

ARTHURIAN LITERATURE

XXXI

ARTHURIAN LITERATURE

Incorporating *Arthurian Yearbook*

ISSN 0261-9946

Editors

Elizabeth Archibald, *Durham University*
David F. Johnson, *Florida State University, Tallahassee*

Assistant Editor

Anna Dow

Editorial Board

James Carley, *York University*
Julia Crick, *King's College London*
Tony Hunt, *University of Oxford*
Marianne Kalinke, *Illinois University*
Norris Lacy, *Pennsylvania State University*
Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, *Cardiff University*
Andrew Lynch, *University of Western Australia*
Ad Putter, *University of Bristol*
Felicity Riddy, *University of York*
Alison Stones, *University of Pittsburgh*
Toshiyuki Takamiya, *University of Keio*
Jane H. M. Taylor, *Durham University*
Raymond H. Thompson, *Acadia University*
Michael Twomey, *Ithaca College*

Arthurian Literature is an interdisciplinary publication devoted to the scholarly and critical study of all aspects of Arthurian legend in Europe in the medieval and early modern periods. Articles on writings from later periods are included if they relate very directly to medieval and early modern sources, although the editors welcome bibliographical studies of all periods. Articles may be up to 20,000 words in length; short items, of under 5,000 words, are published as Notes. Updates on earlier articles are also welcomed.

Material for consideration should be sent to Boydell & Brewer: contributors should follow the style sheet printed at the end of XII of the series. The contents of previous volumes are listed at the back of this book.

*Arthurian
Literature
XXXI*

Edited by

ELIZABETH ARCHIBALD AND DAVID F. JOHNSON

D. S. BREWER

© Contributors 2014

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner

First published 2014
D. S. Brewer, Cambridge

ISBN 978-1-84384-386-3

D. S. Brewer is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc,
668 Mt Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620-2731, USA
website: www.boydellandbrewer.com

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

The publisher has no responsibility for the continued existence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

This publication is printed on acid-free paper

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	vii
General Editors' Foreword	ix
List of Contributors	xi
I Chrétien's <i>Conte du Graal</i> between Myth and History <i>Irit Ruth Kleiman</i>	1
II Malory's Thighs and Launcelot's Buttock: Ignoble Wounds and Moral Transgression in the <i>Morte Darthur</i> <i>Karen Cherewatuk</i>	35
III Weeping, Wounds and Worshyp in Malory's <i>Morte Darthur</i> <i>K. S. Whetter</i>	61
IV Sleeping Knights and 'Such Maner of Sorow-Makyng': Affect, Ethics and Unconsciousness in Malory's <i>Morte</i> <i>Darthur</i> <i>Megan Leitch</i>	83
V Mirroring Masculinities: Transformative Female Corpses in Malory's <i>Morte Darthur</i> <i>Erin Kissick</i>	101
VI Tristan and Iseult at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela <i>Joan Tasker Grimbirt</i>	131
VII Trevelyan Triptych: A Family and the Arthurian Legend <i>Roger Simpson</i>	165
VIII <i>Kaamelott</i> : A New French Arthurian Tradition <i>Tara Foster</i>	185

ILLUSTRATIONS

Tristan and Iseult at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela *Joan Tasker Grimbert*

- 1a. Santiago de Compostela, cathedral: Tristan figure on marble column formerly on north portal of Romanesque cathedral, currently preserved in cathedral museum (photograph © Museo Catedral de Santiago) 134
- 1b. Drawing by Serafin Moralejo, from *Santiago, Camino de Europa*, p. 382 134
- 1c. Santiago de Compostela, cathedral: Tristan and Iseult on marble column formerly on north portal of Romanesque cathedral, currently preserved in Cathedral museum (photograph: © Museo Catedral de Santiago) 135
2. Sangüesa, Santa María le Real: right-hand spandrel of southern façade: Sigurd the dragon-slayer and Regin the blacksmith (photograph: the author) 140
3. Santiago de Compostela, transept: *Santiago caballero* on the 'timpano de Clavijo' (photograph: Jennifer S. Alexander) 144
4. Estella, Palacio de los reyes: capital with Ferragut and Roland fighting on foot (photograph: the author) 149
5. Estella, Palacio de los reyes: capital with Ferragut and Roland fighting on horseback (photograph: the author) 149
6. Estella, Church of San Miguel, relief with St Michael slaying the serpent and weighing souls on Judgement Day (photograph: the author) 152

Trevelyan Triptych: A Family and the Arthurian Legend *Roger Simpson*

- 1 Needlework panel by Mary, Lady Trevelyan at Wallington (courtesy of the National Trust © National Trust Images/ Andreas von Einsedel) 167



ILLUSTRATIONS

The editors, contributors and publishers are grateful to all the institutions and persons listed for permission to reproduce the materials in which they hold copyright. Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders; apologies are offered for any omission, and the publishers will be pleased to add any necessary acknowledgement in subsequent editions.

CONTRIBUTORS

Karen Cherewatuk is a Professor in English at St Olaf College in Northfield, MN. She is the author of *Marriage, Adultery and Inheritance in Malory Morte Darthur* and co-editor with K. S. Whetter of *The Arthurian Way of Death* (Cambridge, 2006 and 2009). She is currently working on two essays on the visual arts and medievalism in the American mid-west.

Tara Foster is an Associate Professor of French at Northern Michigan University. Her research interests range from Old French narrative and hagiography to medievalism and popular culture. Her publications include articles on Clemence of Barking, Juana of Castile and literary representations of the Third Crusade. She is currently working on two projects on Arthurian television and on two translations of medieval French texts.

Joan Tasker Grimbert is Emerita Professor of French and Medieval Studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. She is president of the North American Branch of the International Arthurian Society, and was for nine years the international treasurer of the IAS. She has published six books: *'Yvain' dans le miroir: Une Poétique de la réflexion dans le «Chevalier au lion» de Chrétien de Troyes* (Amsterdam, 1988); *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook* (New York, 1995; London, 2002); *Songs of the Women Trouvères* (New Haven, CT, 2001), with Eglal Doss-Quinby, Wendy Pfeffer and Elizabeth Aubrey; *Philologies Old and New: Essays in Honor of Peter Florian Dembowski* (Edward C. Armstrong Monographs, 2001), with Carol J. Chase; *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge, 2005, 2008), with Norris J. Lacy; and *Chrétien de Troyes in Prose: The Burgundian Erec and Cligés* (Cambridge, 2011), with Carol J. Chase.

Erin Kissick is a PhD candidate in English medieval literature at Purdue University, where she also completed her BA in English and Creative Writing and MA in Literary Studies. Her dissertation is on the topic of 'Constructing Community from Corpses in Medieval English and Icelandic Literature', under the supervision of Professor Shaun Hughes. Her research interests include the medieval undead, the Arthurian tradition, Old Norse sagas, medieval theology of the body, and English and Icelandic textual landscapes.

CONTRIBUTORS

Irit Ruth Kleiman is Associate Professor of Romance Studies at Boston University. Her research interests include historiography, written cultures, psychoanalysis and literature, archetypes of betrayal, the cultures of memory, questions of law and political authority, and the tropes of embodiment. She has published book chapters and essays on topics including Chrétien de Troyes, the medieval Judas Iscariot and the poetics of political rhetoric. Her book *Philippe de Commines: Memory, Betrayal, Text* (Toronto, 2013) received the Newberry Library's Weiss/Brown Award.

Megan Leitch is Lecturer in English Literature at Cardiff University. Her research interests include Middle English romance, Arthurian literature and the fifteenth century. She is the author of *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford, forthcoming 2015). She is currently working on a monograph on sleep and its spaces in medieval and early modern literature.

Roger Simpson was, until his retirement, at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Camelot Regained* (1990), *Radio Camelot* (2008) and many articles on the post-1800 Arthurian Revival.

K. S. Whetter studied Malory with Professor P. J. C. Field and is himself now Full Professor of English at Acadia University. His principal research interests are heroic literature, genre theory and Arthurian literature, especially Malory's *Morte Darthur*. His recent publications include *The Arthurian Way of Death*, co-edited with Karen Cherewatuk (Cambridge, 2009), and 'Malory's Secular Arthuriad', in *Malory and Christianity: Essays on Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, ed. D. Thomas Hanks Jr and Janet Jesmok (Kalamazoo, MI, 2013).

VII

TREVELYAN TRIPTYCH: A FAMILY AND THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND

Roger Simpson

Direct lineal descent from King Arthur has been claimed by and for sundry English monarchs, Henry VII, Elizabeth I and Charles I among them. More recently the egregious Arthur Pendragon has declared himself a re-embodiment of that king, while Laurel Phelan, a Canadian, reportedly learns through regressive therapy that she is a reincarnation of Queen Guinevere.¹ Less aspirational perhaps than all of these, but still exceptional, is the Trevelyan family's claim of descent from a knight of Arthur's Round Table.

From comparatively modest beginnings in Cornwall, the Trevelyans rose to prominence through a series of advantageous marriages which gave them the major estates of Nettlecombe in Somerset and Wallington in Northumbria. For two centuries their menfolk, distinctively intellectual, radical and somewhat puritanical, were largely benevolent landlords at home and yet played leading roles as public administrators, politicians, historians and natural scientists, while their wives brought into the family a complementary artistic prowess revealed in collections, enlightened patronage and personal skill in the fine and applied arts. This article will trace how three members of this remarkable family took up the Arthurian legend and made significant and very individual contributions to its recreation and reinterpretation through widely different media in the twentieth century.²

¹ See A. Pendragon and C. J. Stone, *The Trials of Arthur: The Life and Times of a Modern-Day King* (London, 2003); and L. Phelan, *Guinevere; The True Story of One Woman's Quest for her Past Life Identity and the Healing of her Immortal Soul* (New York, 1996).

² I have been greatly helped by staff in Birkbeck College Library, British Library

Mary, Lady Trevelyan (1882–1966)

Mary, more usually known as ‘Molly’, was born Mary Bell into a family of wealthy ironmasters who were important patrons of the Arts and Crafts movement. Her grandfather, Sir Isaac Lowthian Bell, and two of his children had all commissioned Philip Webb to design their new houses, and William Morris to supply decorations therein. Her father, Sir Hugh Bell, had by a previous marriage another daughter, Gertrude, who would become a leading Arabic scholar and explorer, while his second wife, Florence, the mother of Molly, wrote novels and plays.

Many women of the family also displayed very considerable needlework skills. Among the commissions Isaac Lowthian Bell gave Morris was one for a series of five panels based on the theme of Chaucer’s *The Romaunt of the Rose*, for which Edward Burne-Jones supplied the composition and figure drawings. These embroideries were then worked in silk, wool and gold thread on a linen ground by Lady Margaret Bell and her daughters Florence and Ada Phoebe, exercising great skill and patience over a period of eight years. The result was highly admired by Morris.³ One of Burne-Jones’s original designs for these panels would later hang inspirationally in Molly’s parlour at Wallington.

When in 1904 Molly married Charles Philips Trevelyan (1881–1958) they spent their honeymoon ‘walking a hundred miles in Cornwall’ before returning to live in a comparatively small house at Cambo, close to Wallington itself.⁴ It was here that she formulated an ambitious scheme that probably derived from her honeymoon excursion: to create a large embroidery depicting the Trevelyan family’s legendary connection with King Arthur (Figure 1).

This family legend probably entered the literary record in the early seventeenth century, when the topographical historians Richard Carew and William Camden described the submersion of the terrain between Land’s End and the Scilly Isles, a disaster from which a man called Trevelyan (there are various spellings of the name) contrived to escape on horseback. His feat became part of Cornish folklore, and was allegedly the source of the Trevelyan family crest, which showed a horse rising from the sea. However, though the sunken land was commonly identified with the lost Lyonesse I can find no early account of this heroic survivor’s connection

Manuscripts, the National Trust, Senate House Library, Trinity College Library; and by Lord St Levan, Professor Michael Dower, Steve Dixon and Linda Gowans.

³ L. Parry, *William Morris Textiles* (London, 1983), p. 18; and *William Morris*, ed. L. Parry (London, 1996), pp. 240–1.

⁴ L. Trevelyan, *A Very British Family: The Trevelyans and Their World* (London, 2006), p. 117.

TREVELYAN TRIPTYCH



1 Needlework panel by Mary, Lady Trevelyan at Wallington

with Arthur, nor of a Trevelyan sitting at the Round Table. Admittedly Arthur's court has long been linked with the Jack the Giant Killer legend of St Michael's Mount, and just after 1800 there was a minor poetic flurry of Arthurian association which sought to locate the sleeping king within the Mount. Both Sir Hardinge Giffard and a certain J. H., for example, evoked 'the deep cell, / Where Arthur's giant warriors dwell' entranced in 'charmed slumber'.⁵ But a novel reinterpretation of the story is indicated by Lady Molly's title for her work: *From St Michael's Mount the Knights of King Arthur's Court strive for a wager to swim ashore. Sir Trevelyan alone wins to shore*. In other words she idiosyncratically drops the traditional association with a fabled seismic disaster in Lyonesse, replacing it by a later social incident, a feat carried out for a boastful wager. In doing so she may have seriously weakened the impact of the ancient story by reducing a myth once resonant with potential social and personal disaster to the trivial level of a sporting competition.

Lady Molly's project was nonetheless on a grand scale. In the knowledge that her husband was the heir of Wallington, she planned her

⁵ J. H., 'Lines', *European Magazine* 62 (1812), 450; [Ambrose] H[ardinge] Giffard, 'St Michael's Mount', in *Verses* (Colombo, [1822]), pp. 29–31.

embroidery to occupy a fitting space one day in the Wallington drawing room, and estimated that her work would take thirty years to complete. To formulate her design she did not choose a household name but generously exercised her patronage with considerable acumen in selecting the youthful John Edgar Platt, a prize-winning student at the Royal College of Art, London, and an artist who would later achieve some eminence as a colour woodcut printmaker.⁶ He presumably drew up a design in 1909 according to her wishes. It presents a bold heraldic statement of the house's owners, the family's lineage and her own branch within it. At the four corners appear the crests of previous owners, the Fenwicks and Blacketts, complemented by those of the Trevelyans and the Bells. Under a tree sits an owl, the crest of the Calverleys, marriage with whom brought the house into Trevelyan possession, while centrally the embroidery promotes the origin myth of the Trevelyans and embodies it in the form of Charles Trevelyan, a knight in shining armour rising from the waves.

To create an Arthurian fabric was not unprecedented. Fabrics depicting the Arthurian legend have had a long history stemming from medieval times, and they figured frequently in the nineteenth-century revival of handmade artefacts. Not only was the legend a lifelong concern for William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones from their early creations for Red House to the magnificent Holy Grail series at Stanmore Hall, but there was also a major series of Arthurian tapestries designed by Herbert Bone for the Royal Windsor Tapestry Manufactory, and the subject matter was commonly found among aesthetic circles promoted by the *Studio* magazine.

Unlike previous Arthurian fabrics, however, this design presented a very specific location: Mount's Bay against the background of St Michael's Mount crowned by a medieval fortress. And what makes Lady Molly's work additionally distinctive is that her design gradually evolved during the twenty-three years she devoted to it, continually incorporating fresh public and private incidents that could not have been predicted within the original plan. These include major national and political developments, with which her husband was closely concerned, for it is his career that is celebrated in this portrayal of the legendary hero, Sir Trevelyan. Along the bottom border, for example, her starting date of this section is marked in black: 'May 1917 at War'. The eventual armistice is recorded by placing a line of gold on one of the waves from which the horse rises in the Trevelyan shield. The Peace Treaty of 1919 is symbolized by the white mark on the red collar of the horse – had the treaty been more satisfactory (in the Trevelyan opinion) a gold mark would

⁶ In my description of Molly's embroidery I draw heavily upon detailed information sent me by the National Trust.

have been chosen. Sir Charles's appointment as president of the Board of Education in Ramsay MacDonald's cabinet is denoted by the initials JRM, worked with the 1924 date, on the red scroll around the tree. His resignation in 1931 is shown by a band in his green and white election colours being worked on the tip of the scroll bearing Lady Trevelyan's name. The red flag on the small boat records the 1931 election, when Sir Charles retired from Parliament. Besides these allusions to public affairs, Molly also incorporated data about her family life. For example, the birth of Marjorie, her fourth child, is shown by the child's initials within the knight's helmet, and the birth of Geoffrey, her youngest child, by the initials GWT on the front fold of the saddle-cloth. Later the birth in 1931 of her first grandchild, Susan Dower, is marked on one of the small fish in the bottom border.

Molly began with the top border on 6 July 1910 by using a small frame held on the knee, and used the same technique much later with the bottom border. An attractive watercolour portrait by Phyllis Bicknell shows Molly at work in 1921, when the main body of the work was being done on a large standing frame.⁷ In order to achieve a grand scale for her embroidery she made it in three separate sections, which were later sewn together and then embroidered over the joins. The two borders were also sewn on. With the knight's face she faced serious difficulty, so she asked her aunt, Florence Johnson, a skilled embroideress, to work the face for her. This was done on a separate frame then sewn down on top of the original face, the helmet rim forming the join between the two pieces. Another problem lay in obtaining uniform wools throughout the process. Sadly the English wools that had to be used for the left-hand lower border during the First World War were inferior to the French wools used elsewhere in the embroidery and have faded.

A family memoir gives us a glimpse of the slow progress of the embroidery's completion. One of Molly's daughters, Katharine, recalls that every day as she came down before breakfast, her mother would already be sitting at her great piece of needlework, and would then allow Katharine 'to pull the needle through from underneath, as she stabbed it from above'.⁸ For a later relative, Laura Trevelyan, it seemed that as Charles's political career stalled, he withdrew from his wife, who 'sought comfort in her thirty-year task' and 'was unable to hide her unhappiness from Charles'.⁹ From one point of view, of course, he obtained remarkable success – serving as a Liberal MP from 1899 to 1918, then as a

⁷ The portrait is reproduced in R. Trevelyan, *Wallington, Northumberland*, rev. edn (London, 2004), p. 12.

⁸ K. Trevelyan, *Fool in Love* (London, 1962), p. 27.

⁹ Trevelyan, *A Very British Family*, p. 119.

Labour MP from 1922 to 1931, and twice enjoying cabinet office at the Board of Education – and yet he nonetheless appears to have failed to fulfil his own highest ambitions, and suffered accordingly.

In Charles's own description of Wallington, he highlights the armorial symbolism of the embroidery, its function in uniting the needlework traditions of the Blacketts and the Bells.¹⁰ Curiously, he does not mention the Arthurian aspect of the work, and although he is said to have spent evenings in his closing years reading aloud 'the Border Ballads he loved so well' while Molly stitched at other embroideries, he may have disliked the fabled elements of the family story.¹¹ Unwittingly perhaps the embroidery panel reveals much of his nature. As the only person represented, he cuts rather a cold and very lonely figure. In actuality, despite his many admirably philanthropic qualities, he seems to have been quite a difficult person to get on with, while his combination of pacifist aspirations with an admiration for Stalin's 1930s Russia suggests great naivety, if not dangerous folly. Did he feel increasingly uncomfortable at being continually confronted by this embroidered image of his faded youthful aspirations? And is there perhaps a lurking irony in that this knight has turned his back on the great household he came from, for in real life Charles was preoccupied with severing future generations of his family from the ownership of Wallington. Though ensuring that he would live there himself until his death, the property would at that point be handed over to the National Trust.

Robert Calverley Trevelyan (1872–1951)

Robert Calverley Trevelyan was a younger brother of Sir Charles, and thus brother-in-law to Molly. In contrast to both his father and Charles he never sought public office, choosing instead to devote his life to creative and scholarly pursuits. His copious publications, however, never received widespread praise or even attention, and as a younger son he did not enjoy great affluence until the death of his mother in 1928. However, he enjoyed a comfortable, gentlemanly, enlightened existence at his Surrey home, The Shiffolds, and retained a wide circle of accomplished friends.

In comparison with Molly's close involvement with the family's Arthurian origins, Robert seems to have displayed no interest in the matter. In childhood his early reading was closely shaped by his father,

¹⁰ Sir C. Trevelyan, *Wallington: Its History and Treasures*, 8th edn (privately printed, 1953), p. 27.

¹¹ A. J. A. Morris, *C. P. Trevelyan, 1870–1958: Portrait of a Radical* (Belfast, 1977), p. 193.

George Otto Trevelyan, who nurtured in his son a deep love for Greek and Latin literature, a cultural orientation that would never change throughout a long writing career.¹² Consummately bookish, he is appropriately depicted as a reader in the portrait by Aubrey Waterfield that now hangs at Wallington. After his death, close friends reassembled his considerable and choice library of over five thousand volumes and presented it to Birkbeck College, London, as a memorial. The catalogue of this allows us to glimpse what he read and when he bought it.¹³ His range is impressive. He read in Greek, Latin, French, German, Spanish, Dutch (his wife was from Holland) and Italian. He not only read, but he translated copiously, from Greek, Latin and Italian. He owned books about the Middle East, India and the Far East. He also read widely in art, philosophy, religion, psychology, natural history and astronomy. His main concern was, of course, with creative literature, particularly poetry, and his main topics were drawn from the classical world. Like Matthew Arnold his unadorned style avoids colourful imagery, takes its subject from the mythical past and is intensely concerned with the age-old human problems: freedom, violence, justice, kindness and death.

Among his many works he twice attempted a quasi-Arthurian drama. Here we might also note that from around 1890 to 1910 he was reading quite widely among medieval writers. Besides the to-be-expected Malory, Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Mabinogion* and Marie de France, he acquired many of Jessie M. Weston's translations of more uncommon Arthurian romances. And significantly he was, like his Trevelyan and Bell forebears and contemporaries, deeply interested in German culture. He was, for example, well read in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, for he owned not only Weston's translation (1894) but also Alphonse Grandmont's French translation (1892) and, perhaps most importantly, Karl Bartsch's three-volume edition of *Parzival* and *Titurel* in the original German (1875–77).¹⁴

Though a Grail theme frequently provided the subject for late nineteenth-century English literature, its handling at that time stemmed very largely from English sources, namely Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, especially as filtered through Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad' and *Idylls of the King*. All such works focused on the angelically immaculate and superhumanly strong Galahad as hero, and this residual tradition was not easily altered by new fire from France or Germany. When therefore Robert chose instead to follow Wolfram and adopt the humanly imperfect Parsifal as titular hero

¹² See R. C. Trevelyan, *Windfalls: Notes and Essays*, 2nd edn (London, 1948), p. 143.

¹³ The librarian of Birkbeck kindly loaned me a copy of the catalogue.

¹⁴ Alphonse Grandmont appears in a group photograph taken in Sicily in 1899 (Trinity College, Cambridge, Robert Calverley Trevelyan Collection MS JOT/41).

of a blank-verse drama it was a considerable departure from precedent. *The Birth of Parsival* (1905), however, endows Wolfram's story with a new plot which, omitting Amfortas as a Grail lord, allows Titulere to pass on this sacred office directly to his son, Frimutel.¹⁵ But the ungrateful Frimutel has a brief affair with Herzeloide, the daughter of a friendly king he has just rescued from pagan attack, and by this indulgence he breaks his father's strict taboo on having sex unsanctioned by the Grail. Consequently the Grail – which is all-knowing – sends Kundry to curse him with dethronement, madness and woe. In response Frimutel rejects his Grail kingship, insanely kills Herzeloide's sleeping brothers and runs wild into the forest. He is, of course, unaware that the now pregnant Herzeloide has fled the court in order to protect her baby, Parsival, by raising him secretly. But when the infant is discovered, she has to confess her motherhood to save the child from death. As punishment she and her son are banished to the forest. Here she meets the mentally recovered Frimutel, and the plot hinges on a debate between the parents, that is, between head (the rationalist Frimutel who refuses to accept priestly authority) and heart (Herzeloide's love and compassion). Since stalemate ensues, Herzeloide departs with Kundry to bring up Parsival in peace and holiness until he can fitly succeed to the Grail lordship. The drama closes inconclusively with Frimutel vowing defiance. Thus not only has Robert declined to treat his family's own Arthurian legend, but he has chosen a hero who emphatically rejects the constraints of family tradition.

A very favourable review in the *Athenaeum*, probably written by Gordon Bottomley, a close friend, seems to have inside information about Robert's plan to write a trilogy, in the second part of which Frimutel would be killed by his son, and in the third of which Parsival would reign as king and return to the sacred East with the Grail.¹⁶ Throughout this first play Robert shows little interest in, or sympathy with, formal religion, plays down the Grail lords' theological differences with paganism and condemns the 'superstition' of cruel Christian priests who wish to burn the Parsival babe as 'a witch's brat'. The author's own allegedly 'disputatious' character,¹⁷ however, proves an advantage occasionally by prodding his characters into either a searching ideological debate (Parsival and Herzeloide on reason versus guilt) or a display of forensic virtuosity (Herzeloide's pleading with the priest for her son's life). Indeed the play's dedication to B.A.W.R., that is, Bertrand Russell, probably signals Robert's radical and rationalist intent. Russell, a close friend at

¹⁵ R. C. Trevelyan, *The Birth of Parsival* (London, 1905).

¹⁶ *Athenaeum*, 20 May 1905, 620.

¹⁷ E. Samuel, *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), p. 319.

Cambridge and beyond, had recently published *A Free Man's Worship* (1903), and though he, like Robert, would have been appalled by the violence committed by Frimutel, he would have enthusiastically endorsed Robert's advocacy of nature, maternal love, freedom, reason and truth in their struggle against such concepts as monarchy, priestcraft, family tradition and restraint on sexual intercourse.

The play was quite widely reviewed – Robert employed an agency to send him press cuttings, and twenty-two of these are preserved in the Trinity College archives. Only two are hostile: the *Liverpool Courier*, for whom the 'Grail myth ranks among the most lugubrious of the mediaeval monkish nightmares of early Christendom', and *The Times*, which thought the work 'vague' and 'flat'. Most others found the intention admirable and the verse well crafted, but agreed with *The Times* that Robert's play was fundamentally undramatic and lacked human warmth. He was later urged by Bottomley to write a sequel, but did not do so.¹⁸ Yet the story was evidently much in his mind, and in 1912 he published 'Paraphrased from Wolfram von Eschenbach', which is certainly full of human warmth, and his choice of a particularly tender passage from his source probably reflects a personal tragedy of his own: his acute grief over the early death of his first child, Paul, in 1909, and his understandable concern for his second child, Julian, born in the following year.¹⁹ The translation runs to fifty-eight unrhymed lines, usually of fifteen syllables, about the pregnant Herzeloide's lament for her dead husband, Gahmuret. This is the scene where she uncovers her breast and presses out a few drops of milk:

Though baptism I had ne'er received, yet well instead thereof
Wouldst thou have served me. Now for teardrops shalt thou
serve me oft,
Whene'er in public or in secret I lament my lord. (ll. 26–8)

And after the birth of Parsival, when she sighs that his masculine gender will necessarily involve him in warfare, this maternal breast imagery returns:

Oft to herself these pious words she said:
'The most sublime of queens once gave her breast to him who
endured
A cruel death, nailed to the cross to prove his love for man.' (ll.
51–3)

¹⁸ Letter from GB to RCT, 17 August 1908 in Gordon Bottomley Papers BL Add MS 88957.

¹⁹ R. C. Trevelyan, 'Paraphrased from Wolfram von Eschenbach', in *The Bride of Dionysus: A Music Drama, and Other Poems* (London, 1912), pp. 68–9.

As for continuing with his planned *Parsival* trilogy, by 1908 Robert had come to acknowledge its faults and to conclude that he was ‘more at home in Greek subjects than mediaeval’.²⁰ Bottomley’s intriguing solution was to continue the *Parsival* along the lines of a Stuart masque, an idea curiously in chime with Robert’s poetic development at that moment for he had just completed a libretto for a proposed opera by Donald Tovey.²¹ In due course an unlikely association between a classical subject and musical drama would determine the development of a very new *Parsival* that Robert would soon create. The catalyst was the imminent expiry of the copyright of Richard Wagner’s *Parsifal*.

The influence of Wagnerian opera in the late nineteenth century was immense in both depth and breadth, and among Wagnerian operas *Parsifal* was a special case. His final work in this genre, its performance was largely limited to Bayreuth for thirty years. This restriction, and the opera’s consequent difficulty of access, seems to have enhanced its particular appeal. Being officially classed as a *sacred festival* music drama meant that the journey to see its performance in Bayreuth from 1882 onwards was frequently described as a ‘pilgrimage’. Among the numerous ‘pilgrims’ who made the expensive trip was a very large contingent from England and America, and these left many detailed accounts of their experience.²² Besides making a deep impression on its Bayreuth audience, the wider influence of Wagnerian opera on contemporary and later musicians was profound, for he set the agenda for a generation. In England there was a steady flow of publications about his *Parsifal* – texts, scores, translations, retellings, illustrated forms, children’s versions, commentaries and so on, but this flow ran in a very confined channel and did not spill over appreciably into new creative art and literature, as it had done on the Continent.

Nonetheless the expiry of the *Parsifal* copyright on 31 December 1913 swiftly prompted European opera houses to mount their own productions, and the early New Year saw it produced in Berlin, Paris, Barcelona, Brussels, Rome, Milan and Bologna, while London followed suit on 2 February 1914. Amid this furore of reverent anticipation, Robert determined to write an irreverent celebration in the form of *The New Parsifal*.²³ To do so he rejected the stately slow-moving style he had used in *The Birth*

²⁰ Letter from RCT to Thomas Sturge Moore, 7 August 1908. Senate House Library, London, Thomas Sturge Moore Papers MS 978.

²¹ Letter from RCT to GB, 31 August 1908. BL Add MS 88957.

²² Among the visitors was Gertrude Bell, who was shown the stage one morning by the Grand Duke of Hesse, allowed to sit in the orchestra and ring the *Parsifal* bells. Letter to her mother, 16 August 1899, in *The Letters of Gertrude Bell*, ed. Lady Bell (1927), I, p. 16.

²³ R. C. Trevelyan, *The New Parsifal: An Operatic Fable* (London, 1914).

of *Parsival* and continued instead with a racier Aristophanic mode that he had recently used in *Sisyphus: An Operatic Fable* (1908). Antedating Robert's irreverent treatment of Wagner there had been a few other sceptical precursors among English poets. The decadent Arthur Symons, for example, had lamented the pure fool's rejection of the sweet joys of sexual encounters with women, and a comparably erotic ethic is reflected in verse by two non-decadents: Francis Money Coutts's 'Bayreuth: An Antithesis' and Arthur Bell's 'Frimutelle and the Grail'.²⁴ But Robert's work is far longer and more complex. In many ways he wrote as an insider, as he owned Jessie Weston's edition of *The Legends of the Wagner Dramas* and a translation of Nietzsche's *The Case of Wagner*, and although his library catalogue does not list anything by Wagner himself, he liked the music, attended the London performance of *Parsifal*²⁵ and had previously gone to Bayreuth – I do not know when because a key letter is undated, but he owned an 1895 copy of Baedeker's *Southern Germany*, which suggests that he made a trip there shortly after.²⁶ What is more he dedicated the work to his close friend Bernard Berenson, a lifelong admirer of Wagnerian opera. Thus I suspect that for both Berenson and Robert the satire was good-natured.

Undoubtedly Wagner would not have seen the funny side himself. In a brightly inventive induction Robert imagines his play being examined by the state censors. In a hurry to stop for lunch they are anxious to give the play a cursory approval – it's only 'the merest literary twaddle'²⁷ – but are delayed by the Ghost of Wagner, who wants it banned as 'it's one long blasphemous outrage / On the holiness of the Wagnerian Grail, and the sacred gospel of Bayreuth'.²⁸ But Wagner is too easily offended by the polite ignorance of the censors and departs in a huff, leaving them to sanction the play and move on to the more serious business of lunch.

In the action that follows Robert drastically reshapes the conventional Grail story. His knights have tired of their 'chaste and holy religion' and have allowed Klingsor to become Lord of the Grail.²⁹ Thus empowered

²⁴ A. Symons, 'Parsifal', in *Images of Good and Evil* (London, 1899); F. B. Money Coutts, 'Bayreuth: An Antithesis', in *Musa Verticordia* (London, 1905); and A. F. Bell, 'Frimutelle of the Grail', in *The Dear Land of the Heart* (Hove, 1913).

²⁵ A letter from GB to RCT on 25 February 1914 (BL Add MS 88957) indicates that both poets thought Ernest Newman's recent hostile criticism of Wagner 'offensive and vulgar'.

²⁶ Undated letter from Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson to RGT. Trinity College, Cambridge, MS RCT 2:50.

²⁷ Trevelyan, *The New Parsifal*, p. 2.

²⁸ Trevelyan, *The New Parsifal*, p. 4.

²⁹ Trevelyan, *The New Parsifal*, p. 4.

he decides to remove it from Montsalvat and sail off with the knights and Flower Maidens to the island of Circe. There he replaces the customary dove with the Arabian phoenix to de-Christianize the Grail, turning it into a Dionysiac emblem with Circe as its high priestess. Suddenly there arrives the new Parsifal, in the guise of an entirely family-free, modern philistine aviator named Percival Smith. Like his prototype, this Percival is a sportsman and so promptly shoots the phoenix. Immediately attracted to him, Circe begs for an elopement but his plane is just a single-seater so he has to leave her behind.

A year later he returns as promised, inspired to do so by the enchanted drink Circe had given him. This has made him love Beauty, and so he has come back to get the Grail by whatever means. He brings along in his steam-yacht a comparative mythologist (perhaps based on Sir James Frazer), a literary journalist and a futurist poet. To eliminate these threats to his lordship, Klingsor sets them an aesthetic test. They have to distinguish between a true and a false Grail by judging the value of five pieces of verse by well-known poets (they are based on Longfellow, Tennyson, Kipling, Yeats and Masfield). Only Percival passes this test by disliking them all, but Klingsor then cheats by seizing the true Grail and trying to fly up to an aesthetic heaven. However, his levitation is curtailed by the phoenix (now happily recovered), who condemns Klingsor's sterile view of culture. Percival, as quiz champion, is then offered the Grail but modestly refuses it. Egoistical Wagner, though, steals the Grail himself, and disappears with Circe into a subterranean Venusberg while Klingsor ascends into a sterilized heaven. Percival then sails back home with the disillusioned knights and Flower Maidens, and his scholarly companions who still believe their false Grails are true. However, Percival has made the right choice in rejecting the unwholesome Brahminism of religious and aesthetic Graildom. And we are left to reflect that the common-or-garden workaday world is far preferable.

What should we conclude? I think Robert's sympathies are mixed, but his judgements spoken through the mouth of the phoenix are astute. On one hand Venusberg shelters many of Robert's cultural heroes – Orpheus, Dionysus and Aeschylus – and he would surely have approved of a helienized resort free of sacerdotalism. Again Klingsor's cultural dedication is applauded, but he is finally reproved for the unwholesome Brahminism of his aesthetic: 'Better hadst thou lived out more tolerably thy span / In charity with thy still submerged, less cultured brother man'.³⁰ So, paradoxically, Percival, the blithe candid philistine, is the real hero, celebrated by the phoenix as one of

³⁰ Trevelyan, *The New Parsifal*, p. 68.

those free
 Unconscious souls, in whom, yea though they know it not,
 My spirit dwells and moves and works, unheeded or forgot,
 A secret kindling power, a serene influence,
 Quickening to loveliness and life the pastures of each sense.³¹

Despite its setting in mythical time the play is determinedly modern in application, burlesquing a range of contemporary intellectual opinions and boldly adopting an ultra-modern hero, the aviator. Robert interestingly reveals a command of the appropriate technical terms: Percival flies a Blériot monoplane and knows the advantage of having a Gnome engine. In choosing an aviator for a quasi-Arthurian role, Robert may have been influenced by current newspaper reports of the daring exploits of the pilot Lancelot Gibbs and even of the German airship class named *Parseval*. What is, however, surprising is that Robert represents his aviator purely as a sportsman, for the potential military application of aircraft was by that date very widely canvassed in newspapers, magazines, boys' adventure stories by Herbert Strang and the pioneering science fiction of H. G. Wells. As Robert, like his brother Charles, was strongly opposed to any form of militarism, not to recognize this new threat reveals a remarkable myopia on his part.

Contemporary critical reception of the work was understandably polarized. Of the ten reviews preserved in the Trinity College archives, three were extraordinarily hostile, accusing the author of 'bad language, rude remarks', 'a senseless lack of reverence' and of being a philistine himself, while four highly appreciated the satire. *The Times*, however, judiciously noted the paradox that Robert's comedy lacked a suitable audience, for those who understood the allusions would probably dislike them. The play has never, to my knowledge, been performed. Moreover, not only did Robert lack an audience, he lacked a publisher, for he had to print his book privately.

Undeterred, he returned to further aspects of the subject and the genre two years later in *The Pterodamozels*, a sequel but with a very different purpose and tone.³² Percival Smith and his aeroplane make their reappearance but the Grail is not named, and the whole can be viewed as a quasi-Arthurian work only at a very distant allegorical remove. Essentially this is an anti-war tract dedicated to Robert's elder brother, Charles, who had resigned his cabinet post in protest at Britain's declaration of war in 1914. Robert supported his brother's stance, and though too old to be enlisted himself, he would later shelter the young pacifist poet John Rodker when

³¹ Trevelyan, *The New Parsifal*, p. 69.

³² R. C. Trevelyan, *The Pterodamozels: An Operatic Fable* (London, [1916]).

he tried to evade arrest in 1917. The plot of this new operatic fable presents a Prometheus so sickened by mankind's folly in fighting the Great War that he resolves to replace human beings with a new creation: pterodamozels, virginal flying women. When one of these beings is, unfortunately, wounded by a British cruiser she is rescued – in a remarkable reversal of the Parsifal story – by the aviator Percival Smith, who has fled the war along with two other conscientious objectors. Prometheus's misanthropic plan is, however, confounded by the pterodamozels' wish to marry men, and by Percival's argument that man is not essentially corrupt – only his leaders are. Accordingly, when the pterodamozels kidnap the senior politicians, financiers and editors, international peace breaks out and a worldwide federation of free republics is instituted with Percival as president. At this news Prometheus sinks to Venusberg, causing an earthly flood, and, despite the pterodamozels' wish to let the former leaders drown, the humanitarian Percival insists on their rescue. Such a dramatically limp finale, alas, fatally weakens the play's credibility, and although Robert insists that humour is a crucial human virtue the verse lacks that very quality. It marked the end of Robert's engagement with the Arthurian world. Thereafter he would revert to classical subjects, which were probably much closer to his deeper interests.

Sir George Trevelyan (1906–96)

On the death of Sir Charles in 1958, George as his eldest son succeeded to the baronetcy, but not to the house and estate.³³ By that time, however, George's career path had already diverged markedly from that of previous heirs to Wallington. The novel pattern had been set in infancy when Charles sent him not to Harrow, where he, his father and two brothers had been pupils, but to Sidcot, a Quaker boarding school in Somerset, the ostensible reason being that as Charles was opposed to Britain's involvement in the Great War he wished George to receive a pacifist education. Family orthodoxy was re-established, however, at university level because George proceeded, like his forebears, to Trinity College, Cambridge. Thereafter heterodoxy took over. George immersed himself in the Alexander technique (a new method of head–neck–back integration), trained as a master craftsman in furniture design and taught craft, literature and history at Gordonstoun (a new public school with a pro-

³³ Information about George's life has been drawn from obituaries in the *Daily Telegraph*, 9 February 1996 and *The Times*, 17 February 1996; F. Farrer, *Sir George Trevelyan and the New Spiritual Awakening* (Edinburgh, 2002); and P. Dawkins, 'Sir George Trevelyan 1906–1996' in the online archive www.sirgeorgetrevelyan.org.uk.

nounced emphasis on outdoor pursuits). Moreover, unlike many previous Trevelyan heirs, George had not sought a wealthy bride. Consequently it is possible that by this stage Charles had formed the opinion that his son was too unreliable to prove a safe custodian of Wallington, and decided that the house and its collections, which Charles was determined to preserve, would be more secure under the aegis of the National Trust. A preliminary process to effect this change was set in motion by Charles in the late 1930s. George, nevertheless, was reportedly saddened by his loss of the ancestral home. Fortunately he found a substitute of sorts because in 1947 he was appointed warden of the newly formed Shropshire Adult College, which was housed in Attingham Park, a mansion that had recently been donated to the National Trust by a penurious aristocrat. Although the state rooms were reserved for tours by visitors, the college was permitted to occupy some seventy rooms on the other three floors, and herein George resided for the next twenty-four years. Thereafter he was tirelessly active in setting up trusts and foundations that would spread his message to the world.

Unlike Robert, George was, according to his biographer, Frances Farrer, deeply influenced by the family story of Sir Trevillian, as its link with the court of King Arthur 'was greatly to his taste'.³⁴ Indeed Farrer even allows herself to be carried away into a description of Sir Trevillian as 'a Knight of the legendary Holy Grail'. Moreover this family-bred fantasy was strongly underpinned by the Arthurian theories promoted by Rudolf Steiner. To these George was indirectly inducted in 1942 by his sister Kitty's suggestion that he attend a lecture on Steiner given by a former Steinerian pupil, Dr Walter Johannes Stein. The occasion seems to have been a significant turning point in George's mental development, with profound repercussions. In a quasi-Pauline moment of conversion he rejected his inherited agnostic rationalist background in favour of Steiner's Anthroposophical movement, which asserted that humans and animals have, in addition to their physical body, three non-material bodies: the etheric, the astral and the ego. George would later pursue this holistic approach into ever-broadening concerns with education, medicine, agriculture, conservation, architecture and international affairs, not excluding the more exotic areas of reincarnation, lost Atlantis, ley lines and healing crystals.

Among Steiner's key areas of interest was the Arthurian legend, and the influence of his very idiosyncratic interpretation of this is evident in George Trevelyan's own treatment of the subject. Steiner expounded his general theory in *Cosmic Christianity and the Impulse of Michael* (1924),

³⁴ Farrer, *Sir George Trevelyan*, pp. 60–1.

a work that was quoted approvingly by Edward Matchett in *Twelve Seats at the Round Table* (1976), a book of which Trevelyan was co-author.³⁵ According to Steiner, seven archangels individually administer the cosmic intelligence in cycles of about 300 to 400 years each. Of these angels, Michael represents the Sun, and an earlier cycle of his had included the heroes Alexander and Arthur. Our own understanding of Arthur's real significance is to be gained, however, not from historical documents but through *vision*, by standing on the actual site of Tintagel Castle (Steiner has no doubt this was the 'citadel' where King Arthur's Round Table stood) and gazing over the sea 'with the eyes of the spirit': 'There, in a comparatively short time, one can perceive a wonderful interplay between the light and the air, but also between the elemental spirits living in earth and air...'³⁶ What is more, if we look back 'with occult sight',³⁷ we can see that those who lived on 'Arthur's Mount' had chosen this spot because of the natural forces displayed there, and that the knights received through their 'etheric bodies' the Christ impulse streaming away from the Sun. To take hold of these spirit forces required a special group of men, that is, Arthur as the Sun and twelve knightly zodiacal companions each possessing a particular cosmic influence. Hence they drew strength from the Sun to empower them on 'mighty expeditions' through Europe to 'battle with the wild demonic powers of old'. This Sun-spirit was the Christ as he was in pre-Christian times. Steiner defines this novel concept as 'pagan Christianity' or 'Arthur Christianity', and it was from Britain that such influences were diffused throughout the world.

Counterbalancing this 'stream' (the term favoured by Steiner) is the Grail stream bearing the real Christ, for at Golgotha Christ died to the Sun and came down to earth. Consequently this complementary stream largely derives not from Britain and the North but from the South, that is, Palestine, via Greece, Italy and Spain, and it flows not through nature (wind and wave) but through blood (the hearts of men). A meeting of the two streams (of the pre-Christian Christ and the real Christ) occurred in what Steiner considers a key year, AD 869 (Steiner supplies a diagram), when the Ecumenical Council formally adopted the view that man consisted of body and soul – a dichotomy – rather than the trichotomy of body, soul and *spirit*. Our own age, however, which began around 1870, is once again a Michael cycle, and thus another period when spiritual culture is spread widely abroad. Once more we are confronted, Steiner

³⁵ R. Steiner, *Cosmic Christianity and the Impulse of Michael*, trans. D. S. Osmond, 3rd edn (London, 1953); Sir G. Trevelyan and E. Matchett, *Twelve Seats at the Round Table* (St Helier, Jersey, 1976).

³⁶ Steiner, *Cosmic Christianity*, p. 37.

³⁷ Steiner, *Cosmic Christianity*, p. 76.

believes, with the problem of how Michael himself, not a human being like Parsifal, can find the path leading from his Arthurian knights, who strive to ensure his cosmic sovereignty, to the Grail knights who seek to lead him into the hearts of men.

Such very unorthodox theories would continue to shape George Trevelyan's outlook. In *Twelve Seats of the Round Table*, for instance, the authors' preface develops the suggestion that Arthur's Round Table might have been 'a place of learning and initiation' at which the knights experienced 'twelve conditions of being', each of which gave to them 'different strengths and sensitivities'.³⁸ A series of appropriate meditations and self-development exercises is supplied in the book's succeeding chapters. Leo, we are told, is ruled by the Sun, and 'advanced souls' under this sign are 'noble and courageous', 'the peaks of true chivalry'; displaying 'the warrior urge to save humanity', they are 'a royal Arthurian type'.³⁹ The book is illustrated with reproductions of the large zodiac mosaic which had recently been created by Attingham students inspired by George's concepts. In similar developments of these theories, George lectured at Attingham on 'The Quest of the Grail' and ran a course on 'the Arthurian stream of ancient wisdom' and its links with eastern Sufism. The inspiration here would have stemmed from Wolfram's *Parzival*, with George stressing the links between the western Christian Parsifal and his eastern pagan half-brother Fierfiz. When he later set up the Wrekin Trust he taught a course that connected Parsifal both with the Arthurian knights and the archangel Michael. A pilgrimage followed to St Michael's Mount, relating this site to both the cosmic Christ and the coming of Arthur: 'All is one community' was George's keyword.⁴⁰

One senses that the family legend was also being re-enacted here, suffusing his life with a chivalric aura. The charismatic George, we learn, 'held himself like a knight'.⁴¹ His Attingham secretary, Ruth Nesfield-Cookson, called her memoir 'a tribute to a Knight from his Squire'.⁴² Another recollection, by Caroline Myss, a fellow teacher in the Findhorn Community, describes the day she was driven by George to 'where Camelot had been'.⁴³ She remembered what he was wearing on that occasion, and though she 'can't quite recall where this was' she knew that the experience was 'a rare moment'. On New Year's Eve at Attingham in

³⁸ Trevelyan and Matchett, *Twelve Seats*, p. 7.

³⁹ Trevelyan and Matchett, *Twelve Seats*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ Farrer, *Sir George Trevelyan*, pp. 136, 139 and 143.

⁴¹ Farrer, *Sir George Trevelyan*, p. 115.

⁴² R. Nesfield-Cookson, 'Memories of Sir George Trevelyan – a tribute to a Knight from his Squire (1960–1975)', in the online archive www.sirgeorgetrevelyan.org.uk.

⁴³ Farrer, *Sir George Trevelyan*, p. 198.

1970 George and his class dined as King Arthur, his queen and court – George, of course, taking the role of King Arthur.⁴⁴ But George's familial awareness was also profoundly transmuted by the Goethean concept of *wahlverwandschaften*, later endorsed by Stein, namely that one's family is created not necessarily from one's blood relations but from the rest of the world. The knight from Lyonesse was thus to be universalized into a broader community as George steadily devoted his life to wider philanthropic ends.

Conclusion

Of the three family members discussed above, Robert has, despite publishing so many books – often through Leonard and Virginia Woolf's prestigious Hogarth Press – and being a friend of such Bloomsbury Group luminaries as Bertrand Russell, Roger Fry, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson and E. M. Forster, probably left the weakest trace. Certainly his friendships rather than his close family gave rise to many verse epistles which number among his best work, yet in biographies of his acquaintance he is presented merely as a shadowy figure in the background, his own literary efforts separate from the main concerns of his circle. He suffers therefore from belonging to no major movement. Intellectually he had close friends in two other poets, Gordon Bottomley and Thomas Sturge Moore, with whom he conducted a voluminous correspondence, and shared a desire to reject much of High Victorian taste while remaining distinct from the Modernism of Pound and Eliot. Such an approach has effectively debarred Robert from critical or commercial attention since his death. Unhappily, too, the London Blitz destroyed the publisher's stock of his *Collected Poems*, and this collection has never been reprinted. Probably the sole book of his that sold widely, and is still often found second-hand, is *From the Chinese*, an anthology he made of translations by other writers, which appeared at the end of the Second World War when pro-Chinese sympathies were running high in the west.⁴⁵ Sadly even the one visible memorial to him – his library of some five thousand volumes, which was donated by his friends to Birkbeck College as a specially named memorial collection – no longer exists as a discrete entity. However, perhaps there are a few signs that the critical ice has recently started to melt: an abridged form of Tovey's *The Bride of Dionysus*, for which Robert wrote the libretto, has now become

⁴⁴ Farrer, *Sir George Trevelyan*, p. 104.

⁴⁵ *From the Chinese*, ed. R. C. Trevelyan (Oxford, 1945).

available on CD,⁴⁶ and even his Arthurian works have received some attention by being summarized by Alan Lupack in *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend*, while Donald E. Stanford has provided a sympathetic scholarly account of his entire *oeuvre* in *A Critical Study of the Works of Four British Writers*.⁴⁷

If Robert's studious life was largely confined to his domestic household and circle of close friends, George's career was determinedly different. Though he wrote on a broad range of topics, and contributed forewords to books by his associates, he was not – nor did he claim to be – an original thinker. But he moved in much wider social circles than Robert, where he excelled as an orator and an inspirer. Through his teaching, his organization of conferences and the setting up of trusts he was essentially a missionary with the zeal to effect change in virtually every aspect of the world. He has thus established quite a reputation as an important guru of the modern New Age movement, and public knowledge of his views persists through a substantial website, while the Wrekin Trust he established still functions on a minor scale. His comparative celebrity slips, of course, under the radar of Academe, which very rarely takes note of New Age approaches. Nonetheless, while such approaches need not compel our belief, they should be addressed, because much of the modern interest in the Arthurian legends springs from such sources and these show no signs of decline. For example, Walter Stein's *The Ninth Century: World History in the Light of the Holy Grail* has recently been reprinted with an introduction by John Matthews, which claims it to be 'one of the most valuable and original works on the Grail yet to appear in any language'.⁴⁸

Molly's role was markedly different from that of her son or brother-in-law, who both pursued their tangential ways, in being more firmly associated with the life of her relatives, both through her continual support for her husband's political career and the creation of her great embroidery as a family icon. It may seem paradoxical that the rationalist Trevelyan family should have fostered such a fanciful legend – and indeed Molly's other brother-in-law, the historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, had scant interest or belief in either the historical or the mythical King Arthur⁴⁹

⁴⁶ D. Tovey, *Excerpts from 'The Bride of Abydos'*, Belfast Philharmonic Choir and Ulster Orchestra, conducted by George Vass. Dutton Digital. CDLX 7241 (2009).

⁴⁷ *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend*, ed. A. Lupack (Oxford, 2005); and D. E. Stanford, *A Critical Study of the Works of Four British Writers: Margaret Louisa Woods, Mary Coleridge, Sir Henry Newbolt and R. C. Trevelyan*, ed. R. W. Crump (Lewiston, NY, and Lampeter, 2006).

⁴⁸ W. Stein, *The Ninth Century: World History in the Light of the Holy Grail*, trans. I. Groves, rev. J. M. Wood, with an introduction by J. Matthews (London, 2009 [1988]).

⁴⁹ See G. M. Trevelyan, *History of England*, new edn (London, 1937 [1926]), pp. 33 and 36–7.

– but as Wallington now belongs to the National Trust and is open to the public, the embroidery, a dominant feature in one of the main rooms, is seen by thousands of visitors every year and is reproduced in colour in the guidebook. Paradoxically, too, Molly’s creativity, which was, in comparison with that of Robert and George, quite self-effacing in motive, has resulted in her achievement becoming probably the most durable, for the embroidery’s reputation is spreading, and its image appropriately appears in the modern guidebook to another great house, St Michael’s Mount in Cornwall, which is now also in the care of the National Trust.⁵⁰ Moreover, as images of National Trust artefacts have recently become available online, global access to the embroidery is assured. Whether or not there really was a strong family tradition of an Arthurian provenance for Sir Trevelyan before Molly stitched him into the story, her artefact has succeeded in giving the tale continuing strength. Promoted too by George’s biographer and the associated website, the tale is now commonly found among internet accounts of the Trevelyan family while in more traditional print forms a new American genealogical study of the worldwide Trevillian family claims to begin with ‘Sir Trevillian, a knight in King Arthur’s court’;⁵¹ and the material has been developed by Craig Weatherhill into his trilogy of fantasy novels set in Lyonesse.⁵² The family’s complex involvement with the Matter of Britain has taken strong root.

⁵⁰ J. St Aubyn, Lord St Levan, *St. Michael’s Mount: The Illustrated Historical Guide* (London, 2004), p. 5. This image had not appeared in the 1978 edition.

⁵¹ R. Trevillian, *The Rearview Mirror* (Bloomington, IN, 2001).

⁵² C. Weatherhill, *The Lyonesse Stone/Seat of Storms/The Tinnors’ Way* (Padstow, 1991, 1995 and 2010).