its dualistic medium, thus changing radically the sens of the mediaeval romance. This movement away from the externals of the legend emphasizes the development of the legend away from narrative and towards image.

17. E. M. Forster, The Longest Journey, World's Classics (1960), p. 165.

18. The unusual importance and unity of the orchestral part is indicated by Elliott Zuckerman's statement that 'Apart, perhaps, from the narratives and dialogues of the first act, Tristan is a vast symphonic poem.' The First Hundred Years of Wagner's Tristan, p. 9.

The story of Tristan and Iseult was a romance for the Middle Ages, out of which the 19th century erected its own romantic construct, the originals being too near reality, whether the external reality of duplicity and adultery or the internal reality of passionate desire. In consequence, the reworkings reveal much of what the 19th century in many of its aspects and phases felt about passion and romance. But nowhere do they illuminate that magnetism between man and woman like Cathy Earnshaw's stark cry 'I am Heathcliff', nor, for all Swinburne's insistence on Fate, is there anything which describes a doomed love more poignantly than Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Once the age had overcome its moralistic scruples it could portray passion, but it had to be stripped of romance; when passion came into the orbit of the mediaeval or passed into the realm of the Aesthetic it lost its crucial dynamism.

Yet while, with the exception of 'The Last Tournament', the Tristan literature of the 19th century is flawed by the sensibilities of age and artist, this does not represent the total achievement in the field. What the 19th century achieved through research into the mediaeval versions, artistic experiment and Wagnerian enthusiasm was the retrieving and recreation of a piece of universal mythology. Not surprisingly it is Yeats who perceives this ultimate value of the legend when he states

And so it is that all the august sorrowful persons of literature, Cassandra and Helen and Deirdre, and Lear and Tristan, have come out of legends and are indeed but the images of the primitive imagination mirrored in the little looking-glass of the modern and classic imagination.¹⁹

During the century the lovers progressed from antiquarian curiosities

19. 'The Celtic Element in Literature', Essays and Introductions (1961), p. 182.

to characters in a narrative pattern and thence to the protagonists of a transcendental passion; they moved from Brittany and Cornwall in the Middle Ages to a timeless dimension of music and philosophy. The image they presented at the end of the century was necessarily not the same as that which had compelled the Middle Ages, such is the effect of the looking-glass of Romanticism, nor was it the same as that promulgated after the anti-Wagner reaction. But it established what the 19th century investigations in all the various areas had gravitated towards: the restoration of an archetype of human love and longing, capable, like all myths, of fluidity and constant reinterpretation.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

CHAPTER I The Tristan Legend

Editions

- Bédier, Joseph, Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas, 2 vols. 1902-5.
- Curtis, R.L., Le Roman de Tristan en Prose, Munich, 1963.
- Ewart, A., The Lays of Marie de France, 1944.
- , The Romance of Tristan by Béroul, 1963.
- Foerster, W., Cligès, Halle, 1884.
- Hoepffner, E., La Folie Tristan d'Oxford, Strasbourg, 1963.
- , La Folie Tristan de Berne, Paris, 1949.
- Kölbing, E., Die nordische und die englische Version der TristanSage, 2 vols. Heilbronn, 1878-82.
- Lichtenstein, F., Eilhart von Oberge, Strasbourg, 1877.
- Muret, Ernst, Le Roman de Tristan par Béroul et un anonyme, SATF, Paris, 1903.
- Ranke, F., Gottfried von Strassburg. Tristan und Isolde, Berlin, 1949.
- Vinaver, Eugène, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, 3 vols. 1967.
- Wind, B.H., Les Fragments de Thomas, Leiden, 1950.

Criticism

- Bennett, J.A.W., (ed.) Essays on Malory, 1963.
- Bromwich, Rachel, 'Some Remarks on the Celtic Sources of "Tristan"', Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion (1953), pp. 38f.
- , 'The Welsh Triads', ALMA, pp. 44f.
- Bruce, J.D., The Evolution of Arthurian Romance, 2 vols. Gloucester, Mass. 1958.
- De Rougement, Denis, Passion and Society, trans. M. Belgion, 1941.
- Frappier, Jean, 'Chrétien de Troyes', ALMA, pp. 157f.
- Hoepffner, E., 'The Breton Lais', ALMA, pp. 112f.
- Jonin, P., Les Personnages Féminins dans les romans français de Tristan au XII^e siècle. Etude des influences contemporaines, Aix-en-Provence, 1958.

- Loomis, R.S., Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance, New York, 1927.
- , The Romance of Tristan and Iseult, New York, 1951.
- Löseth, E., Le Roman en Prose de Tristan, le roman de Palamede et la compilation de Rusticien de Pise: analyse critique d'après les manuscrits de Paris, Paris, 1890.
- Newstead, Helaine, 'The Tryst beneath the Tree', Romance Philology xi (1958), 269ff.
- , 'The Origin and Growth of the Tristan Legend', ALMA, pp. 122f.
- Pickford, C.E., L'Evolution du Roman Arthurien en Prose, Paris, 1960.
- Van Hamel, A.G., 'Tristan's Combat with the Dragon', Revue Celtique xli (1924), 331ff.
- Vinaver, E., Le Roman de Tristan et d'Iseut dans l'Oeuvre de Thomas Malory, Paris, 1925.
- , 'The Prose Tristan', ALMA, pp. 139f.
- West, C.B., Courtoisie in Anglo-Norman Literature, 1938.
- Whitehead, F., 'The Early Tristan Poems', ALMA, pp. 134f.
- Whitteridge, G., 'The Date of the Tristan of Béroul', Medium Aevum, xxviii (1959), 167ff.
- Williams, Ifor, Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry, Dublin, 1944.

CHAPTER II Scott's edition of Sir Tristrem: the founding of Tristan

Scholarship

Manuscripts

Manuscripts in Douce's collection which have notes in his own handwriting:

Tristan fragments, Bodley MS. Douce d.6. Douce's notes are stitched into the back of the manuscript and contain comments on the English and French versions together with abstracts of both by Scott and Ellis respectively.

Le Mort de Tristan, Bodley MS. Douce 189.

Letters from Ellis to Douce, Bodley MS. Douce d.34.

Letters from Douce to Ellis, B.M. Additional MS. 28099.

The Journals of Sir Frederick Madden, Bodley MS. 40759-801.

Scott

Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, 3 Vols. 1803.

Sir Tristram, 1804.

Castle Dangerous, 1832.

'Essays on Chivalry and Romance', Miscellaneous Prose Works, 3 Vols. 1847.

General Introduction to the Waverley Novels, 1877.

The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, ed. J.L. Robertson, 1964.

The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, ed. H.J.C. Grierson, 12 Vols. 1932-7.

Grierson, H.J.C., Sir Walter Scott, Bart., New York, 1938.

Lockhart, J., Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, 1882.

Parsons, C.O., Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction, 1964.

Contemporary Works on Mediaeval Literature

Creuzé de Lesser, A., Introduction to La Table Ronde, Paris, 1829.

Davies, Edward, Mythology and Rites of the British Druids, 1809.

De la Rue, G., Recherches sur les ouvrages des Bardes de la Bretagne Armoricaîne, Paris, 1817.

De la Villemarqué, H., (ed.) Berzas-Breiz, Paris, 1839.

———, 'Les poèmes gallois et les romans de la Table Ronde', Revue de Paris, xxiv (1841), 274ff. Revised in Les Contes Populaires des Anciens Bretons, Paris, 1842 and again in Les Romans de la Table Ronde, Paris, 1860.

———, Archives des Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires, v (1856), 89ff.

De Roquefort, B., (ed.) Poésies de Marie de France, Paris, 1820.

———, De l'état de la Poésie dans les 12^e et 13^e siècles, 3 Vols, Paris, 1821.

De Tressan, L.E. de la Vergne, 'Histoire de Tristan de Léonois et de la Reine Yseult', Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans, i, Paris, 1776.

Duval, Amaury, 'Fragments des poèmes sur Tristan Fils de Meliadus', Histoire Littéraire de la France, xix (1838), 687ff.

Ellis, George, Specimens of the Early English Poets to which is prefixed an Historical Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the English Poetry and Language, 3 vols. 1801.

———, Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, 3 vols. 1805.

- Fauriel, C., 'Origine de l'épopée chevaleresque', Revue des Deux Mondes (1832), pp. 175ff.
- Ginguené, P.L., 'Chrétien de Troyes', Histoire Littéraire de la France, xv (1820), 246ff.
- Guest, Charlotte, (ed.) The Mabinogion from the Llyfr o Hergest and other ancient Welsh manuscripts, 3 vols. 1849
- Jones, Edward, Musical and Poetical Remains of the Welsh Bards, 1784.
- Madden, Frederick, 'Remarks on Walter Scott's Sir Tristrem', Gentleman's Magazine, ciii (October 1833) 307ff.
- , (ed.) Syr Gawaine, 1839.
- Michel, Francisque, (ed.) Tristani: Recueil de ce qui reste des poèmes de ses aventures, 3 vols. Paris, 1835-9.
- Müller, C.H., (ed.) Samlung deutscher Gedichte aus dem 12., 13., und 14. Jahrhundert, 2 vols. Berlin, 1785.
- Owen-Pughe, William, A Dictionary of the Welsh Language explained in English, 1803.
- Paris, Paulin, Manuscripts Francois de la Bibliothèque du Roi, 7 vols. Paris, 1836.
- Percy, Thomas, (ed.) Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, 3 vols. 1767.
- Pinkerton, John, 'An Essay on the Origin of Scottish Poetry' and 'A List of Scottish Poets' in Ancient Scottish Poems, 3 vols. 1792.
- Price, Richard, (ed.) Warton's History of English Poetry, 3 vols. 1824.
- Ritson, Joseph, Bibliographica Scotica. See B.H. Bronson, 'Ritson's Bibliographica Scotica', PMLA, lli (1937), 122ff.
- , (ed.) Ancient English Metrical Romances, 3 vols. 1802.
- , The Life of King Arthur, 1825.
- Southey, Robert, (ed.) The Byrth, Luf and Actes of Kyng Arthur, 2 vols. 1817.
- Stephens, Thomas, The Literature of the Kymry, 1844.
- Turner, Sharon, A History of the Anglo-Saxons, 3 vols. 1799-1805.
- Von der Hagen, Friedrich, (ed.) Gottfried von Strassburgs Werke, Breslau, 1823.
- Warton, Thomas, History of English Poetry, 3 vols. 1774-81.
- Weber, Heinrich, Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, 1811.

The History of the Renowned Prince Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, Stansby reprint, pubd. by Walker and Edwards, 2 vols. 1816.

The Mort D'Arthur. The Most Ancient and Famous History of the Renowned Prince Arthur King of Britain, Stansby reprint, pubd. by R. Wilks, 3 vols. 1816.

Background Material

Bliss, A.J., 'Notes on the Auchinleck MS.', Speculum, xxvi (1951), 652ff.

Bronson, B.H., Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms, 2 vols. Berkeley, 1938.

Dennis, Leah, 'Percy's Essay "On the Ancient Metrical Romances"', PMLA, xlix, (1934).

Furnivall, F.J., (ed.) The Chronicle of Robert Mannyng of Brunne, Rolls Series, 1887.

Hustveot, S.B., Ballad Books and Ballad Men, Massachusetts, 1930.

Johnston, Arthur, Enchanted Ground, 1964.

Le Men, R.F., 'The Villemarqué Bubble', Athenaeum (11th April, 1868), p.527.

Loomis, L.H., 'Chaucer and the Auchinleck MS.', Essays in Honor of Carleton Brown, New York, 1940.

Mehl, Dieter, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 1968.

Murray, J.A.H., (ed.) The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Ercelesbourne, EETS OS 61 (1875).

O'Loughain, J.L.H., 'The English Alliterative Romances', ALMA, pp. 520f.

Parry, T., A History of Welsh Literature, trans. H.I. Bell, 1955.

Phelps, W.L., The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement, Boston, 1893.

Phillips, D. Rhys, Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion, 1921.

Southey, C.C., Robert Southey: Life and Correspondence, 5 vols. 1850.

Vogel, B., 'The Dialect of Sir Tristrem', JEGP, xl (1941), 538ff.

CHAPTER III Arnold's Tristan and Iseult: the French Link

Arnold

The Poems of Matthew Arnold, ed. Kenneth Allott, 1965.

The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, ed. R.E. Super, 6 vols. Michigan, 1960-68.

- The Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-88, ed. G.W.E. Russell, 2 vols. 1895.
- The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. H.F. Lowry, 1932.
- Letter to Herbert Hill, 5th November, 1852. See R.E.C. Houghton, TLS (19th May, 1932), p. 368.
- Letter to Swinburne, 26th July, 1882. See E. Gosse, TLS (12th August, 1920), p. 517.
- The Notebooks of Matthew Arnold, ed. H. F. Lowry, K. Young and W. H. Dunn 1952.
- Baum, P.F., Ten Studies in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold, Durham, N.C., 1958.
- Brooks, R.L., 'Matthew Arnold's Revision of Tristram and Iseult: examples of Clough's influence', Victorian Poetry, 11 (1964), 57ff.
- Clough, A.H., Review of 1852 vol. North American Review, lxxvii (July, 1853), 12ff.
- Ford, G.H., Keats and the Victorians, New Haven, 1945.
- Guller, A.D., Imaginative Reason, Yale, 1965.
- Johnson, D.H., The Alien Vision, 1952.
- Johnson, W.S., The Voices of Matthew Arnold, 1961.
- Kendall, J.L., 'The Unity of Arnold's Tristram and Iseult', Victorian Poetry, 1 (1963), 140ff.
- Sells, I.E., Matthew Arnold and France, 1935.
- Sundell, M.G., 'The Intellectual Background and Structure of Arnold's Tristram and Iseult', Victorian Poetry, 1 (1963).
- Tinker, C.B., and Lowry, F.H., The Poetry of Matthew Arnold: A Commentary, 1940.

Contemporary Arthurian Works

- Bulwer-Lytton, E.G.E., King Arthur, 1848.
- Dunlop, J., History of Fiction, 3 vols. 1814.
- Frere, J., The Monks and the Giants, 1817-18.
- Heber, Reginald, 'Morte D'Arthur', The Poetical Works of Reginald Heber, 1841.
- Moultrie, John, 'Sir Launfal', Poems, 1837.

Peacock, T.L., 'The Misfortunes of Elphin', The Complete Novels, ed. D. Garnett, 3 vols. 1963.

Praed, W.M., 'The Legend of the Haunted Tree', The Poetical Work of Winthrop Mackworth Praed, collected R.W. Griswold, New York, 1844.

Riethmüller, C.J., Lancelot of the Lake. a tragedy in 5 Acts, 1843.

Thelwall, J., The Fairy of the Lake, 1801.

Wordsworth, William, 'The Egyptian Maid', The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, rev. E. de Selincourt, 1960.

CHAPTER IV Tennyson's 'The Last Tournament' : the English View

Manuscripts

Draft of the first part of 'Gareth', part verse and part prose, Houghton MS. Eng. 952 ff. 1-40.

Letters from Hawker and Knowles in the Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln, are in the process of being catalogued.

Swinburne's poem 'Lancelot', B.M. MS. Ashley 4442 (viii, 61-2).

Tennyson

The Poems of Tennyson, ed. C. Ricks, 1969.

Tennyson, Hallam, Materials for a life of Alfred Tennyson, pubd. privately, 4 vols. 1897.

———, Alfred Tennyson: A Memoir, 2 vols. 1897.

Baum, P.F., Tennyson Sixty Years After, 1948.

Brooke, Stopford A., Tennyson, 1894.

Buckley, J.H., Tennyson : the Growth of a Poet, 1960.

Bush, Douglas, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry, Harvard, 1937.

Gray, J.M., Man and myth in Victorian England : Tennyson's The Coming of Arthur, Tennyson Monograph Series, 1969.

Hamann, A., An Essay on Tennyson's Idylls of the King, 1897.

Jones, Richard, The Growth of the Idylls of the King, 1895.

Littledale, H., Essays on Tennyson's Idylls of the King, 1893.

Maccallum, M.W., Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Arthurian Story from the Sixteenth Century, 1894.

Paden, W.D., Tennyson in Egypt : A Study of the Imagery in his Earlier Work, Kansas, 1942.

Priestley, F.E.L., 'Tennyson's Idylls', Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson, ed. J. Kilham, 1960.

Scott, P.G., 'Tennyson's Celtic Reading', Tennyson Research Bulletin, 11 (November 1968).

Shannon Jr., E.F., Tennyson and the Reviewers, Harvard, 1952.

Tennyson, Charles, Alfred Tennyson, 1949.

Tillotson, Kathleen, 'Tennyson's Serial Poem', Mid-Victorian Studies, 1965, pp. 80f.

Wright, H.G., 'Tennyson and Wales', Essays and Studies, xiv (1929), 80ff.

Contemporary Arthurian Works

Blaikie, J.A., 'Arthur in Avalon', Magazine of Art, vii (1884), 433ff.

Brough, William, King Arthur or the Days and Knights of the Round Table, 1864.

Bruce, Charles, Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot, 1865.

Buchanan, R.W., 'Mordred', St James Magazine, viii (August 1863), 33ff.

——, Fragments of the Round Table, pubd. anon. 1859.

Evans, Sebastian, 'Arthur's Knighting', Macmillan's Magazine, xx (August 1869), 321ff.

Gosse, E., 'Guinevere', On Viol and Flute, 1873.

Hawker, R.S., 'The Quest of the Sangraal', Cornish Ballads and Other Poems, ed. C.E. Byles, 1908.

Meredith, Owen, 'Queen Guinevere', Clytemnestra and Other Poems, 1855.

Millard, Frederick, Tristram and Iseult, pubd. privately, 1870.

Millington, E.J., 'King Arthur and His Knights', Monthly Packet, 1859-64.

Morgan, R.W., The Duke's Daughter, 1867.

Morris, William, The Defence of Guinevere and Other Poems, 1858.

——, 'The Maying of Guenevere', Collected Works, ed. May Morris, I.

Mulock Craig, D.M., 'Avilion, or the Happy Isles', Avilion and Other Tales, 1853

Rossetti, D.G., 'God's Graal', The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. W.M. Rossetti.

Stuart-Glennie, J.S., King Arthur: or the Drama of the Revolution, 1867-70.

Swinburne, A.C., 'The Day Before the Trial', G. Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne, ii, 52.

Westwood, Thomas, The Sword of Kingship, 1866.

——, The Quest of the Sangreall, 1868.

CHAPTER V Swinburne's Tristram of Lyonesse: the Pre-Raphaelite Reaction

Manuscripts

Swinburne's poem 'Queen Yseult', B.M. MSS. Ashley 4351 and 4441.

Swinburne

The Complete Works of A.C. Swinburne, ed. E. Gosse and T.J. Wise, 20 vols. 1925-7.

The Swinburne Letters, ed. C.Y. Lang, 6 vols. Yale, 1959-62.

Connolly, T.E., Swinburne's Theory of Poetry, New York, 1969.

Fuller, J.O., Swinburne: A Critical Biography, 1968.

Gosse, Edmund, Life of Swinburne, 1917.

Hyder, C.K., Swinburne's Literary Career and Fame, 1933.

Lafourcade, G., La Jeunesse de Swinburne, 2 vols. Paris, 1928.

——, Swinburne: A Literary Biography, 1932.

Nicolson, Harold, Swinburne, 1926.

Reid, J.R., 'Swinburne's Tristram of Lyonesse: The Poet's Song of Love', Victorian Poetry, iv (1966), 99ff.

Rutland, W.R., Swinburne, a Nineteenth Century Hellene, 1931.

Welby, T.E., A Study of Swinburne, 1926.

Pre-Raphaelites

The Collected Works of William Morris, ed. May Morris, 24 vols. 1910-15.

- The Letters of William Morris, ed. Phillip Henderson, 1965.
- The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. W.M. Rossetti, 1911.
- The Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. O. Doughty and J.R. Wahl, 4 vols. 1965-8.
- The Rossetti Papers, 1862-70, ed. W.M. Rossetti, 1903.
- Burne-Jones, Georgiana, Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones, 2 vols. 1904.
- Doughty, Oswald, A Victorian Romantic: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1960.
- Gaunt, William, The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy, 1942.
- Greenan, M.R., William Morris. Mediaevalist and Revolutionary, New York, 1945.
- Henderson, Phillip, William Morris. his Life. Work and Friends, 1967.
- Hoare, Dorothy, The Works of Morris and Yeats in Relation to Early Saga Literature, 1937.
- Hough, Graham, The Last Romantics, 1961.
- Hunt, J.D., The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination 1848-1900, 1968.
- Mackail, J.W., The Life of William Morris, 2 vols. 1899.
- Pras, Mario, The Romantic Agony, trans. Angus Davidson, 1951.

CHAPTER VI The Florescence of Tristan Scholarship

Malory

- The Historie of King Arthur, ed. T. Wright, 3 vols. 1858.
- The Story of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table, retold by James Knowles, 1861.
- La Mort D'Arthur, abridged by E. Conybeare, 1868.
- Le Morte Darthur, ed. E. Strachey, 1868.
- La Mort d'Arthur, ed. B.M. Ranking, 1871.
- The Boys' King Arthur, retold by S. Lanier, Baltimore, 1880.
- King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, retold by H. Frith, 1884.
- Malory's History of King Arthur and the Quest of the Holy Grail, ed. E. Rhys, 1886.

Le Morte Darthur by Syr Thomas Malory, ed. Oscar Sommer, 3 vols. 1889-91.

King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, ed. C. Morris, 1892.

Le Mort Darthur by Sir Thomas Malory, introduced by J. Rhys and illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley, 2 vols. 1893.

Selections from Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur, ed. A.T. Martin, 1896.

Le Mort D'Arthur: the book of King Arthur and his noble knights of the Round Table, illustrated by Russell Flint, 4 vols. 1910.

Wagner

Dry, Wakeling, Nights at the Opera, 1902.

Forman, A.B.P., The Wagner Stories, 1907.

Frost, W.H., The Wagner Story Book, 1894.

Fynes, R., and Parker, L.N., Parsifal and Tristan und Isolde, 1914.

Guerber, H.A., Stories of the Wagner Operas, New York, 1895.

Hall, G., The Wagnerian Romances, New York, 1907.

Heintz, A., Tristan und Isolde by Richard Wagner, trans. C. Bache, 1892.

Hight, G.A., Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, 1912.

Le Gallienne, Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, New York, 1909.

Lemain, J., L'amour dans le drame Wagnérien Tristan et Isolde, Paris, 1899.

MacSpadden, J.W., Stories from Wagner, 1905.

Maud, C., Wagner Heroines, 1903.

Newman, Ernest, Wagner Operas, 1949.

Taylor, V., Stories from Wagner, 1905.

Weston, J., Legends of the Wagner Drama, 1896.

Von Wolzogen, H., Guide to the Legend, Poem and Music of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, trans. B.L. Mosely, Leipzig, 1884.

Young, F., The Wagner Stories, 1907.

Scholarship

Bédier, J., 'La Mort de Tristan et Iseult après le manuscrit français de la Bibliothèque Nationale, comparé aux poèmes allemands de

- Eilhart d'Oberge', Romania, xv, 1886, 481ff.
- Bédier, J., 'Spécimen d'un essai de reconstruction conjecturale du Tristan de Thomas' Festgabe - Hermann Suchier, Forschungen zur Romanischen Philologie (1900).
- , Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut, Paris, 1900.
- , Sur l'oeuvre de Gaston Paris, Paris, 1904.
- Bossert, A., Tristan et Iseult. poème de Gotfrit de Strasbourg comparé à d'autres poèmes sur le même sujet, Paris, 1865.
- Bruce, J.D., Review of Schoepperle, MLN, xxix (1914), 213ff.
- Campbell, J.F., Popular Tales of the Western Highlands, 4 vols. 1862.
- Estlander, C.G., 'Pièces inédites du Roman de Tristan', Acta Societas Scientiarum Fennicae, vii (1886).
- Golther, W., Tristan und Isolde in den Dichtungen des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit, Leipzig, 1893.
- Leith, E.T., On the Development of the Legend of Tristan. its origin in Myth and its development in Romance, paper for the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 9th April, 1868.
- Lot, Ferdinand, 'De la provenance des lais dits bretons', Romania, xxiv (1895), 513ff.
- , Joseph Bédier. 1864-1948, Paris, 1939.
- Loth, Joseph, 'Des nouvelles théories sur l'origine des Romans Arthurians', Revue Celtique, xiii (1892), 475ff.
- , Contributions à l'étude des romans de la Table Ronde, Paris, 1912.
- Lutoslawski, W., 'Les Folies de Tristan', Romania, xv (1886), 511ff.
- Muret, E., 'Eilhart d'Oberg et sa source française', Romania, xvi (1887), 288ff.
- Nutt, Alfred, Studies on the legend of the Holy Grail with especial reference to the hypothesis of its Celtic Origin, 1888.
- , 'Celtic Myth and Saga', Folklore, iii (1892), 406ff.
- Paris, Gaston, 'Notes sur les Romans relatifs à Tristan', Romania, xv (1886), 597ff.
- , 'Romans en vers du cycle de la Table Ronde', Histoire Littéraire de la France, xxx (1888), 1ff.
- , 'Tristan et Iseut', Revue de Paris, (11th April, 1894). Reprinted in Poèmes et Légendes du Moyen Ages, Paris, 1900.

Paris, G., Review of Foerster's Cligès, Journal des Savants, (June 1902), pp. 269ff.

Piquet, F., L'Originalité de Gotfried de Strasbourg dans son poème de Tristan und Isolde, Lille, 1905.

Rhys, John, Studies in the Arthurian Legend, 1891.

Schoepperle, Gertrude, Tristan and Isolt, a study of the sources of the Romance, 2 vols. New York, 1963.

Vetter, F., La legende de Tristan d'après le poème français de Thomas et les versions principales qui s'y rattachent, Marburg, 1882.

Weston, Jessie Laidlaw, 'King Arthur and his Knights, a survey of Arthurian Romance, Romance and Folklore, iv (1899).

——, The Story of Tristan and Iseult, 2 vols. 1899.

——, The Legend of Sir Perceval, 2 vols, 1906-9.

——, From Ritual to Romance, 1928.

Zimmer, H., 'Beitrage zur Namenforschung in den altfranzösischen 'Arthurepen', Zs. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt., xiii (1891), 58ff.

CHAPTER VII The Impact of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde

Manuscripts

The journal of Michael Field, Works and Days, 1898-1904, B.M. MSS. Ashley 46787-46793.

Contemporary Works

Baring, Maurice, 'Tristram and Iseult', The Collected Poems of Maurice Baring, 1911.

Binyon, Laurence, 'Tristram's End', Odes, 1913.

Carr, J. Comyns, King Arthur, 1895.

——, Tristram and Iseult, 1906.

Coutts, Francis, The Romance of King Arthur, 4 parts, 1907.

Dalkeith, L., 'Sir Gareth of Orkney', Little Plays, 1898.

Dillon, A., King Arthur Pendragon, 1906.

Field, Michael, The Tragedy of Pardon, 1911.

——, Tristan de Léonois, 1911.

- Forster, W., The Legend of Lohengrin, 1894.
- Gray, Maxwell, 'Sir Launcelot at the Forest Chapel', Atalanta, vii (October, 1893), 35.
- Hardy, Thomas, The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall, 1923.
- Hearne, I., Queen Herseleid, 1911.
- Hill, G., Guinevere, 1906.
- Kinross, M., Tristram and Iseult, 1913.
- Lawrence, D.H., The Trespasser, 1912.
- Lee, T.H., The Marriage of Iseult and Other Plays, 1909.
- Lounsbury C., An Iseult Idyll and Other Poems, 1901.
- Mann, Thomas, Tristan, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter, Penguin, 1955.
- Masefield, John, Tristan and Iseult, 1927.
- Moore, George, Evelyn Innes, 1898.
- Newbolt, Henry, Mordred, 1895.
- Phillips, Stephen, 'The Parting of Launcelot and Guinevere', New Poems, 1908.
- Rhys, Ernest, The Masque of the Grail, 1908.
- , Enid, 1908.
- , Guinevere, 1905.
- Robinson, E.A., Tristram, 1928.
- Spiers, Kaufmann, 'The Madness of Lancelot', Fortnightly Review, xlii (August, 1909, 345ff.
- Steynor, Morley, Lancelot and Elaine, 1909.
- Symons, Arthur, Tristan and Iseult, 1917.
- Trevelyan, R.C., The Birth of Parsifal, 1914.
- , The New Parsifal, 1914.
- Williams, Antonia, Isolt. A New Telling, 1915.
- Wills, W.G., King Arthur. See F. Wills, W.G. Wills, dramatist and Painter, 1898.

Background

- Carr, Alice, Stray Memories, 1920.

- D'Arcy, The Mind and Heart of Love, 1945.
- Flower, M., (ed.) The Journal of Arnold Bennett, 1932.
- Halperin, Maurice, Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut dans la littérature Anglo-Américaine au XIX^e et au XX^e siècles, Paris, 1931.
- Heath-Stubbs, J.H., The Darkling Plain, 1950.
- Hough, G., Image and Experience, 1960.
- Mix, Kathleen L., A Study in Yellow. The Yellow Book and its Contributors, Kansas, 1968.
- Reid, Margaret, The Arthurian Legend: Comparisons of Treatment in Modern and Mediaeval Literature, 1938.
- Shaw, George Bernard, Our Theatres in the Nineties, 2 vols. 1932.
- Smythe, Ethel, Maurice Baring, 1938.
- Starr, N.C., King Arthur Today : The Arthurian Legend in English and American Literature 1901-1953, Gainesville, 1959.
- Symons, A., 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', Harpers, lxxxvii (November 1893), 859ff.
- Wilde, Oscar, Plays. Prose. Writings and Poems, 1962.
- Letters of W.B. Yeats, ed. A. Wade, 1959.
- Yeats, W.B., 'Essay on Celtic Literature', Essays and Introductions, 1961
- Zuckermann, Elliott, The First Hundred Years of Wagner's Tristan, New York, 1964.