THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Faculty of Arts

The Legends of Glastonbury: 'Eternal truths' and 'historical facts'

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Master of Philosophy

December 2013

This thesis has been completed as a requirement for a postgraduate
research degree of the University of Winchester

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ABSTRACT FOR THESIS

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The town of Glastonbury in Somerset has, from the medieval period onwards, accumulated a large number of myths and legends around itself. Historical and archaeological accounts of Glastonbury's past have generally dismissed the historicity of these legends. However, there is a significant body of alternative texts which draw upon the same documentary and material evidence, but reach very different conclusions. The purpose of this thesis is to undertake a detailed examination and comparison of these academic and alternative literary traditions, specifically in relation to the history of Glastonbury, in order to investigate what their conflicting views reveal about their respective natures, and the relationship between them. It also considers what these conflicts suggest about the relationship between the writers of the alternative texts and mainstream society as a whole, and why it is at Glastonbury in particular that such a phenomenon has arisen.

The approach adopted involves comparing and contrasting the purposes and methods of the academic and alternative traditions, together with the evidence that they draw upon and the conclusions that they reach. It takes into account both the arguments explicitly put forward within the texts themselves, and also the intertextual effect of other existing literature, which influences not only how authors develop the arguments within their texts, but also how readers interpret them. As such, this thesis provides a detailed case study which supplements existing research on the relationship between academic and alternative history and archaeology in general, and the alternative movement at Glastonbury in particular.

The conclusions of this thesis are that alternative accounts of Glastonbury's past act as a form of literary heterotopia, which sets itself up in opposition to the accounts provided by mainstream academic scholarship. However, it is also argued that, rather than being regarded as simple opposites, academic and alternative texts should instead be viewed as lying along a spectrum, with the position of each individual text depending upon the purposes and methods of its author.

As such, they reflect the alternative movement's desire to challenge the mainstream, seeking to both imitate and overthrow it at the same time. It is further suggested that it is the ambiguous nature of Glastonbury's historical and archaeological record which has provided a fertile environment in which both the legends, and these conflicting interpretations of the past, have been able to flourish.

These conclusions are consistent with the findings of previous researchers, but this thesis provides a detailed analysis of textual evidence specific to Glastonbury's history in support of their more general conclusions. It also offers a number of suggestions regarding some of the underlying social forces and processes which have given rise to the alternative movement at Glastonbury.

Contents

List of illustrations

Declaration, Copyright Statement and Intellectual Property Rights

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

I confirm that this thesis is entirely my own work.

Referencing system adopted, and the use of footnotes

The Harvard system for referencing has been adopted in this thesis, as set out in Pears and Shields (2008), subject to minor adaptations as required. However, a number of footnotes have also been included within the thesis where it is considered helpful to justify, amplify or illustrate the point being made, but where inclusion of such text within the main thesis would interrupt the main flow of the argument.

Dating convention

Unless otherwise specified, all dates within this thesis are stated using the Common Era (CE) dating convention.

Acknowledgements

Like most of history, the Glastonbury legends reveal as much about ourselves as about the past.
(Wood, 1999, p.69)

Chapter 1: Introduction, definitions and research questions

Extracts from two texts concerning the history of Glastonbury

> *Sceptics have tried hard to discredit the story of Arthur being buried at Glastonbury Abbey by pointing to the monks' need to attract funds for rebuilding. Yet the story stands up to scrutiny and Dr Raleigh Radford who excavated the site between 1962 and 63, checked that an important person of the right period was indeed buried there and there was no real reason why the monks should have invented such a fraud, all their details being accurate as far as he could tell.*
> (Howard-Gordon, 2010, p.90)

> *It does not take an Hercule Poirot to conclude that the "discovery" of King Arthur's burial by medieval monks was an exceedingly clever and timely forgery, designed to kill two birds with one stone: raise desperately needed funds for the monastery and ingratiate themselves with the dynasty of King Henry II, by producing evidence for his political ambitions and crediting him with a hand in the discovery.*
> (James and Thorpe, 1999, p.538)

One core of evidence, but two different conclusions: an apparent dichotomy

The two texts from which the quotations above were taken have a number of common features. In the first place, they shared a common purpose: the author was presenting an account of the past, drawing upon various kinds of evidence available to them at the time they were writing. More specifically, in the sections of their books from which these quotations were taken, both authors were offering an assessment of the credibility of claims made in the 12th century by the monks of Glastonbury Abbey that they had discovered the remains of the legendary King Arthur in the Abbey graveyard. Furthermore, in addition to this common purpose, the two authors were also drawing upon substantially the same core of historical and archaeological evidence.[1] However, there are also a number of features which set the two quotations apart. The first and most obvious difference is that the conclusions the authors reached were completely at odds with each other. Furthermore, it is also of significance that the two texts were of very different genres: the first was written by a Glastonbury bookshop owner and publisher, as a brief guide to the 'myths and legends, history, beliefs and personal experiences' to be found at Glastonbury (Howard-Gordon, 2010, p.3); the second was written by two academics, as part of a substantial volume which considered a number of 'ancient mysteries' from around the world, with the objective of reaching 'a reasoned conclusion from the material' available to them (James and Thorpe, 1999, p. xvi).

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[1]The relevant evidence is discussed in detail within chapter 5.

What we therefore have are two different texts, which happened to be of rather different kinds, which were working with the same material and (ostensibly) the same purpose, but reached conclusions which were not only significantly different, but diametrically opposed.

This situation is not, in itself, particularly surprising. It is not at all uncommon for people who undertake research into the human past to reach differing conclusions, regardless of whether or not they use the accepted academic methods of their day. However, even a cursory review of the literature regarding Glastonbury suggests that the example noted above is not an isolated one. Frederick Bligh Bond, an ecclesiastical architect, claimed that discoveries made during his excavations at Glastonbury Abbey were due to information that he had received from medieval monks via the medium of automatic writing (Bond, 1918). But Professor Rahtz, summarising the archaeological excavations undertaken at the Abbey during the 20th century, argued that it was theories such as these that marred the rest of Bond's work, which was otherwise relatively meticulous by the standards of his day (Rahtz, 2003, p.87).[2] And not long after Bond undertook his work at Glastonbury Abbbey, Katherine Maltwood, a professional artist cum lady of leisure, proposed that a giant zodiac 20 miles across had been laid out around Glastonbury in prehistoric times (Maltwood, 1929). However, Ian Burrow, after examining the relevant evidence with the eye of a professional archaeologist, asserted that there was no basis whatever for any of Maltwood's claims (Burrow, 1983).

What these isolated examples suggest is that there may be a recurring pattern at work here. That there may be a whole succession of authors who have proposed alternative accounts of Glastonbury's past to those which are offered by academics. Furthermore, if upon investigation the work of these alternative authors were found to contain a coherent and recognisable set of common characteristics, it might even be considered to constitute a competing tradition, setting itself up in opposition to the academic tradition, and offering an alternative vision of the past. What could such a situation reveal about the authors of such texts, both academic and alternative? What could it reveal about the traditions that they work within? What, indeed, *are* the characteristics of quality academic, as opposed to non-academic, texts? And if it is indeed found that the alternative texts do constitute a coherent tradition, then upon what basis, and drawing upon what evidence, can either type of text claim to contain any insight into Glastonbury's past? Furthermore, how do the authors of such texts, and indeed the two traditions as a whole, deal with such apparently conflicting conclusions? To what extent do they recognise and negotiate with one another's positions, and what kind of discourse takes place between them?

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[2] Chapter 2 contains further details of the theories of Maltwood and Bond, while chapters 5, 6 and 7 include an examination of the ways in which these theories have in turn been justified, by the authors and their supporters, and also challenged, by their critics.

The argument of this thesis is that there is indeed a recognisable body of texts, with a number of common characteristics, which offer alternative accounts of Glastonbury's past in direct opposition to the accounts offered by the academics, in spite of being based upon substantially the same core of evidence. Furthermore, it is argued that the relationship between these two traditions offers a number of insights, not just regarding the alternative tradition, but also regarding the academic one. However, before setting out the detailed evidence which supports this conclusion, and the methods by which this evidence was assembled, it is first necessary to articulate the framework within which this investigation has been undertaken, and to define more precisely the questions that it aims to address.

Thesis structure and investigative framework

The purpose of this thesis is not to debate the question of 'what is history?' in the manner of Carr (1986) or Evans (1997); nor of archaeology, for that matter. Neither is its purpose to establish a theoretical position on how texts create meaning in general, whether drawing upon the structuralist stance of Barthes (1977), the post-structuralist position of White (1987), or the postmodern perspectives offered by writers such as Deleuze and Guattari (1996) or Foucault (1966), even though such authors raise important issues which cannot be simply ignored. Its purpose is solely to undertake an analysis of two differing sets of accounts of the history of Glastonbury. However, this purpose is deceptively simple, and provokes a number of complex and inter-related questions. From what standpoint, for example, and by what means should academic work on historiography be incorporated into the analysis? How are texts on Glastonbury to be selected, and assigned to one or other of these two traditions, until the traditions themselves have been adequately defined (or, in the case of the alternative tradition, even demonstrated to exist)? And how are such definitions to be formulated, so that detailed analysis can then be undertaken, if it is only through this very analysis that the characteristics of each tradition are to be revealed, and such definitions then justified (or refuted)?

The approach that has been adopted to address these issues is as follows. For the purposes of the present chapter, only provisional definitions of each tradition are offered. The purpose of the thesis is then articulated in terms of these provisional definitions, and it is presupposed that it is indeed meaningful to talk in terms of an 'alternative tradition'. In the second chapter an overview of the historical and material evidence regarding the earliest phases of the human settlement at Glastonbury is set out, followed by a summary of the five legends which are the focus of this thesis. In the third chapter, a review is undertaken of existing research, both in order to examine the findings of other investigations on these or related questions, but also to set out the broader context within which this thesis takes its place (leaving aside for the

moment detailed analysis of historical and archaeological work on Glastonbury itself, which is instead discussed separately in the chapters which follow). In the fourth chapter the general methodology adopted throughout the thesis for the analysis and comparison of individual texts is set out, together with an overview of the epistemologies of academic history and archaeology. This methodology is then used for the detailed examination of both academic and alternative texts on Glastonbury which is undertaken within chapters 5 to 7. The summary conclusions from this analysis, which are set out in chapter 8, then pull together the themes which have emerged from this work. They also include 'retrospective' re-assessments not only of the suitability of the definitions provisionally applied at the start of this process, but also of the other assumptions upon which the analysis has been undertaken (including the presumption that such a thing as an 'alternative tradition' exists at all).

This thesis, although presented in a 'linear' fashion, is therefore inherently iterative in nature. Provisional definitions are used in the early chapters to select and categorise the various texts on Glastonbury which are subjected to detailed analysis. However, these definitions have to a certain extent partly been shaped by the very act of reading these texts. These provisional definitions therefore inevitably involve a degree of 'iterative hindsight'. Towards the end of the thesis, it is therefore necessary to revisit these definitions, in order to reconfirm their validity. Similarly, it is provisionally assumed at the start of the thesis that it is indeed meaningful to talk in terms of an 'alternative tradition'. But this assumption also draws to some extent upon the experience of reading 'alternative' texts, and must therefore likewise be revisited, and more fully discussed, once the detailed textual analysis has been presented.

Provisional definitions

In order, then, to embark upon this investigation of the legends of Glastonbury, the following provisional definitions have been used.

Texts are considered to be Glastonbury History Texts if they are textual accounts of Glastonbury's past which were based primarily upon documentary evidence, and were either written by, or written in the style of, academic historians. Similarly, Glastonbury Archaeology Texts are textual accounts of Glastonbury's past which were based primarily upon material evidence, and were either written by, or in the style of, academic archaeologists.

For these purposes, 'the style of' such academic texts is taken to be those characteristics revealed by analysis of the historical and archaeological traditions noted within chapter 4 and chapters 5 to 7. This style displays evidence of critical use of documentary or material evidence (which is normally capable of independent verification). It shows an awareness of historical and academic context, and also complies with accepted academic conventions regarding the

legitimate purposes of such texts, the methods that may be used, the evidence that may be drawn upon and the kind of conclusions that can be reached in undertaking an academic analysis of past events.

By way of contrast with these two broadly academic kinds of writing, texts are considered to be Alternative Glastonbury Texts if they are textual accounts of Glastonbury's past which were based primarily upon documentary or material evidence, but were not written by, or in the style of, either academic historians or archaeologists.[3]

Finally, for the purposes of this thesis a 'legend' is defined as a story regarding the past which is popularly regarded as having at least some historical validity, but whose authenticity is consistently challenged by most academic historians or archaeologists.[4] The particular legends which form the focus of this thesis are discussed in further detail in chapter 2 below.

Research questions

Drawing upon the preceding sections, the main research question for this thesis is as follows:

> The accounts of a number of Glastonbury legends within Alternative Glastonbury Texts appear to conflict with the accounts offered within Glastonbury Historical and Archaeological Texts, in spite of claiming to draw upon a common core of historical facts; what do these conflicts reveal about the nature and function of these two textual traditions, and the relationship between them?

In addition, the thesis also considers the supplementary questions:

> What wider issues do the conflicts between Glastonbury Alternative Texts and Glastonbury Historical / Archaeological texts suggest regarding the relationship between the writers of Alternative Glastonbury Texts and mainstream society?[5]

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[3] Although these definitions appear to imply that it is always be possible to draw a clear distinction between Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Glastonbury Historical / Archaeological Texts, it is important not to overlook the possibility that any individual text may in fact combine some of the characteristics of both traditions. However, as is seen in chapters 5 to 7, the vast majority of the texts examined fall quite naturally into either one category or the other, and so for all practical purposes the use of such classifications are not problematic.

[4] This definition is based upon the following from the OED: 'An unauthentic or non-historical story, esp. one handed down by tradition from early times and popularly regarded as historical'.

Source:"legend, n.". OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/107040?rskey=6BCXGB&result=1 (accessed March 18, 2013).

[5] Chapter 3 includes discussion of the meaning and use of the term 'mainstream'. Following Prince and Riches (2000, pp. 26-28), within this thesis this term will be used to denote the urban industrial middle class, that is, the mainstream as perceived by adherents of the New Age movement.

What features of the landscape, history and social background of Glastonbury have made it a location around which so many legends have accumulated, and where there is so much evidence of conflicting interpretations of the past?

In pursuing this investigation, two questions in particular are used to drive the analysis:

1. What are the distinguishing features which characterise Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Glastonbury Historical / Archaeological Texts?

and

2. Upon what basis do their authors claim to write with any authority upon their chosen topics?

This thesis focuses upon aspects of Glastonbury's past where there is textual evidence of academic and alternative authors drawing upon a common core of evidence and yet reaching conflicting conclusions, and where there was also sufficient dialogue between the two traditions for a meaningful comparison of their methods and positions to be undertaken. The first matter which needs to be addressed, therefore, is to provide an overview of the legends of Glastonbury and the circumstances under which they arose. It can then be determined which of these legends contain evidence of conflicting positions, and of dialogue between the two traditions, and are therefore suitable for more detailed analysis.

Chapter 2: The Glastonbury Legends

Origins

There are few early documents relating to Glastonbury. Furthermore, their reliability as historical sources is in some cases open to challenge, not least because purportedly early texts generally only survive in the form of later copies, within which the original text (if, indeed, one ever existed) is vulnerable to any errors, emendations or additions that may have been made by the copyist. Nevertheless, limited as they are, these early documents are the foundation upon which both the history and the legends of Glastonbury have been built.

Documentary sources for Glastonbury (or at least, those which historians consider likely to be authentic) begin with the charters of the Abbey concerning its landholdings, some of which Rahtz (2003, p.38) considered to date from the late 7th century. There is also the Winchester manuscript of the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, the earliest part of which Swanton (2000, p.xxi) argued must predate 891 CE, but this contains only a brief and simple statement that the Saxon king Ine built (or perhaps rebuilt) the minster at Glastonbury in 688 CE. More expansively, but also more enigmatically, the anonymous biographer 'B' of St Dunstan, writing in the late 10th century, asserted that 'the first neophytes of the catholic law' had discovered at Glastonbury 'an ancient church, built by no human skill' (Rahtz, 2003, p.61), a building which subsequently became known as the 'Vetusta Ecclesia', or 'the old church'. The exact meaning of this passage is unclear, but it has given rise to much later speculation in some quarters, even including the possibility that the Vetusta Ecclesia had been erected by Christ himself.

47 Spelman's version of the Old Church as a building of upright wooden planks (as described by William of Malmesbury) with a straw thatch

Figure 1: The Vetusta Ecclesia, as envisaged by Henry Spelman in the mid-seventeenth century, as a building of upright wooden planks (as described by William of Malmesbury) with a straw thatch (Rahtz, 2003, p.94).

Further references to Glastonbury also arise in the medieval lives of various other saints; documents which, while they may not rank as 'reliable history', nevertheless still 'provide a date before which certain matters were being discussed' (Rahtz, 2003, p.38). Particularly notable amongst these is the Life of Gildas written by Caradoc of Llancarfan about 1140 CE. This text recounts how at some point during the 6th century St Gildas interceded in a dispute between King Arthur and a local Somerset chief named Melwas, who had abducted his wife Guenevere and imprisoned her within his hilltop stronghold (Carley, 1996, pp.94-6), a location which some later authors have argued must have been Glastonbury Tor. There is also the medieval Life of St Collen, a text that only survives in a Welsh redaction of the 16th century, but which Ashe (1957, p.26) argued must derive from a much earlier tradition. This tells the tale of how St Collen was tempted by the spirits of Glastonbury Tor, and was invited to attend a feast in their underground world (Carley, 1996, pp.98-9). Both the Life of Gildas and the Life of St Collen have been much drawn upon by alternative theorists; somewhat less so by historians and archaeologists. In addition, there are also a number of relevant medieval traditions relating to other saints, including St Patrick (Finberg, 1969), St Benignus (Carley, 1996, p.105) and St Bridget (Frances, 2008). However, academics again have been cautious in drawing upon such hagiographical matter for historical purposes. Furthermore, beyond the few details noted above, even these texts offer very little insight into the date and form of the earliest settlements at Glastonbury.

However, writing at about the same time as Caradoc of Llancarfan, an author who has found rather more favour with the academics is William of Malmesbury (c.1090 - c.1143), who about 1129 CE was commissioned by the monks of Glastonbury to write an account 'concerning the antiquity' of their Abbey, that is, an account of its history and earliest origins, based upon the various documents and records then contained within their library. Detailed discussion of this important text (the *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*), and in particular the edition and translation of Scott (1981), is included within chapters 5 to 7. However, it is worth noting here that William's original text does appear to have included a brief, if cautious, reference to the monks' rather ambitious claim that the Abbey had been founded by none other than the earliest apostles to reach Britain, and therefore to be the oldest church in the kingdom (Rahtz, 2003, p.61). Later editions of William's text contain further claims, including the subsequent refounding of the Abbey by St Patrick in the 5th century, but the authenticity of many of these passages has been strongly disputed by historians.

Even by the early 12th century, then, it is clear from the documentary sources that Glastonbury was already a place which not only had an ancient and venerable history, but had

also accumulated a significant body of speculation and legend around it, including claims to a much more ancient, and even mysterious, past.

The extent to which such claims to great antiquity have been verified by examination of the physical remains at Glastonbury is, however, decidedly limited. In the *De Antiquitate* (Scott, 1981, p.85), William had noted the existence in the Abbey graveyard of two 'pyramids' (now surmised to have been the bases of earlier Saxon crosses), bearing inscriptions which, although only partially decipherable, were consistent with a Saxon origin for the foundation, and possibly one as early as the 7th century (Rahtz, 2003, p.43).

19 *Henry Spelman's seventeenth-century reconstruction of the two pyramids; he based this on the earlier written description of William of Malmesbury*
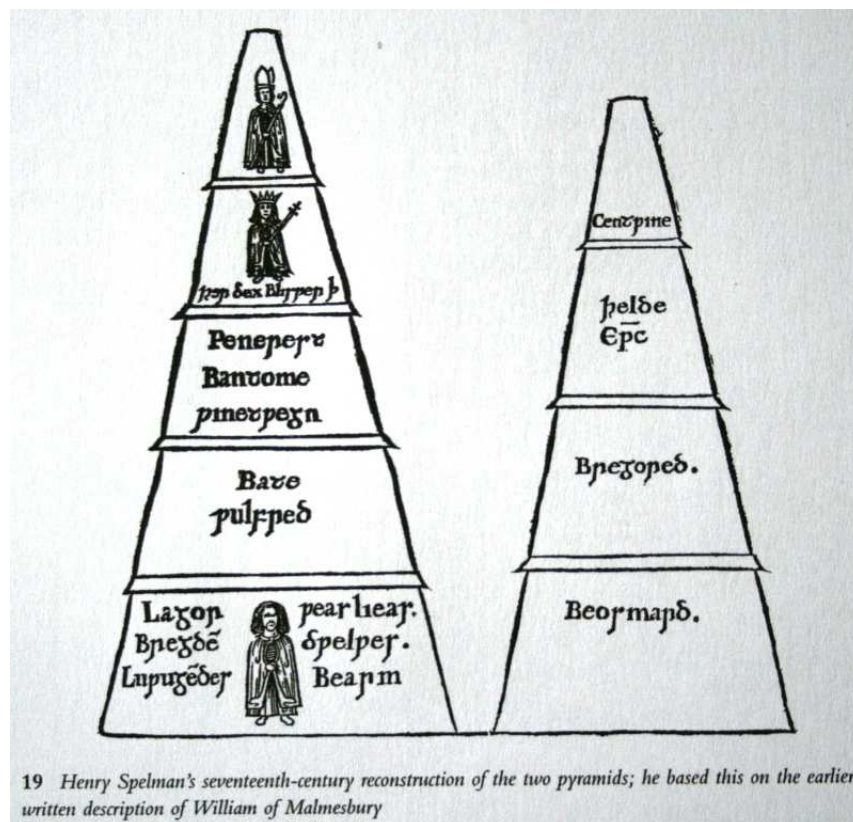
Figure 2: Henry Spelman's mid-seventeenth century reconstruction of the two pyramids, based upon the description given by William of Malmesbury (Rahtz, 2003, p.42).

More recently, systematic excavations at the Abbey site were undertaken first by Bond in 1918, and then by others including Radford (1968 and 1973), whose work is currently being reviewed and re-evaluated by Gilchrist and Green.[6] Bond's claims to have found evidence of a

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[6] Gilchrist and Allum's work has not yet been published. However, summary presentations of their findings have indicated that there is, after all, evidence of occupation and activity on the Abbey site from the mid 5th to 6th centuries, and that burials which Radford had concluded were likely to support

circle of huts around an ancient church founded by Joseph of Arimathea have not, however, generally found favour with later scholars. The earliest feature that Radford could identify with any certainty was a section of ditch, which he attributed to the 7th century, and which he believed to be the 'vallum monasterii', or boundary of the sacred enclosure (Radford, 1981, p.114).
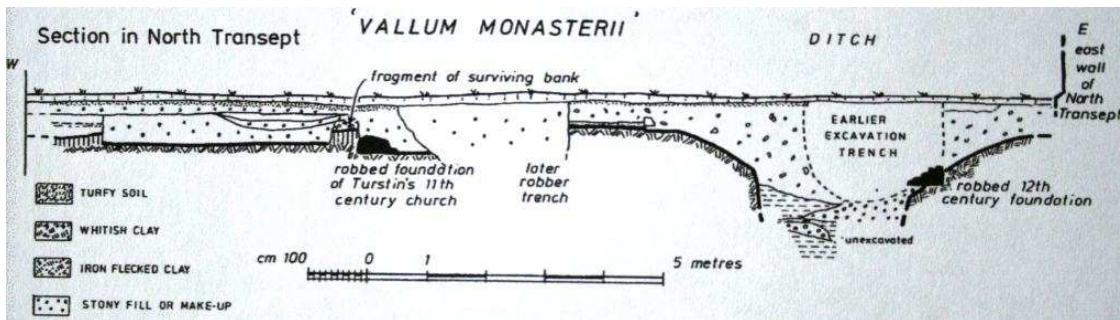
Figure 3: Sections of the enclosing earthwork of the early monastery - the vallum monasterii - as recorded by Radford, featuring a bank with a ditch on its outer side (Rahtz, 2003, p.119, after Radford, 1981).

Meanwhile, slightly further afield, a series of excavations were undertaken by Rahtz in the mid 1960's, with the specific objective of investigating the historical authenticity of some of Glastonbury's earliest legends. The conclusions of this work, however, were almost wholly negative. Upon excavating the remains of St Bridget's chapel just outside the town, the site of an alleged visit by St Bridget in 488 CE, the earliest date he found to be credible for its foundation turned out to be the late 7th century (Rahtz, 1974, pp.34-36). At the site of the Chalice Well, which some enthusiasts considered to be an ancient and sacred location, he could find no evidence for human activity predating the medieval period (Rahtz, 1964, p.145). And although his excavations on top of Glastonbury Tor did reveal the existence of a small monastic foundation (or perhaps a military outpost) of the late 5th to early 6th century, there was no evidence of any of the earlier temples or monuments which his sponsors had hoped that he would find there (Rahtz, 2003, p.71).

Both the historical sources and the archaeological evidence concerning Glastonbury's past are examined in greater detail within the chapters which follow. However, even from the brief summary set out above it is clear that, at least until the very recent work that has now been undertaken by Gilchrist and Green, the physical evidence available was neither sufficient to

the authenticity of Arthur's exhumation are In fact of a much later date (Gilchrist, 2013). In due course, it will be interesting to observe the alternative community's reaction to these new findings.

confirm nor to refute any claims of a settlement at Glastonbury before its Saxon phase, which itself could not be securely dated to any earlier than the 7th century (the one exception being the isolated outpost upon the summit of the Tor). Such a situation inevitably creates a fertile environment within which legends of earlier origins, once rooted, could potentially flourish. In the absence of physical evidence to the contrary, speculations about the age and origin of the Vetusta Ecclesia, for example, could be neither positively confirmed nor absolutely dismissed. The one thing which is reasonably certain, regarding this particular legend at least, is that the physical evidence which might once have been used to decide the case one way or the other now no longer exists. In 1184 CE a catastrophic fire swept through the Abbey, destroying everything that remained of this ancient church above ground level, while subsequent development of the site in the medieval period almost certainly destroyed anything that might once have been preserved in the archaeological layers below (Rahtz, 2003, p.89). However, the fire of 1184 CE was not solely destructive in nature. For it was in the aftermath of this conflagration that the first of the legends examined in this thesis found its genesis.

King Arthur's grave

<u>Summary of the legend, and its historical claims</u>

There are a number of legends that link Glastonbury with King Arthur, but these are only a small subset of the much larger body of stories concerning his alleged life and deeds at locations ranging from nearby Cadbury hill to far-off Tintagel, Wales and even Scotland. However, Glastonbury is the home to one very specific claim: that it was the location of his final resting place. For in or about the year 1189 CE, shortly after the disastrous fire of 1184 CE, a group of monks allegedly undertook excavations in the cemetery of Glastonbury Abbey and unearthed two skeletons which they claimed to be those of King Arthur and his wife Queen Guinevere.

<u>Development of the legend</u>

Documentary sources for this discovery start with Gerald of Wales (c.1145 - c.1123), a prominent cleric and aspiring candidate to the bishopric of Wales, who appears to have either been an eye witness to the exhumation or to have had access to firsthand accounts of it. The two summaries that he provides (Gerald of Wales, c.1193-5, pp.281-4; Gerald of Wales, 1216, pp.284-7) describe not only the removal of the skeletons, the size and evidence of injuries to 'Arthur' and the tress of blond hair belonging to 'Guinevere', but also the simultaneous discovery of a leaden cross which conveniently and explicitly stated that 'hic iacet sepultus inclitus rex arturius in insula avalonia' (Robinson, 1926, p.11).

Cross from King
Arthur's Grave

Figure 4: Cross from Arthur's grave (Robinson, 1926, p.11, as reproduced in Camden's *Britannia* of 1607).

Subsequent medieval and post-medieval writers draw largely upon the account of Gerald for evidence regarding the exhumation itself. They also make use of other earlier sources such as the 9th century *Historia Brittonum* of Nennius, the 5-6th century *De Excidio Britonum* of Gildas and the 10th century *Annales Cambriae*, which provide more general information concerning Arthur's alleged life and deeds, and play a circumstantial role in reconstructions of his purported historical existence. However, these other texts are only indirectly relevant in debating the historicity of the Glastonbury legend. As has already been noted, a more specific link between Arthur and Glastonbury is contained within Caradoc of Llancarfan's *Life of Gildas*,

but the reliability of this essentially hagiographical work as historical evidence has been heavily disputed.

In passing, it is worth noting that William of Malmesbury's work was not only silent regarding any Arthurian connection with Glastonbury, but explicitly stated that ' the sepulchre of Arthur is nowhere known' (Robinson, 1926, p.5). Similarly, Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *History of the Kings of Britain* of 1136 had recently propelled this hitherto obscure Celtic warlord into the popular imagination, was also silent on any Glastonbury connection. But in spite of (or perhaps because of) the aura of mystery that always seems to have surrounded him, popular interest in Arthur continued through to the Victorian period and beyond, influencing aspects of English culture ranging from conceptions of chivalry and personal morality to ideas of national identity. It has been accompanied by a torrent of popular and academic speculation upon Arthur's historicity from a range of authors, with the Glastonbury associations being just one among many contending claims and theories.

With the advent of modern scholarship the legend of Arthur at Glastonbury has come under increasing scrutiny, and criticism. Arguing that fully authenticated texts are the only basis for reliable history, Robinson (1926) demonstrated to his own satisfaction that neither Arthur nor Joseph of Arimathea (see the following section) had any plausible claim to a historical association with Glastonbury, simply because of the lack of such texts. This view was echoed and even more emphatically restated by Treharne, the Professor of History at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (Treharne, 1967). This line of argument was, however, robustly challenged by Ashe (1984), an independent researcher and author whose writing career has been largely devoted to discussing Arthurian matters. Ashe noted that recent work by the archaeologist Raleigh Radford at the Abbey cemetery provided a degree of support for the theory that excavations of some sort had indeed previously been undertaken there in the late 12th century. He also persuaded a number of academics to join him in contributing to Ashe (1968), which included an account of excavations then being undertaken at nearby Cadbury 'Camelot' by Alcock, an archaeologist who was at that point becoming increasingly convinced of Arthur's historical existence (Alcock, 1968; 1971). However, as Hutton (2003) has observed, in the face of renewed evaluation of the relevant texts the tide of academic favour turned steadily more and more against Arthur's historicity as the second half of the 20th century progressed. Against this general backdrop Rahtz (2003) had no hesitation in consigning Arthur's exhumation at Glastonbury to his chapter on 'myth'. Even the determination of James and Thorpe (1999) to give unconventional theories a fair run for their money ended up with them emphatically rejecting this story as a medieval hoax.

So far as Alternative Glastonbury Texts are concerned, it is interesting to note how many passing references have been made to Arthurian claims (all of them drawing upon the account provided by Gerald of Wales, together with the work of Ashe, Radford and Alcock), but also how little these have been a major area of focus. There are brief references to Arthur and his alleged exhumation within Howard-Gordon (1982), Michell (1997) and Mann (2001), which draw upon the same sources as academic works. However, each of these authors emphasises different aspects of the legend, and interprets it in different ways, before proceeding to interweave Arthur's legend with the various other themes which are their main areas of concern.

Joseph of Arimathea

Summary of the legend, and its historical claims

It is claimed that Glastonbury was visited by Joseph of Arimathea, who (according to the Gospels) obtained permission to bury the body of Jesus from Pontius Pilate after the Crucifixion. It is further claimed that Joseph established the first English church at Glastonbury, comprising a single central building surrounded by the cells of each of his twelve disciples.

Development of the legend

Claims regarding Joseph were first made many centuries ago, but there is considerable debate regarding their antiquity and ultimate source. The earliest surviving texts to contain such claims are 13th century copies of William of Malmesbury's 12th century *De Antiquitate* (Scott, 1981). However, it has been argued by academics such as Lagorio (1971) that these references were in fact later additions to William's original text which were made by the monks of Glastonbury at some point during the late 12th or early 13th century, and that they are therefore historically unreliable.[7] In addition to the *De Antiquitate*, there are also various apocrypha relating to the legend of Joseph, including accounts of his life and deeds, but these provide at best only indirect evidence regarding any connection he may have had with Glastonbury. Throughout the medieval period the legend was promoted and embellished in various ways, in particular under the leadership of Richard Beere, who was the Abbot of Glastonbury Abbey from 1493 to 1524 CE. However, such later enhancements all essentially drew and relied upon the 13th century editions of the *De Antiquitate*.

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[7] This conclusion has been drawn from a comparison of surviving 13th century texts of the *De Antiquitate* with another of William's 12th century works, the *De Gestis Regum*, Later editions of *De Gestis Regum* appear to have been revised by William to incorporate the text of the *De Antiquitate*, and have therefore been assumed to reflect the *De Antiquitate* as originally written by William. The absence of any references to Joseph of Arimathea in the *De Gestis Regum* has therefore been taken to imply that there were no such references within William's original *De Antiquitate* either.

The legend of Joseph of Arimathea was re-examined by both Robinson (1926) and Treharne (1967) and, being closely interrelated with that of King Arthur (discussed above), was dismissed on very similar grounds (viz, the lack of authenticated historical documents supporting it). In this they were again challenged by Ashe (1984), who claimed that the existence of authentic oral traditions predating the extant records was not only possible, but plausible, and that this was a factor for which neither of these authors had made even the slightest allowance. Meanwhile, others within the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition such as Howard-Gordon (1982) and Michell (1997) have continued to draw upon the same sources for the legend in a manner which, while acknowledging a degree of uncertainty, implicitly assert its historical status, simply by according greater credence to sources which academics have dismissed as being unreliable.

The discoveries of Frederick Bligh Bond[8]

<u>Summary of the legend, and its historical claims</u>

Early in the 20th century the site of the ruined Abbey of Glastonbury was purchased by the Church of England, which jointly with the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (hereafter 'SANHS') set up a committee to manage the site, and commission a series of archaeological investigations there. From 1908 to 1922 CE the (honorary) director of excavations appointed by this committee was Frederick Bligh Bond, a local architect and acknowledged expert upon rood screens. Bond's initial work was in some respects highly successful, in particular regarding the discovery of the Edgar Chapel at the extreme east end of the Abbey church, but some of his methods were highly unconventional. With one Captain Bartlett (who acted under the pseudonym 'JA'), he made use of automatic writing to communicate - as he believed - with the memories of medieval monks, which resided in what he termed the 'Greater Memory', a kind of disembodied storehouse of knowledge accumulated from all those who had lived and died upon the earth. Bond claimed that the messages received from this source were both detailed and accurate, and in particular provided reliable guidance on the nature and location of the Abbey's archaeological remains, including the original foundation of Joseph of Arimathea. Furthermore, he claimed that some of this evidence had already been used by himself and Captain Bartlett to direct their

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[8] The two previous legends, which derive from the medieval period, clearly qualify as 'legends' within the definition set out in the previous chapter. This 'legend', and the two which follow it, are however of more recent origin. Nevertheless, from the detailed textual analysis which follows it is clear that the claims made by Bond, Maltwood and Russell, as summarised in the following three sections, are not only widely regarded by alternative authors as 'having at least some historical validity', but are also 'consistently challenged by most academic historians or archaeologists'. On this basis, they are also considered to qualify as 'legends', for the purposes of this thesis.

excavations, the results of which had then been seen to confirm the accuracy of the automatic scripts.

FIG. 4.—THE ¡PLAN OF THE ABBEY CHURCH WITH THE EDGAR CHAPEL TO THE EAST (LEFT HAND).
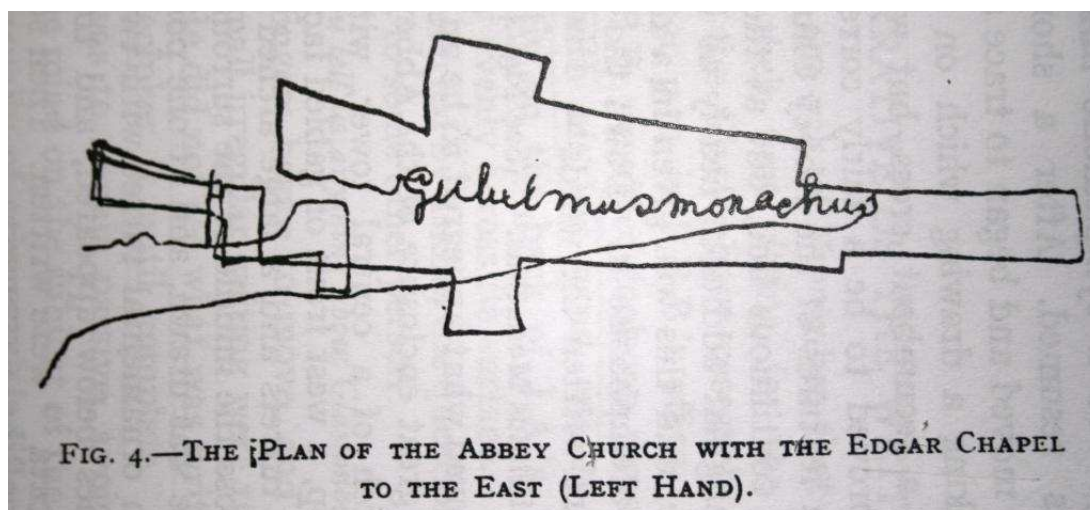
Figure 5: The plan of the Abbey church, including the Edgar chapel at its east end, as obtained by Bond using automatic writing (Bond, 1918, p.34).

Bond's contribution to the legends of Glastonbury turned out to be twofold. Not only did he adopt somewhat unorthodox methods to investigate the historical and legendary past of Glastonbury Abbey - methods which have become the subject of debate and disagreement between academics and alternative authors. He was also (unwittingly) to become something of a legend in his own right, as his work was later drawn upon and further developed by other alternative writers in ways that he could never have anticipated - and of which would probably have greatly disapproved.[9]

Development of the legend

Notwithstanding a number of hints in some of his earlier writing, the first substantial statement regarding the unorthodox nature of Bond's theories and methods was the publication of Bond (1918). This took place after the Edgar chapel had already been excavated, but contained extracts from various automatic scripts which had been generated before these excavations, including predictions regarding the location and dimensions of the chapel. A 'veridical table' comparing these predictions with the evidence provided by subsequent excavations was also included. Bond also provided an account of the process by which the scripts had been generated, together with his own suggestions regarding the mechanism by which automatic writing functioned, and an outline of the 'sacred geometry' which he

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[9] One example would be the development of the concepts of sacred geometry within Michell (1997).

considered to be incorporated within the layout of the Abbey. Finally, the volume also contained a number of scripts predicting the location and dimensions of the Loretto chapel, which was known to have existed, but had not yet been located.

The reaction to Bond (1918) was initially favourable, but rapidly turned critical, especially from ecclesiastical quarters. Whether the cause lay in his unorthodox methods, his other interests (which included Freemasonry, Gematria and psychic phenomena generally), the incessant lobbying of his estranged wife or Dean Robinson's evident preference for his competitor William Caroe, his relationship with both the ecclesiastical authorities and with SANHS became increasingly strained. Subsequent excavation of the Loretto chapel provided at best lukewarm support for the predictions set out in Bond (1918). His intransigent insistence upon the presence of an apse at the east end of the Edgar Chapel, purely because such an extension was required for the layout to confirm with his geometrical theories, did little to help matters - especially as the only other evidence that he could offer to support its existence was flimsy, at best. He was dismissed from his post, and excluded from further involvement in the excavations. His subsequent career included bankruptcy, an editorial role in the American Society for Psychical Research (where it should be noted he was frequently involved in the unmasking of charlatans), and the publication of increasingly esoteric books upon subjects including automatic writing and the use of number symbolism within religious scripture.

Bond's work was largely ignored until John Michell, an old Etonian and leading light of the emerging New Age movement, published *The View Over Atlantis* in 1969. This trail-blazing volume contained a range of new and unorthodox ideas including ley lines as flows of the earth's latent power, links between these ley lines and oriental dragon mythology, and the adaptation and development of Bond's ideas into a Platonic system of numerology encompassing both Glastonbury Abbey and Stonehenge (and, later, the temple at Jerusalem). These concepts were then further developed in Michell (1997), an account of the history of Glastonbury which blended these accounts with Michell's (highly unusual) interpretation of selected extracts from standard historical sources to set out his vision of the history and symbolic significance of Glastonbury, and the role it would soon play in a national and international rebirth of spirituality. Although authors of other Alternative Glastonbury Texts have not shown the same depth of interest in Bond's work, he is nevertheless briefly referenced with respectful caution by Howard-Gordon (1982) and Mann (2001), who draw selectively upon his work, whilst adapting and fitting it into their own world-views.

The academic community has been rather less generous. Although even his harshest critics have willingly acknowledged that both Bond's excavations and the records that he made of them were up to, and in some cases exceeded, the standards of his day (Rahtz 2003), his work

is generally felt to have been increasingly marred by his obsession with 'non-scientific theories' (Rahtz, 2003, p.87), and spiritualism. In a recent biography Hopkinson-Ball (2007) has been at some pains to point out the difference between Bond's theories (or at least his early theories) and spiritualism, but it is a label that has mostly stuck fast - whether among his critics or his friends. There is arguably nothing unscientific per se about his 'Greater Memory' theory, although in the absence of supporting evidence it can remain nothing more than an unproven hypothesis. However, he has been heavily criticised for the fact that both the predictions he obtained via automatic writing and the evidence which he claimed proved their accuracy were only made publicly available retrospectively, so that it was simply not possible for anyone to undertake an independent verification of his claims. Under such circumstances, even the most generous writers have been unable to go any further than to suggest that 'perhaps a great opportunity was lost forever' (James and Thorpe, 1999, p.621).

The Glastonbury Zodiac

Summary of the legend, and its historical claims

It is claimed that features of the landscape around Glastonbury take the form of an enormous circular zodiac ten miles across. Various features of the landscape, including hills, streams, roads and woods, are alleged to depict the zodiacal constellations, although the design also incorporates a number of figures which differ from the traditional zodiac. It is asserted that the Zodiac was first laid out in antiquity, during the Neolithic period.

Development of the legend

The first recorded claim regarding the existence and origin of the Zodiac was made in 1929 by Katherine Maltwood, the wife of a wealthy entrepreneur. Maltwood was also a professional artist in her own right, and it was while producing illustrations for a translation of *The High History of the Holy Grail* from her summer home on the Polden hills that she noticed the patterns of the Zodiac in the landscape around her. Her proposals regarding the existence, nature and antiquity of the Zodiac are set out in Maltwood (1929), and further developed in Maltwood (1944). The arguments within these texts focus upon examination and analysis of the detailed form of the alleged zodiac figures, and are supported by a number of maps and aerial photographs.
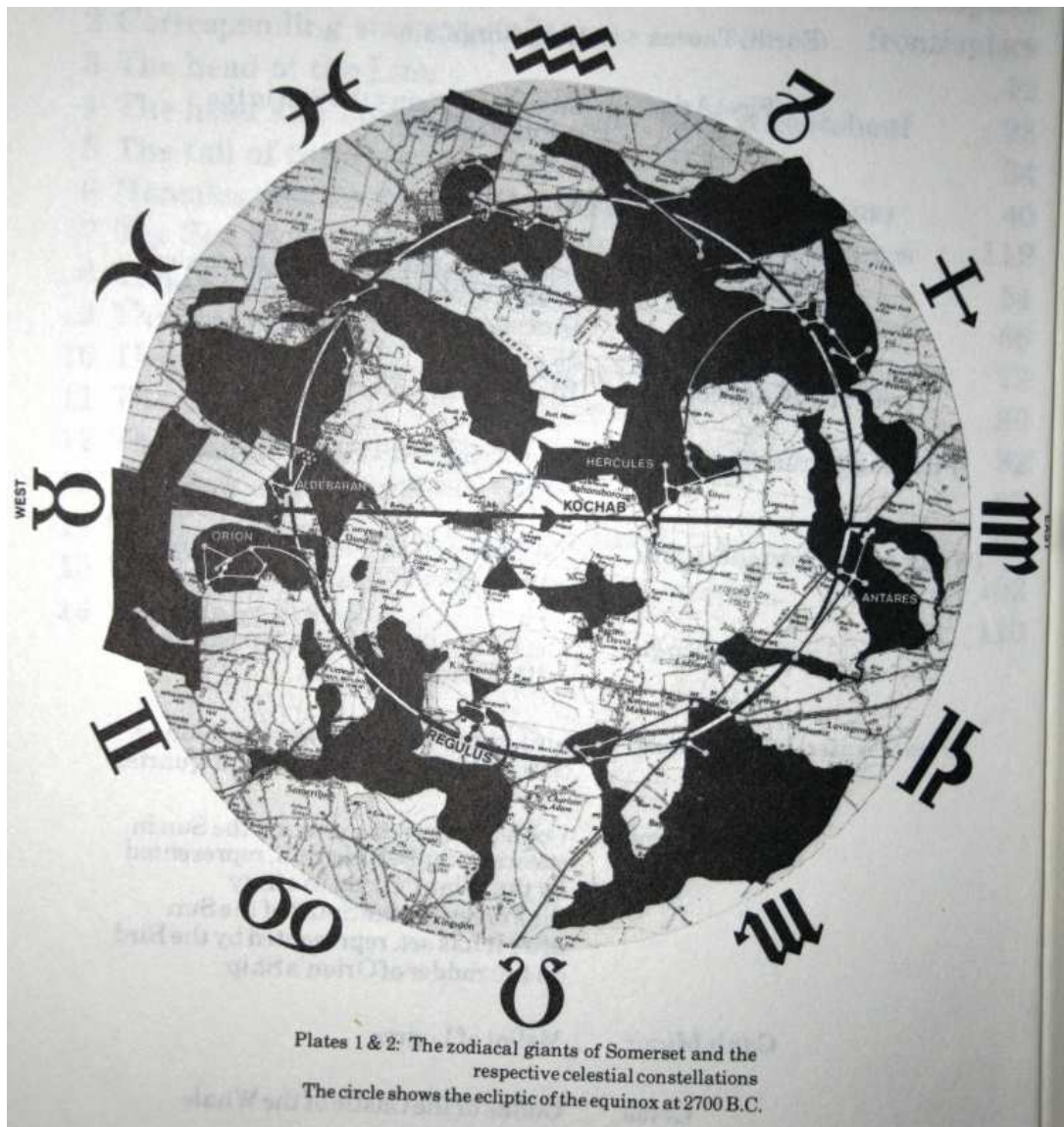
Plates 1 & 2: The zodiacal giants of Somerset and the
respective celestial constellations
The circle shows the ecliptic of the equinox at 2700 B.C.

Figure 6: Maltwood's Zodiac, superimposed upon a map of Somerset (Maltwood, 1929, plates 1&2).

Figure 7: Head of Leo, from Maltwood's Zodiac (Maltwood, 1929, plate 3).

The claims of Maltwood attracted little attention when she first published them, but they were later revived by Caine (1978). Further developing Maltwood's theory using similar methods, Caine proposed a number of changes to Maltwood's design, and also introduced the new hypothesis that the Zodiac had not only been slowly evolving throughout prehistory but was still evolving in the present - and indeed would continue to evolve in the future. One particularly notable feature of Caine (1978) was the introduction by Geoffrey Ashe, in which he

26

expressed not only very limited support for her thesis, but also a personal lack of conviction regarding its claims to literal truth - sentiments which he later repeated in Ashe (1984).

Later Alternative Glastonbury Texts such as Howard-Gordon (1982) and Jones (2007) have continued to drawn upon the work of Maltwood and Caine, but without significant revision to their central arguments. Maltwood's proposals were, however, challenged and rejected by Michell (1997), in favour of his alternative account of the evolution of the Glastonbury landscape.

More sustained criticism of the Zodiac has meanwhile come from the academic community. Burrow (1983) examined a number of Zodiac features and claimed them to be either relatively recent historical features, or completely ephemeral. Burrow's refutation was found to be completely convincing by later academics such as Rahtz (2003) and James and Thorpe (1999), who had no hesitation in dismissing outright either the antiquity or the existence of the Zodiac.

The terraces of Glastonbury Tor

Summary of the legend, and its historical claims

It is claimed that the terraces along the slopes of the Tor were shaped in prehistory into a particular form of unicursal labyrinth (traditionally associated with the labyrinth of Knossos), the path along them leading from the western base of the Tor up towards the summit. It is asserted that this labyrinth, or maze, was constructed during the Neolithic period.

Development of the legend

The existence of the labyrinth was first asserted in the 1960's by a retired businessman named Geoffrey Russell, following an inspiration dream (or perhaps vision - from his writings, it is somewhat unclear). He undertook a number of activities to substantiate this claim, but published only very brief arguments in its support, for example as footnotes to his discussion of the Holy Grail within Russell (1990).

FIG.1. THE CRETAN LABYRINTH [COIN OF KNOSSOS]
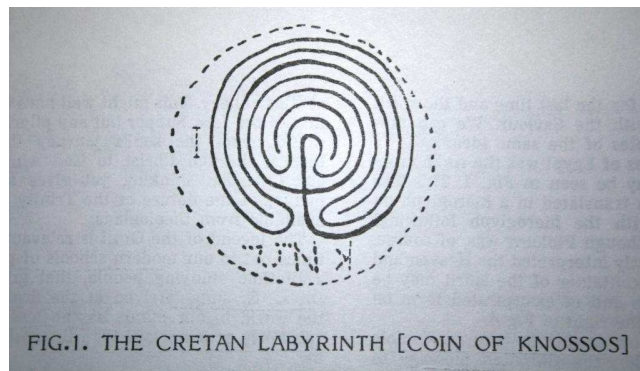
Figure 8: Sketch of a coin from Knossos, depicting the form of the labyrinth (Russell, 1990, p. 29).

The first detailed consideration of the claim was undertaken by Ashe (1982; 1984). Ashe tested the theory firstly by walking the terraces on the ground, and also by considering the extent to which various features of the terraces' construction might support such a claim. He also made a number of speculations regarding possible origins for the design.

Figure 9: The Tor from the south (Ashe, 1982, p.4).
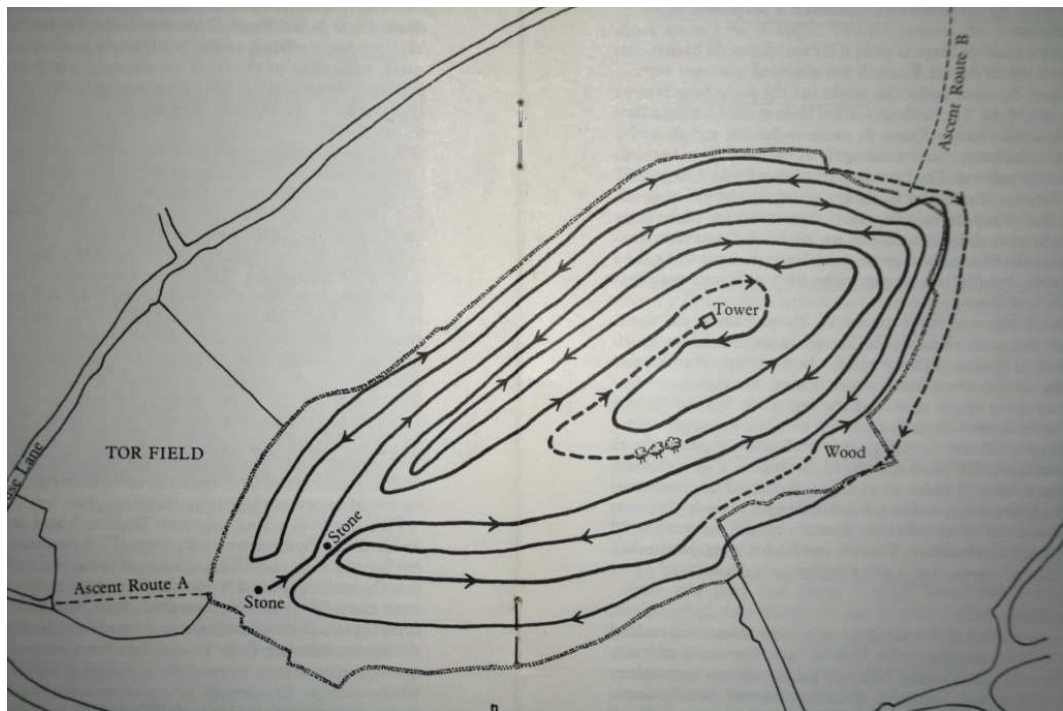
Figure 10: The 'labyrinth' path of the terraces viewed from above (Ashe, 1982, pp.6-7).

Ashe's thesis has been widely drawn upon, without significant revision, by a number of authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts including Howard-Gordon (1982), Michell (1997) and Mann (1993; 2001). Ashe's work is generally stated to be conclusive, a claim which Ashe himself was careful never to make. However, the theory has not been universally accepted: Mann (2004, p.62), for example, although noting the theory, stated that there were 'problems [...] with the design that means the terraces were not originally carved to be a labyrinth.'

Reactions from the academic community have varied. Rahtz (2003, p.67) acknowledged that Russell's proposal was at least 'worth mentioning' on archaeological / historical grounds - a concession which has been widely cited within Alternative Glastonbury Texts, although these generally fail to also note his clearly stated preference for alternative hypotheses. These views were further developed in the light of new evidence within Rahtz (2002) where, although still cautious regarding the labyrinth design, he went somewhat further than his previous work in at least favouring a Neolithic origin for the terraces themselves. Drawing upon the same evidence, James and Thorpe (1999) have been almost persuaded, and allowed the labyrinth theory not only to be credible, but perhaps the single most plausible explanation for the origin of the terraces. On the other hand Hutton (1993; 2003) has been decidedly less convinced. The theory was also discussed at some length within Hollinrake and Hollinrake (2003), as part of their account of the findings from their archaeological watching brief during restoration work on some of the pathways over the Tor. Their conclusions were wholly negative.

29

Other legends

As set out in the previous chapter, the purpose of this thesis is to focus upon areas where there appears to be conflict between accounts of Glastonbury's past generated by academics on the one hand, and alternative theorists on the other. It is upon this basis that the five legends set out above have been selected for detailed analysis, since in each of these cases there are clear indications that such a conflict exists. However, before considering these legends in greater detail, it is also worth noting a number of other legends which, for a variety of reasons, are not considered suitable for more detailed analysis.

Closely related to the legend of Joseph of Arimathea, for example, is the story that, arriving in Britain shortly after the Crucifixion, he brought with him the Holy Grail (or, in some versions, two cruets containing the blood and sweat of Jesus). To the extent that these stories relate to Glastonbury (and are therefore of relevance for this thesis), they may be regarded as subsidiary to the Joseph legend, and have therefore not been separately considered.[10] Similarly, legends relating to a visit by Jesus himself in his youth, in the company of his supposed uncle Joseph of Arimathea, have not been considered in detail. A number of alternative texts have been written which argue in favour of the historicity of such a visit, but such claims invariably depend upon a supposed earlier visit by Joseph, and are therefore again subsidiary to that legend. Similarly, given the lack of historical or archaeological evidence to support a discussion of the origin of the Vetusta Ecclesia, there is in effect no 'foil' against which the speculations of alternative theorists may be tested. Finally, there is also the medieval legend (deriving from William of Malmesbury) that St Bridget stayed at the little chapel on the nearby Isle of Beckery about 488 CE. As was noted within chapter 2, academic work has been done by Rahtz (1974) and Frances (2008) which challenges the authenticity of this legend, but the only Alternative Glastonbury Texts which discuss this legend do so only in very summary form, and generally lack explicit claims regarding its historical authenticity. For this reason, this legend has also not been considered further within this thesis.

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[10] The discussion within Treharne (1967), for example, focused almost entirely upon the historicity of the King Arthur legend, regarding the Joseph legend as a secondary phenomenon to this, and the Holy Grail legends as even less worthy of historical investigation.

Chapter 3: Review of existing literature

Introduction

As set out in chapter 1, this thesis compares the assertions made within academic historical and archaeological texts on Glastonbury with the competing claims of texts written by alternative thinkers. For this reason, detailed analysis of the arguments and evidence specific to Glastonbury within both of these kinds of text is deferred until subsequent chapters. However, it is not only when discussing the history of Glastonbury that academics and alternative thinkers have found themselves offering conflicting interpretations of the past. These wider debates give a broader context within which their disagreements concerning the legends of Glastonbury should be viewed. It is therefore to this broader perspective that we now turn.

Wider academic perspectives on legends, and alternative theorists

When it comes to considering the historical authenticity of 'traditions', or legends, the starting point for many academics has been Hobsbawm (1984),[11] a collection of papers by a number of authors which examined the processes at work in 'the invention of tradition.' The main argument developed within this text, as the title strongly implies, was that traditions claiming to have great antiquity have often been invented as a purely contemporary response to new situations. References they contained to a purported past were considered to be a part of this creative process, and driven by contemporary needs, rather than representing a balanced and dispassionate assessment of what actually happened (Hobsbawm, 1984, pp.1-2). Hobsbawn himself argued, furthermore, that such 'inventions' were much more likely to occur during times of rapid social change, when existing traditions and practices no longer met the needs that people now had (Hobsbawm, 1984, p.4). He asserted that the main purpose of such traditions was to establish or symbolise social group cohesion (Hobsbawm, 1984, p.9), although they could also be used to legitimise institutions or authorities, and inculcate value systems. These summary observations, which were set out in Hobsbawm's initial chapter, were then supported by a number of detailed case studies, including the highland traditions of Scotland, the hunt for the Welsh past in the Romantic period, and the origins of Celtic identity.

As is clear from the summary above, much of Hobsbawm's argument focused upon traditions which were 'invented' prior to the 20th century. While some of the Glastonbury

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[11] Hutton (2003, chapter 1), for example, clearly draws heavily upon Hobsbawm (1984) in his analysis of 'how myths are made'. He explicitly cites Hobsbawm's previous work at the beginning of this chapter (Hutton, 2003, p.10), and the conclusions that he finally reaches regarding the forces at work in fashioning myth (Hutton, 2003, p.21) are then strikingly similar to those set out in Hobsbawm (1984, p.2), regarding traditions.

legends (such as King Arthur's exhumation, and a visit by Joseph of Arimathea) did arise in this period, there are others (such as the Glastonbury Zodiac, or the Tor maze) which are of more recent origin, and for which more recent scholarship is required. However, in reviewing this more recent literature it is important to recognise that the 20th century was not only the period within which these more recent Glastonbury legends emerged, but that, more generally, it also witnessed a proliferation of 'alternative theories'. Such theories were put forward regarding topics as diverse as the esoteric tradition within ancient Egyptian civilisation (Jordan, 2006, pp.119-124) and the mysteries of the Maya (Webster, 2006, pp.130-146), and even included the suggestion that these and other earthly civilisations were to a large extent derived from extra-terrestrial intervention (Von Daniken, 1973). These theories were often set in direct opposition to the more orthodox explanations proposed by archaeologists, and the reactions of the archaeological community to such claims is therefore of great interest and relevance for this thesis, as the texts which they wrote in response offer a broad perspective of the approaches and relative merits of the various competing parties, and also provide a wider context within which the debates regarding Glastonbury may be viewed.

Feder (1999) is a good example of this kind of work. His title, 'Frauds, Myths and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology', rather like Hobsbawm's title, neatly encapsulates both his standpoint and his conclusions.[12] Feder, a college lecturer in the USA, was concerned to discover the widespread belief in the 'controversial claims' of alternative theorists amongst his students. As someone 'committed to the scientific investigation of human antiquity' (Feder, 1999, p.v), he decided to write a text which would help to demonstrate how the past could be known, through science, and within which the scientific methods of archaeology would be contrasted with the flawed methods of 'pseudoscience'. His central assertion was that 'pseudoscientists' were unscrupulous people, motivated by the desire to promote their own pet theory (or simply make a lot of money), rather than to educate (Feder, 1999, p.9). He also suggested that other factors were sometimes at work in the generation of these theories, including nationalistic causes, religious beliefs and the desire for a more 'romantic' past - as well as an author's desire for fame, and their own 'mental instability.' But the net result of such texts, he argued, was that the public was misinformed, not only about prehistory but more generally about the credibility of science as a whole - a state of affairs which he felt had potentially serious consequences (Feder, 1999, pp.9-10; p.13).

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[12] It should, however, be noted that not all academics have necessarily been hostile to alternative theorists. James and Thorpe (1999), for example, offered an intentionally dispassionate assessment of the merits of a number of 'ancient mysteries', ranging from the statues of Easter Island to 'the riddle of the Sphinx'.

Similar to Feder, but drawing upon contributions from a wider range of authors, is the collection of papers within Fagan (2006). The first of these, contributed by Fagan, an Associate Professor at Penn State University, set out the 'respect for context' and 'centrality of data' which he considered to be the cornerstones of the discipline of archaeology (Fagan, 2006, pp.25-6). He contrasted these principles with the methods of 'pseudoarchaeology', which he portrayed as a simplistic, and mainly interpretative, exercise. The 'flawed methods' of pseudoarchaeology, he suggested (Fagan, 2006, pp.30-34), included attitudes such as the adherence to outdated theoretical models, and alternately disparaging the authority of academics (when their views were in conflict with those of the author), or appealing to it (in the few cases where they were not).[13] He then listed no less than eight procedural weaknesses common to the genre, including an obsession with 'mysteries' and esoterica, the use of wide-ranging but superficial data and the selective or distorted presentation of this data. In effect, he argued, the authors of pseudoarchaeology had offered no credible support for the 'huge claims' they made - claims which, in any case, were couched in such vague terms as to render both their objectives and conclusions far from clear (Fagan, 2006, pp.34-42). Like Feder (1999), Fagan was clearly of the opinion that financial gain was likely to be the main motive behind such works. He also acknowledged that 'media attention' and quite simply an enjoyment of the 'liberating and exciting' experience of setting themselves up in opposition to the professionals were also likely to be contributing factors (Fagan, 2006, pp.66-69).

Although wholly dismissive of the claims of 'pseudoarchaeologists' from an academic standpoint, Fagan and his co-authors remained very much aware of the great appeal that their works could hold for a non-academic audience. In the second chapter of the book, Flemming (a marine archaeologist) offered an analysis of this phenomenon, under the heading 'the attraction of non-rational archaeological hypotheses.' In this analysis he further explored both the methods such authors employed in promoting their theories, and the reasons why they were, sometimes, at least partially successful. Critical to the process, he argued, was the fact that authors of pseudoarchaeology always aimed their 'pseudo-texts' at non-experts, rather than seeking to publish them within academic journals, and promoted them in a manner designed to have 'maximum appeal' to their non-expert audience (Flemming, 2006, p.47). This appeal partly relied upon (specious) claims that their methods were both empirical and scientific (Flemming, 2006, p.48), thereby appearing to compete with the academics upon their own territory. It also relied upon 'pyschological' factors, including a natural human affinity for the melodramatic (especially when contrasted with the dryness of academic

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[13] In the few cases where academics have been prepared to support the claims of pseudoarchaeologists, however, Fagan (2006, pp.33-4) noted that they have generally been commenting upon matters which actually lie outside their own field of expertise.

evidence and argument), the perennial allure of 'forbidden spaces', and the appeal of 'simple and humane' explanations of the past (Flemming, 2006, pp.62-4). Also significant, he argued, was a tactic common among pseudoarchaeologists of forcing their readers to make a 'great commitment' early on in the work, their choice being either to accept the author's position, and continue reading, or to reject it, and stop. His assertion was that readers who elected to continue reading by this very action effectively made an emotional commitment to the author's cause, after which their position was similar to that of a religious convert (Flemming, 2006, p.66).

These comments are further borne out by the subsequent chapter of Flemming's work entitled 'memoirs of a true believer.' This contribution was written by Reece, a former devotee of alternative theories who subsequently completely rejected them, became, upon her retirement, a student of archaeology, and also set up a website ('In the Hall of Ma'at') dedicated to a critical examination of pseudoarchaeology and alternative history. Reece wrote with a degree of embarrassment about her former beliefs. After confessing to 'an inclination to be anti-establishment' in her youth (Reece, 2006, p.97), she offered a number of insights into the appeal that such theories have for their adherents. These included the appeal of joining a 'quest' and 'a feeling of being included in a great mystery' (Reece, 2006, p.97), a situation which she summed up as follows:

> It is almost as if a knowledgeable guide has taken you by the hand and invited you to come on a journey through time and visit sacred places, to discover hidden truths, and to contemplate ill-studied wonders that may hold the answers to humanity's greatest questions.
> (Reece, 2006, pp.99-100)

Also included among the list of attractions was the fact that alternative history was so much easier to do (or read about) than the work of academic historians (Reece, 2006, p.103), whose tendency not to publish outside of scientific journals or university presses, she felt, created 'problems of perception' and an 'impression of exclusive clubbishness' (Reece, 2006, p.104). But such shortcomings played only a relatively minor role within her analysis. Far more compelling to a non-academic audience, she argued, was the chance to 'recapture this lost spiritual knowledge of the ancients' and 'live in as peaceful a world as they had', ideas which she felt were 'like balm to a modern soul' (Reece, 2006, p.99).

Spiritual quests and the search for origins

Flemming's observations regarding the religious nature of the 'great commitment' required from readers of pseudoarchaeological texts, taken together with Reece's comments on the 'lost spiritual knowledge' felt to be accessible from them, point us towards another line of scholarship which has examined the claims made within such texts: that of Religious Studies. Particularly relevant for this thesis are studies of the New Age movement - partly due to its close links with Glastonbury (discussed further below), but also because of the wide range of ways in which New Age writers have drawn upon the past in constructing their belief systems, and because of the equally wide range of views which scholars have formed of these belief systems, and of the role which texts (historical or otherwise) play in the construction process.

Heelas (1996), for example, characterising the New Age as a sacralised version of an individualised, humanistic ethic (Heelas, 1996, p.160; p.163), focused much of his analysis upon the factors which induced people to adopt the various alternative practices and beliefs that it offered. Proposing that the movement essentially represented a reactionary expression of their disenchantment with both the 'certainties of modernity' and the 'uncertainties of modernity', and to an emerging 'crisis in modernity', he argued that, in a world where a perceived failure of institutions meant that each individual was 'thrown back upon oneself', the New Age offered them a renewed sense of identity (Heelas, 1996, pp.135-8; pp.141-4). His work therefore offers a number of suggestions regarding the motivation behind New Age beliefs (much of which echoes the observations of Flemming and Reece in the section above) but provides little detailed examination of the historical basis of New Age beliefs, or discussion of the conflict between these beliefs and the work of historians and archaeologists.

Hanegraaff (1996), on the other hand, devoted an entire chapter of his analysis of the New Age movement to its 'visions of the past', in particular regarding the legend of Atlantis (Hanegraaff, 1996, pp.309-311). Noting that New Agers were not generally concerned about whether such accounts were compatible with historical sources (and indeed that they only tended to employ any form of detailed analysis if it happened to support their present line of argument) his overall conclusion was that such stories, although couched in historical terms, were not in fact intended to be taken literally at all (Hanegraaff, 1996, p.305; pp.318-9). Hanegraaff's overall assessment of the New Age movement - that it could be characterised as a secularised reaction against the reductionism implicit within western thought drawing upon pre-existing esoteric traditions - was somewhat at variance with that of Heelas. However, notwithstanding the frequent use of assertions about the past within New Age texts, and the role that they appeared to play in its adherents' 'search for identity', both Hanegraaff and

Heelas were united in according these assertions, and any conflict they might have with historical accounts, a relatively low importance within the overall fabric of New Age thought.

The New Age movement at Glastonbury, and its precursors

It is useful to contrast these views with the works of Bowman, Ivakhiv, and Prince; not just because these researchers have undertaken extensive work specifically upon Glastonbury, and its believers (New Age and otherwise), but also because of the range of different approaches that they have brought to bear, and the range of conclusions that they have reached. It is also important, though, to bear in mind the challenges raised by Sutcliffe (2003), who argued that the very concept of a 'New Age' movement was itself fundamentally flawed. Sutcliffe's argument was based firstly upon the observation that 'New Age' was in fact a term created and used by observers rather than participants, but also upon the wide variety of alleged 'New Age' beliefs and practices, and the lack any unifying themes amongst them. This lack of cohesion is an important characteristic of both the Glastonbury alternative culture and Alternative Glastonbury Texts, and is discussed further in chapters 5 to 7.

Bowman, meanwhile, in a series of publications, has examined aspects of Glastonbury ranging from its function as a destination for pilgrimage (Bowman 1993), the interplay between Christianity, vernacular religion and alternative spirituality within the town (Bowman 2000), and the constant negotiation between local and global identity that is played out there (Bowman 2005). Although her work has not specifically addressed the conflict between academic and alternative accounts of its past, she has noted that many of the alternative claims are 'stated as uncontested facts' by their adherents (Bowman, 2005, p.158). However, she has also noted that tradition, informal transmission and personal experience are commonly regarded as being of greater significance in supporting such assertions than any textual authorities, academic or otherwise (Bowman, 2005, p.165). On the other hand, reflecting upon the ways in which the Glastonbury legends of Arthur and Bridget have been 'recycled and manipulated' over time, she has also approached Glastonbury's legends more as stories which carry significance to people, regardless of whether they can be proved to be true (Bowman, 2007, p.16). This approach is also borne out by accounts of her interactions with some Glastonbury believers, who have made assertions such as the following:

> *Words and images you see in the shop are not about academic accuracy, clever deduction or historic fact. They are a language that speaks to the heart.* (Bowman, 2007, p.23)

A recurring feature of Bowman's work is the suggestion that the New Age and neo-pagan movements in part reflect people's dissatisfaction with their identity, and the desire to seek it

elsewhere (Bowman, 1995, p.146). Following on from this, her overall conclusion is that Glastonbury's attraction for spiritual seekers is that it allows them to interact both with the place and with the past, as a way of creating meaning within the present (Bowman, 2007, p.30), and that, as such, it 'provides insight into the constant negotiation of "mainstream" and "alternative"' (Bowman, 2009, p.168).

Similar themes emerge from Ivakhiv (2001), a study of 'pilgrims and politics' at Glastonbury and Sedona, being two examples of 'sacred' locations - that is (for Ivakhiv) places where meaning is created, contested and negotiated (Ivakhiv, 2001, p.45). Ivakhiv's argument drew upon Foucault (1986), and in particular upon the concept of heterotopic locations, that is, places which mirror, challenge, and seek to overturn the features within society to which they refer. He argued that local struggles at places like Glastonbury reflect wider conflicts between competing worldviews within society as a whole, and that myths and religious movements (such as the Goddess culture), which draw upon 'seemingly non-modern sources', emerge as one response to this crisis (Ivakhiv, 2001, p.5). Suggesting that 'remything' the past is and always has been a part of the effort to make sense of the present' (Ivakhiv, 2001, p.35), he then discussed some of the struggles between the alternative community and academic historians, while carefully adopting a position of 'sympathetic scepticism', which enabled him to contemplate 'alternative rationalities' from the believer's perspective, and thereby avoid questions about 'objective truth' (Ivakhiv, 2001, p.16). From a starting point where he acknowledged both that the documented history and popular mythology were clearly mutually incompatible (Ivakhiv, 2001, p.93), and that most of the legends 'can neither be proved or disproved' (Ivakhiv, 2001, p.133), he then described a number of general areas of conflict where there was either a degree of dialogue between the fringe and the establishment (such as Gimbutas' assertions regarding the antiquity of goddess worship), or where relationships were poor, or almost non-existent (on topics such as the 'earth mysteries', or the existence of ley lines). However, although he cited Ronald Hutton as one academic in particular who has actively engaged in discussion with the alternative community, he did not discuss in any detail the various positions taken regarding the legends specific to Glastonbury, or the means used to justify them.

A rather different perspective on the New Age movement, meanwhile, is set out in the work of Prince and Riches (2000). The (somewhat ambitious) aim of this text was to offer a model for the origin of *all* religious movements, although the authors focused their analysis upon the New Age movement at Glastonbury, which they considered to provide an example of such a community 'in a relatively simple form' (Prince and Riches, 2000, p.7). Their starting point was the concept of *communitas* first developed by Turner (1969), and their thesis was

that, when groups of people are in a state of *communitas*, they experience an inevitable tension between the competing forces of egalitarianism and individual autonomy. Religious movements such as the New Age movement, they then argued, were the result of attempts to reconcile the resulting conflicts (Prince and Riches, 2000, p.16).

Prince and Riches (2000) offers a number of insights into the wider dynamics of New Age culture. Whilst accepting the significance of the divide between 'mainstream' and 'non mainstream' culture in its formation, they rejected the view that New Age culture simply represents a 'middle class critique' of the mainstream (Prince and Riches, 2000, pp.26-34; pp.203-204). They argued instead that New Agers had already rejected the mainstream before adopting New Age beliefs, and that their perception of the mainstream (as industrial, and focused upon material wealth) represented a view formed after leaving it. [14] Prince and Riches also observed that the New Age was far from being a homogeneous movement, and noted that the various subgroups contained within it were in some cases openly critical of each other (Prince and Riches, 2000, p.254). However, whilst acknowledging the importance of New Age accounts of the past (which they argued reflected contemporary needs, rather than anything else) they offered no explicit analysis of the ways in which these differed from the 'mainstream' accounts of academics. Indeed, unlike Hanegraaff (1996), which was based exclusively upon analysis of New Age texts, they argued that, rather than such 'ideological' material, it was the behaviour of individuals, each responding to their own particular social circumstances, which constituted the 'foundation' of the movement (Prince and Riches, 2000, p.8). Texts, they argued, instead arose within the subsequent processes of 'cultural vision' and 'cultural representation' (Prince and Riches, 2000, p.240). And such texts were effectively by-products of the emergence of various teachers, each with their own vision to promote, each of which needed to be distinct and to some extent 'mysterious', simply in order to protect and enhance the almost shamanistic status of the teacher in question (Prince and Riches, 2000, p.246 and p.263).

In addition to the works discussed above, however, there is also a further dimension which is important in understanding the origins of Glastonbury as a centre of 'alternative culture', both spiritual and artistic. This derives from the activities of a number of 'Avalonians' who made Glastonbury their home (or the focus of their creative energies, at least) some time in advance of the New Age movement, around the early part of the 20th century, as described in

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[14] In their discussion, Prince and Riches (2000, pp.26-28) noted the problematic nature of the term 'mainstream', a term for which they felt no satisfactory definition had been offered - not least due to the fact that the culture typically identified by this term is not, in fact, homogeneous. For the purposes of their analysis, they instead argued that what was more important was the manner in which new religious movements *experienced* the 'mainstream' – viz, as the 'urban industrial middle class', which they perceived to be homogeneous (albeit erroneously).

Benham (2006). These included not only Bond and (slightly later on) Maltwood, as noted within chapter 2, but also such characters as Dr John Goodchild, who hid a certain (allegedly) ancient and mysterious cup within the 'well' on the mound of St Bridget's chapel, and the two young ladies who retrieved if from its hiding place under the guidance of the psychic visions of an acquaintance of theirs, one Wellesley Tudor Pole. [15] Also active during this period – and instrumental in the organisation of the Glastonbury Festival, which took place from 1914 to 1926 - were the dramatist Alice Buckton, who used local residents and their children to stage a range of dramatic productions (including her own play *The Coming of Bride*), and the composer Rutland Boughton, whose composition *The Immortal Hour*, which was first performed at Glastonbury, later went on to enjoy spectacular success on a west end stage in London. Under the influence of these many diverse spirits, Benham has argued that these early years, which were in their own way a hive of creative energy, were 'obviously ... a critical stage in the unfolding of the latter-day Glastonbury mystique' (Benham, 2006, p.xviii).

However, it is interesting to note that the extent to which these early pioneers had a direct influence upon the resurgence in counter-cultural activity from the 1960s onwards was, in some respects, quite limited. The modern Glastonbury Festival, which actually takes place at nearby Pilton, and which was first held in 1971, is in no way related to its predecessors from the first half of the 20th century. Meanwhile, Benham himself has conceded that, following the death of Dion Fortune (the last of his Avalonians) in 1946, there was something of a hiatus before the emergence of a new influx of people and ideas in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Benham, 2006, p.265), and that these new spirits arrived on the scene with little or no understanding of what had gone on there before. Furthermore, with the exception of some of the claims made for the Glastonbury cup, it should also be noted that very few of these individuals concerned themselves greatly with Glastonbury's historical background, or have left behind them any explicit textual claims regarding the authenticity of its legends. On the other hand, though, it must also be recognised that the young Wellesley Tudor Pole, whose psychic insights had first led to the discovery of the hidden cup on St Bridget's mound in 1907, would later become a driving force behind the Chalice Well Trust, and one of the sponsors of the excavations undertaken by Rahtz from the 1960s onwards.[16] Also, as has been noted in

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[15] This cup, which has never been securely dated, was believed by Goodchild to have been used by Jesus, and by others to have been the Holy Grail itself – although it has also been suggested that it may be of much more recent origin. For a number of years, it played a central role in a series of mystical and quasi-religious ceremonies held by the Tudor Poles at their home in Bristol, but is now in the care of the Chalice Well Trust, in Glastonbury (Benham, 2006).

[16] It is interesting to note, in passing, that – notwithstanding the negative attitudes which some alternative thinkers expressed towards himself - Rahtz was careful to acknowledge that Tudor Pole was 'a remarkable man', and that, although he 'clearly hoped that I too would find evidence to support the

chapter 2 above, both the works of Bond and Maltwood were later to form the basis for the later visions of Michell and Caine, even though these later authors never had any direct contact with their earlier fore-runners. Thus it is that, even though the links between these early personalities and the later authors which are the focus of this thesis are neither numerous nor extensive, such links do exist. It is important, therefore, to recognise this early resurgence of art and spirituality at Glastonbury as something which at the very least set the context for the counter-cultural developments which were to follow in the latter half of the 20th century, and which also, even if only to a limited extent, provided inspiration or impetus for the work of alternative theorists and academics alike.

Conclusions

What is immediately apparent from the existing literature is that, although a number of authors have written on topics relevant to this thesis, none of them have undertaken the kind of analysis performed within this thesis, or addressed the same research questions. Historians and archaeologists have examined the legends of Glastonbury with a view to establishing their historical authenticity; they have also critically examined the work of a number of alternative theorists, with the same purpose in mind. Scholars of Religious Studies have investigated how myths and legends function as faith documents, both in the broader context of the New Age movement as a whole, and specifically with reference to Glastonbury. But no previous work has involved a detailed analysis and comparison of the academic and alternative accounts of Glastonbury's past. It is this gap in the literature which this thesis aims to address.

However, what is also apparent is that, perhaps because the existing literature arises across a number of different fields, not only does it offer a number of different perspectives upon issues relevant to this thesis, but in many cases involved viewpoints which were mutually incompatible. Prince and Riches (2000, p.210), for example, regarded texts as purely secondary phenomena, and therefore inappropriate as a basis for enquiry; Hanegraaff (1996), on the other hand, relied exclusively upon them as his only source of information. Similarly, the findings in Bowman (2007) noted above suggested that inconsistencies between academic and alternative accounts of Glastonbury's past were not a matter of any great significance for New Age believers, while for Ivakhiv (2001) the exact opposite was the case. Such inconsistencies are not unexpected, in such a contentious field of study. However, they do suggest that a degree of caution should be used in drawing upon the work or the conclusions of any previous researcher.

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early legends', he 'never expressed dissatisfaction or disappointment' when this did not occur (Rahtz, 1991, pp.134-5).

Nevertheless, in spite of these differing perspectives, and (in some cases) conclusions, a number of common themes do emerge from the existing literature. The first of these are numerous references to the contemporary function of myths and legends: that they represent a response to present circumstances, which draws upon a certain view of the past, rather than a dispassionate investigation into the past for its own sake. This conclusion is supported just as much by Religious Studies researchers such as Ivakhiv (2001) and Bowman (2007) as it is by historians such as Hobsbawm (1984). What the literature also suggests is that these 'present circumstances' are likely to involve a degree of disenchantment within society as a whole (during times of social instability or upheaval, for example) and represent attempts by individuals alternately to replicate, challenge or overthrow that society, creating new identities for themselves in the process (Heelas, 1996; Hangraaf, 1996; Bowman, 1995; Ivakhiv, 2001). However, it is also clear that such attempts are likely to result in conflict not just with existing authorities (such as the academic establishment), but also between rival factions within these new movements, as they seek to reconcile their need for social cohesion and communal identity with their desire for individual freedom (Prince and Riches, 2000). Finally, in terms of the factors which motivate writers to create alternative texts, and readers to then buy and read them, the existing literature suggests that they are likely to contain not only great claims for dramatic revelations, but also the romantic appeal of a mysterious quest that will take both author and reader far beyond the confines of the everyday world, with all its limitations and imperfections, and into a magical place where everything is on the one hand clear, and simple, and yet at the same time also remains somewhat vague, and enigmatic.

As is demonstrated in chapters 5 to 7, these common themes of contemporary relevance, disenchantment and romanticised escapism are extremely helpful in setting out the wider context within which conflicts between academic authors and alternative writers may be analysed in detail, and better understood. Slightly more challenging, though, are the points upon which the various authors discussed above did not agree with one another. For example, is an analysis of textual documents really an appropriate basis for the investigation of beliefs held concerning Glastonbury's past? And to what extent is any inconsistency between two such texts actually a matter of concern to their respective readers? For present purposes, these issues are addressed simply by maintaining an intentionally narrow focus. Such questions could only be investigated by extending the scope of research to include, for example, interviews with the readers of both kinds of text. Such an investigation, although it remains a possible area for future research, is however specifically (if reluctantly) excluded from the scope of this thesis, which instead focuses solely upon the evidence contained within the texts themselves. Rather more problematic for this thesis, though, is the wide range of the

disciplines relevant to this investigation, as is borne out by the analysis above. Researchers into Religious Studies, as well as historians and archaeologists, have between them brought a wide range of research techniques to bear upon these questions, yielding not only differing results, but different kinds of results. This situation begs the important question (first alluded to within chapter 1) of the perspective from which this thesis itself approaches texts which discuss the legends of Glastonbury, and also the various other texts which are relevant for such an undertaking. Using what methodology, indeed, may a comparison of academic and alternative texts be undertaken? And how does this methodology accommodate the extensive existing literature regarding the methodologies of academic history, and archaeology? It is to such questions that this thesis must now turn.

Chapter 4: Methodologies

Introduction

This thesis seeks to analyse and compare the ways in which academic and alternative texts approach the legends of Glastonbury. It proceeds by focusing upon the means by which authors from these two traditions justify the conclusions that they reach - in effect, adopting a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' towards their claims, to use the terminology of Ricoeur (Hughes-Warrington, 2008, p.303). It is now time to set out in more detail how this has been done. What is clearly needed is a methodology which enables a structured investigation and comparison of how individual texts generate meaning, and also gives due recognition to the existing methodologies of academic history and archaeology, but also maintains a degree of critical independence from these disciplines. Furthermore, it also needs to recognise that textual meaning is derived not only from factors internal to a text (such as the evidence that it draws upon, and the ways in which its arguments are constructed), but also upon external factors which may (consciously or unconsciously) influence the ways in which authors fashion their texts, and readers then interpret them.

Thesis methodology

The methodology of this thesis starts from the premise that textual meaning derives from the interaction of a number of factors both internal and external to any given text. The nature of each of these factors, and the manner in which they operate, are set out in detail within the following paragraph. Working upon this premise, though, if it is desired to compare two (or more) texts, then this can be achieved simply by taking each of these factors in turn, selecting extracts from each text which illustrate how the factor in question works within that text, analysing these two sets of extracts, and then comparing the results of these analyses.

More specifically, so far as these 'factors' are concerned, it is proposed that authors' claims to generate knowledge typically rely upon the representation within their text of four related processes: their motivation and purpose for writing the text in the first place, the assembling of the evidence which they considered relevant to this purpose, the fashioning of an argument based upon this evidence, and finally the statement of the conclusions that they reached, which should draw upon the evidence and argument previously presented (and, hopefully, also fulfil their stated purpose). However, such processes, which are internal to the text itself, and are explicitly offered to its readers as prima facie justification for the conclusions that the author has reached, are not the sole means by which the validity of their conclusions are asserted. To a greater or a lesser extent, the topics which they chose to write upon and the way in which they wrote was inevitably influenced by their own personal background. The

intellectual framework of the tradition they were working within, whether or not explicitly referenced within the body of their text, is also a crucial factor underpinning (or undermining) the credibility of their work, and the conclusions they reached. Such factors may also affect the meanings which readers then take from these works, whether or not the authority of the tradition in question was explicitly invoked within the text, whether or not its readers have correctly interpreted the author's intended meaning, and whether or not they are the audience that the author was writing for in the first place.

These factors, which provide the framework for the analysis of textual meaning adopted within this thesis, may be conveniently summarised by means of the following diagram.

Model for Textual Influences
Influences on the Author
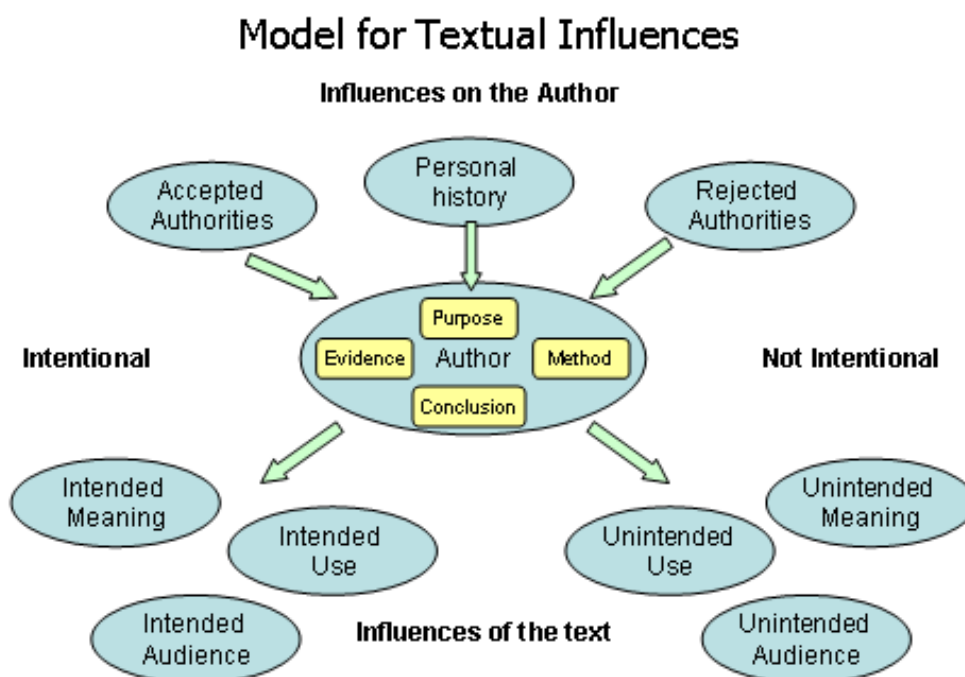
Figure 8: Model for Textual Influences

Although this framework has not been derived directly from the work of any single previous author, it draws upon authors working in a number of fields, including those of narratology, genre analysis and literary criticism, and also both historiography and academic archaeology. Swales (1990, p.46), for example, has emphasised the importance of 'communicative purpose' in the analysis of various genres of text; historians from Elton (1969, pp.66-76) to Evans (1997, pp.75-102) and archaeologists from Rahtz (1991, pp.65-7) to Renfrew and Bahn (1998, pp.45-6) have asserted the importance of historical evidence, or archaeological data, even if only to provide a 'network of resistance' (Johnson, 2010, p.48). White (Hughes-Warrington, 2008, pp.391-2) and Frye (1973), amongst others, have offered their analysis of the various tropes, or methods of argumentation, open to an author, and Barthes (1977, pp.85-88) has argued that

the meaning (and therefore, in effect, the conclusions) of a text arises when the various different levels within it are integrated into other, higher, levels. Meanwhile, Kristeva's writings on intertextuality (Moi, 1990, p.37) serve to emphasise the importance that existing authorities play in the creation of textual meaning by authors, while Barthes' celebrated *The Death of the Author* (Barthes, 1977, pp.142-8), still serves as an important reminder of the significant role that readers also play within this process. An objectivist historian such as Elton (1969) might disagree with a postmodernist such as Jenkins (2003) regarding the manner in which a writer's personal circumstances may or may not be considered to influence their work, but the critical evaluation of sources, including the assessment of the motives and cultural perspectives of the people who generated these sources, has long been an accepted part of standard historical practice (as is seen in the section which follows below). And so far as postmodernist perspectives are concerned, this framework recognises the 'rhizomatic', organic nature of knowledge discussed within Deleuze and Guattari (1996, chapter 1), as being derived from multiple, successive interactions between authors, texts and readers. Similarly, by acknowledging the role played by authorities in setting the acceptable parameters of academic discourse, it also recognises the arguments of Foucault (1966; 1969) regarding the importance of power structures in the construction of knowledge.

In terms of how this framework is applied in practice, however, the starting point remains the 'hermeneutic of suspicion' of Ricoeur. The approach adopted starts by posing the fundamental question: 'upon what basis does the author claim to write with any authority upon their chosen topic?' By examining the aspects of these texts set out in the Model for Textual Influences (see Figure 8) above, this thesis then explores both how authors seek to justify any claims that they make, and in particular to examine the ways in which each text relies upon, complements or contrasts with other texts from within the same tradition, or alternative traditions.

This process inevitably leads to consideration of further questions, such as 'what *kinds* of claims are being made?', 'what evidence is produced in support of these claims?', and 'what methods are being used to marshal this evidence into a coherent argument?' It also suggests the need to examine various factors that may have influenced authors in the shaping of their texts, either consciously or subconsciously. In this manner, examination of the text 'as written' leads into a further analysis of factors at work in the background which are also of importance in shaping the meaning of a text to its author, and to its readers. More broadly, when investigating the relationship between individual texts and the traditions that they locate themselves within (or set themselves in opposition against), it is important to consider the extent to which individual texts rely upon the authority of previous texts or traditions, and of

how these traditions change over time, as each new text not only draws upon the works of previous authors, but also in its turn adds to the body of material available to future writers. It is also necessary to consider how texts and traditions deal with such matters as differences of opinion, areas of uncertainty, and limitations to the scope of their enquiry - as well as recognising that (regardless of the intentions of the authors) the activities of those who read are also influential in shaping the way that texts are understood, interpreted, and incorporated into any collective corpus.

In summary, then: by means of successive questioning of the basis of authority of texts and the traditions that they represent, this thesis aims to gain insight into the nature of the knowledge generated by these texts, and also into what distinguishes the two traditions from each other. It then draws upon these insights to reach a number of conclusions about the authors of these texts, and the traditions within which they work.

The historical tradition

The methodology for this thesis set out in the previous section, drawing as it does upon existing texts and documents, and involving a critical appraisal of the context within which they were written, shares a number of features in common with the methods of academic history. Academic history, meanwhile, shares a number of features in common with academic archaeology. This situation raises a number of important questions. To what extent, for example, can existing theoretical work on the nature of history in general be drawn upon to provide a framework for the detailed analysis of the legends of Glastonbury set out within chapters 5 to 7? To what extent can the academic disciplines of history and of archaeology be regarded as adopting a common approach, and presenting a united front towards the approaches of alternative texts on Glastonbury, and to what extent is it necessary to draw a distinction between their principles, their methods, and their positions?

In examining these questions, it is important to recognise that any authority which academic texts on Glastonbury may carry derives not just from the detailed argument within the texts themselves, but also from the authority of the tradition in which these texts were written, whose methods and standards they will be expected to have faithfully adopted. Historians who wrote about Glastonbury during the 20th century, for example, can be expected to have been familiar with the academic discourses of their day regarding the nature of history, its scope and its methods. Such discourses are therefore of great importance to this thesis, not only because they underpin the authority of academic writing in general, and therefore the authority of Glastonbury Historians in particular, but also because they indicate the context within which academic texts on Glastonbury need to be examined and interpreted. Furthermore, as is seen below, consideration of these discourses is also useful because it helps

to highlight a number of ways in which such texts differ from the Alternative Glastonbury Texts.

History and archaeology

In reviewing discourses on the nature of academic history and academic archaeology, it is important firstly to draw a number of distinctions between these two disciplines. Although they have a common interest in the investigation of the human past, and many methodological and epistemological debates are of relevance to both disciplines, there are also a number of differences between them. These are of importance for this wider discussion and also for the detailed consideration of Glastonbury which follows in subsequent chapters. History, for example, has roots stretching back to the age of classical Greece, while archaeology has only become established as an academic discipline in the past 150 years (Renfrew, 1998, p.24). Historians, with their focus upon the interpretation of documentary evidence, have frequently drawn upon insights from the fields of literature and the arts,[17] while archaeologists, in attempting to extract as much information as possible from sometimes limited material remains, have tended to turn instead towards the sciences.[18] With these differing backgrounds, the two subjects have forged rather different patterns of intellectual allegiances, both within the academic and the lay communities - differences which have important implications when it comes to examining the legends of Glastonbury, not least because archaeology, having from time to time been significantly influenced by contributions from amateur enthusiasts, now finds them a vocal constituency whose challenges it cannot afford to ignore.[19] The two disciplines are therefore examined separately, in this and the following section, before a comparison and synthesis of conclusions is offered.

Perspectives on historical writing

Turning firstly to literature on the historical tradition, then, the first observation that needs to be made is that it is quite extensive. Not only have the views expressed evolved

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[17] The editing and translating into modern English of William of Malmesbury's *De Antiquitate* by Scott (1981), for example, would have been impossible without detailed knowledge of medieval Latin.

[18] An example of the application of science with archaeology with particular relevance for this thesis was the use of carbon 14 analysis within Rahtz (1974, pp.83-4) to date one of the skeletons found at Beckery Chapel at 765 CE (plus or minus 80 years). This was one of the crucial pieces of evidence which he drew upon in reaching his conclusion that the earliest monastic community there dated from the same period, and not that of Bt Bridget's alleged visit in the 5th century.

[19] The most often cited example of contributions from amateurs comes from the work of Heinrich Schliemann, in particular through his excavations at Troy (Renfrew, 1998, p.30). More recent examples of engagement with non-academics include Ian Hodder's interactions with Goddess worshippers during his excavations at Çatal Höyük, and the discussions between pagans and archaeologists within Chippendale (1990) and Blain and Wallis (2007), which included discussion of their conflicting views regarding how ancient monuments should be preserved and maintained, and negotiating rights of access for the various interested parties.

considerably over the centuries, as each author offers a new reinterpretation of the past from a continuously evolving present perspective (Carr, 1986, p.2; Evans, 1997, p.30), but at any given point in time the views expressed can also show considerable diversity. At first glance, it would therefore appear that relatively little consensus has been achieved upon either the purpose or epistemology of historical writing.

This diversity is well illustrated by a brief comparison between two of the founding fathers of the genre. Rather unfortunately, Herodotus, whose 5th century BCE '*ἱστορία*' or 'researches' into the wars of previous generations of Greeks and Persians gave the discipline of history its name (Burn, 1972, p.7), has become known not only as the 'father of history', but also (in some quarters) 'the father of lies',[20] due to the number of fantastic animals and similar marvels he included in his text. Thucydides, his immediate successor, hinting at the shortcomings in his predecessor's methods and offering his own in their place, stated that good practice was simply a matter of 'telling the truth' in such a manner that anyone else who examined the same evidence would concur with his account of it - an undertaking which became much more achievable if one focused one's efforts on the more recent past. Meanwhile, Thucydides' requirement that a historian's sources should be capable of independent verification is still recognised as a fundamental principle academic research today (Hughes-Warrington, 2008, pp.355-7). Furthermore, as the detailed textual analysis in chapters 5 to 7 reveals, also happens to be one of the features which most clearly distinguishes historical writing from Alternative Glastonbury Texts, where the lack of such verifiability is frequently noticeable.

However, it is not only historians who have debated the question of what does and does not constitute historical writing. On the basis that history is a form of literature, literary theorists from Hayden White (1987) and Ricoeur through to Foucault (1970, 1972) and Barthes have also offered their own insights, often stressing in particular the ambiguity and mutability of the meanings of historical narratives. Such arguments have, in some instances, been used by the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts to defend their positions, or challenge those of the academics. On the other hand, though, the rise of the sub-discipline of social history in the mid 20th century, and the statistical analyses which underpinned it, arguably helped to reinforce the views of writers like Elton (1969), who had always maintained that at least some aspects of history could be founded upon facts which could be clearly quantified, and objectively known.

In the face of all this diversity of opinion, it is hardly surprising that no consensus has been achieved regarding the broader nature of historical writing, and that there is no generally

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[20] Evans, J (1968). This alternative title has been used by his many detractors since antiquity,

accepted definition of what 'history' actually 'is'.[21] As the purpose of this thesis is to focus upon the contrast between academic and alternative texts, the lack of a generally accepted definition of 'history' in the broader sense is not of itself a matter for concern. However, debates about such questions not only offer insights into how academic historians viewed themselves and their work in the 20th century, but also offer important insights into their conceptual frameworks, which they brought to bear in their investigations of the legends of Glastonbury. In particular, there is one question which lay at the heart of many of these discussions, and which also happens to be especially relevant to the legends of Glastonbury: the extent to which facts about the past may be regarded as fixed, and objectively knowable, and the extent to which such knowledge is unavoidably fluid, and subject to interpretation on the part of the people who write histories, and the people who read them.

<u>Data and Interpretation</u>

That historians should base their work upon historical data is one assertion at least that is universally conceded within academia.[22] That making use of these data involves a degree of interpretation is likewise not disputed. However, the question of whether such data may be considered to exist independently of their interpretation, or whether the act of interpretation is itself an integral part of the generation of any data, is rather more contentious. To a large extent discussion has revolved around the use of written sources, which until the start of the 20th century were almost the sole source drawn upon by the working historian (Carr, 1986, p.10) and which, in spite of now being supplemented by other surviving artefacts, remain their main stock-in-trade.[23] Likewise, Thucydides dictum that historians' use of their sources should not only be accurate (Carr, 1986, p.22) but also capable of independent verification, should this be required (Evans, 1997, pp.127-8), has found general acceptance, in spite of its rarely being explicitly stated.

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[21] The OED definition of history describes it as 'the branch of knowledge that deals with past events'.

Source: "history, n.". OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. 5 July 2013 http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/87324 (Accessed 5 July, 2013).

This is useful as a starting point, but leaves a number of important questions unresolved, including what actually constitutes a historical 'event'.

[22] Confusingly, historians have employed a number of different terms to denote the evidence base which they draw upon in their work. Carr (1986, p.5), for example, drew a careful distinction between 'facts' and 'historical facts'; White (1995, pp.238-9) argued that the (separate) concept of an 'event' was also a useful one. Meanwhile (Evans, 1997, p.76) offered a discussion of the relationship between facts and 'evidence'. As precise definition of such terms is of limited relevance for this thesis, they are largely avoided, and the less familiar but also less loaded term 'data' is used instead.

[23] Chapter 3 of Evans (1997), 'Historians and their facts', for instance, focuses almost exclusively upon interpretation of the written text.

Historians' views regarding their relationship with the sources they use have evolved considerably over time, but it was only with the writings of Ranke in the mid 19th century that the importance of rigorous source criticism was actually explicitly stated - a development which many have regarded as the foundation proper of the discipline.[24] Indeed, as is seen in the detailed analysis within chapter 5 to 7, it is this critical approach to all sources which most clearly distinguishes historical writing from alternative texts. In the first half of the 20th century Momigliano added a further refinement by proposing that historical sources could be divided between primary sources, being eye witness or other contemporary accounts of the events concerned, and secondary ones, being accounts subsequently generated by people who had not witnessed the events themselves (Evans, 1997, p.93). However, in the 20th century a rather more fundamental challenge arose from a debate about the very nature of the 'historical facts' which were the subject matter of history, and whether they could be considered to have any independent existence at all, in an objective sense.

This debate may be characterised by contrasting in particular the writings of Elton (1969) and Jenkins (2003).[25] For Elton, a scholar of political history, historical facts could be known objectively by means of the rigorous training which historians underwent, and the specialised techniques that they then employed in their researches. These included extensive reading of the available sources (ideally, all of them) in order to gain an understanding of the context within which they were written, and should be interpreted (Elton, 1969, p.60). Although in practice secondary sources might be useful for providing an initial understanding of the historical context, meticulous and exhaustive study of the relevant primary sources was the only route to fully mastering the underlying subject matter. But for Elton, the underlying facts, as revealed by a detailed examination of these sources, existed quite independently of the activities of the historian.[26]

By way of contrast, Jenkins, writing many years later as a polemical advocate of a postmodern agenda (rather than a practising historian), viewed the situation very differently.

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[24] See Hughes-Warrington (2008, pp.293-8). It is not without irony that Ranke's comment that the objective of historical writing should simply be 'to show what actually happened' ('wie es eigentlich gewesen') has itself been the subject of almost endless subsequent debate, retranslation and reinterpretation by generations of historians.

[25] Other challenges to notion of objectivity have also been raised. These include Hayden White's controversial contention that historical writing cannot be differentiated structurally from fiction (White, 1987, p.27), and Foucault's more radical assertions that the conventions of language itself reflect power structures that effectively constrain which ideas can and cannot be articulated, and justified (Hughes-Warrington, 2008, pp.110-111).

[26] Given these views, it is somewhat ironic that Elton (1969) was itself actually a polemical work, written mainly to defend the central status of his own specialised discipline (political history) within academia, and contained views which were very much conditioned by his own particular field of study (Evans, 2002, pp.171-3, and p.186). Thus, even in the work of an 'objective' and professional historian, a purely personal agenda may sometimes be seen to be at work.

For Jenkins, all documents were in effect secondary, being solely representations of the events they purported to describe generated by individuals who were not only unavoidably removed from those events to some extent (either in distance or in time) but furthermore simply incapable of describing them objectively (Jenkins, 2003, pp.57-8). The influence of the various individuals involved in the generation of history was therefore manifested not just in more superficial matters such as the style and presentation of the finished historical work, as had been argued in Elton (1969, p.97). Individual influence, Jenkins proposed, was also an important factor unavoidably at play in the generation of the historical sources themselves, as well as in the subsequent selection and interpretation of these sources by historians (including the context within which they were interpreted). He therefore concluded that histories could make no claims whatsoever to objective truth, if such a thing could be considered to exist at all. Furthermore, he asserted that multiple possible alternative histories, which need not necessarily be mutually consistent, could validly be written to describe any particular sequence of events.

Extending this discussion further, if one were to characterise the various viewpoints that exist on this question as a spectrum,[27] one could place writers like Elton and Hobsbawm towards the 'objectivist' end of it, with empiricists such as Hutton occupying the central ground,[28] Carr asserting a more relativist stance and then writers such as White, Foucault and Jenkins as vocal but minority advocates of a more extreme postmodernist position. Such a spectrum recognises the varying views of individual historians at any given point in time, and can furthermore be used to demonstrate how the range of opinions held has shifted over time. Particularly relevant to this thesis are the changes that have taken place in the 20th century, the period in which most Glastonbury History texts were written. During this period, the emphasis upon 'objectivist' approaches which had largely held sway during the early 20th century gradually gave way from the 1960s onwards to a diverse mix of both 'relativist' approaches on the one hand and more objectivist methods of quantitative social history on the other, with a more 'centralist' position finally gaining ground again as the 20th century drew to a close - as seen, for example, in Evans (1997).

Such debates have a number of implications for our examination of the legends of Glastonbury. In the first place, it should be recognised that most of the historians who considered the Glastonbury legends were writing in the mid 20th century, approaching the subject from a broadly 'objectivist' stance, and reaching broadly similar conclusions. Later academics might perhaps have argued that the varying (and often mutually inconsistent)

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[27] A model suggested to me by Barbara Yorke, Emeritus Professor at the University of Winchester.
[28] See the separate section within chapter 6 for a discussion of Hutton's work in relation to Glastonbury.

histories offered by the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts merely represent alternative and equally valid accounts of the same events, but the authors whose work is considered in this thesis would almost certainly have simply considered them to be erroneous. And even postmodernists such as Jenkins (2003, p.15) concede that some accounts of the past are simply insupportable, due to their inconsistency with any reasoned interpretation of the available data. As is seen in the chapters which follow, this is a level of scrutiny from which most Alternative Glastonbury Texts would not emerge unscathed. It is therefore clear that, regardless of the stance adopted on matters of objectivity, conflict of some kind between Glastonbury Historians and the writers of Alternative Glastonbury Texts is almost inevitable.

Causality

Closely linked to debates about the extent to which history is or is not objective, or scientific, are questions such as whether or not the writing of history yields 'laws' or generalisations, or is capable of determining the causes of the events that it describes - whether for the general edification of its readers (Elton, 1969, p.42), or as possible guidance for future political or social decision-making (Carr, 1986, p.20).

Carr (1986, p.81), for example, argued that history was itself 'a study of causes', the causes of any single event being multiple, and the historian's task being to establish hierarchies among them. Elton, for once, agreed with him (Elton, 1969, p.3; p.89), although noting the risk that hindsight might lead the unwary historian to impose a degree of coherence and patterning upon the past which had never, in fact, existed at the time. More recently, Evans (1997, pp.29-30), has agreed that, although historical events sometimes appeared to be 'overdetermined' by a superfluity of causes, the historian could nevertheless generally determine such a hierarchy of causes, by a careful examination of both the events themselves and the context within which they occurred (Evans, 1997, p.158).

The relevance of such debates to the history of Glastonbury may not be immediately obvious, but nevertheless they are important. For, far from being 'overdetermined', Glastonbury's history in many respects suffers from the opposite problem: the frequent lack of sufficient evidence for any firm conclusions to be reached.[29] And in the absence of such evidence, writers have often drawn instead upon the assumed motivations of people in the past and, by a kind of 'inverse causality', used these to help fill the 'evidence gap' and reconstruct a plausible sequence of events. A good example of this process at work is

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[29] For example, as noted by Robinson (1926) and Treharne (1967), there is almost no direct evidence of any Arthurian associations at Glastonbury before the 12th century. However, this lack of evidence has not stopped writers drawing vastly differing conclusions from the small amount of (largely circumstantial) evidence that does exist.

provided by the many historians who have noted the financial benefits likely to accrue to Glastonbury Abbey from a discovery of King Arthur's remains, and from this inferred that the exhumation was faked.[30] Specific facts relevant to the exhumation are scarce, and to some extent ambiguous. Rather than assembling the facts and using them to explain the subsequent chain of events, they therefore instead work backwards from the (presumed) desired outcome (ie, greater revenue from pilgrims, and the prestige that would accrue to the foundation) to infer the events that led up to them (that is, fake an exhumation of King Arthur's remains).

Such a line of reasoning not only relies upon a belief in the ability of the historian to appreciate the chains of cause and effect in the patterns of history. It also relies upon their assumed ability to understand the motivation and thoughts of historical actors - a question which has also been much debated by historians. On the one hand Elton (1969, p.16) maintained that the role of the historian was to immerse oneself in information about people from the past to the point where one could almost 'know what they are going to say next', and that it was this ability to 'stand with each man in turn', together with his familiarity with the evidence, which enabled history to be written (Elton, 1969, p.72; p.76). Similarly, the philosopher Collingwood (1946) maintained that 're-enactment' of the past, achieved by immersing oneself intellectually in the situation of historical actors in order to 'recreate' their motivations and actions, was an activity central to the writing of history. At the other end of the spectrum, however, Jenkins (2003, p.48) drew upon the work of Wittgenstein to assert that such an undertaking was impossible even in the present, let alone in the past.

Once again, it is fair to say that this is another topic which is more characterised by the vigour of academic debate rather than by any consensus of opinion achieved. Nevertheless, the presumed ability of historians (and other writers) to draw chains of inference based upon the concept of causality, and to comprehend the motivations of historical actors in their work, is seen to be critically important when it comes to the generation of accounts about Glastonbury's past, as both Glastonbury Histories and Alternative Glastonbury Texts have drawn extensively upon causality, in the form of the assumed motivations of historical actors, in reconstructing the sequences of past events. And such issues become especially important when it comes to dealing with historical material which has subsequently become the stuff of legend.

Historians and legends

The relationship between historians and legends has always been a lively one, not least due to the variety of definitions which have been offered for what a 'legend' actually is, and the

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[30] As seen for example in Treharne (1967), Lagorio (1971) and Gransden (1976).

fact that most of the definitions which have been offered are inherently loaded, to a greater or lesser extent.[31] For Glynn Daniel, for example, writing in 1955 about the newly established field of archaeology, a legend (unlike a myth) was not an invented story, but was instead a form of history, having 'a kernel of truth, however distorted' (Daniel, 1955, p.14). However, Daniel's position was not exactly typical, for either historians or archaeologists. Another archaeologist has recently suggested that when it comes to legends, 'most people would see the OED definition as about right, ie "an unauthentic or non-historical story, esp. one handed down by tradition from early times and popularly regarded as historical"' (Thorpe, N., personal communication, 24 February 2011). Evans (1997, p.151; p207), in a similar vein, observed that 'history has always been seen by historians as a destroyer of myths' (a sentiment which presumably also applies by extension to such things as legends), and this position is further supported, for example, by the number of 20th century scholars who have devoted much time and energy to challenging the alleged antiquity of historical documents pertaining to King Arthur.[32] Thus, although there may not be complete agreement amongst historians regarding what does and does not constitute a legend, it has generally been accepted that their historical value does not lie so much in the descriptions which they offer of past events as in the insights they offer into the worldviews of their creators.

As such, it is hardly surprising that historians have generally regarded legends as imaginative but fictitious accounts of past events, and turned towards an analysis of the circumstances and needs of their creators in the search for insights into their origins - an approach which (it should be noted) again relies heavily upon the historian's presumed ability, via their contextual knowledge and critical use of sources, to discern the motives of the individuals in the past. At the more sceptical end of the spectrum, as was noted in chapter 3, writers such as Hobsbawm (1984) have examined a number of 'traditions', in particular relating to nationalistic movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, which were unambiguously ascribed to the 'invention' of particular individuals, who in effect created a fictitious historical past in order to support their present needs and motives, whether these were to further their own personal wealth and ambitions or to promote the wider aspirations of the societies within which they lived. Turning specifically to Glastonbury, the general view is succinctly summed up by Barbara Yorke's observation that 'modern academic historians and archaeologists would see the Glastonbury myths having historical value for the date at which they were written (e.g. invention of the past), but not for the period they purport to describe' (Yorke, B., personal

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[31] As set out in chapter 1, the definition adopted within this thesis is based upon that provided by the OED.
[32] Notable examples are the historians Hughes and Dumville, and the archaeologist Thomas (Hutton, 2003, pp.50-2).

communication, 15 February 2011). Even writers such as Hutton (2003 and 2009), while taking a more generous view of the motives of the authors and the wider value of the works they created, have still viewed their creations in the light of 'creative wish fulfilment'. The general view of historians has been that legends are stories which reflect the needs and aspirations of their authors, rather than offering reliable factual accounts of events from the past.

Thus it is clear that historians are, by virtue of their discipline alone, naturally inclined to adopt a critical attitude to the historical claims contained within legendary stories. And this perspective on legends as a whole, and in particular the legends of Glastonbury, becomes particularly evident when it comes to examining the works of some of the academic authors who have addressed themselves in detail to the legends of Glastonbury.

The Glastonbury Historians

Detailed analysis of the work of selected Glastonbury Historians is undertaken from chapter 5 onwards. However, in order to provide an illustration of how the factors described above are evident in the work of these scholars, and influenced both the methods they applied and the conclusions that they reached, the approaches adopted by two particular writers is discussed briefly below.

The first of these authors was the Very Revd Joseph Armitage Robinson, a Cambridge Classics graduate and former Dean of Westminster, who took on the post of Dean of Wells from 1911 until his retirement in 1933, but who in his spare time also 'established a reputation as a scholar and formidable amateur antiquary' who paid 'scrupulous attention to detail' (Hopkinson-Ball, 2007, p.103). As a Somerset man by birth, he took a keen interest in the history of the region, in particular that of the early Anglo-Saxon church, publishing his *Somerset Historical Essays* in 1921 and the *Times of St Dunstan* in 1923. He also acted as the president of Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society for a number of years. With this background, and writing as he did in the early part of the 20th century, Robinson was clearly strongly influenced by the scholarly traditions and approaches of his time. His investigation of the legends of Joseph of Arimathea and King Arthur, published in 1926, focused almost exclusively upon a discussion of the documentary evidence, and his methods effectively constituted consideration of historical documents only, of which only the oldest (when fully supported by convincing evidence of their authenticity) were to be considered reliable. Alternative approaches, involving consideration of possible sequences of events or suppositions which were not fully supported by such evidence, were considered inadmissible, and the results of them dismissed as mere speculation.

It is interesting to contrast the work of Robinson with that of Treharne, writing on similar questions in 1967. As a professor of history at the University of Aberystwyth, Treharne adopted a very similar approach, with heavy reliance upon documentary sources and dismissal as fiction (or at best speculation) of anything which these sources did not directly support.[33] However, it is interesting to note that Treharne, unlike Robinson, also drew heavily upon the evidence provided by excavations - consistent with the emergence of the relatively new discipline of academic archaeology during the first half of the century. Furthermore, Treharne also made extensive use of both contextual information and his views regarding the motivations of the Glastonbury monks to infer a sequence of events (ie forgery) which he considered not only plausible, but compelling - that is, to invoke the principle of causality, based upon both his own insight and upon other academic work of his day. A considerable proportion of his text was devoted to a discussion of the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the work which effectively established King Arthur as a figure of international status and prestige. In essence, Treharne's argument was that the *Historia Regum* brought about such a significant change in the cultural milieu of the 12th century that substantial benefits would potentially accrue to Glastonbury Abbey were King Arthur's tomb to be found there. So substantial, in fact, that the monks took the decision to stage manage this event, and fake the necessary supporting evidence.

Brief though these sketches are, they provide useful illustrations of the ways in which Glastonbury Historians have viewed and interpreted their data, the ways in which they used 'causality' to approach the legends of Glastonbury, and in particular the 'objectivist' approach that generally prevailed in historical writing during the first half of the 20th century. What they also demonstrate is that, notwithstanding any differences of opinion that they may have regarding more theoretical questions, in practice there is a large degree of consistency in the sources that academic historians have drawn upon, the methods that they have employed and the (negative) conclusions they have reached. However, in spite of the united front which they offer to the Alternative Glastonbury Texts, these example also serve as a useful reminder that historians and their methods must themselves be viewed as products of their own times and circumstances.

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[33] Treharne's approach, it should be noted, was virtually identical to that recommended in Elton (1969, p.69).

Concluding comments - history

As has been demonstrated above, the question 'what is history?' has generated much debate amongst scholars, with each historian having their own perspective to offer, and the range and emphasis of these perspectives varying considerably over time. However, these debates should not obscure the fact that, for the purposes of this thesis, there is actually a relatively large degree of consensus regarding a number of fundamental propositions.

The first of these is the straightforward observation that written documents provide the bedrock of evidence upon which historical writing is based; other forms of evidence may be used from time to time to corroborate or challenge the view derived from such documents, but for the historian their role is generally a secondary one. Furthermore, these documentary sources must not only be explicitly acknowledged, but this should be done in a sufficiently detailed and methodical manner (via referencing, or similar practices) to enable the use of them to be independently checked and verified, if required. As is seen in the chapters which follow, it is such requirements which most clearly distinguish the writings of historians from those of alternative theorists.

Secondly, given the limited extent of the evidence available to either support or refute the historicity of the legends of Glastonbury, it is important to recognise the extent to which causality, in the form of the assumed motives of historical actors, is often invoked by authors to help fill an 'evidence gap'. It is not uncommon for historians (and other writers) to draw upon these assumed motivations in order to help reconstruct plausible sequences of events which they then assert represent the way in which things 'actually happened'. It is much less common, however, for authors to explain *how* they have managed to acquire such a detailed knowledge of what was going on in the minds of their predecessors, and to demonstrate this in a manner both explicit and robust.

Such demonstration (when it is done at all) is generally provided by an analysis of context. In drawing upon the sources at their disposal, historians should not only show discernment and a critical eye - ready to challenge and potentially even reject testimonies which are considered unduly biased, or otherwise unreliable - but they should also be sufficiently acquainted with other sources for the period (both primary and secondary) to have a good understanding of the historical context within which their source needs to be interpreted. And indeed this appreciation of context is important not just for the historian who is drawing predominantly upon primary sources for new research, but also for other scholars who subsequently draw upon their work (including an awareness of the potential influence of their personal circumstances upon their views, methods and conclusions). This is equally true whether they are later historians undertaking their own analyses of the period in question, or

other researchers who wish to compare the methods of historians with those of writers from different genres. A historian writing in the early part of the 20th century was working within the context of a discipline which largely viewed its work as scientific, and objective; a volume claiming to set out '*the* history' of a given topic was not uncommon. On the other hand, by the mid to late 20th century, historians had become much more mindful of issues such as relativism, inherent bias and the existence of multiple viewpoints on any given question, and the most that many would claim for their works were that they were '*a* history' of the matter in question. Some might even go so far as to assert that multiple alternative histories of past events were not only possible, but inevitable, and that there is no objective way of choosing between such multiple accounts - a stance which on the face of it might appear to offer theoretical support to the writers of Alternative Glastonbury Texts.

What is therefore evident, though, is the extent to which Glastonbury Historians and the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts adopt fundamentally different approaches to examining the past, and are therefore (at least potentially) antagonistic towards each other, in both their methods and their conclusions. However, as was noted at the start of this chapter, the related discipline of archaeology has traditionally enjoyed much more active, and sometimes fruitful, participation with people from beyond the confines of academia – although it is important to recognise that occasional tensions have arisen (for example, regarding the activities of metal detectorists). The following section therefore examines how this rather different relationship affects the work of archaeologists, and the manner in which they engage in turn with such alternative constituencies.

The archaeological tradition

As was noted in the previous section, archaeology is not only a much younger discipline than history, but it has also, in its shorter lifetime, forged a rather different pattern of intellectual allegiances, both within the academic community and beyond it. When it comes to examining archaeologists' claims regarding the knowledge about the past which they generate through their research, and considering the basis of these claims, it is therefore important to recognise the different nature of the evidence base that they work with, and also the different methods that they employ. Nevertheless, it is seen that (not surprisingly), the two disciplines share a number of concerns in common.

Although as a profession archaeology is indeed relatively young, it nevertheless successfully established many common standards of practice in the 150 years up to the mid 20th century, by which time the 'foundation proper' of the modern discipline had effectively been

established.[34] In this period, contributions to its evolving methods were made by individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds, including many who either took an interest as 'gentleman antiquaries' or (like Heinrich Schliemann) as amateurs. It has therefore been by a variety of means, including the establishment of a number of peer-reviewed journals and the growth of a number of university departments devoting some or all of their resources to archaeology that the significant body of accumulated archaeological knowledge now amassed has been generated, and institutionalised. However, it is important to recognise that contemporary archaeology, partly by virtue of its historical development, is a 'broad church' in which there are a number of diverse constituencies. On the one hand there are the University academics, drawing heavily upon the methods of the early antiquarians, but also increasingly making use of the insights and contributions offered by other academic disciplines, and in particular from science (discussed in greater detail below). Meanwhile, outside of the universities lie the numerous teams of 'commercial' excavators who are contracted either by government bodies or (more recently) corporate developers, sometimes in order to excavate sites which are considered to be of national interest but more often to undertake 'rescue' excavations in advance of new development taking place - work in which the excavation and recording of physical remains (while they still exist), rather than theoretical considerations, have often been became the main priority. However, interest is not limited to these two groups. To attempt a complete picture, one also needs to consider the investigations and publications of local archaeological groups (of varying standards and abilities), the activities of metal detectorists, the development of 'earth mysteries' and alternative archaeological interest groups, and then finally the rise of 'televised excavators', broadcasting to a public which seems ever more interested in its past. All of these subgroups, to a greater or lesser extent, overlap with each other, drawing upon (or arguing with) one another's epistemologies, methods and conclusions, and creating a rich and diverse, but also somewhat fragmented, network of researchers.

In the context of this rich but diverse landscape, the question of what archaeologists consider their work to mean is a potentially contentious one, capable of eliciting a wide range of responses and reactions, with amateur enthusiasts forming a significant and influential group whose voice cannot be wholly ignored. Since the majority of Glastonbury Archaeology Texts were written by academics, the discussion below is largely limited to their work - although even within this more limited group it needs to be recognised that there is considerable diversity of opinion. Furthermore, Johnson (2010, p.161), commenting as a theorist rather as a practitioner, has argued that there is often a considerable discrepancy

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[34] Renfrew (1998) offers a detailed account of this progression, while Stout (2008) offers a sociological critique of how orthodoxy was established within the discipline, and alternative approaches marginalised in the process.

between what archaeologists do and what they say they do, and that (in practice) theoretical considerations are often ignored anyway, and replaced with a 'crude and unreflective empiricism' (Johnson, 2010, p.219). In such cases, there is always the potential for researchers (both academic and amateur) to fall back upon the assertion that their conclusions are simply 'obvious', even though they are proposing widely differing theories. When such claims are made without further justification being offered, it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish those claims which are well-founded from those which are less so.

In such an environment, academic debates about the nature of archaeology may appear to have limited significance for the purposes of this thesis. Nevertheless, a number of important themes do emerge from a review of the literature.

<u>Archaeology and Science</u>

Of the many disciplines which make a significant contribution to the methods of archaeology, science is perhaps the most immediately obvious, and the detailed textual analysis in later chapters shows that both archaeologists and alternative thinkers are quick to claim the support of 'science' whenever they can. Scientific techniques now commonly employed in archaeology include the use of resistivity and magnetometry surveys,[35] pollen analysis[36] and isotope analysis,[37] as well as more established methods such as the carbon dating of organic remains, and DNA and bone analysis. The contributions of science to archaeology, whether measured by the number of techniques employed or the range of disciplines drawn upon, has steadily increased throughout the 20th century, bringing not only in increasing insights but also increasing specialisation within the archaeological profession.

Science's contribution to archaeology should not, however, be measured in these terms alone. As far back as the 1960s, the 'New Archaeology' which had emerged in North America, and which for a while had a significant impact upon archaeological thinking in the UK, stressed the importance of bringing greater rigour to the methods of archaeology by drawing upon the approaches, and also the authority, of the scientific community. Up until this point archaeologists had relied upon the 'inductive' approach of excavating sites (typically focusing on the 'best' ones), and then drawing conclusions about what had occurred in the past based

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[35] As seen, for example, in the recent discovery of a whole series of concentric rings within the stone circles at the (unexcavated) site of Stanton Drew (David, 2004).

[36] For example in Coles and Coles (1990, pp.17-18), where pollen analysis was used to demonstrate that, during prehistory, the Somerset Levels was a combination of marshy reed swamp and tree-clad higher ground.

[37] For example the oxygen isotope analysis which demonstrated the continental origins of the so-called 'Amesbury Archer' excavated near Stonehenge in May 2002, as summarised by Wessex Archaeology at http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/amesbury/tests/oxygen_isotope.html (accessed 6 November 2011).

upon their analysis of the surviving material remains. However, the accounts of the past that they generated were increasingly criticised for being essentially descriptive rather than explanatory in nature, and for relying heavily upon the experience and authority of the excavator. In place of such interpretations, New Archaeologists urged themselves and one another to achieve more. They felt that their work should aim to answer the more demanding question of *why* past developments had occurred, developing hypotheses and then devising research programmes by which these could be tested, and then (ultimately) deriving 'general laws', akin to the laws of science, which would not only describe past societies but also explain the processes by which these societies operated, and evolved.

Meanwhile, however, the authority of science was itself under challenge. Throughout the early part of the 20th century a 'positivist' view of science had largely prevailed, in which its methods were held to be rational, its evidence to be objective and the conclusions that it drew to be virtually unassailable (until the arrival of new evidence, at least). The writings of the sociologist Kuhn (1957; 1996) upon the nature of science, however, were to fundamentally change this situation. By focusing upon the 'sociological' aspects of the behaviour of scientists, in particular during the 'crises' which from time to time occurred as the scientific community discarded old 'paradigms' and adopted new ones, Kuhn argued that they were far from being the rational, objective investigators that they claimed to be, and that their conclusions were (to some extent) socially constructed. While acknowledging that science did in a meaningful sense progress, for many thinkers Kuhn convincingly demonstrated that its authority was far from absolute. Such arguments did not go unanswered by members of the scientific community, many of whom felt that Kuhn's theories misrepresented the way in which they went about their work, and the academic rigour that underpinned their findings. However, it did form part of a more general reaction against the authority that science had come to enjoy within the western world, which has arguably emboldened many Alternative Glastonbury Text authors to belittle or challenge its dictates as and when these come into conflict with their own views.

Evidence and Interpretation

This questioning of the relationship between the activities of the researcher and the nature of the evidence that their research generates is a common theme throughout much of 20th century thought. Its impact upon the researches of historians has already been noted in the previous section of this chapter, and its role in the development of scientific thought, and therefore indirectly upon archaeological theory, has been hinted at above. However, a number of much more direct examples are provided from the work of archaeologists themselves, and

in particular (by a strange coincidence) by the archaeology of one particular site from the Glastonbury area itself.

In the late 19th century Arthur Bulleid, a noted local antiquarian, inspired by recent discoveries in Switzerland, decided to investigate a site at Godney on the Somerset levels half a mile North of Glastonbury.[38] The famous 'lake village' of around 70 huts which his excavation revealed, which dated back to the 1st century BCE, was a discovery of national importance, offering a wealth of new insights into settlements of the period, their domestic arrangements and their relationship with the surrounding landscape (Minnitt and Coles, 1996). Bulleid was working before the discipline and methods of archaeology had been firmly established, but he was a careful excavator who kept detailed notes and site plans of his work at the two lake village sites. The quality of these records meant that, in 1972, David Clarke, a significant figure in the development of the New Archaeology, was able to re-examine this evidence, after which he reached conclusions which differed from his predecessor's in a number of ways. In particular, Clarke argued that the settlement was actually made up of a collection of standardised 'modular units', within which he discerned separate areas for different uses, and for male and female activities. Clarke's work is cited in Renfrew (1998, pp.38-9) as a classic example of how the two activities of obtaining evidence and of interpreting it may be separated; of how evidence, if gathered and recorded with sufficient clarity, may be considered to be objective, and independent of the views and preconceptions of the excavator.[39] If such a viewpoint were to be accepted, then it would suggest that, by objective recording of archaeological data, a single core of objective evidence from any individual excavation could be obtained which could then be used by all subsequent researchers, and that the influence of individual hands and minds upon the development of archaeology might be reduced to that of interpretation alone.

However, this is not a viewpoint to which all archaeologists would subscribe. Hodder (1986, pp.16-18) argued, following Kuhn, that observational data had to be recognised as being paradigm dependent, and that the reductionist approaches of the New Archaeology failed to take adequate account of the 'irreducible' influences of agency, culture and historical context. Such factors, he argued, inevitably mediated and influenced the relationships between society and material culture, cause and effect, fact and theory. He therefore proposed that new approaches to archaeology were needed which recognised, in effect, that the thoughts and

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[38] The sequence of events which led up to this excavation also illustrates the importance of 'context' in archaeology. It was the contemporary intellectual context of the Swiss discoveries which prompted Bulleid to wonder whether similar remains might exist in Britain, while the similar geographical context of the Somerset levels suggested a location in which these might be found.

[39] It is interesting to note that some aspects of Clarke's reinterpretation have now in turn been reviewed and themselves challenged, by Coles and Minnit (1995, chapter 7).

actions of individuals in the present and the past had an impact both upon how the archaeological record was created, and how it was later interpreted. As is seen, this is a point of some significance for the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts, who frequently argue that the actions (and sometimes even the identity) of the individual researcher may have a fundamental bearing upon the outcome of investigations into the past.

Other archaeologists have taken the discussion even further. Johnson (2010, p.183; p.142) noted that some Darwinist and feminist archaeologists, for example, have argued that the entire archaeological endeavour is based upon a number of ideological presuppositions (which they considered to be highly questionable), and that the body of so-called 'objective' data which it has generated is significantly distorted and biased as a result. Such arguments lend a degree of support to writers such as Caine (1978, p.34), who claimed that archaeologists' rejection of the Zodiac was based upon their a priori assumptions, rather than any assessment of the evidence.

Not all theorists, however, would adopt such extreme positions. Johnson (2010, p.48), although recognising that 'all archaeological data are socially constructed in some sense', nevertheless claimed that even 'postprocessual' archaeologists 'acknowledge and affirm [...] that the data at the very least form a network of resistance.' Such a position helps to draw a clear distinction between the work of archaeologists, where attention to the detailed evidence is always a key consideration, and the work of alternative theorists, where this is often seen to be lacking.

Getting inside the human mind

Such debates about the relationship between the human mind and the archaeological record become particularly pointed when it comes to considering the thoughts and motivations of people from the past. As has been noted above, Hodder (1986) argued that the historical and cultural context within which individuals act is a significant influence upon their behaviour, and therefore upon the archaeological record that they subsequently leave behind them. However, if this argument is accepted, it then raises the question of how such factors are to be allowed for within academic research. The New Archaeologists had largely avoided such questions by focusing instead upon explaining change in terms of functional processes, which were to a large extent dependent upon the surrounding physical environment and the opportunities and constraints it afforded. However, Johnson (2010, p.91) has argued that, regardless of the 'immense difficulties in recovering thoughts', the attempt is 'simply necessary.' This is partly because it is virtually impossible to describe human behaviour without referring to mental concepts, but also because, in the absence of explicit theorising, archaeologists have inevitably fallen back upon assumptions based upon a 'common sense'

which they have implicitly assumed, but never demonstrated, to be shared by people from different cultures and different periods.

However difficult it may be to investigate the thoughts of people from the past in a manner both sufficiently imaginative and sufficiently rigorous, a number of important points remain. As noted above, in the absence of any explicit acknowledgement of their theoretical basis, Johnson (2010) has repeatedly argued that archaeologists are prone to simply resorting to claims that their conclusions are 'obvious' - especially when it comes to matters regarding human thought and motivation. And furthermore, even a devotee of the New Archaeology such as Renfrew conceded that archaeology is ultimately written for the present, and is therefore a product not just of the available evidence, but also of the paradigms of the day.

Cultural Evolution

This influence of the present upon interpretations of the past is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the much debated area of Cultural Evolution.

The idea that human civilisation might progress through a sequence of stages is not a new one. Discoverers of the New World of the Americas had been quick to conclude that the 'primitive' societies already existing there were earlier and inferior to the more advanced civilisation they were bringing with them. Hobbes, writing in the 17th century, evoked a similar notion of progress to support his thesis that individuals voluntarily sacrificed a share of their personal freedom in exchange for participating in the benefits of a wider commonwealth. However, it was with the growth of science and Darwinism in the 19th century that these ideas took root more deeply. As Johnson (2010, chapter 9) has argued, such ideas have had a significant influence upon the ways in which archaeology has perceived the past and the present, and also its own role of articulating the relationship between the two. However, the notion of that human society progresses from one age to the next has not gone unchallenged. Followers of the Romantic movement of the 18th and 19th centuries instead deplored what they perceived to be a *decline* in the quality of life from previous ages. Their influence can be seen right up to the present day, and is evident in the work of many alternative theorists such as Michell (1997), with their frequent references to the idyllic societies and cultures which they allege existed in previous ages. Meanwhile, even within academic archaeology the use of simplistic 'unilinear' models has not gone unchallenged, with various authors attempting to replace them with alternative and more sophisticated approaches. However, as Johnson (2010, p.161) has observed, it is still not uncommon for archaeologists to place implicit reliance upon relatively simple 'evolutionary' arguments in their reconstructions of the likely sequence of past events.

History and Archaeology

Notwithstanding the different origins, methods and academic allegiances of the two disciplines of history and archaeology, it is evident from the preceding sections that they have a number of concerns in common. Particularly noticeable amongst these are such matters as the importance of arguments being based upon supportable evidence, interpreted within an appropriate context, and debates about the relationships between this evidence and the act of interpretation. Also, more broadly, they share a desire to identify patterns and relationships between events which precede and events which follow, to understand *why* things happened as they did. In examining such questions, there are two specific areas where the overlap between history and archaeology becomes particularly apparent.

The first of these relates to the matter of timescales, a question of clear relevance to both disciplines. Braudel, one of the founders of the *Annales* school of history, argued that history could be considered to fall into three kinds of time scales: the 'long durée', in which changes to the physical environment predominated, the 'moyenne durée' of economic cycles, and then the 'histoire evenementielle' of day to day existence. As Johnson (2010, pp.186-7) has noted, the discussions of the *Annales* school regarding the interactions between these time scales, in particular which (if any) of them could be considered to dominate the others (and thereby determine the overall course of events), has many implications for archaeologists. Johnson also noted that some of the *Annales* historians argued for the existence of 'mentalités' at work in minds of the populace, and proposed that these were a key force driving observed change over some or even all of these timescales. However, Hodder (1986, p.153), while stressing the value of the links between archaeology and history and recognising the importance of this framework in particular, felt that the *Annales* approach was oversimplified. He suggested that the supposed unity of the 'mentalités' was open to challenge (following Foucault), and that, rather than just three, there should arguably be as many timescales as there were active social processes. Once again, the question is of importance when one comes to consider the extent to which humans may be regarded as agents who actively influence the development of the societies that they live in (a common position with alternative theorists), or are of a more reactive nature, responding more quasi-mechanically to the circumstances within which they happen to find themselves.

Questions regarding the workings of the human mind are also of relevance in the second area of overlap between history and archaeology. These derive from the writings of Collingwood (1946), who (as noted in the previous section on historical writing) argued for the central role of imagination in re-creations of the past. Collingwood's argument, it should be stressed, was not that imagination should be given free rein, unconstrained by any other

considerations, but more that the only way in which historians could meaningfully engage with a sequence of events in the past was to immerse themselves mentally in the situation of the period that they were studying and, by a process of successive 'question and answer', interrogate the options available to historical actors. Only by means of such a process, he argued, could historians arrive at an understanding of the decisions taken by people in the past, and therefore the causes of sequences of events. As Hodder (1986, p.149) noted, this was not a viewpoint that found much support at the time of writing, but it has subsequently gained ground both with historians and archaeologists.[40]. Furthermore, as has been noted in the previous section, and as is seen in chapters 5 to 7, this alleged ability to understand the motives of historical agents has a key role to play in the interpretation of the Glastonbury legends.

<u>The Glastonbury Archaeologists</u>

The relevance of the issues discussed above for this thesis is further illustrated by an outline of the work and views of Phillip Rahtz. This is not just because of the number of excavations he undertook in and around Glastonbury, or because his summary volume (Rahtz, 1993) is regarded by many as the authoritative establishment account of the origins of Glastonbury and its legends, but also because of his own peculiar stance when it came to theoretical matters. In many ways an unorthodox figure, with intellectual allegiances across many of the archaeological interest groups described above, his views offer a revealing cross section through the multidimensional matrix of archaeological thought. [41]

Rahtz undertook his first excavations in 1946 as an amateur, and was largely self-taught. Having 'turned professional' by undertaking contract work, in particular rescue excavations at Chew Valley in 1953, he then joined the ranks of the academics upon taking a post at Birmingham University in 1963. He may therefore be considered to have had a foot in a number of archaeological camps during the course of his varied career - more so than many of his contemporaries.

By his own admission, when he started work in archaeology Rahtz was 'hardly aware that it had any theoretical basis' (Rahtz 2001, p.132), since in practice archaeologists simply 'accumulated data, looked at them and made particular and general conclusions' (Rahtz 2001, p.133). As such, it would be tempting to cite him as a classic example of Johnson's 'crude and unreflective empiricism', but this would be both unjust and oversimplified. A man with a keen

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[40] Hodder's own support of Collingwood's position was, it should be noted, entirely consistent with his own thesis of the importance of agency, culture and history in mediating the relationship between cause and effect.

[41] These views are set out in some detail within Rahtz (1991), and also in the 'archaeological autobiography' of Rahtz (2001).

interest in science, and a firm believer in determinism,[42] he was more enthusiastic than most of his contemporaries to embrace the approaches of the New Archaeology.[43] With these convictions, Rahtz always considered his goal to be recording his excavations 'as objectively as possible' (Rahtz, 1991, p.11). He remained throughout his life highly critical of attempts by academics to 'personalise' archaeology, and was even more vehemently opposed to the interpretations of the past offered by mystics and alternative archaeologists. He devoted a whole chapter of Rahtz (1991) to an analysis and critique of their activities, famously branding Glastonbury 'the Mecca of all irrationality' Rahtz (1991, p.128); views which he then expanded upon in detail in Rahtz (1993). Nevertheless, as a scientist, he was prepared to keep an open mind regarding the merits of such practices as dowsing, for which he conceded there might be some scientific basis.[44] However, notwithstanding such broader perspectives, he was nevertheless happy towards the end of his career to assert that he was 'still basically working with the same paradigms as I had in the 1940s' (Rahtz, 2001, p.143). Clearly, Johnson's contention that there was still considerable evidence of 'unreflective empiricism' within contemporary archaeological practice was not wholly without foundation.

Concluding comments - archaeology

With archaeology, as with history, the discussion above demonstrates not only the wide range of viewpoints regarding what can be known about the past and how it may be determined, but also how such debates have a direct bearing upon the archaeology of Glastonbury. Rahtz, for example, as an empiricist and scientist by personal inclination, identified strongly with the methods and approaches of the New Archaeologists, and naturally favoured a more 'objectivist' stance regarding the relationship between data and interpretation. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that someone whose enthusiasm for determinism was so great that he relegated human society and the human mind to being merely passive reflections of their environment and circumstances, should find himself at variance with a post-processualist such as Hodder, who instead argued that what archaeology needed was greater recognition of the active role played by agents, and in particular human agents. As is seen in chapters 5 to 7, many of the issues outlined above, and the stances taken

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[42] This applied both in the sense of 'environmental determinism', as an archaeological theory, but also in the more radical sense that Rahtz considered the lives and actions of all individuals to be completely determined in advance, being the product of their personal history (in particular their genetic origins) and the immediate environment of their day to day lives (Rahtz, 2001, p.238, and Rahtz, 1991, p.8).
[43] Much of Rahtz (1991), for example, had been devoted to advocating the principles and methods of the New Archaeology. Hodder (1986, p.155), however, argued against Rahtz's view that archaeology should seek to become a 'new' natural science.
[44] Rahtz was much criticised within academic circles for allowing dowsing to be done during his excavations at Old Sarum, and allegedly making use of its results to help guide his excavations (Rahtz, 2001, pp.77-8).

on them by both archaeologists and alternative thinkers, have been critical in the articulation and justification of their various viewpoints regarding the legends of Glastonbury.

Given the close relationship between archaeology and history, it is perhaps not surprising that the issues outlined in this section bear a strong resemblance to those discussed in the previous one, nor that the conclusions drawn should be correspondingly similar. Notwithstanding the greater variety of practitioners, influences and theoretical viewpoints that are evident within archaeology, it is nevertheless clear that, like history, all archaeological work must be founded upon evidence (generally, in this case, 'material evidence') which is not only described 'as objectively as possible', but is also, to the extent that it can be, retained and made available for independent review and scrutiny. Likewise, it is also essential that people who draw upon archaeological work are aware of the context within which this work was undertaken, whether understood as the immediate physical environment within which material remains were found, or the conceptual framework within which they were later interpreted. However, the debates summarised within this chapter also highlight a number of other issues which are seen to be relevant for the subsequent discussion.

The first of these is to again highlight the importance of science, not just in terms of the techniques which it contributes to archaeological research but also the attendant conceptual frameworks which it brings in its wake, and even the implied authority that its very name brings to any discussion, in this technological age. Similarly important, and related to this, are discussions about the relationship between obtaining evidence and interpreting it, and the extent to which these two activities should or can be separated. Finally, as the post-processualists have frequently argued, there is the crucial question of the meanings which objects had for people in the past. Such meanings are always problematical, and are difficult (some would argue impossible) to theorise. However, in the absence of an explicit theoretical basis, there is always a risk that both academics and lay people alike simply fall back upon a 'crude and unreflective empiricism', that is, they rely upon the simple but unsupported statement that their conclusions are 'obvious'.

Chapter 5: The text as written

Introduction

As set out in chapter 4, the methodology of this thesis is driven by consideration of the question: 'upon what basis does the author claim to write with any authority upon his or her chosen topic?' Possible answers to this question have then led to further questions, including the intended purpose of the text, the nature of the evidence assembled within it and the methods used to develop this evidence into a (hopefully coherent) argument. However, the primary question in itself suggests both the first place in which to look for answers to these questions, and the means by which answers may reasonably be sought: by undertaking an examination of the text itself.

However, before embarking upon this detailed textual analysis, it is important to reiterate that a multiplicity of factors come into play when a text is written. In the first place, most authors are heavily influenced (and indeed sometimes constrained) by the literary traditions which they chose to work within, and by the chances of life that have moulded them into the people that they are. Furthermore, their motives for writing a text may well include an ambition to further their own careers, to enhance their prestige among their peers and perhaps even to increase their personal fortunes, as well as simply the desire to share their knowledge of the subject in question with other interested parties. Grander aspirations, including the wish to contribute to the enlightenment of mankind and to help build a better future than the contemporary present should also not be discounted. In undertaking their work, authors therefore draw not only upon what others have previously written, and said, but also upon their own individual circumstances, perspectives, and inspiration.

Jenkins (2003, p.27), for instance, recognised that the process of writing history was influenced not just by epistemological, methodological and ideological factors, but also by more everyday concerns including the pressures arising from family and friends, interactions with academic peers, superiors and students, and also the considerations that inevitably arose from working with publishers. Alternative Glastonbury Text authors, although they rarely explicitly acknowledge the influence of such factors, may reasonably be assumed to often find themselves in a similar position.[45] However, aside from such immediate concerns, both academics and alternative writers have often been influenced not only by their views regarding the forces which have shaped the past, but also on those which will or should fashion the future. In doing so, they have drawn upon previous authorities in their field, but

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[45] For example, my own repeated attempts to meet with Howard-Gordon to discuss her work have been unsuccessful, as I was given to understand that she was busy working on a revised edition of Howard-Gordon (1982), and unable to spare the time.

they have also interpreted and shaped these in their own way, making their own contribution to the tradition that they work within and the knowledge it has produced in the process. The extent to which authors choose to explicitly acknowledge these influences within their work, however, may vary considerably – and even such fundamental matters as the identification of a text as an academic work are often implied through the conventions and methods adopted, rather than being explicitly stated. It is therefore important to keep an open mind, and consider a wide range of possible influences, when it comes to analysing these texts.

Purpose

Paradoxically, when it comes to setting out their purpose, Historical / Archaeological Texts tend to exhibit a combination two diametrically opposed approaches: the first of these is the practice of including early in the work a clear and simple statement of the author's objectives; the second is to remain virtually silent about them. The key to understanding, and then resolving, this apparent contradiction lies in appreciating the nature of academic scholarship.

Considering firstly the explicit statements of purpose, it is immediately noticeable that (where these are made at all) they are typically short, and make reference to the tradition of historical writing within which the work is being located. Thus, for example, when Robinson (1926, p.v) stated that he was investigating 'the historical truth' of the legends of Joseph of Arimathea, or Treharne (1967, p.10) made clear that his duty as a historian was to 'discover and reveal the truth, if his historical science and technique enable[d] him to do so', both of these authors were making immediate and intentional links between their work and the established traditions of historical writing. Their books were intended (at least partly) for a non-academic audience, and this may explain the absence of any further discussion of the kind of 'truth' that historical writing may actually be considered to contain. Should any reader wish to know their views on such questions, these simple references implicitly made it clear that other works within the historical tradition should be consulted; further comment within their own texts was simply not required.

Explicit references such as those cited above are generally more common in popular works, where the author perhaps feels the need to make their intellectual allegiances clear from the start. The second approach, to have no such statement at all, is more common when academics are writing for each other, where such a statement would be unnecessary, as the nature of the work is already clearly understood by both the author and the reader. Such texts are identified as lying within the academic tradition by a variety of means, but once this tradition has effectively been identified, it necessarily follows that the purpose of the text, the authorities that it draws upon, and indeed the methods and types of evidence that it is likely to employ are also largely prescribed. Thus, for example, when Lagorio wrote an article in the

academic journal *Speculum*[46] on 'The Evolving Legend of St Joseph at Glastonbury' in 1971, the title of the article and its presence in this publication were alone considered sufficient for readers to understand her purpose. No other explanation on the matter was offered, beyond including within her opening remarks an indication of the period in history upon which she would be focusing. Rahtz (2002) and various other academic texts are similarly silent regarding their purpose.

Comparing this situation with Alternative Glastonbury Texts, a number of striking contrasts are immediately apparent. The first of these again involves an element of paradox: an explicit statement of the purpose of the text is almost always offered, but the meaning of this statement is often far from clear (and the methods, evidence and conclusion which subsequently follow do little to shed further light upon the matter). Thus, for example, although Howard-Gordon (1982, pp.vii-viii) opened her introduction by stating that her purpose had been 'to write a short and simple guide-book to Glastonbury', it soon became evident her work would focus upon its various myths (as implied by the text's subtitle). However, neither the nature of myth itself nor the manner in which these myths were to be investigated was clarified further. Her discussion of the matter instead involved a series of suggestive but enigmatic observations, including that these myths were 'all preoccupied with the same theme', being 'speculations on the insoluble problems of the human condition' and that they were posing the common question: 'What is the meaning of Life?' Her further statements that 'myths are what make up the genuine process of history', and that since they constituted 'the backbone of a culture' they were more important than the 'chronicles of personalities and events which make up our history books' did little to clarify matters. No other discussion of the nature of myth was offered. However, what such statements did create was a general sense of the importance of the truths that her work would discuss, and their transcendence over the equivalent truths offered by academic scholarship. Equally mysterious was the purpose of a work such as Michell (1997), the introduction to which ended with the enigmatic claim that, by 'outlining the development of Glastonbury's magical legend' the text would 'restore the chain of sacred tradition which links the ancient past to the present and extends into the future' (Michell 1997, p.iii). It is noticeable that in both of these texts a claim was made involving the historical past, and its relevance to the present or future, in which a great but enigmatic truth was claimed to be revealed (or at least encountered). The extent to which these claims were borne out by the methods, evidence and conclusions subsequently offered is discussed further below. However, the contrast with Historical and Archaeological

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[46] 'A Journal of Medieval Studies', published by the Medieval Academy of America.

Texts is again striking, in that the nature of the truths which they lay claim to reveal are both more modest, and more immediately accessible.

Even in Alternative Glastonbury Texts which do not contain an explicit statement of their purpose, the 'great but enigmatic truth' is a theme which recurs with such frequency that it may almost be considered one of the defining characteristics of the genre, and therefore a purpose of the text whether explicitly acknowledged or not. Maltwood (1929) and Maltwood (1944), for example, launched into a discussion of the Zodiac without clearly stating whether the author's purpose was to demonstrate its existence, prove its antiquity or explore its symbolic significance. However, at various points within her work, Maltwood not only stated its figures to be the original from which all subsequent forms of Zodiac were derived, but also that they were the inspiration for the symbols of the four evangelists and the 'giants' referred to by subsequent poets and historians from the Greeks and Goths to the Indians, as well as implying that the Zodiac was also related to the epic of Gilgamesh (Maltwood, 1944, p.18; p.4; p.26; p.29). From these references alone, it is clear that her aims were highly ambitious, to say the least. Half a century later, Caine (1978), whose stated purpose was to further develop Maltwood's earlier work, was even less restrained, not only repeating Maltwood's claim that the Zodiac was the 'key to all Avalon's mysteries', but also stating it to be the Cauldron of Cerridwen and the original Round Table, and therefore the place where we can each undertake our own individual quest for the Holy Grail (Caine, 1978, p. 22; p.23). Furthermore, as the earliest Zodiac and therefore inspiration for all of Chaldean, Greek and Celtic mythology, she also considered it to enshrine 'the teaching of the ancient mysteries', being 'a vast and harmonius compendium of every kind of knowledge' from science, mathematics and astronomy to medicine, agriculture and psychology (Caine, 1978, p.25). As such, she considered it capable of unlocking 'the doors which divide the religions of the world from each other', and also 'the doors of specialist study in all the arts and sciences.' Similarly, Russell (1990, p.30), concluding his discussion of possible links between the Tor labyrinth and related Grail mythology, concluded that their significance lay in their potential to help heal the sickness of the world, and restore wisdom to mankind. Drawing upon such examples it is clear that, even where such an objective is not explicitly stated, the nature of the claims made within the body of Alternative Glastonbury Texts often reveal their purposes to be the exposition of hitherto hidden secrets which are at the same time both mysterious and of great importance, both for the individual reader and for humankind as a whole.

Closely related to this purpose of revealing a 'great but enigmatic truth', Alternative Glastonbury Texts are typically presented in such a way as to convey a strong implication of the specialness of the knowledge they convey. Furthermore, it is frequently implied that the

new and radical thinking which they contain will not only result in a paradigm shift for researchers in this field, but that, by the act of buying and reading the text, readers themselves to some extent become personally involved in that transformative process. For example, the claims of Bond (1918) and Michell (1997) regarding alleged correspondences between the Abbey layout and those of Joseph of Arimathea's circle of huts, Stonehenge, and the temple in Jerusalem have all the appearance of being sensational and revolutionary, when compared with contemporary orthodox scholarship.[47] Furthermore, although this sense of novelty alone carries an implicit invitation which is unique to each individual reader - the opportunity to embark upon a journey beyond the confines of conventional learning with the trailblazing author as their personal guide and authority - in some cases this sense of potential for individual transformation is made more explicit. The purpose of Michell (1997) as noted above is a good example of this. The suggestion that the text will 'restore the chain of sacred tradition' suggests that not only the author writing the text, but also that readers, through the act of reading it, are somehow involving themselves in a novel mystical experience, only made possible by the 'new light' which the title claims will be shed 'on the ancient mystery of Glastonbury.' Again, a clear contrast is evident here between Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological texts, from whose sober pages such mysterious, revolutionary or individualistic purposes are noticeably absent.

Given these differences, it is useful to examine and to contrast the views that each tradition takes of the other's purposes. Not surprisingly, given the comments above, these often suggest a degree of conflict. The chapter on 'myth and legend' within Rahtz (2003), for instance, started with a discussion of alternative attitudes to the myths of Glastonbury, at the end of which he concluded that they were simply 'the product of medieval and later invention', whose 'continued exposition as fact degrades real scholarship and historical truth' (Rahtz 2003, pp.53-54). On the other hand, it has already been noted above how the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts frequently assert the transcendence of their insights beyond those of the academics, and in this context the observations of Caine (1978, p.34), who claimed that the approaches taken by academics served only to perpetuate 'the even and relatively meaningless tenor of life', are particularly telling. Although a degree of tension has often characterised such exchanges, it should be noted that more moderate views have also been expressed. These include Hutton's assertion of the value of the legends as part of the re-enchantment of the landscape (see chapter 6) and also the treatment adopted in Mann (2001), whose division of his text into two separate parts, dealing firstly with the historical and then

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[47] It is interesting to note, however, that many of the ideas within these texts were in fact largely derived from the earlier work of Aubrey, Stukeley and Wood, among others, as discussed within chapters two and three of Hutton (2009).

with the mythical aspects of Glastonbury's past, appears to acknowledge a distinct but complementary value for each of them. However, such authors are arguably in a minority. Where the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts accept or draw upon academic work, there is normally somewhere a statement making it clear that they consider their own insights to transcend it (see for example the comments on Howard-Gordon (1982, 2010) in chapters 5 and 7).

It is clear, then, that in their purposes at least, Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological Texts show strikingly difference approaches. The purposes of Historical Texts, whether stated or implied, are typically modest, and draw heavily upon the tradition within which they are embedded. In contrast, Alternative Glastonbury Texts are typically revolutionary in nature, proclaiming 'great but enigmatic' truths which will supersede or transcend those of academic scholarship, and they implicitly invite the reader to undertake a personal journey of exploration and discovery into strange new worlds of knowledge, in the company of the author, as their guide. Furthermore, these are journeys which will not only transform our understanding of the past, present, and future of our society. They will also restore meaning to that society, and to readers' own individual lives.

Methods

One would normally expect the purpose of a text to have a clear and direct influence upon its methods, the evidence that it draws upon, and ultimately its conclusions. In the case of Historical / Archaeological Texts, this is undoubtedly the case. In much the same way that the purpose of such a text is largely implicit from the tradition it is located within, there are also a number of methodological conventions which the reader can immediately expect the text to adopt. The meticulous referencing of recognised authorities, which is an integral part of the academic approach, is discussed in detail in the following chapter. However, more generally, the careful scrutiny and evaluation of *all* documentary sources, together with explicit referencing within the text to show where and how they have been used, is a standard part of any academic methodology. This is not to say that historical texts are completely uniform in their methods. There a number of alternative systems for referencing which an author may choose between, and also a number of audiences for which they may be writing, so the approach adopted varies according to the circumstances. Nevertheless, a high degree of overall consistency is to be expected.

A useful example of the academic approach at work is provided by Gransden (1976), which contains an analysis of the development of the legends of Glastonbury (and in particular the Arthurian legend) during the 12th century. The main line of argument in this work consisted of outlining the precarious financial position of Glastonbury Abbey following the fire of 1184,

noting that 'monks habitually responded to such challenges by propaganda' (Gransden 1976, p.339), and then arguing that this combination of circumstances directly led to the 'bogus' exhumation of 'King Arthur', as a means of helping to raise new funds for the reconstruction.

The text is noticeable firstly for the extensive and detailed assembling of evidence from a variety of sources, in many cases as citations of the work of other historians, but also from a range of primary historical documents. Some of this evidence has a direct bearing upon the argument that Gransden developed. However, much of it was used to provide a contextual framework, which set out the circumstances that the monks of Glastonbury found themselves in during the 12th century, and the various factors which may therefore have influenced their actions. To get from this starting point to her eventual conclusions involved a significant step, which relied upon her correctly inferring the actions of the monks based upon the circumstances within which they found themselves.[48] However, Gransden's text is notable for the degree of rigour with which this was done.[49] Also notable is the fact that she considered and discussed alternative hypotheses, summarising both the evidence in their favour, and then her reasons for rejecting them. This text therefore provides a good illustration of many of the characteristics of academic work that were previously outlined within chapter 4: the compilation and analysis of a significant body of documentary evidence, for which sources were explicitly stated, the awareness of historical context, and also the use of 'causality' to infer the motivations, and thus the actions, of historical subjects. In many ways, Gransden (1976) may therefore be regarded as a good example of the 'standard' approach which all academics may be expected to bring to their work.

However, as has been noted above, within this overall uniformity a number of variations in approach may nevertheless be discerned. Useful examples of this are provided by further examination of the texts of Robinson (1926) and Treharne (1967), which were provisionally discussed within chapter 4. Robinson (1926), for example, included a clear statement that his aim was to discover the 'historical truth' of the Joseph and Arthur legends. However, although (as has already been noted in chapter 4) his work then contained no explicit reference to the methods that he would employ, it is nevertheless apparent from the text that the only

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[48] It is notable that, notwithstanding the evidence which she marshalled in support of her arguments, Gransden nevertheless relied to some extent upon a claim that her conclusions were 'obvious'. This again highlights the problematic nature of such an assertion, as discussed within chapter 4.

[49] Unusually, amongst texts on Glastonbury, this text did include explicit references to back up the claim that the monks stood to gain financially from such a fraud (Gransden 1976, p.337). This point is often discussed in both academic and alternative literature, but very rarely is solid evidence actually produced by either side in support of their conclusions (at least insofar as the history of Glastonbury is concerned). However, it should also be recognised that, in reaching her conclusions, Gransden, a specialist on medieval chronicles, was implicitly drawing upon the experience she had gained from examining a large number of other similar situations.

evidence which he considered to be worthy of discussion consisted of documents, and indeed documents whose historical authenticity could be demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt. To the extent that a narrative of events could be reconstructed directly from this evidence, he regarded it admissible as history; anything else was not.

As was also noted in chapter 4, a similar approach was adopted in Treharne (1967), except that he (generally) accorded more weight to the evidence provided by archaeology, and also made extensive use of contextual and circumstantial evidence. However, a number of other features of Treharne's methods are also worthy of interest. In the first place, it is notable that, early on in his text, he stated as a general principle that legends for which there was no existing early documentary support were (in effect) highly unlikely to be authentic. Given the extremely high standards which he (like Robinson) set for documentary evidence to be 'admissible', and the fact that he (of course) knew in advance that none of the Glastonbury documents would reach this high standard, this in effect ensured from the outset that the case in favour of the legends would fail. However, this was achieved simply by asserting a general principle which suited his purposes (and which had all the appearance of being part of the accepted canon of historical method), but which he had not, in fact, demonstrated to be supportable. In addition, Treharne's text is notable for the degree of assurance with which he concluded, based upon purely circumstantial evidence, that the monks 'must have' faked the exhumation,[50] and also for the fact that he conveniently managed to overlook Radford's recent excavations in the Abbey grounds, which, as it happens, had provided a degree of circumstantial evidence supporting the authenticity of King Arthur's exhumation.[51] With the benefit of hindsight, it is interesting to note here that, as set out within chapter 2, the recent work of Gilchrist and Green has now effectively disproved Radford's assertions regarding the support that his excavations offered to the historicity of Arthur's exhumation. It is also interesting to note Gilchrist's suggestion that, in reaching his conclusions, Radford may to some extent have been influenced by a desire to please his American sponsors (Gilchrist, 2013).

From these examples alone, it is clear that, although historians and archaeologists may to a large extent share common purposes and methodologies, and reach very similar conclusions, this does not mean there are no differences of purpose, or approach, between them. One is also tempted to conclude that, in some cases, their selection and presentation of the evidence supporting their case may not always be completely impartial.

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[50] The degree of confidence with which Treharne (1967) stated his conclusions was heavily criticised by Ashe (1984, p.62), given the nature of the evidence which Treharne had offered in support of them.
[51] Ashe (1984, p.68) also criticised Treharne (1967) for omitting any consideration of Radford's work from his analysis.

In summing up the academic approach to investigating the Glastonbury legends, then, there is clear evidence of how the characteristics of academic work outlined within chapter 4 (regarding documentary evidence, appreciation of historical context, and also the use of 'causality') are reflected within the work of the Glastonbury Historians. However, there is also evidence of how each academic brings their own interpretation to these general principles, and, potentially, distorts them in the process. In particular, though, the concept of verifiability is clearly of fundamental importance. As has been observed in relation to Bond's excavations (James and Thorpe 1999, p.621), 'archaeological excavation is an unrepeatable experiment.' Nevertheless, in order to be accepted as meaningful knowledge, academics require arguments to be articulated in a manner which not only makes it clear what sources of information have been used, and how they have been used, but which also allows the reader to verify these sources, to the extent that such verification is feasible.

Comparing this situation with the methods adopted within Alternative Glastonbury Texts, a number of clear contrasts appear. In the first place, Alternative Glastonbury Text authors show a noticeable tendency to adopt, or perhaps in some instances mimic, the methods of the academics. This appears to be related to the desire to draw upon academic authority wherever possible (a topic which is discussed further in the following chapter). One way in which this is evident is through the citation of other texts, both from within their own tradition and from the academic tradition. However, these citations are rarely as extensive, or at the same level of detail, as is observed in academic work. Furthermore, in order to support their frequent assertion of the 'scientific' nature of their findings, the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts frequently purport to draw upon mathematics, in particular the use of 'special numbers' and 'special geometry'.[52] Complex diagrams and supporting calculations are presented which have the appearance of containing sophisticated analysis, but in fact the mathematics involved is quite elementary, and the links between the various computations performed and the argument being developed in the text is either obscure, or relies upon deriving various 'special numbers' which are allegedly embedded within the designs. In addition, the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts also employ a number of other rather less orthodox methods.

One method of argument commonly employed within alternative texts is the development of an argument by means of suggestion. Possible links between pieces of disparate evidence are identified (often with a note of caution being expressed by the author), but having suggested the existence of these connections, the text then moves on to other related

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[52] Examples would include the assertions within Bond (1918, pp.147-9) that the Abbey was laid out based upon 74-foot squares (a number he considered to carry mystical significance), the similar use of geometry / mathematics within Michell (1997, chapter 15), and the further speculations within Mann (2001, pp.104-7).

discussions before any clear conclusion has been reached. However, later on in the text, the connection proposed will then often be assumed, either explicitly or implicitly, to have been demonstrated. A good example of this is seen in the discussion of Joseph of Arimathea within Mann (2001, pp.21-3). As recounted within this text, the legend of Joseph's visit was first described as a 'story', after which it was viewed as an allegory for the arrival of Christianity in Britain (linked to the new Age of Pisces), and considered to be 'peculiarly satisfying' even if 'quite unable to be proven true' (Mann 2001, p.21). Soon afterwards, the earliest church was 'said to' have been built by Joseph, but (after again making it clear that the 'historic truth' was unknown), Mann then went on to note the 'structural consistency' of the legend with a number of 'older traditions'. On the basis of all of this evidence, he then finally concluded that, in developing Joseph's legend to increase the reputation of the Abbey, the monks had 'wisely retained a mythical truth to the far older pagan religion', and that 'from the Christian tradition it was therefore possible to read the ancient story of the island' (Mann 2001, pp.22-3). However, no explanation was offered in the text as to why the caution initially expressed with regard to the legend was not reflected within this final conclusion.

There are a number of common variations on this approach. For example, in cases where it has been explicitly accepted that the particular connection discussed has not been firmly established, a text often first discusses the question in cautious terms, without reaching any firm conclusion, but then, later on in the text, make further observations which imply that a link of some kind does indeed exist. When Joseph's visit was first noted in Howard-Gordon (1982), for example, its status was clearly identified as being 'legend', and the detailed discussion of the Abbey's 'Christian Associations' which followed similarly noted how it was from 'tradition' that the story derived (Howard-Gordon, 1982, p.16; p.27). However, after noting the references within William of Malmesbury to Joseph's dedication of his church to the Virgin Mary,[53] a number of correspondences between the Joseph legend and Glastonbury's Goddess tradition were then used to support Howard-Gordon's assertion that there had been a 'pre-existing Goddess cult at Glastonbury', an assertion which implicitly placed some kind of reliance upon the authenticity of the legend. However, to confuse the matter further, the truth of all this early history was then qualified in a subsequent paragraph, so that the extent to which the legend was considered to have been authenticated remained ultimately unclear. A similar approach was adopted in Russell (1990, pp.27-30), where similarities between the chi-rho symbol and the design of the central section of the Tor maze were used to suggest that Joseph did indeed visit Glastonbury (bringing with him the Holy Grail). In this case, the

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[53] It is notable here that Howard-Gordon's analysis did not mention the issue of the later textual interpolations that were made to William of Malmesbury's original work.

conclusions reached were articulated slightly more clearly; but the means by which the methods and evidence were considered to offer support to them remained decidedly obscure.

The air of mild confusion that accompanies this method of 'suggested association' in some cases becomes heightened to the point where the line of argument, and even the final conclusion, become extremely hard to follow (or even non-existent). This is particularly noticeable within Maltwood (1944), where the chapters dealing with the origins of the Zodiac were a rambling collection of historical assertions, partially justified, suggestive associations based upon perceived links between strands from various legends and mythologies, and outright assertions for which no support was offered at all (Maltwood, 1944, pp.3-35). The author's enigmatic statement that her insights were due to the 'specialized training' she had cultivated over the previous 25 years did little to clarify by what means she considered her discoveries to have been made, but it did serve to increase both the mysterious nature of the text and (as noted above) the sense of the unique insights which it offered (Maltwood, 1944, p.13). Michell (1997) exhibits similar features. The enigmatic nature of its purpose has already been noted; when the reader turns to the body of the text to discover the means by which the promised secrets are to be revealed, they encounter a strange mixture of historical and archaeological reasoning, combined with 'suggestive associations' drawn from mythology, other fields of knowledge, or simply the author's own unsupported assertions.

The use of the author's own opinion or firsthand experience within alternative texts is itself a technique worthy of more detailed examination, as the testimony of the individual is generally accorded a much higher status than in historical / archaeological writing. In some cases this may amount to simply recounting analyses or investigations that have been undertaken, and they produce results which are open to debate and carry a degree of conviction. A good example is provided by Ashe (1982), in which not only was the Tor labyrinth theory tested by the eminently sensible method of attempting to walk along its path (something that had not previously been undertaken), but the author also considered the form and layout of the terraces, and used various novel arguments to indicate ways in which these were consistent with the existence of the labyrinth. He also considered some of the counterarguments that had been raised, and provided a reasoned challenge to them. Ashe's conclusion, typically, was cautious: that the facts observed 'do not prove the maze's reality', but that they did 'go some way towards proving its credibility' (Ashe 1982, p.2). An interesting contrast with this approach, however, is provided in Caine (1978, p.23), where it was stated that it was only at the 'crucial bar of personal experience' that each individual could ultimately judge the truth of the various mythical aspects of the Zodiac. This statement was later echoed in Howard-Gordon (1982, p.42), where it was acknowledged that 'the actual meanings and

symbolism we find in the zodiac are, therefore, of our own making', further emphasising the possibility of a plurality of meaning. Given that Ashe, a leading figure in Glastonbury circles, was famously unconvinced by the Zodiac,[54] a position which drew him much criticism,[55] it is interesting to speculate whether this 'softened' approach might represent a conscious or subconscious attempt to reconcile (or at least to acknowledge) different factions which existed within the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition.

Before drawing together the diverse strands of method employed within Alternative Glastonbury Texts, one further technique which should not be overlooked (and has already been mentioned in passing) is the 'bold assertion': the simple statement of an alleged fact, which is presented authoritatively without any further evidence being offered. This presentation is frequently encountered in the works of Michell,[56] but is also evident within Caine (1978).[57] An interesting variation on this technique involves appeal to what the author considers to be 'obvious'. To Michell (1997, p.39) it was 'obvious' that the Tor had been shaped by the hand of man; Bond (1918, p.155) similarly stated that nothing should be accepted which was not first 'fully endorsed by reason and common sense.' However, as was astutely noted in Ashe (1984, p.158), and repeated in James and Thorpe (1999, p.288), the 'obvious' explanation can vary considerably, depending upon to whom you are speaking. It is therefore interesting to find in these observations almost the perfect echo of the concerns expressed within Johnson (2010), as summarised within chapter 4 regarding the arguments adopted from time to time by academic archaeologists. Any assertion whose main justification is that the author considers it to be 'obvious' must be viewed as potentially unsupported, except by the personal authority or prestige of the author in question. Furthermore, if both academics and alternative theorists resort to such arguments, then this raises the question of the basis upon which readers should distinguish between them, and judge the validity of their competing claims.

Pulling together the observations above, what is therefore evident within Alternative Glastonbury Texts is a great diversity of approaches. In order to achieve their 'great but enigmatic' purposes, they draw upon both the findings and methods of historians and

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[54] As noted in chapter 2, Ashe's sceptical views regarding the Zodiac are rather pointedly set out in the foreword to Caine (1978, pp.15-17).

[55] Roberts (1992, p.22), for example, was very dismissive of Ash for the views the latter had expressed regarding the Zodiac.

[56] The first chapter of Michell (1997), for example, contained a detailed description of the nature and habits of the inhabitants of the 'primordial paradise' without a single piece of substantial evidence being offered in support of these claims.

[57] Caine (1978, p.22), for example, claimed that the Zodiac accurately replicated a celestial planisphere when scaled to the map of Avalon, but no further evidence was presented to support this assertion. Without such evidence, the reader effectively lacks the means to either prove, or disprove, the claim that has been made.

archaeologists, but combine these with a highly individual blend of 'suggestive association' and the author's own opinions, whether supported by analysis, accounts of their own investigations, or simply unsupported assertions. The effect is to create a rich mix of multiple strands of interweaving argument, with mystery, enigma and ambiguity constantly lurking in the background. Under such circumstances, it is almost inevitable that different authors will sometimes reach conclusions which are mutually incompatible, and that a conceptual framework which tolerates multiple points of view will be necessary if direct conflict is to be avoided. However, within all this richness and diversity, a number of recurring patterns may be discerned (some of which have been noted above). The nature and possible origin of these, in the absence of any standard texts setting out the accepted practices of this tradition, is discussed further in chapter 8 below. However, the contrast with Historical / Archaeological writing could not be more striking, given the narrow and focused approach of authors such as Treharne, Robinson and Rahtz, the much narrower (but also much more clearly defined) sense of meaning and knowledge which their works create, and the much greater consistency in the conclusions that they reach.

However, before leaving this section, it is worth investigating this apparent contrast a little further. Even Rahtz, for example, an author who was generally very careful to set out the evidence upon which he based his conclusions and the means by which he arrived at them, was nevertheless happy to simply state that a geological / agricultural origin for the Tor terraces was 'probably true' without any further justification (Rahtz 2003, p.67). He was also equally happy to commence his chapter on 'myth and legend' with the statement that 'most, if not all, of the myths associated with Glastonbury are a compendium of invention of medieval and later centuries' (Rahtz 2003, p.53), without offering further supporting evidence. As we have seen, particular instances of this second assertion were later supported by references to the work of Gransden, Burrow and others, and arguably Rahtz was simply offering in a succinct form his own précis of the detailed evidence he had examined upon the matter. However, such assertions by academics, leaning as they do solely upon the authority of the author, do run the risk of being (at least superficially) indistinguishable from the 'bold assertions' which are frequently encountered within Alternative Glastonbury Texts.

In a similar vein, it is also interesting to notice how often academic writers also make appeal to what they consider to be 'obvious'. To Treharne it was 'self-evident' that Geoffrey of Monmouth's work was fable and legend rather than history, while to Gransden (1976, p.337) there were a long list of 'obvious' reasons why the monks of Glastonbury would want to make use of literature to establish a long and holy tradition for the Abbey. Finally, when it comes to multiple meanings, one has only to note the (albeit minority) view expressed in Jenkins (2003)

and other postmodern theorists to recognise that it is not just the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts who argue that multiple meanings to a given text or artefact can coexist at any given time. In conclusion, while it is fair to observe that highly individual, multiple strands of argument and conclusion are predominantly observed within Alternative Glastonbury Texts, and that Historical / Archaeological Texts are much less individualised and exhibit much greater mutual consistency, it must also be acknowledged that the situation is actually more complex than this. Both kinds of text exhibit both kinds of characteristic, to a greater or lesser extent.

Evidence

When it comes to establishing the credibility of the case being put forward by an author, the evidence they present in support of their assertions must play a central role. This evidence may take a variety of forms, both orthodox and unorthodox, and the weight attached to different kinds of evidence may vary depending upon the nature of the case being argued. However, it is surely upon the basis of this evidence that the case being argued by the author must ultimately stand, or fall.

As was noted in chapter 4, the evidence drawn upon by historians generally consists primarily of documents produced in the past, while archaeologists instead principally make use of material remains from the past. Since documents are themselves material objects, and various kinds of material remains can in turn function as documents, these categories are not mutually exclusive, and there is a large degree of overlap between these two fields of study.[58] Thus, although Rahtz (2003, p.10) makes it clear that most of this text is concerned with archaeology, and the evidence provided by material remains from the past indeed occupies much of the volume, 'historical truth' is also mentioned within his stated purpose. His discussion of Arthur's exhumation, for example, involves consideration of the documentary evidence provided by William of Malmesbury and Gerald of Wales, as well the excavations of Radford, and consideration of the leaden cross found within the grave.[59] Conversely, as was noted above, Treharne (1967), examining the same question as a professor of history, relied largely upon documentary sources, although he did also include a brief (though arguably somewhat partial) analysis of the physical evidence.

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[58] These points are discussed further in Johnson (2010), who also notes the contrasting situation in North America, where archaeology is arguably more allied with anthropology.

[59] The fact that the lead cross is now lost, and can be examined only via earlier written accounts of it, further highlights the closeness of the relationship between archaeology and history. But even when the location of the artefact in question is still known, researchers are in practice often dependent upon a written account of it offered by other authors, perhaps provided at second or even third hand, and some while after the object was actually excavated.

In addition to this direct evidence, however, it is immediately evident from even the most cursory examination of historical and archaeological texts that they also make extensive use of secondary material. The overwhelming majority of this takes the form of earlier historical and archaeological texts (including the author's own previously published work), with, it may be noted, a few references to other academic work, but very few (if any) references to alternative texts. Occasionally information derived from academic sources may be critiqued or qualified,[60] but, coming as it does from within the academic tradition, and adhering as it is assumed to do to academic standards, it is generally accepted at face value. This means of establishing the credibility of a text by invoking the authority of previous texts plays such a significant role in establishing an evidence base, not only within Historical / Archaeological Texts, but also within Alternative Glastonbury Texts, that it is discussed separately below within chapter 6.

Returning, though, to the evidence derived directly by academic authors themselves, and presented in their works to support the assertions made within them, what is immediately apparent is that the extent of this work may vary significantly from one text to the next. Rahtz (1993), for example, being a popular book which offered the public a synthesis of the work of many scholars, quite naturally relied heavily upon references to these previous works in support of its assertions. Rahtz (1971), on the other hand, which was a detailed account of excavations made on the summit of Glastonbury Tor between 1964 and 1966, was largely devoted to the detailed description and illustration of the material evidence that was uncovered during these excavations. However, it should also be noted that even this publication nevertheless contained a significant proportion of 'contextual' material, which had been derived from previous publications. The situation within historical texts is very similar. The proportion of a historical text devoted to original contributions by the author is often relatively small, when compared with the material derived from external sources, and their contribution may even largely consist of deriving new insights by assembling or re-interpreting existing scholarship relevant to the subject (for example, the analysis of the evolution of the legend of Joseph of Arimathea set out within Lagorio 1971). Even in a text such as Scott (1981), a significant proportion of the book was nevertheless devoted to noting and commenting upon the work of other scholars, or drawing upon it to clarify the historical context within which William was writing.

Thus it can be seen that, although 'primary' evidence produced by the author does form a critical part of the evidence base within Historical and Archaeological Texts, this is almost never offered in isolation. Furthermore, it is often outweighed (and sometimes almost

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[60] Scott (1981, p.180), for example, noted the view of Gransden (1976, p.347) that 'undoubtedly most of the interpolations [to William of Malmesbury's *De Antiquitate*] were made soon' after the fire of 1184, but then argued that this claim now required modification.

overwhelmed) by the evidence derived from external sources, not least because such 'primary' evidence cannot be properly interpreted until it has been placed within the appropriate context. Nevertheless, the importance of this 'author derived' evidence does beg an important question: upon what basis should it be accepted by the reader at face value?

There are many potential answers to this question, but most of them ultimately come back to the principles governing academic research set out within chapter 4. The explicit referencing of historical sources means that the documentary evidence invoked by an author can be independently verified, if required. Such verification is rarely considered necessary, and on the few occasions when it is undertaken this is generally performed not by individual readers but by independent academics, acting in effect on the collective behalf of all readers. However, if an academic author were found to be inaccurate in their use of their sources, the professional consequences (in terms of destroyed reputation alone) would be highly serious.[61] This consideration, when taken together with the rigorous training that academics undergo and the high ethical standards they are expected to adhere to, mean that in practice a significant degree of trust is placed in the work produced by previous authors. This trust is only rarely found to have been misplaced.

However, when it comes to assessing the reliability of the evidence produced by academics, a number of caveats are nevertheless in order. Once an archaeologist has completed their work, the site is in effect largely destroyed, and all that remains for independent scrutiny are artefacts selected by them and the records made by the excavators. Furthermore, the evidence produced by academics may in some cases be ambiguous. Not only do all documents and material remains ultimately derive from the activity of humans, whose purpose in generating them may be far from clear, but the implications of such evidence may also be far from obvious. Caradoc's account of the encounter between Arthur and Melwas within his *Life of Gildas*, for example, has been used both by Ashe (1984, p.63; p.133) to argue in favour of the authenticity of Arthur's exhumation, and by Gransden (1976, p.352) to argue against it.[62]

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[61] Evans (1997, pp.116-8), for example, discusses at length the controversy that surrounded the work of Abraham, whose theories regarding the origins of the Weimar Republic in Germany were found upon investigation to have been based upon flawed evidence, and whose academic career very shortly thereafter came to a rather abrupt end (after which he became a lawyer instead...).

[62] This sequence of arguments began when Alcock (1971) argued that the Arthurian exhumation was unlikely to have been a fraud, due to the lack of any pre-existing Arthurian tradition at Glastonbury onto which such a story could have been grafted. Using the same logic, Gransden (1976, p.352) then noted that Caradoc's work suggested that just such a tradition did indeed exist, and therefore made fraud more likely. On the other hand, Ashe (1984, p.63; p.133), while accepting Caradoc's work as evidence of such a tradition, instead argued that this made the exhumation *more* plausible, as it suggested continuity of Arthurian associations at Glastonbury from the more distant past.

Contrasting this situation with the approach of Alternative Glastonbury Texts, it is immediately noticeable that although similar documentary and material evidence is drawn upon, the range of sources used is both much more restricted and more diverse (a point discussed in detail in the following chapter, insofar as it relates to drawing upon the work of previous authors). Moreover, it is particularly striking that new evidence generated by the author, often using unorthodox means such as dowsing, plays a much more prominent role, and also that such evidence is generally accorded a very high status. The highly individual insights contained within Maltwood (1944), for example, have already been noted, but equally notable are the dream / vision which acted as the inspiration for Russell (1990), and the automatic writing which was the source for Bond (1918). Less 'personal' additional evidence is usually also offered to support the insights gained from such sources,[63] but such evidence generally plays a secondary 'confirmatory' role,[64] and authors seem to expect readers to unquestioningly accept evidence they generated by means that were not open to wider scrutiny. Furthermore, they are typically surprised and affronted if this testimony is considered insufficient by their readers. For example, although automatic writing was the key source for Bond (1918), this was produced by Bond and JA without the involvement of any independent observers, and also selected, transcribed and tested against the archaeological evidence solely by them. However, they felt that a simple statement within Bond (1918) by Bond and JA regarding how they obtained and tested this evidence offered more than sufficient support for the integrity of their methods, and the reliability of their findings.[65] Both Kennawell (1965) and Hopkinson-Ball (2007) have noted not only the impatience which Bond showed towards people who questioned his methods and findings, but also the extent to which the texts he chose to present to the public had been very selectively chosen from the large number which had actually been generated.

Given the comments above, it is interesting to note (once again) how frequently the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts have proclaimed the 'scientific' status of their findings. In addition to the claims of Maltwood (1944) already noted above, the subtitle of Bond (1918) proclaimed his work to be a 'psychological experiment', offering for the scrutiny of his readers the table of 'veridical passages' relating to the Edgar Chapel, together with the

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[63] Bond (1918), for example, included accounts of the excavations which confirmed the existence of the Edgar Chapel, as well as the predictions obtained by automatic writing which he claimed had guided those excavations.

[64] Russell (1990), for example, confidently predicted that excavation would, in due course, confirm the Tor maze hypothesis.

[65] See Bond (1918, Part I), and in particular the 'testimonies' provided upon pages 79 and 80.

automatic drawings used to support a number of predictions regarding the (as yet unexcavated) Loretto Chapel.[66]

What emerges from this analysis, then, are further indications of how Alternative Glastonbury Texts are both diverse and highly individual in their approach to the legends of Glastonbury. They draw upon the same evidence that Historical / Archaeological Texts do, although much more selectively and with less evidence of wider contextual understanding, but they generally supplement this with a significant measure of evidence that was either gained by or generated by the individual author, often using means which are not open to wider scrutiny. Such 'individuality' does also occur within Historical / Archaeological Texts, but it is much less prominent, with much greater emphasis placed upon the text being transparent, and open to challenge and verification by readers or third parties. Indeed, even though there has been much debate within academia regarding the impact that researchers have upon the process of research, and upon the evidence that they generate, this nevertheless remains the aspect of these texts which appears to be least open to individual influence.

Conclusions (of the texts reviewed)

It might be expected that once a text's purpose has been set out, and the evidence assessed using appropriate methods, then the conclusions will necessarily follow, and that little more need be said on the matter. Further investigation and reflection, however, once again reveal the situation to be rather more complex.

Within academic writing, a close correspondence between a text's purpose and its conclusion is expected, and also generally observed, both in the detailed argument and 'mini conclusions' of each subsection within the text, and in the final observations which are made at the end of the volume. Thus James and Thorpe (1999), whose purpose was to 'give a fair run' to a number of unorthodox theories (Thorpe, N., personal communication, 24 February 2011), invariably concluded each topic with an assessment of the extent to which the purported 'mystery' under examination was or was not supported or explained by their analysis of the available evidence. The existence of the Zodiac and the authenticity of Arthur's exhumation, for example, were considered, and then roundly rejected. The Tor labyrinth was allowed to be at least as plausible as alternative explanations of the terraces, but, on the other hand, the shortcomings in the 'scientific' methods of Bond (1918) were considered to be so endemic as to render any independent assessment of the matter impossible. However, while the argument and structure of such texts always convey the impression of impartial investigation, it has already been observed that this may be deceptive, and there is no reason

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[66] Sadly, later excavations were to show that Bond's predictions regarding the Loretto Chapel were highly inaccurate.

why purpose, methods and evidence could not actually have been (consciously or subconsciously) selected by the author based upon their a priori assumptions.[67] Nevertheless, while it is always necessary to approach a text mindful that such processes might have been at work in the author's mind (either consciously or subconsciously), it must be conceded that academic texts do, as presented, ostensibly follow a logical and structured process from purpose though to conclusion. Furthermore, these conclusions are of a similar nature to the text's alleged purpose; that is, of fulfilling their modest claims to be making an incremental addition to the knowledge of the tradition within which they are working. And, when it comes to considering the legends of Glastonbury, as was suggested in chapter 1, these conclusions are generally decidedly negative. The case for the Zodiac has been completely dismissed by the academics. Views on the legends of Joseph and Arthur have been overwhelmingly negative, except for brief acknowledgments that they cannot be absolutely proved to be untrue. Views on the Tor maze vary from 'unconvinced' to 'cautiously favourable'. But when it comes to Bond, the verification procedures that he adopted are considered to be so flawed that any merits his sources might once have had are now felt to be completely indeterminable.

Further examination reveals the conclusions within academic texts not only to be simply stated, but also to be one of a strictly limited number of types. In some cases authors will feel sufficiently confident of the conclusions that may be drawn from their methods and evidence to state their conclusions with a high degree of assurance, as in Treharne (1967), or James and Thorpe (1999) as noted above. In others, where the evidence is more equivocal, a range of possible solutions may be offered, and perhaps a marginal preference between them indicated, as in Rahtz (2003, p.67) regarding the origin of the Tor terraces. In some cases they may feel that the evidence is so slight that no assessment can actually be offered with any confidence. Just occasionally, an explicit conclusion may appear to be lacking, such as in Robinson (1926), where the discussion effectively ended with the observation that there was no evidence that either the Joseph or Arthur legends were ancient; however, in such cases the implicit conclusion is invariably clear. In some cases the conclusions drawn by scholars may change over time,[68] but it is unusual for this to represent more than a change of emphasis in the weighing of evidence, or general developments in the wider understanding of the relevant context.[69] Indeed, although the assembly and discussion of the relevant evidence in an

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[67] See the previous discussion of the purpose of Treharne.

[68] One example of academic opinion evolving over time is provided the varying views during the 20th century regarding the historicity of King Arthur, which are discussed in detail within Hutton (2003, chapter 2).

[69] For example, it is notable that considerably more credibility was attributed to the Neolithic / Tor maze hypothesis within both Hutton (2003) and Rahtz (2002) than had been the case within Hutton (1991) and Rahtz (1993), even though almost no new evidence had emerged in the interim. According to

academic text may be a lengthy and involved process, the arguments proposed at each stage of the work are typically clearly and concisely stated, and the conclusions relatively simple to comprehend (regardless of whether the reader happens to agree with them). Academic work may be complex in its detail, but it is generally simplistic in the conclusions it offers.

Simplicity and complexity also feature within the structure of Alternative Glastonbury Texts, although in very different ways, but once again a high degree of diversity is observed. In some cases, the types of conclusions drawn are similar to those observed within academic texts, but more often their nature actually remains far from clear. At the more orthodox end of the spectrum are writers such as Ashe, whose arguments in favour of the historicity of Arthur and Joseph lead to the conclusion that these were 'just possible' and 'slightly more than just possible' (Ashe 1984, p.97). Ashe also concluded, with rather more conviction, that the case against them remained unproven (Ashe 1984, p.74; p.97). As well as making the telling observation that what was 'obvious' varied widely from one author to another (see above), Ashe (1984, p.132) also noted the enigmatic nature of Glastonbury, where multiple explanations remained possible, with the unorthodox ones persistently refusing to subside in the face of more orthodox ones, a point which was later discussed at more length within Hutton (2003, chapter 3). Ashe's more decisive rejection of the Zodiac has already been noted, as an example that again draws attention to the fragmented nature of the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition. Not only do these texts frequently disagree with each other's conclusions,[70] but multiple conclusions within a single text are also offered. Caine (1978, p.37), for example, stated that the answer to a question can validly be 'both yes and no at once' (an insight which she claimed modern quantum physicists shared, in contrast to the 'icy materialism' that had prevailed in Maltwood's day), while (as has already been noted above) Howard-Gordon (1982) asserted that the Zodiac could mean different things to different people. In some cases, this ambiguity is so deeply embedded within the style of the text that it is far from clear what conclusions are actually being offered. The stated purpose of Michell (1997), for example, may well have been 'great but enigmatic', but the increasingly disjointed structure of the final chapters render the nature of its conclusions thoroughly obscure, as is the extent to which these initial promises have actually been fulfilled. Similarly, although it might be argued that the conclusions of Howard-Gordon (1982) regarding the myths of Glastonbury are in effect interwoven amongst the chain of associations within the text, these conclusions are never actually explicitly stated. To the extent that Alternative Glastonbury

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Hutton, this was simply due to 'a more generous assessment of the available evidence' (Hutton, R., personal communication, 18 August 2010).
[70] Not only did Ashe (1984) and Caine (1978) have widely differing views of the Zodiac, but even Caine (1978) and Maltwood (1944) offered very different accounts of it.

Texts deliver on their high promises, this lies within enigmatic hints embedded in the flow of the text, rather than within their explicit conclusions.

Before drawing this discussion to a close, a few comments on the views of each tradition regarding the conclusions drawn by the other are once again instructive. Treharne (1967, p.118), having dismissed all of the evidence proposed in favour a visit by Joseph, was very careful to make it clear that his work did not, nevertheless, conclusively prove Joseph *not* to have ever visited Glastonbury. A similar concession was acknowledged by Lagorio (1976, p.230). However, in the absence of any credible supporting evidence, Treharne simply relegated this to 'the realm of pious conjecture.' Strikingly similar sentiments were made in Rahtz (2003, p.66), where belief in the existence of the Zodiac was considered 'a matter of faith rather than reason.' The claims within Alternative Glastonbury Texts are typically either dismissed outright, or concluded to lie beyond the realm of what can and cannot be proved. The attitude of the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts to the conclusions of the historians and archaeologists, meanwhile has already been noted within previous sections. To the extent they support the argument being developed, they are cited; to the extent they do not, they are either dismissed, or considered to be 'transcended' by the new insights being proposed by the author.

Thus, in their conclusions as in their purposes, methods and use of evidence, there are both parallels and contrasts between Historical / Archaeological Texts. Like their purposes, academic texts offer modest but consistent conclusions that are clear and comprehensible, representing an incremental contribution to an established body of work. The conclusions of Alternative Glastonbury Texts, on the other hand, are much more diverse, fragmented, and enigmatic. Ultimately, both their meanings, and the 'great but enigmatic' promises made at their outset, appear to be inseparable from their all-pervasive sense of mystery.

Conclusions (of this chapter)

The aim of this chapter has been to set out an initial assessment of the basis upon which the authors of Historical / Archaeological Texts and Alternative Glastonbury Texts could claim that the assertions within their works should have any form of authority for their readership, by means of a detailed examination of the purposes presented, the evidence drawn upon, the methods employed and the conclusions reached in a number of different texts. In undertaking this investigation, a number of similarities and differences between the two traditions have been established. Historical / Archaeological Texts, for example, may be seen to be characterised by their (relative) unity of purpose, and the high degree of consistency in the methods they employ, the types of evidence that they draw upon and the kinds of conclusions that they reach. They work within a clearly defined tradition, with accepted procedures which

are widely respected. Although variations do sometimes arise, these are due to the differing degrees of emphasis placed upon particular kinds of evidence, rather than from any fundamental disagreements regarding objectives or methodologies. Their procedures are systematic, transparent and (to the extent practicable) repeatable, by way of verification. Their objectives are modest, ever mindful of the tradition that they work within, and focused upon making incremental contributions to the existing knowledge of the academic tradition.

Although they draw upon a common body of evidence, and employ some of the same techniques (albeit selectively, and with less evidence of contextual rigour), Alternative Glastonbury Texts, on the other hand, exhibit a number of striking differences to Historical / Archaeological Texts. Their stated purposes are often the revelation of great, but enigmatic, truths transcending those of the historians and archaeologists. They approach their work in a variety of ways, but typically exhibit a high degree of individuality in the methods they employ and the evidence that they draw upon, which are often effectively inaccessible to further enquiry or verification by the reader. Nevertheless, in spite of their diversity, these methods do exhibit a number of recurring patterns. One particularly common approach relies upon the use of chains of suggestive associations, which imply the existence of connections between disparate facts. These connections are never rigorously demonstrated, but are nevertheless treated as embodying meaning, in some form. This vagueness of purpose and argument becomes increasingly prevalent as these texts draw towards their conclusions, which (if explicitly stated at all) tend to be highly suggestive, decidedly enigmatic, and exceedingly obscure. The 'great but enigmatic' truths which they set out to elucidate therefore remain as mysterious at their conclusion as they were at their start. With these characteristics, it is hardly surprising that the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts reach a wide range of conclusions, many of them mutually incompatible, and that a highly fragmented tradition results. In some cases, open conflict and schism arises; in others, a multivalent culture prevails, within which apparently irreconcilable differences of opinion are not considered to be a matter for concern.

However, what this initial analysis also reveals is the extent to which there are 'unseen hands' at work in the background when any text is created. The extent of the external references observed in both academic and alternative texts have made it abundantly clear that the work of previous authors, whether from within the same tradition or from other traditions, plays a significant role in the arguments developed by these texts, and in particular in their attempts to establish the validity of their claims. This may be evident in the form of direct references which authors use to support their case, or more indirectly through the suggested association of their work with the authority and prestige of an existing tradition (which may or

may not be the tradition their own text is located within). However, it is nevertheless clear that much of the credibility of a given text often depends heavily upon the credibility of the other texts which came before it. What is also clear is that, quite aside from any purpose explicitly acknowledged the author, other agendas of a more personal nature may also be at work when a text gets written. To form a more complete view of the nature and meaning of these texts, it is clearly important to gain a better understanding the nature and significance of these 'unseen' forces. It is therefore upon questions such as these that the following chapter now focuses.

Chapter 6: Context and Intertext

Introduction

As would be expected, the detailed textual analysis within the previous chapter has illustrated how both academic and alternative authors frequently draw upon the authority of previous writers as a means of supporting the assertions made within their own texts. In the process, it has also become clear how the personal agendas or aspirations of authors may potentially play a major role in the shaping of a text, even (in some cases) those texts which were written by academics. What inferences may be drawn from these observations? And what are the implications for the credibility of the claims made within both academic and alternative texts? The purpose of this chapter is to explore these two questions. It does this by firstly considering relevant academic literature on the matter, by then undertaking a detailed analysis of how Glastonbury authors have drawn upon previous authorities to support the claims made in their texts, and finally by considering the ways in which the personal history of a number of these authors may have influenced their work.

So far as the Historical and Archaeological traditions are concerned, as is clear from the general discussion within chapter 4, the referencing of previous academic work is very much an integral part of accepted academic practice. The works of previous writers ('secondary sources') can not only supply specific information relevant to the case which the author is developing, but they also provide some of the general contextual information which is so important for academic research. While the information within them should not necessarily be accepted without question, they remain a potentially valuable source of evidence, and judicious use of this should enhance the credibility of the author's own text. One would therefore expect to find such references arising within Historical and Archaeological Texts. This is not, of course, to say that ideas drawn from outside the academic tradition would have no place at all in such texts, and no credibility. However, such ideas would first need to be rigorously tested, in order to determine whether or not they measured up against strictly academic criteria.

Furthermore, it should also be recognised that in a wider sense, the academic tradition as a whole (that is, its principles, methods and conventions) forms a much broader context within which its practitioners work (or at least are expected and assumed to work). These principles, methods and conventions may not be explicitly stated within each individual text, but they are nevertheless understood to provide the framework within which authors are working. As such, they in effect act as an 'unseen' influence upon how the text is shaped, how it will be interpreted (at least by the academic community) and, ultimately, upon how credible it will be.

In summary, then, both in terms of the detailed historical information and the conceptual framework that they provide, previous texts are expected to play an essential role in supporting the credibility of academic work.

Staying for the moment within the academic community, the question of the influence of an author's individual perspective (whether shaped by their immediate circumstances, their cultural background or their genetic origins) is however a rather more complex one. As discussed within chapter 4, writers such as Elton (1969) have argued that it should have no influence beyond affecting an author's style. On the other hand, though, some writers have asserted that it is only individuals from within a given cultural tradition who are actually able to comprehend and faithfully articulate that tradition; a view which is discussed, and challenged, by Evans (1997, pp.211). Upon such a basis, a particular personal history would not only be acceptable, but essential to one's role as a historian. Furthermore, as was noted in the previous chapter, there have clearly been at least some instances where it is recognised that historians have allowed their professional judgement to be swayed by their preconceptions. And similar considerations apply when it comes to academic archaeology. While the views expressed upon this issue have therefore varied, it is at least clear that further investigation of the backgrounds of individual academics and their motives is needed before a balanced assessment can be made of the claims contained within their texts.

Moving beyond purely historical and archaeological literature, the lack of an explicit theoretical framework for Alternative Glastonbury Texts means that one cannot use similar methods to summarise their stance on such matters, or compare their views with those of the academics. However, drawing upon the methodology set out in chapter 3, it is proposed that the broader 'environment' within which a text is written, and read, is of critical importance to the meaning that text may be said to generate, and therefore to both the nature of its claims and the ways in which these are justified, either explicitly or implicitly. Kristeva's arguments regarding the importance of the 'intertextuality' created by other works (such as accepted / rejected authorities) in the interpretation and meaning of any text are of particular relevance here, and these arguments remain equally valid whether writers are working with or outside of the academic tradition. It is therefore clear that the existing body of work within which a text is written and the personal situation of the author are of fundamental importance in the creation of textual meaning.

It is therefore to a more detailed analysis of the use of authorities within texts about Glastonbury that we now turn.

Authority

<u>Drawing upon the authorities of one's own tradition</u>

Considering firstly the historical and archaeological traditions, the work of Philip Rahtz provides a number of useful examples of an academic drawing upon the work of his predecessors. The dismissal of the Zodiac in Rahtz (2003, p.66), for example, relied upon a brief précis of the arguments previously proposed in Burrow (1983), who was cited within his bibliography. Similarly, a short account of Gransden (1976) was sufficient to justify Rahtz's assertion that she had 'coolly demolished' any claims regarding the authenticity of Arthur's exhumation (Rahtz, 2003, p.56). No further analysis of either case was considered necessary, arguably because Rahtz was confident in placing reliance upon his colleagues' application of the standards required within their professions. Similarly brief but explicit referencing is common throughout academic work. This typically either takes the form observed within Rahtz (2003), supplemented by more explicit referencing of sources within the body of the text if required (in effect drawing upon the Harvard system of referencing), or follows the approach adopted within Hutton (2003), where detailed notes of sources were provided at the end of the work, and these were then cross referenced to the main text by means of a simple numbering system.

Turning to the Alternative Glastonbury Texts, a similar principle regarding citation of authorities from within one's own tradition appears to operate. However, upon closer inspection it becomes clear that it is much more loosely applied. A number of examples of this tendency are provided in particular by the work of John Michell, who drew heavily upon, but extensively adapted, the previous work of Bond (Hopkinson-Ball, T., personal communication, 18 April 2012). Thus, for example, in drawing upon Bond (1918), Michell clearly acknowledged this authority within his text and his bibliography (Michell, 1997, p.13, p.78, pp.135-8, p.169). However, what Michell did not include was the more detailed page referencing normally provided by academics. Further investigation not only reveals this less detailed approach to be almost typical within Alternative Glastonbury Texts, but that even the level of referencing provided within Michell is frequently absent. It is also noticeable that bibliographies within alternative texts are generally much shorter than academic ones, and much more selective. It is also interesting to note the extent to which the tradition in question dictates the authorities that need, or do not need, to be discussed. The historical discussion within Maltwood (1944), for example, was largely devoted to refuting the theories of fellow-mystic Blavatsky, rather than to any consideration of the views of academic historians or archaeologists.

<u>Drawing upon the authorities of other traditions - historical and archaeological approaches</u>

In addition to their use of sources from within their own tradition, there are also a limited number of instances where one tradition draws more explicitly upon the work of an opposing tradition. Although more limited in number, these 'cross-tradition' citations are of great interest for the insights which they yield; and also for the differences between the two traditions that they reveal.

Considering firstly Historical and Archaeological Texts, it has already been noted that relatively few Alternative Glastonbury Texts are listed within their bibliographies, with even fewer citations from such works being made within the body of the text itself. A number of do exceptions occur, including Rahtz's brief discussion of the Zodiac theory already noted above. However, where these arise they are mostly made almost for the sake of completeness, in order to acknowledge but then dismiss a theory which, however ill-founded it may be, is nevertheless well known, and therefore requires inclusion within any text which seeks to address all aspects of Glastonbury's history. Such references are typically accompanied by a brief reference to the academic author who refuted the theory within the Alternative Glastonbury Text in question, before the discussion moves on.

However, there are also a few instances where Alternative Glastonbury Text claims are considered to be worthy of consideration, a good example of this being the discussion of the Tor labyrinth contained within Rahtz (2003). Where this is the case, it is noticeable that the theory is considered solely upon its merits with regard to historical / archaeological evidence and methods, and the unorthodox nature of its inspiration is either not acknowledged (as is the case with the Russell's labyrinth), or is stated in terms which, so far as possible, present it more neutrally as a source of inspiration which lies beyond the present limits of science but which cannot at this point be either accepted or wholly dismissed. The treatment of Bond (1918) within James and Thorpe (1999) is a good example of this approach. This cautious treatment is only to be expected where the subject matter concerns questions such as spiritualism, where popular opinion is known to be divided.

Based upon these examples, it is fair to conclude that there is evidence that Historical and Archaeological Texts are open to the theories of alternative writers, including those of the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition. However, given the previous comments regarding the importance of maintaining the required standards of academic proof, such alternative theories must always be first tested against these standards before they can be admitted into the cannon of accepted scholarship. However, even with this caveat in mind, it is interesting to pause for a moment, and digress briefly to consider further the role that personal situation may have played in some of the decisions made by archaeologists.

The example is provided once again by Rahtz, and the degree of respect that he accorded to Russell's labyrinth theory, as was noted above. On the face of it, his presentation of the theory appears to be fair and balanced, and based solely upon the evidence to hand. However, what Rahtz did not (in this volume, at least) make clear was that the entire series of excavations which he undertook in the Glastonbury area were in fact funded by a number of charitable bodies, including a trust which had been set up by Russell himself (Rahtz, 1974, p.8), with the express purpose of investigating whether or not there was any physical evidence to support some of the earliest legends of Glastonbury (Rahtz, 1991, pp.134-5). Is it possible that Rahtz was influenced by the desire to show respect to someone who was acting as a patron to his work? An interesting precedent is provided by his work on Old Sarum in 1957, in which he allowed a local dowser to explore the site during his excavations there. When he was asked to justify this decision to the Council for British Archaeology, the explanation he gave was that the dowser in question just happened to also be the president of the local field work group, who were providing volunteers for the dig, and that 'when support is given by a local society, one should not be obstructive or rude to its president' (Rahtz, 2001, p.78). On the other hand, though, it should also be stressed that, in all of Rahtz's excavations at Glastonbury, he found (almost) no solid evidence to support any of the legends which his patrons were hoping he would authenticate, and that he made this abundantly clear in all of his writings (Rahtz, 1991, pp.134-5). Taking this argument one step further, it is also interesting to speculate upon the extent to which his pride in his own principles and beliefs (which happened to be scientific, and atheistic) may have motivated him to such an outright rejection of the legends (and their value), simply to prove to himself and the world that he was not prepared to compromise his principles by giving any undue consideration to the hopes of his patrons. Such observations once again provoke the question of what personal agendas may lie behind the work of even respected academics, which is a question that is discussed in more detail in the second half of this chapter.

Drawing upon the authorities of other traditions: Alternative Glastonbury Text approaches

Returning to the use of authorities, and turning now to the ways in which the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts draw upon texts from outside of their own tradition, what is immediately noticeable is a significant contrast with the (generally) consistent and unyielding discipline observed within academic texts. Particularly noticeable, first of all, is the tendency of the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts to be highly selective in their use of authority, whether drawn from their own tradition or from another one. Michell (1997, p.82), for example, quoted verbatim the statement within Treharne (1967) that 'when the English arrived at Glastonbury [...] they found a great and famous Celtic monastery already established

and flourishing there', and relied upon his authority in this matter. The fact that Treharne was also a writer who '[denied] the historical basis of all the legends in their present form' was duly noted, but this observation did not impel Michell to either consider Treharne's wider concerns regarding the legends or to question his own reliance upon this otherwise rejected authority.

The attitude of the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts to Historical Archaeological Texts is indeed both interesting and ambivalent. On the one hand, to the extent that academic authorities are considered to support the Alternative Glastonbury Text case, they are cited with relish, and in fact with a noticeable emphasis upon the academic credentials of the author. From the manner in which this is done, it is apparent that the very academic nature of the authority is being emphasised because it is considered to lend greater credibility to the case being argued. Thus Maltwood (1944, p.3) carefully noted how the work of *Dr* L.A. Waddell[71] (italics mine) supported her own theories, as they demonstrated that the ancient Sumerians had passed on aspects of their civilisation the Cymry (that is, the prehistoric inhabitants of Britain). She was also very careful to assert the scientific nature of her own discoveries (Maltwood, 1944, p.21). Meanwhile Michell (1997, p.127), discussing the exhumation of Arthur, was similarly careful to point out how 'Dr Ralegh Radford, who continued Bond's archaeological work' (which is perhaps not quite how Radford himself would have expressed it) was part of the 'modern archaeology' which had confirmed that there was indeed an ancient burial on the site (Michell, 1997, p.124). There are numerous other similar instances where the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts appear to go out of their way to stress the academic nature of authorities which they cite to support their arguments.[72] Furthermore, consistent with their relaxed use of authority from their own tradition, such references are not only highly selective, but sometimes arguably distort and misrepresent the conclusions of the original author.[73] Any credibility which Alternative Glastonbury Text authors are seeking to bring to their text by such citations is therefore inevitably diminished; at least, so far as academic criteria are concerned.

Notwithstanding the support which Alternative Glastonbury Text authors claim from the academic community, from time to time, it is however noticeable that academics with whom an Alternative Glastonbury Text author disagrees are likely to be summarily dismissed for their unenlightened methods, if indeed they are mentioned at all. For example, only a few pages away from his reference to the work of Radford, Michell (1997, p.40) was decidedly

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[71] Waddell is an obscure source quoted in detail by Maltwood, even though she ignores extensive mainstream scholarship (which would not have supported her case).
[72] Howard-Gordon (1982, p.30), for example, also notes the work of Radford, which she implicitly considers to conclusively prove that Arthur's exhumation was genuine.
[73] A good example is Rahtz's views on the origin of the Tor terraces, which are discussed in detail within chapter 7.

disparaging of the reluctance that academics exhibited when confronted with the medium of revelation as a form of evidence, even though he was later happy to note how the work of Rev Lionel S. Lewis 'provided scholarly backing for the mystical revival [...] at Glastonbury' (Michell, 1997, p.78). Similar sentiments, asserting the transcendence of the values or knowledge embodied in an Alternative Glastonbury Text over the knowledge that an academic text could offer are almost too numerous to mention. Examples include the assertion in Maltwood (1929, p.34) that 'history may err, but legend seldom', and a similar statement in Howard-Gordon (1982, p.viii). Thus there appear to be two competing forces at work. On the one hand, Alternative Glastonbury Text authors show a tendency to draw upon the authority of the academic establishment, and identify their own work with its prestige, whenever they can; however, on the other hand, they also seek to overthrow or reject it. This tension generally persists throughout the work, as the arguments develop and the citations continue, and it often remains unresolved when they reach their conclusions.

From this analysis, it may be concluded that the Alternative Glastonbury Texts, drawing widely but selectively upon sources which lend support to their immediate cause, seem to display an ambivalent attitude towards academic scholarship. To the extent that it confirms their arguments, this scholarship is lauded, and its academic nature is celebrated; but to the extent that it does not, it is rejected, and mocked.

Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological Texts: use of common authorities

Notwithstanding the various differences noted above between the two traditions in terms of their use of authorities, they do however share a number of important similarities. In particular, they both exhibit a tendency to make use of the same, earliest, sources when investigating a legend. Thus even such diverse authors as Michell (1997) and Rahtz (2003), in their examination of the foundation of Glastonbury Abbey, drew upon the original work of William of Malmesbury (and, in their investigation of the exhumation of Arthur, upon Gerald of Wales). This use of a common, and typically ancient, source has two significant consequences. In the first place, it means that they are drawing upon the same core of textual material, and therefore that an implicit relationship of some sort can be expected to exist between the two traditions, even if there is no explicit link between them. It is arguably this common core of accepted authority which, contrasted with the differences between the two traditions, generates the main research questions of this thesis. However, a further consequence arises from the fact that it is only via academic scholarship that early texts such as William of Malmesbury are accessible at all; whether they like it or not, Alternative Glastonbury Text authors are therefore drawing upon academic scholarship whenever they make use of such an early source.

Nevertheless, the use of such common sources still leaves significant room for interpretation. Thus it is instructive to note, for example, that while historians universally follow the lead of Gransden (1976) in rejecting the later interpolations within William's *De Antiquitate* as later forgeries, Michell interpreted them differently. Michell, although acknowledging them to be later additions, claimed that they should be regarded as improvements to the text, which provided greater detail upon matters of importance (Michell, 1997, p.90). From this example alone it is clear that the use of common historical sources in no way guarantees the emergence of a consistent narrative across the two traditions. A similar example is provided in by Howard-Gordon (1982, p.27), where the text of the *De Antiquitate* is quoted as an authority for Joseph's visit to Glastonbury, though this time without any mention that such references were clearly later additions to William's original text.

Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological Texts: coherent traditions?

A further area of difference between the two traditions which is revealed by analysis of their use of authorities lies in the degree of cohesion within each of them. This is particularly evident in the degree of consistency which they show in referencing authorities from within their own tradition.

Taking first the Historical / Archaeological tradition, there is a relatively high degree of uniformity in the authorities that are drawn upon and the manner in which they are used, (as well as in the conclusions that are reached, as was seen in chapter 5). This is particularly evident from the bibliographies that they provide. Rahtz (2003), for example, included within its extensive bibliography not only Burrow (1983) and Gransden (1976), as already noted above, but also Radford (1981), Robinson (1926) and Scott (1981), together with a selection of Rahtz's own publications. References to Alternative Glastonbury Texts, as previously noted, were few and far between. These included Ashe (1968), and also a passing mention of the more orthodox sections of Bond (1918). In the works of other academics, the lists of authors cited are of similar length, and involve much the same writers. Thus not only Rahtz but also Hutton (2003) and James and Thorpe (1999) are found to be citing the authorities noted above. Drawing upon these and similar examples, it becomes clear that there is a strong tendency for academic texts to draw upon a common core of previous work, most of which is academic in nature.

Turning to the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition, however, a rather different picture emerges. In the first place, the bibliographies themselves tend to be quite short (often being offered as 'further reading', or 'relevant reading'), while only very limited explicit referencing of sources is usually found within the body of the text. This is again consistent with the tendency for 'looser referencing' already noted above. Furthermore, while it is common for

Alternative Glastonbury Text authors to cite other Alternative Glastonbury Texts in support of their cause, they are far more eclectic in the particular sources upon which they draw. The work of Howard-Gordon, for example, provides a number of useful examples typical of Alternative Glastonbury Texts, even though this is offered as only a brief introductory text, which draws upon other works, rather than making any claims to original research. In her bibliography, Howard-Gordon (1982) listed no less than seven titles by Ashe, along with numerous other Alternative Glastonbury Texts. She did also include academics such as Rahtz (1993) and Treharne (1967), but such conventional scholars remained in a definite minority, and were sometimes included simply as a means of accessing medieval texts (as noted above). The book contained no index, and although authorities were frequently named throughout the text there was a noticeable lack of detailed referencing, which would enable readers to independently confirm the accuracy and appropriateness of her citations, should they wish to do so. Michell (1997), by way of contrast, made only passing reference to Ashe (1982) or Maltwood (1929), while much more extensive use was made of the work of Bond, of whose works no less than five were listed in the bibliography (Michell, 1997, p.169). Caine (1978), on the other hand, drew predominantly upon the work of Maltwood (1929), even though numerous other authors were listed in her bibliography.

More detailed investigation of the manner in which the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts draw upon each other's work yields further insights, though. In the first place, there are clear instances where the findings of previous writers have not only been selectively used, but have arguably been distorted in the process. As was the case regarding the selective or misleading citation of academic works (already discussed above), this can only have the effect of reducing the credibility of such texts, based upon purely academic criteria. However, it is interesting to note that this feature is so widespread within Alternative Glastonbury Texts as to suggest that, for some reason, it is not a matter of concern for their authors. More significantly, though, given that Alternative Glastonbury Text authors make only sporadic references to their sources, and that other Alternative Glastonbury Texts feature much more predominantly within those sources, it is likely to be texts from their own tradition which they look to for authoritative interpretations of academic texts, and not the original texts themselves. It is therefore likely that the meaning of the original texts (whether academic or alternative) is in effect modified, so far as the readers of Alternative Glastonbury Texts are concerned, as a result of the way in which the alternative tradition works. This is a potentially significant issue, whose implications are discussed separately within the chapter which follows.

Instances of inconsistency between Alternative Glastonbury Texts are not, however, limited to changes of emphasis, or to new authors replacing selected aspects of a previous text with

their own revisions or improvements. It is not uncommon for one Alternative Glastonbury Text author to completely and summarily dismiss the authority of another. Particularly notable is Michell's outright dismissal of Maltwood's Zodiac (Michell, 1997, pp.19-20), which was arguably necessary because it was completely incompatible with the alternative ancient history of the Somerset Levels that he was proposing. However, Maltwood in her turn had similarly dismissed the 'pseudo-occultism' of the devotees of the Chalice Well (Maltwood, 1944, p.21). Given that the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition contains such a diverse range of authors and authorities, propounding such fundamentally incompatible theories, it is hardly surprising that the resulting tradition is so disjointed, and lacking in cohesion. In some cases, it almost appears that authors simply selected for inclusion evidence that happened to support their own thesis, while conveniently ignoring any evidence or arguments which did not (or, if such an omission would have been too glaring, simply discounting the claims of the opposing authority altogether).

At this point it should also be noted, however, that such disagreements are not peculiar to the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition alone. Accusations including selective use of evidence and misrepresentation of conclusions have also been levelled against Historical / Archaeological Texts, on a few occasions. One example of this is again provided by the work of the long-suffering Ashe. As has already been noted within chapter 5, Ashe had expressed considerable caution when discussing the maze upon the Tor, making it clear that he did not consider his work to prove that such a maze actually existed. However, commenting in passing upon the labyrinth theory while offering his own updated views on the origins of the Tor, Rahtz (2002, p.11) claimed that 'the theory has nevertheless struck deep locally, and has been written about as fact (e.g. Ashe 1985).'[74] Another example is the selective use or archaeological evidence within Treharne (1967), as noted within chapter 5. Nevertheless, compared with the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition, such instances are relatively rare. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that, when all of the relevant evidence is considered, the academic tradition displays a considerable degree of coherence and internal consistency, while the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition remains much more fragmented.

The use of authorities: summary comments

As has been seen above, both academic and alternative authors include within their texts a significant number of references to previous works, with the objective of enhancing the credibility of their own arguments. However, there are some telling differences in the ways in which they do this, which yield significant insights into the differences between the two traditions, and the motivating forces at work behind them.

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[74] Ashe (1985), being a reprint of Ashe (1982).

The tradition that authors associate themselves with is likely to heavily influence the authorities upon which they do and do not draw. There is a strong tendency for authors from both traditions to cite other works within their own tradition, but also a common tendency to cite the earliest available authorities. However, while Historical / Archaeological Texts show a high degree of internal coherence and consistency in the works which they cite, and the way in which they cite them, within Alternative Glastonbury Texts much 'looser' referencing is evident, which contributes to the much greater diversity of viewpoints which are seen within this tradition. The manner in which each of the traditions draws upon the work of the other is also significant. Historical / Archaeological Texts are prepared to draw selectively upon the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition, subject to the condition that its insights satisfy the required standards of academic proof. However, the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts exhibit an ambivalent attitude towards their academic cousins, sometimes attempting to draw upon their prestige, when it supports the desired cause, but at other times rejecting it outright, as being transcended by their own insights. The academic tradition is therefore characterised by its high degree of internal consistency, and the alternative tradition by its high degree of variability.

The implications of these observations for the credibility of the claims made within such texts are twofold. So far as the academic tradition is concerned, the coherence and consistency demonstrated by texts from within the tradition means that the status of the texts and of the tradition itself is enhanced, while (by way of contrast) that of the Alternative Glastonbury Texts is correspondingly diminished. However, so far as can be inferred from the analysis performed, this reduced credibility of their texts (in the eyes of the academic establishment) does not seem to be a matter of concern to alternative authors, whose ultimate purposes are to transcend the establishment, rather than to conform with it. However, what has also emerged from this analysis are clear indications that, underlying both the explicit methods of a text and the 'intertextual' effect of the traditions which it works within (or works against), highly individual personal agendas are likely to be at work. Furthermore, these agendas can sometimes play a significant role in the shaping of a text, notwithstanding any expectations that a reader might have of the motives and methods of an author based upon the text alone, and the tradition that it appears to be working within. It is therefore to consideration of these personal agendas that we now turn.

Personal History

The observation that writers are individuals, who inevitably bring their own individual perspectives to the works that they produce, would not be disputed by authors from either the academic tradition or the alternative tradition. As was noted in chapter 4, academics routinely

consider the extent to which the circumstances and thoughts of individuals may influence their actions, and therefore the records of the past which they leave behind them, including their own written accounts of both their own time and of the times which came before them. Similarly, as observed within chapter 5, an emphasis upon individuality is a recurring feature within many Alternative Glastonbury Texts. As set out in chapter 4, such views are also reflected in the approach of this thesis, which is to recognise, where practicable, the impact that authors' personal histories may have had upon their work. However, given the nature and scope of this thesis, it would clearly be impractical for the background and motives of each and every author whose work has been drawn upon in this investigation to be subjected to minute and detailed examination. The section which follows instead analyses just a few of the Glastonbury authors, in order to illustrate the kinds of factors which may have influenced their work, and which therefore need to be borne in mind when assessing the credibility of the claims contained within these and other texts.

<u>William of Malmesbury</u>

As one of the key historical sources for the early history of Glastonbury Abbey, but also a man who was writing in and for a different age, William is a figure of great interest. Unfortunately, relatively little direct evidence of his life survives, except for that contained within the various histories that he wrote (Thomson, 2003, p.ix). However, based upon these texts, and an understanding of the circumstances in England during his life (in particular those relating to the church), it is nevertheless possible to reconstruct enough information on his personal history for some useful comments to be made regarding its likely impact upon his work.

William lived in the century immediately after the Norman Conquest, a time of radical social transformation, as the new order began to assert its authority over its conquered territory and to sweep aside many of its established customs and institutions. This conflict between the Anglo-Saxon past and the Norman present was to be a constant and significant dynamic within William's life work and work, in one form or another. Born of a Norman father and English mother (Thomson, 2003, p.4), and therefore arguably with a foot in both camps even from his birth (Gransden, 1974, pp.166-7), William's work sometimes betrays ambivalent attitudes. On the one hand, much of his work was written to help reassert the antiquity and legitimacy of Saxon ecclesiastical foundations, in the face of the Norman hegemony (Scott, 1981, p.3). On the other hand, however, he heavily criticised the Saxons for their effeminacy, gluttony and irreligious drunkeness, portraying their subjection by the Normans as divine retribution for their shortcomings (Gransden, 1974, p.173). The Saxon / Norman dynamic is

even evident in the style of his writing, where both English and continental influences may be seen to be at work (Thomson, 2003, p.46).

As William was ambivalent about his Saxon origins, so many later historians have been ambivalent about him. Some aspects of his work have been praised for their conscientiousness and critical acumen, as has his use of a wide range of materials in addition to purely documentary evidence (Gransden, 1974, p.175). However, he has also been criticised for his credulity, for example in his handling of 'miraculous events' of relatively recent origin (Thomson, 2003, p.25), and for the partiality that he sometimes betrays when writing in support of ecclesiastical foundations, or upon the secular power struggles of his own day (Gransden, 1974, p.176)[75]. Views on the role that personal ambition may have played in his work are also divided. Gransden (1974, pp.180-181), for example, suggested that being 'passed over' for the abbacy of Malmesbury was a significant disappointment to William, but Thomson (2003, p.6) instead asserted that he was in fact offered the post, but declined it, preferring instead to concentrate upon the historical work for which he chiefly wished to be remembered.

What can be inferred from the life and works of William, then, are a number of significant observations. In the first place, it needs to be recognised that even a historical writer who is often praised for his objectivity, his discernment and his integrity may nevertheless also be vulnerable to bias, whether this arises from his parentage, his situation in life or the agenda which moves him to write in the first place. However, it is also clear that, when there are a number of competing forces at work, their impact of upon a writer's output may be far from simple to predict.[76] In the face of such conflicting interests, authors may end up supporting either one cause or the other, steering a middle course in between them, or even alternating their allegiance from time to time, depending upon the facts of the matter currently in hand and the underlying principles at stake. Finally, though, William also provides a useful example of a phenomenon often encountered in texts concerning Glastonbury: that of a writer who was driven by a strong sense of his or her spiritual purpose.

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[75] William's critical attitude towards his sources is evident, for example, from his dismissal of the authenticity of the discovery of St Dunstan's remains at Glastonbury Abbey, and of the claim that Gildas ended his days there (Scott, 1981, p.23-4). The very fact that the *De Antiquitate* was clearly written for the monks, but rejected by them, and subsequently dedicated instead to Henry de Blois (Scott, 1981, p.4), lends further support to the view that, notwithstanding his general support for Saxon foundations, William was not prepared to compromise his integrity by espousing a cause which he considered to lack credible evidence. However, there are contrasting views on this matter. Gransden (1974, pp.168-9), for example, argued that it was in discussing monastic origins that William most fell short of his own ideals, whereas Thomson (2003, p.25) argued that, while this might have been true of more recent 'miraculous events', his assessment of Glastonbury's earlier legends was relatively 'cool'.
[76] Thomson (2003, p.39) concluded that 'it seems plain to me that William was a man at conflict with himself, and this is what makes him so difficult to categorize'.

Geoffrey Ashe

Geoffrey Ashe, born in 1923, was another writer with spiritual purposes. Born in the UK but brought up in Ottawa and Toronto, he first became interested in Glastonbury and Arthur 'during a time of personal trouble and uncertainty' (Ashe, 2007, p.vii) upon reading a book entitled *Glastonbury and England,* written by Christopher Hollis. Ashe was particularly struck by Hollis' reference to an alleged prophecy of Glastonbury Abbey's future restoration that had been made by a monk at the time of the Dissolution. Inspired by this idea, he conceived the purpose of himself 'play[ing] a part in its reawakening' (Ashe, 2007, p.vii). The direct result of this sense of personal mission was *King Arthur's Avalon* (Ashe, 2007, first published 1957).

This book, whose aim 'was not to pursue antiquarian research for its own sake, but to promote the rebirth of Glastonbury with all it implied' (Ashe, 2007, p.viii), enjoyed great popularity, and was in due course a major factor behind Glastonbury's 'alternative revival' in the 1960s. Although it was more of a story-telling exercise than a history, and contained much that was imaginative and suggestive, it was nevertheless grounded in the relevant historical and archaeological evidence.[77] In both this and his later works, Ashe argued his case with a degree of rigour which meant that academic scholars were not only willing to engage him in debate, but even on occasion to collaborate with him.[78] As a result, Ashe came to occupy a somewhat unique role vis-à-vis the Alternative Glastonbury Text / academic traditions. His writing, which was focused largely upon Glastonbury and the historicity of Arthurian legends, was mostly scholarly and well researched. Nevertheless, he generally favoured the more 'romantic' hypotheses beloved of the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts.

However, Ashe's position as a successful professional author focusing almost exclusively upon one topic (the Arthurian question) was not without its risks. As noted by Hutton (2003, p.52), both the plausibility of a historical Arthur and value of debate upon the whole Arthurian question steadily declined towards the end of the 20th century, at least so far as academics were concerned. From the mid 1980s onwards Ashe, 'bereft of his academic allies [...] had to publish to survive', even though 'his works were no longer read by British academics' (Hutton, 2003, pp.53-4). Under these difficult circumstances Ashe maintained a constant flow of literary

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[77] Even Professor Treharne, who considered Ashe's work 'somewhat diffuse and, by strict historical standards, rather uncritical', nevertheless conceded that the Ashe (2007) 'has a considerable and very useful up-to-date bibliography which discriminates usefully among the countless books and pamphlets, some of them highly unscholarly, which have appeared on this topic' (Treharne, 1967, p.134).

[78] When Alcock excavated 'Camelot' Cadbury Castle (partly in search of evidence of Arthurian Age occupation), Ashe not only chaired the excavation committee but also persuaded Alcock, Rahtz and Radford (who had excavated the Abbey site in the 1950s) to contribute articles to his compilation volume The Quest for Arthur's Britain (1968).

output, still advocating the historicity of Arthur, but his theories in some cases became increasingly imaginative.

The influence of Ashe's personal background upon his Glastonbury writing was pointedly summarised in Hutton (2003, p.84) with the observation that 'his vision of it [...] was conceived before he had ever actually been there.' Within the same volume, echoing and expanding upon the suggestions of Hobsbawm (1984) regarding the socially constructed nature of myths and traditions primarily as responses to contemporary issues, Hutton had already noted the important role often played by outsiders in 'fostering self-images for communities' (Hutton 2003, p.84). Building upon this argument, he then suggested that Ashe provided a good example of this dynamic, and of the influence that North Americans in particular have had upon the creation and promotion of Glastonbury's legends. Meanwhile, it is also interesting to note that Ashe's own statement that his Glastonbury mission was borne out of a time of personal crisis makes it clear that he was someone with issues to resolve, who looked to towards Glastonbury in search of answers (although we can only speculate upon either the nature of these issues or their influence upon his sense of personal mission). At the same time, though, Ashe also serves as a reminder that writers are motivated by more than just academic or idealistic concerns. Simply earning a living is a necessity for many of them, and a motive that cannot be ignored.

What the above analysis suggests, then, is that Ashe was a writer whose conclusions were, at the very least, heavily influenced by his own circumstances and preconceptions. It might even be argued that his conclusions were to some extent settled before either his methodology had been formulated or his evidence assembled. It is not without irony that an Alternative Glastonbury Text author who is generally notable for the rigour of his researches may nevertheless have been effectively using them to justify conclusions that had been reached a priori. It is also ironic that, in all of these researches, he was never able to authenticate the prophecy originally cited by Hollis which had inspired him to undertake this journey in the first place (Ashe, 2007, p.vii).

<u>Katherine Maltwood</u>

Happily for Katherine Maltwood, the need to acquire a living was not a pressing concern; neither was the need to gain the approval of academics. Born in 1878 and conveniently married to the wealthy entrepreneur John Maltwood she was, although a professional artist in her own right, independently wealthy. When tired of travelling and art collecting she was therefore able to retreat to one of the couple's properties, Childon Priory, survey the surrounding Somerset levels, and indulge her artistic and spiritual interests, largely without reference to the views and requirements of other people, if she so wished.

It was while living at this house and producing illustrations for a translation of the *Perlesvaus*, with its descriptions of the adventures of Arthurian knights in search of the Holy Grail, that she conceived the notion of the Glastonbury Zodiac. As evidenced by her writings, the source of her vision appears to have been largely artistic. Her analysis focused almost exclusively upon the spiritual significance and detailed layout of the Zodiac (Maltwood, 1929, pp.8-117), whose form alone she considered to be sufficient justification for its existence. She also made numerous claims for the historical nature of her discovery, and its scientific nature, but these were only very briefly asserted, with very little supporting evidence being offered. The fact that her 'Sumerian' hypothesis was in due course roundly rejected by the academic community seems to have caused her little concern, as she held the opinion that her insights in any case both encompassed and transcended those of the academics (Maltwood, 1944, p.34). Interestingly, however, she does appear to have been at some pains to counter the claims of a fellow mystic, Blavatsky: a large part of such 'historical' argument as there is within her work was devoted to a refutation of Blavatsky's competing 'Egyptian' hypothesis (Maltwood, 1944, pp.23-35). Other 'alternative' thinkers and their misguided theories were, however, dismissed with only a few passing words (Maltwood, 1944, p.21).[79]

What is evident from the above is that Maltwood's personal circumstances played a major part not only in the inspiration for the Zodiac and the means by which she justified it, but also the audience to whom she addressed her work and the extent to which she engaged in meaningful debate with others regarding it. Her independent wealth meant that she had no need to seek the approval of the general 'buying' public, and her lack of interest in academic scholarship allowed her simply to unilaterally assert her transcendence of it, without the need to respond to any of the challenges that if offered. But Blavatsky, another mystic drawing upon highly individual inspiration, posed a more serious challenge, and one to which a response was clearly required.

The privilege of wealth therefore brought Maltwood independence, and the freedom to pursue a personal artistic and spiritual vision to whatever ends it might lead her. But it also seems to have brought her a degree of intellectual isolation. Even those who were inspired by her and followed in her work felt no obligation to adhere to her original vision (eg Caine, 1978), and although Hutton (2003, p.83) generously included the Zodiac within his summary of Glastonbury Legends which although much criticised remained 'still possible', few other

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[79] Maltwood (1944, p.21) includes a brief reference to 'the miasma of pseudo-occultism' at Glastonbury. Exactly who she had in mind is unclear, but the reference has led Benham (2006) to speculate that the eccentric Alice Buckton and the spiritualists Wellesley Tudor-Pole and Dion Fortune, whose beliefs would have been radically to Maltwood's theosophical inclinations, may have been her intended target.

academics have been prepared to accord it any credibility at all.[80] As another outsider who helped to foster the self-image of Glastonbury, Maltwood ultimately stands as a somewhat isolated figure.

Frederick Bligh Bond

By a curious coincidence, one of the visitors to the Maltwoods at Childon Priory was none other than Frederick Bligh Bond, who (in his capacity as a professional architect) advised them regarding various alterations to the property. It is known that he corresponded with Maltwood for some time (Hopkinson-Ball, 2007, pp.117-8), but the extent of their influence upon one another's thinking is unclear. Far more influential for Bond were likely to have been his formative years.

In his youth, Bond had been a sickly child who had led a decidedly isolated existence. A fragmentary writing, presumed to be autobiographical, reveals not only how his illnesses resulted in his withdrawal from contact with other childhood companions, but the solace that he instead sought and found in his 'dream life' and in esoteric writings (Kennawell, 1965, p.18). Furthermore, this document also expresses the 'suffering' that he subsequently experienced when at the age of fourteen he was suddenly forced back into engagement with the wider world. It could be argued that these childhood experiences were to set the pattern for the rest of his life.

It is interesting firstly to consider Bond's views regarding the phenomenon of automatic writing, the method which he used to guide his excavations at Glastonbury Abbey, and which is in itself a decidedly esoteric method of obtaining information. Bond's explanations of the processes which might be at work in generating automatic writing contain references to attempts by 'the limited self' to attain contact with 'something greater than itself', and 'harmonise' with the collective memories of mankind, as recorded in the Greater Memory (Bond, 1918, pp.97-98). In these passages, in his later writings regarding the 'Company of Avalon' (from whom the automatic writing purported to emanate), and in particular in the character of 'Johannes', the medieval monk who was part of the monastic community but constantly sought refuge in the countryside, there appear to be recurring themes of conflicting urges: the incessant desire of a lonely individual to reach out and participate in a wider community, and yet also his tendency to reject that community, and seek solace in isolation.

However, such conflicts were not just played out in the realm of ideas. Both Kennawell (1965) and Hopkinson-Ball (2007) have consistently noted that many of the difficulties that arose during Bond's association with Glastonbury arose from his eccentric personality, in

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[80] See for example Burrow (1983), James and Thorpe (1999, pp.298-304).

which the habits of his youth are apparent. Perhaps the most significant issues were the strength of his belief in automatic writing based upon proofs accessible to himself alone, and his impatience with others when they were not persuaded by these proofs. The automatic writing sessions were, for example, conducted by himself and Bartlett alone. The resulting scripts were then reviewed and compiled solely by them, and (initially at least) published selectively, and only after the related excavations which confirmed their accuracy had been undertaken (Bond, 1918). Given the lack of access that others had to any means of independent verification of this process, it is hardly surprising that some challenges arose. Yet Bond was always highly impatient of these. The strength of his personal vision and his own degree of conviction in the knowledge he felt he had attained were absolute.

Like Maltwood, Bond's work was both 'honorary' and characterised by a highly individual approach and vision upon which he would not comprise. However, unlike Maltwood, he was not in a position to ignore the views of others who did not see things in the same way as himself. His role as Director of Excavations was cut short, largely as a result of his conflicts with the ecclesiastical authorities, and neglect of the architectural practice which had originally provided him with the financial 'independence' to pursue these interests would ultimately lead to his bankruptcy.

It can therefore be argued that the pattern of Bond's work, and his life, were very much the result of the influences of his youth. Much of his adult life, like that of his childhood, was to be lived in intellectual isolation and the obsessional pursuit of a personal vision that he was unable to share with most of his fellow creatures.

Ronald Hutton

Ashe, Bond and Malltwood between them offer a good indication of the breadth and variety of authors writing within the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition, and it is therefore useful to now contrast the range of factors which may have influenced their work with a similar analysis of writers from within the academic tradition. Preliminary sketches of some of these have already been provided within chapter 4, in outlining the work, methods and views of Robinson, Treharne and (in particular) Rahtz, the archaeologist whose scientific inclinations were not limited to an enthusiasm for the methods of the 'New Archaeology', but also extended towards Darwinism in general, and even an unswerving belief in absolute determinism. However, it will be noted that all of these writers in effect worked in 'direct opposition' to Alternative Glastonbury Texts, both in the (negative) conclusions that they reached and in the methods and philosophies that they brought to bear upon their work. Rather than exploring the work and lives of such scholars in greater detail, it is therefore useful at this point to focus instead upon the work of another academic, and one who has not only

actively engaged with the alternative community but who has, in some respects at least, shown evidence of a degree of sympathy with them.

Ronald Hutton, currently Professor of History at the University of Bristol and a leading authority upon ancient and medieval paganism and magic, has written upon a variety of aspects of Glastonbury's history and its legends, and the previous chapters have included a number of references to his work. So far as his views on the nature of historical writing are concerned, as a successful academic and somebody 'trained as an empiricist historian' but engaged in writing 'pluralist and open-ended' history (Hutton, 2003, p.xii), Hutton's work shows that he well aware of the challenges of postmodernism (Hutton, 2003, p.ix). From a theoretical perspective, he may therefore be summarised as an empirically based historian who believes in the possibility of objective (but pluralist) history. Nevertheless, he remains a historian who is alive to the limits of what his craft can achieve.

Superficially, such a stance would appear to contrast somewhat with Hutton's research interests, and also with the manner in which he has engaged with various 'alternative' groups. He has written widely upon movements such as contemporary witchcraft, druidism and paganism, and his engagement with the 'alternative' community has also included taking part in the Oak Dragon Project,[81] participating in public debates with the likes of John Michell. Hutton has in fact become so deeply immersed in the pagan community during his research that he was at one point described (and criticised) by practicing Wiccan Jan Farrell-Roberts in *The Cauldron* (May 2003) for being 'a very active member of the British Pagan community [...] [who] had taken on a mission to reform modern paganism.' The apparent contrast between Hutton's academic perspective and his interest in unorthodox religions is, however, purely superficial. As an empirically grounded historian, Hutton perceives his role to be uncovering the genuine origins of such religions (Hutton, 2003, p.267), and (where appropriate) offering his own work as a replacement for the plethora of unreliable histories that they have often created for themselves. His writing is therefore notable for its almost ruthless exposure of the lack of historical basis for the alleged antiquity of contemporary pagan traditions (Hutton, 1993, pp.340-1). However, to portray Hutton simply as an empiricist historian who is only interested in exposing the weaknesses of such claims would be decidedly misleading.

Hutton is notable (especially as an academic) for the degree of respect he accords to alternative theories and theorists. Writers such as Robinson may have made passing reference to the aesthetic worth of the Glastonbury Legends they are in effect seeking to debunk (eg

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[81] The Oak Dragon Project was 'an organization formed in 1986 by modern pagans, "earth mystics" and "alternative archaeologists" with the intention of holding debates with each other and with more orthodox scholars' (Hutton, 1993, p.xvi).

Robinson, 1926, p.50), but Hutton has gone much further. He has not only allowed that 'the enigmatic quality of some of the [Glastonbury] monuments, and the intangible nature of its medieval and modern traditions, represent the greatest gifts which it makes to modern religion' (Hutton, 2003, p.85), but even that 'the early history of Glastonbury can plausibly be written in a great many different ways', one of which includes the literal historical presence there of Joseph of Arimathea, King Arthur and even the Zodiac (Hutton, 2003, p.83). For most academic historians, such an admission would be almost inconceivable. Meanwhile, although his own upbringing was pagan (Hutton, 2003, p.269), Hutton has described himself as 'not strongly religious by temperament'.[82] He has also stated that 'to some extent history occupies the space in my life filled in others by religion or spirituality' Hutton (2009, p.xii).

How the potential conflicts between the empathetically engaged but empirically grounded historian are reflected in his writing is an interesting question which is full of possibilities. For example, the outcome of his engagement with the Oak Dragon Project was Hutton (1993), a book which was dedicated 'to the Clan of the Oak Dragon', but which denied any substantial continuation of ancient pagan traditions even into the early Christian period and in which, for example, he stated that in spite of Glastonbury Tor being 'the most famous' candidate for an ancient maze, it was 'also the least convincing' (Hutton, 1993, p.107). Academics might have feared that engagement with alternative thinkers might have resulted in an over-generous assessment of Glastonbury's claims, but the opposite effect - too harsh a dismissal of them by an empirically inclined historian, who was too alive to such a risk - is also possible. The extent to which these forces may have vied with each other in the writing of his books is something that only Hutton could comment on, but the result is at the very least a forceful restatement of the importance of evidence to a historian.

In conclusion, then, in Hutton we see a useful reminder of the risks of oversimplification in attributing dominant interests and intentions to authors, even academic ones. Both an empathetic sense of the value of legends and traditions and also a belief in the strict academic standards for historical evidence are evident within Hutton's work, and the interplay between them is arguably a key source of its interest and meaning. As such, he offers an important reminder of the ways in which authors can combine multiple (and perhaps even conflicting) enthusiasms and voices in their work, as proposed by Bakhtin (1981, pp.262-3), and that even the authors themselves may not be consciously aware of all of these voices, or the extent to which they influence the methods they employ, the evidence they select and the conclusions that they reach.

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[82] http://druidnetwork.org/en/node/1791#interview accessed 11/09/10.

<u>The influence of personal history: summary comments</u>

The analysis above shows how significant is the role that the personal histories of Glastonbury authors can play in the texts that they generate.

The influence of authors' personal history is evident firstly in the causes that they espouse, (eg William of Malmesbury, Ashe above) but also in the methods that they adopt and the conclusions that they reach. And while it is tempting upon the one hand to emphasise the importance of this influence upon their conclusions (given William's background and purpose, the only plausible outcome of his endeavours would be a text recording 'the antiquity' of Glastonbury Abbey), it is important to also recognise that this alone does not determine the text (William clearly elected not to include the claim to Dunstan's grave, however much that might have aided his purpose). This is also true in the case of Ashe. While his overall theme was in effect determined, there still remained a range of ways in which his objectives could be achieved, and various limitations imposed by the evidence and his 'academic' methods then influenced the topics and cases for which he felt he could justifiably argue. Finally, with the work of Hutton, we are reminded of the competing forces which may be at work in the mind of an author, and the risks involved in an overly simplistic analysis which attempts to reduce the influences upon an author to a single, dominant motivating factor.

One of the other themes that emerges from this analysis is the significant role that personal vision, or a sense of vocation, has played in the generation of these texts, together with the relationship between these personal (and often spiritual) visions and the processes involved in their collective acceptance by a wider society. Ashe's ability to articulate a vision which (somewhat to his surprise) was later adopted by the alternative community, and his ability to engage with the academic community using methods and language that they could accept, were arguably critical to the central role that he has played, and the extent to which his work has been drawn upon by both academic and alternative writers. Bond, however, although motivated by a vision no less compelling, was (as a result of his childhood experiences) arguably both less willing and less able to participate in the compromises, the give and take, of collective knowledge generation, and suffered accordingly. Maltwood, on the other hand, with her independent wealth, could afford to ignore any such interactions, in the short term. However, in the longer term, this degree of isolation meant that her vision was one which would not reach a wider audience. The theme of economic gain is also a constantly recurring one, and an influence which few can afford to ignore.

Across all of these writers, then, the common inference is that the personal background of each writer has played an important role in their approach to their work, and needs to be assessed if the significance of their work is to be properly appreciated.

Furthermore, it is also clear that the personal history of an author not only influences their work directly, in terms of the methods that they employ and the conclusions they are likely to reach, but also indirectly, in terms of the tradition that they are likely identify themselves with and within which they will work. Thus Katherine Maltwood, with her independent wealth, was free to indulge her artistic abilities and spiritual interests as she chose, allying herself with other thinkers (or ignoring them) based solely upon her own inclinations. Geoffrey Ashe, on the other hand, initially employed writing purely as a means towards the spiritual transformation that was his real objective. However, having been so successful in this that he became a professional writer, he thereafter needed to ensure that his literary output had constant appeal to the buying public. Similarly, Ronald Hutton, in spite of an early interest in archaeology, made academic history his profession because he considered that he had more aptitude for it (and, by implication, because he was more likely to find a rewarding career within that discipline). Thus each writer is arguably drawn towards a tradition which is partly the result of their personal circumstances, abilities and interests. This identification with a particular tradition itself then has two immediate consequences. In the first place, the conclusions of texts within an author's own tradition are likely to be accepted with only limited further consideration or challenge, whereas texts from outside of the tradition are more likely to be rejected. But secondly, the methods of these previous texts, to the extent that they represent the methods of the tradition as a whole, are also likely to be accepted and adopted.

Conclusions

As this chapter has demonstrated, the twin influences of previous authorities and an author's personal history both play important roles in shaping the texts that Glastonbury writers generate, and contribute to either establishing or undermining the credibility of these texts. While there are a number of factors at work here, it is particularly interesting to note how, from an academic perspective, it is appeal to previous authority which, when exercised judiciously and in accordance with accepted academic standards, stands the best chance of enhancing the credibility of a text. On the other hand, the influence of their personal history, if it is suspected to have inappropriately swayed their professional judgement, is more likely to undermine that credibility. With Alternative Glastonbury Texts, however, the situation is somewhat different. Their credibility in the eyes of the academics is (more often than not) diminished by their attempts to enlist previous authorities in their support, either because they are authorities whose legitimacy is considered to be unproven (to say the least), or because the means by which they are cited does not meet academic standards. Nevertheless, such referencing still continues to be done, and in a manner which suggests that, to the authors of these texts at least, the persuasiveness of their case has been enhanced. It is also

noticeable that, rather than relegating details of their personal history or inspiration to the margins of their argument, Alternative Glastonbury Text authors are more likely to feel that they form an integral part of their work. Finally, one dynamic which is clearly evident within both traditions is the importance that the author's personal history has in shaping the tradition which they are likely to ally themselves with, and therefore the kinds of causes they are likely to espouse, the methods they are likely to employ and the kinds of authorities they are likely to accept (or to reject).

However, in addition to these observations, what has also become clear is that these powerful influences, especially when working in combination, can have the effect of modifying, transforming, and even potentially distorting the conclusions of previous writers from other traditions, when they absorb these into their own tradition. The impact that this has on the credibility of their own texts has been discussed within the current chapter, but the impact that such modifications may subsequently have upon how the original text is then understood, and therefore upon its perceived meaning and credibility, are questions which now need to be explored.

Chapter 7: The text as read

The previous chapter has shown that, when it comes to investigating the credibility of the claims made by Glastonbury authors, it is important to look not only at material presented explicitly within the body of the text itself - the purposes, evidence and methods which the author has set out in support of their conclusions - but also to consider the influence of various unseen (but no less significant) forces which may be at work in the background. An author's personal history, the tradition that they identify with and the authorities that they recognise (or reject) inevitably all play a role in shaping the text that they write, the kind of claims that they make within it, and the means by which these claims are subsequently justified. However, the influences that have been considered thus far all have one thing in common: they have focused almost exclusively upon the authors themselves. Whether it is the nature of the claims being made, the means by which they are explicitly justified or the wider context within which they were formed, it has always been the actions of authors, and in particular the meanings intended by those authors, which have been the focus of discussion.

What this investigation has revealed, however, is that authors do not (however much they might wish to) have an exclusive monopoly on the creation of textual meaning. In addition to the 'unseen' influence of their own background and personal situation there are also other 'hidden' forces at work. Drawing, in their role as authors, upon the works of previous writers, they inevitably bring their own interpretation to each previous work - an interpretation which not only helps to shape the meaning of their own text but which also modifies, and potentially even transforms, the meaning of the previous one. And if this act of interpretation has, for this particular reader, affected the meaning of that previous text, then it is inevitable that both the nature of the claims it contained and the credibility of these claims may likewise have been modified. It is therefore clear that a full understanding of the meaning of texts about Glastonbury (and the credibility of the claims they contain) cannot be obtained without also considering the activities of readers of these texts, even though they may or may not be using the text in the way that the author intended, or have even been the audience that the author had in mind when they wrote the text in the first place. It is therefore necessary to investigate not only the audiences which authors addressed their works to, and the meanings that they intended to be found within them, but it is also necessary to consider use of the text by the readers that they did not anticipate, who may find meanings which they did not intend.

Glastonbury History and Archaeology - intended readings

As was noted in chapter 5, although historical writers do not always explicitly state the purpose of their work, this can generally be inferred without much difficulty from the text itself. This purpose being closely related to the author's intentions regarding the target audience, use and meaning of a text, these may likewise often be relatively clear, even when not explicitly stated. For example, Rahtz (1971), a detailed account of the author's excavations on the summit of Glastonbury Tor, was published in an academic journal adopting a style, format and content that were consistent with academic conventions. From these features, it is therefore clear that it was written predominantly with an academic audience in mind, who would critically read and then (potentially) draw upon this work in their own research according to the standard practices of the academic tradition. Similar considerations apply to Rahtz (1964), for although this particular text was published by the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (and perhaps partially intended for an amateur and lay audience), this was still an audience which identified itself with the academic tradition, was familiar with its methods and style, and would expect to see them adopted in such a publication.

It is interesting to contrast such publications with Rahtz (1993). Various features of this text, including the title, the publisher (Batsford / English Heritage), and the format and content of the front and back covers (not to mention the content, bibliography and referencing) make it clear that this volume was a popular summary, written for a lay audience, of the researches of academic archaeologists. This was further confirmed by Rahtz's introduction. This did not explicitly state what his intended audience was, but it nevertheless set out his purpose in a manner which made it clear that his intention was to convey to them the meanings which academics had read into the evidence available, and, in particular, to distinguish these meanings from the various alternative interpretations offered within 'the strange miscellany on sale at the Abbey bookstall' (Rahtz 1993, p.10). Within this lay audience, it is particularly interesting to consider the extent to which Rahtz's work was actually aimed specifically at the authors (and readers) of Alternative Glastonbury Texts. Numerous citations of Rahtz's work by the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts, including those discussed in the following section, clearly demonstrate that, while they may have been selective in their use of his work, they were nevertheless clearly familiar with it. Archaeologists who view their work as being scientific and objective would doubtless argue that acceptance or neglect of Rahtz's conclusions by his readers did not in any way modify the meaning of his original text, which was self contained and unequivocal. However, it should also be recognised that many readers would have formed their views of Rahtz not by reading his work themselves, but by reading what their preferred authors had to say about it, or by selectively reading only the sections of

his text which they considered insightful. The meaning of Rahtz's work to this audience was therefore potentially quite different to that which he intended, since it involved the selective acceptance of a limited number of his conclusions, which were often taken out of context.

It is interesting to contrast the impact of this 'popular' work with Burrow (1983). This standard academic refutation of the historicity of the Zodiac was deliberately published in Popular Archaeology, a journal dedicated to 'bringing archaeology to the public' (http://popular-archaeology.com/page/about-us, accessed 14 January 2012), that is, intended for general, rather than academic, readership. It may therefore be presumed that it was at least partly aimed at devotees of the Zodiac. However, the research undertaken for this thesis did not reveal a single reference to this work within an Alternative Glastonbury Text. Although (presumably) intended to be read by Alternative Glastonbury Text authors, Burrow's work would therefore appear to have had little or no meaning to them, either because they were simply unaware of its existence, or perhaps because they considered its methods and insights to be of limited value, and therefore dismissed it out of hand. An academic work with which Alternative Glastonbury Text authors can find no common cause at all is simply ignored; for all practical purposes it almost has no (meaningful) existence to them.

Glastonbury History / Archaeology - unintended consequences

Not surprisingly, it is largely when they reach the hands of alternative thinkers that academic texts tend to be used in ways which the author did not intend.

As noted above, the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts tend to be highly selective in their use of sources (both academic and alternative), citing only those authorities who happen to support their own individual line of argument. As their purposes often run contrary to those of the academics, the mere fact that they cite academic works at all therefore suggests that both this audience and this use are unlikely to have been those intended by the original author. This can occur even when the citation is completely faithful to the original work. One example which has already been noted (in chapter 5) is provided by the references within Michell (1997, p.82) to Treharne (1967), where Michell quotes verbatim Treharne's general comments regarding the antiquity of Glastonbury Abbey, even though Treharne's conclusions regarding the legends of Joseph and Arthur are completely at variance with his own. This usage, although completely faithful to the written text of the original, was not only completely at odds with Treharne's intentions regarding the overall meaning of his work, but also with the audience he intended it for, and the ways in which he expected them to make use of it.

In addition to verbatim quotations of such passages, the potential for distortion of an author's meaning is even greater when isolated comments or conclusions are cited out of

context, especially where a summary of their views is offered which does not fully reflect every nuance of the original text. An interesting example of this process is provided by two aspects of the Tor maze. In the first place, the assessment offered in Rahtz (1993, p.51) made it clear that, while he considered the maze theory to be 'worth mentioning', he did not think it the most likely explanation for the origin of the terraces upon the Tor. Instead, he stated that a geological or agricultural explanation was 'probably true'. However, he then suggested that, were the maze indeed to be prehistoric, then a Neolithic date was more likely than the Minoan one originally attributed to it within Russell (1967). While (as noted above) Rahtz's work was intended for general readership rather than being addressed specifically to alternative theorists, these two observations, which offer a degree of academic support for an 'alternative' hypothesis, have frequently been noted within Alternative Glastonbury Texts, However, such use has often been accompanied by some interesting changes of emphasis. Rahtz's acceptance that there might indeed be a prehistoric maze on the Tor has been widely cited; however, in the process, his preference for alternative explanations has often been recognised through vague phrases which acknowledge the matter not yet to be fully resolved, or has been ignored altogether. Thus, Howard-Gordon (1982, p.3) noted that:

> *Philip Rahtz [...] has not committed himself to the existence of a human-made maze*
> *[...] Archaeologists are interested but cautious, and presumably they will remain so*
> *until it is excavated.*
> Howard-Gordon (1982, p.3)

Meanwhile Mann (2001, p.90) simply stated that Rahtz had considered the theory 'well "worth consideration"', without further mention of his views on the subject. When it comes to dating, however, the Neolithic period that Rahtz proposed (were the maze to be genuine), perhaps due to its consistency with the various claims of the Goddess movement, has not only been accepted without question (Howard-Gordon, 1982, pp.2-3) but has been absorbed into the literature to the point where this dating is routinely accepted. To many Alternative Glastonbury Text writers, Rahtz has thus simply become the academic who was sympathetic to Russell's claims, though not yet fully convinced, but who dated the maze to the Neolithic period. This can hardly be the legacy that he would have wished for.

Alternative Glastonbury Texts - intended readings

Unlike academic history or archaeology, it has already been noted (in chapter 5) that the purpose and conclusions of Alternative Glastonbury Texts are sometimes far from clear (notwithstanding their titles, or any explicit statements made within their introductions). It is therefore difficult, in some cases, to draw any firm conclusions regarding their intentions in terms of audience, use or meaning, and the ways in which the actions of subsequent readers can reaffirm (or challenge) these. However, while it may reasonably be inferred that they were

written both for the 'community' of readers of other Alternative Glastonbury Texts, and to some extent for the general public, it is their relationship with academic writers which is of particular interest for present purposes.

It is interesting, for example, to note the claim of Caine (1978, p.34) that academic scholars had not made any systematic study of the evidence regarding the existence of the Zodiac, and that as a result their rejection of it was unjustified. Such a statement might be taken to imply that she was in part addressing her work to such an audience (or at least to an audience which would consider the views of academics to carry some weight). However, the observation of Hutton (2003, p.54) that Ashe's books 'were no longer read by British academics, for the simple reason [...] that most university libraries has ceased to buy them' suggested that most archaeologists probably devote little time to alternative theorists, except to challenge their findings regarding specific sites (as in Burrow 1983) or criticise their endeavour as a whole.[83]

An interesting variation on this position is seen in the introduction to Howard-Gordon (2010), being an updated version of her previous work of 1982. In this, she explicitly claimed that, since the previous edition was published:

> *Archaeologists have also become far more open to the idea to the idea of ceremonial rites and initiations [...] though they have yet to acknowledge the pioneering research they appropriated and previously dismissed as rubbish.*
> (Howard-Gordon, 2010, p.2)

This statement clearly implied that Howard-Gordon not only felt that academics should read and take note of her and her colleagues' ground-breaking work, but also considered that, having previously rejected it out of hand, they had now instead plagiarised it.

Notwithstanding such considerations, it should of course be borne in mind that most writers publish a book in the hope that people will buy it (and then, hopefully, read it), and that, as observed in Ivakhiv (2001, pp.99-100; 139), Glastonbury is amongst many other things a marketplace for a not insignificant trade in esoteric wares to tourists, including books. Whether Alternative Glastonbury Texts ever sell in sufficient quantities to provide a commercial return on the time required to write them is a matter for debate.[84] However, the rather more mundane motive of generating income from the numerous tourists and pilgrims who visit Glastonbury every year should not be completely overlooked. Nevertheless, in many instances, the intended audience, use and meaning of Alternative Glastonbury Texts remains, like their purposes and conclusions, somewhat obscure.

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[83] As noted within chapter 3, the nature and purpose of Fagan (2006) provides further support for this view.
[84] Ronald Hutton has suggested that such books never generate a significant financial return (Hutton, R., personal communication, 18 August 2010).

Alternative Glastonbury Texts - unintended consequences

It is not just in their use of the writings of historians and archaeologists that the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts 'reinterpret' the work of previous authors. As was noted in chapter 6, not only did Caine's adaption of the Glastonbury Zodiac make significant changes to the design and significance of the Zodiac itself, but the fact that such changes might be made was anticipated by Maltwood herself. Ambiguity and fluidity of meaning therefore appear to be an inherent part of the Alternative Glastonbury Text genre. However, there are also instances where such adaptations and reinterpretations almost certainly would not meet with the approval of the previous authors.

One interesting example is provided by the writings of Bond, in particular Bond (1918), and the ways in which this work has been drawn upon by Michell. Although both writers could be considered to be working broadly within the tradition of occult or Masonic traditions, with their emphasis upon the symbolism of number of geometric form, it is clear that Michell drew heavily upon Bond (amongst others) for his inspiration. In a number of places Michell was at pains to point out a number of mistakes which he felt Bond had made,[85] which were duly superseded by his own interpretations. However, it is clear that in the use of 'sacred geometry', and in particular in its application at Glastonbury in search of ancient pagan wisdom, Michell owed much to his predecessor. However, what is easily overlooked is that such a search for pagan wisdom was very far from being Bond's own purpose. As Hopkinson-Ball (2007, p.106) has noted, Bond perceived the purpose of his own work to be 'a spiritual reinvigorating of the (Anglican) Church'[86], a fact which rendered his troubled relationship with ecclesiastical authorities all the more traumatic for him. That it should be rejected by that church was bad enough. That it should have later been accepted, but heavily revised, by a counter-cultural figure such as John Michell, or more generally by New Age readers (Hopkinson-Ball 2007, p.xvi), he would probably have found even more distressing. Such usage of his text, and by such an audience, represents a significant revision of Bond's original intentions.

A final example of how readers may change the meaning attributed to an Alternative Glastonbury Text is provided by Ashe (1982). This brief work, written for general readership, and widely cited for his arguments in favour of the existence of the Tor maze, are noteworthy for the way in which his conclusions have sometimes been distorted; and not just by the

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[85] Issues where Michell disagreed with Bond included the identification of particular archaeological remains (Michell, 1997, p.127), the configuration of cells which Bond claimed had surrounded Joseph's original wattle church at Glastonbury, and more generally Bond's continual search for 'material discoveries' with which to confirm his broader insights (Michell, 1997, p.158).
[86] In this particular reference Hopkinson-Ball was discussing Bond's work on gematria, but the observation applies equally to his archaeological researches.

authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts. As was noted in chapter 6, Ashe (1982, p.2) was extremely cautious to note that his observations 'do not prove the maze's reality, but they go some distance towards proving its credibility.' However, this is not how his work has always been reported. Michell (1997, p.40) was happy to note that 'the evidence for it [has been] soberly summarized in a booklet by Geoffrey Ashe' without any mention of Ashe's caveats, while Howard-Gordon (1982, p.3) in her turn stated that his work 'shows the maze to be one of the great ritual works of early Britain.' As has already been noted within chapter 6, even the academic Rahtz incorrectly stated Ashe to have written about the labyrinth as if it were an established fact. Just as with Rahtz's own views regarding the maze, it could be argued that subsequent misrepresentation does not change the meaning of the original text. However, when such misrepresentation becomes so widespread, and each new text becomes the source upon which later readers and writers base their conclusions, it is clear that in some sense the meaning of the original, and more generally the status and credibility of the author in the minds of his or her readers, is progressively altered by each new text that purportedly draws upon it.

Historical Sources

In much of the previous discussion it has been argued that an author's intended meaning, which one would hope to be reasonably apparent from a perusal of their text, has been distorted by the manner in which that text was later interpreted. In most cases the meaning originally intended has been reasonably clear, and the distortion resulting from later interpretations likewise clear. However, this is not the case with the final group of texts which are relevant for this discussion: the medieval documents which both academic works and the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts alike draw upon as their common source material, but whose original purpose may now be obscure, or only retrievable by academic scholarship (whose findings may in some cases be disputed).

The first example is more in the nature of an amusing irony than anything else. When Gerald of Wales recorded the details of King Arthur's exhumation in the late 12th century, it was with some satisfaction that he observed that:

> *In their stupidity the British people maintain that he is still alive. Now that the truth is*
> *known [...] what really happened must be made crystal clear to all and separated from*
> *the myths which have accumulated on the subject.*
> (Gerald of Wales, 1216, p.285)

Although a Welshman himself, and with aspirations to a degree of ecclesiastical independence from England, Gerald was clearly much pleased that persistent myths regarding the return of the 'once and future king' would at last now be laid to rest. The irony is that his own account,

and not least the inconsistencies and ambiguities within it, have instead made a significant contribution to the modern myth and mystery over whether King Arthur ever existed at all! The simple, factual, myth-busting account that Gerald thought he was writing has, eight centuries later, itself become an ambiguous text which is used to support a rather different myth. This example serves as a useful reminder of how fluid the relationship between myth and history can be, and how difficult it is to drive a clear dividing line between the two. Even when writers such as Gerald of Wales considered that they were making simple statements of fact, which they felt were supported by unarguably strong evidence, later writers may nevertheless draw upon their work in ways they had not anticipated, and generate kinds of meaning which they may never have intended.

Two more significant examples of this phenomenon, however, occur in the writings of William of Malmesbury. The first of these, the interpolations made into the *De Antiquitate* between the 12th and 13th centuries, have already been discussed within chapter 6. Whether one favours the modern scholars, who typically argue the interpolations to be inventions, or the likes of Michell (1997, p.90), who argue them to be 'improvements' (drawing upon ancient traditions or other documents now lost), it is at least clear that such revisions were certainly not intended by William when he wrote the original work. More interesting though are passages such as the following, which both historians and alternative theorists agree to have been original to William's work:

> *The church of Glastonbury, therefore, is the oldest of all those that I know in England [...] There one can observe all over the floor stones, artfully interlaced in the forms of triangles or squares and sealed with lead; I do no harm to religion if I believe some sacred mystery is contained beneath them.*
> (Scott 1981, p.67)

How is such a passage to be understood? Historians have generally shown little interest in the matter,[87] but for Alternative Glastonbury Text authors this enigmatic statement has offered fertile ground in which to plant a number of speculative hypotheses, each suited to their own perspectives and purposes. Caine (1968, p.245), for example, was confident that what William had seen was a depiction of the Glastonbury Zodiac. Howard-Gordon (1982, p.29), on the other hand, was more persuaded by James Carley's suggestion that it depicted some form of alchemical symbolism. And while Bond asserted that the pavement was a record in stone of the layout of original Joseph's church and the surrounding hermit cells, Michell (1997, p.145)

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[87] Scott (1981, p.193), for example, devoted his commentary on this section to a discussion of minor variations between the *De Antiquitate* and the *de Gestis Regum* texts, rather than to speculations regarding the intended meaning of this passage. Rahtz (1993, p.73), meanwhile, merely noted the pavement as a 'remarkable' decorative feature.

stated that it was instead clearly an example of his own 'Foundation Pattern'. The imaginative but cautious Ashe (1957, p.202), whilst cautioning that 'nobody can say what it means' nevertheless felt that it proved that , in William's time, Glastonbury 'was not just another Abbey', but 'possessed an air of mystical strangeness, and potentialities of wonder peculiar to itself' (a conclusion which, in turn, conveniently supported his own standard line of argument, which relied heavily upon the legends of Glastonbury containing unresolved mysteries which could not be easily explained away).

It is unlikely that any consensus will ever be achieved regarding the meaning that William intended to convey by his enigmatic statements. However, in many ways this extract from his text provides the perfect illustration of a wider phenomenon, already noted in passing within chapter 5 and discussed by both Ashe (1984, p.252) and Hutton (2003, pp.83-85), which would appear to be a fundamental feature of the Glastonbury mythos: the high degree of ambiguity that seems to be inherent in many aspects of its history and archaeology. It is this ambiguity which means that so many competing hypotheses regarding Glastonbury's past can be formed, each drawing a degree of support (albeit sometimes equivocal support) from the same evidence base. It is this ambiguity which means that, while academics may consider the ideas of alternative theorists to be highly implausible, they nevertheless often concede that they are unable to completely refute them. It is therefore this same ambiguity which has made Glastonbury such a fertile ground within which artistic and spiritual creativity have been able to flourish, and where the aura of mystery has been able play such an important role in the creation and continual evolution of the many legends.

Conclusions

Previous chapters have noted the interplay between individual inspiration and collective traditions in the generation of academic and 'alternative' texts, and in particular the cohesive nature of the former, which contrasts so sharply with the diverse and fragmented nature of the latter. The analysis in this chapter has built upon and further reinforced these themes, and has demonstrated in particular how the interpretations of readers of these texts can potentially confirm, modify or even subvert the intentions of their authors. This is occasionally seen when selected extracts from academic work have been co-opted into the corpus of Alternative Glastonbury Texts. However, much more frequently, it is the ambiguous and enigmatic claims of Alternative Glastonbury Text authors, with their fertile and flexible repository of assertions, methods and conclusions, which have been moulded into a new form in order to provide support for another alternative authors' arguments, and conclusions. And this diversity has been shown to be not purely a product of the objectives and methods employed by the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts; it is also inherent within the ancient source material that both academics and alternative writers alike must commonly use.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

Main research question

As was observed in chapter 3, various researchers have offered interpretations of the nature of New Age culture, and the social forces that influence it. For Heelas (1996), the New Age movement was characterised by 'self spirituality', and an emphasis upon each individual's search for their own, unique, spiritual path. For Hanegraaff (1996), it was essentially the reinvigoration of a pre-existing secular esoteric tradition already latent within western culture, and best understood as a reaction against the reductionist philosophy prevailing within mainstream society, resulting in a movement whose beliefs and practices were so diverse and fragmented that their opposition to mainstream society was in fact the one thing they had in common. This lack of cohesion is so extreme that it has even led some authors, such as Sutcliffe (2003), to question whether a 'New Age' movement can truly be considered to exist at all. More specifically, though, when it comes to considering the texts generated by New Age and other 'alternative' authors, and in particular their accounts of the past, it is clear from Fagan (2006) and Feder (1999) that academics regard such texts as a direct challenge to the authority of their own work. Meanwhile, researchers such as Bowman (1995; 2009) and Prince and Riches (2000) have highlighted how Glastonbury, a small town in Somerset with a wealth of history and legends, appears to operate as a focus for a range of people with 'counter cultural' agendas. It is therefore clear that alternative texts in general and Glastonbury in particular are strongly associated with an 'anti-establishment' ethos.

The first chapter sets out the main objective of this thesis: to investigate what the conflicts between Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological Texts reveal about the nature and function of these two traditions, and the relationship between them. Drawing upon the work of previous researchers, the main conclusions of this thesis are that Alternative Glastonbury Texts, considered as the literary expression of one particular instance of 'New Age' culture, are best understood as a form of reaction against mainstream culture (represented here by the work of historians and archaeologists), and an attempt to establish a 'counter cultural' tradition of literature in opposition to it. As such, it is argued that they operate as a form of literary heterotopia (applying the term in a purely abstract sense), in the same way that Ivakhiv (2001, p.11) argued that Glastonbury itself was heterotopic (in a wider social and cultural sense). This 'counter cultural' agenda, offering as it does a platform from which any number of assaults upon the establishment may be made, is attractive to a diverse range of authors, with an equally diverse range of causes, which partly explains why the resulting tradition is both broad and fragmented. Nevertheless, it is maintained that the

resulting texts still have sufficient features in common for them to operate as a 'tradition', albeit one with many internal inconsistencies, and a low degree of coherence.

It is further argued that, due to the heterotopic nature of the relationship between Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological Texts, it is not appropriate simply to regard these two traditions as polar opposites. For while it has been seen that, to some extent, the purposes, methods, evidence and conclusions of alternative texts are indeed diametrically opposed to those of the competing academic texts, what has also emerged is their tendency to adopt and adapt the methods employed within their academic counterparts. This is particularly evident from the manner in which alternative texts, which are typically highly individualistic, nevertheless sometimes show evidence of attempts to establish a more coherent and collective body of work – characteristics that are more normally associated with academic research. On the other hand, and perhaps more surprisingly, it has also been demonstrated that in some instances Historical / Archaeological Texts have exhibited characteristics more commonly associated with alternative texts. Thus, it is concluded that, instead of regarding these two traditions as simple opposites, it is more appropriate to represent them as a spectrum. Individual texts, which generally exhibit a mixture of characteristics, may then be located at an appropriate point along this spectrum depending upon the purposes and methods of the author, the types of the evidence that they draw upon and the nature of the conclusions that they reach.

Comparison of Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological Texts

In support of these conclusions, it should firstly be recognised that both the academic tradition and the alternative tradition have a number of characteristic features. Furthermore, as was anticipated within chapter 4, and as has been demonstrated within chapters 5 to 7, the initial impression at least is that these features enable a clear distinction to be drawn between the two traditions.

Alternative Glastonbury Texts, on the one hand, are highly individualistic, and varied in nature. They frequently employ the use of non-standard methods (devised by the author), and involve the use of non-repeatable experiments (or other evidence accessible only to the author), and may even involve accepting that a text or an artefact may have different meanings for different individuals. The bibliographies that these works contain are often short and highly selective, and - notwithstanding the occasional use of common authorities - generally have little in common with the bibliographies from other alternative texts. Meanwhile, any specific references that they make to previous texts are often vague, enigmatic, and (again) highly selective. Furthermore, the authors of alternative texts typically pay little attention to the context within which their claims are made, and both the

transparency and clarity of the methods that they employ and the verifiability of the sources that they draw upon are frequently open to challenge. Finally, although these authors frequently claim to be making significant advances to the field of knowledge in their chosen subject, the range of different conclusions that they reach is not only very wide, but often incompatible with the conclusions of other Alternative Glastonbury Texts.

Meanwhile, the preceding chapters have also demonstrated that academic texts generally exhibit a very different set of characteristics. These include the use of methods which are highly standardised and (for the most part) rigorously maintained, with significant emphasis being placed upon the importance of context, upon the transparency and clarity of the methods used and the verifiability of sources. The approaches used and the conclusions drawn in academic texts are therefore almost always very similar, and the body of evidence upon which they are based is not just common to most works, but accessible to both authors and readers for verification, if required. Extensive use is made of previous academic work, with wide ranging bibliographies, explicit referencing of the sources used, while only modest claims are made for the incremental contribution being made to this body of knowledge by the present author. Thus is it clear that, as was anticipated, the methods of the academic and alternative tradition are in many respects at variance with each other.

However, the position is not simply that of a conflict of opposites.

In the first place, the textual analysis has shown that some of the features of Historical / Archaeological Texts are, to a lesser extent, also observed within Alternative Glastonbury Texts, consistent with their heterotopic agenda of both challenging academic authority and seeking to supersede it. The frequent referencing of other alternative texts, for example, strongly suggests the desire to establish a new tradition, independent of the academic one, with its own authorities who may be cited to support the author's argument in the same way that academics cite other academics. This is further illustrated by appeal to academic authority, on the rare occasions that this is perceived to support the argument being developed, or by claims to be progressing beyond its limits, when it does not. The methods of some authors, such as Mann, contain a mixture of academic and alternative approaches, while those of others, in particular Ashe, arguably have more in common with the academic tradition than they do with the alternative one. To some extent, Alternative Glastonbury Texts not only express the authors' desire to rebel against 'the establishment', but also their desire to co-opt it, replace it, and build their own edifice upon the foundations it offers. Features such as these, therefore, lend support to the conclusion that Alternative Glastonbury Texts represent one particular manifestation of the reactionary characteristics that previous scholars have already identified within the New Age and other alternative movements.

However, what is also evident from the detailed textual analysis is that, perhaps more surprisingly, there are a number of instances where academic authors exhibit some of the characteristics more generally associated with alternative texts. Treharne (1967), for example, was justly criticised within Ashe (1984), not only for overlooking the importance of the recent excavations of Radford but also for the degree of conviction with which he expressed conclusions based upon evidence that was contextual, and largely circumstantial. It could also be argued that Treharne's methods were to some extent selected in order to support conclusions that had been reached a priori. Rahtz's representation of Ashe's views regarding the Tor maze was not only highly selective, but clearly did not do justice to the caution with which these had originally been expressed. Meanwhile, the extent to which Radford and even Rahtz may in some cases have allowed their own or their sponsor's personal convictions to sway their assessment of the evidence and the presentation of their conclusions remains open to question, to say the least. Furthermore, most of the academics who have concluded that Arthur's exhumation was faked have based this upon a presumption that they can correctly infer the actions of people in the past based upon those people's assumed motives, without citing any specific evidence in support of these assertions. Finally, not only Rahtz, but also Treharne and even Gransden – along with many other academics – have from time to time resorted to the statement that their conclusions are simply 'obvious' – a claim which is supported by little more than the authority and prestige of the author, and which is just as available to (and even more frequently employed within) Alternative Glastonbury Texts. Thus it may be seen that, in spite of the many differences between the academic and alternative traditions, there are also common characteristics which they both share, and that what sets them apart is only the degree to which each particular text exhibits the purposes and methods of one tradition, or of the other.

Commentary upon provisional definitions and other assumptions

As well as setting out the key conclusions of this thesis, the summary observations in the previous section also provide the basis for a number of additional comments, without which the thesis itself would be incomplete. This is because the argument developed within the thesis relies upon initial definitions of Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological Texts (as set out within chapter 1) which were necessarily provisional in nature, since they in turn rely upon an assumed knowledge of the characteristics of academic texts, and therefore (to some extent) anticipate the detailed work which follows (within chapter 4, and chapters 5 to 7). Similarly, as set out in chapter 1, the thesis also implicitly relies upon the assumption that the collection of Alternative Glastonbury Texts here assembled do indeed

represent a tradition of some kind, and that it is therefore meaningful to talk of comparing this 'tradition' with the academic one.

Considering firstly the question of the definitions adopted, though, upon further consideration it rapidly becomes evident that the provisional nature of these definitions in no way undermines either the argument developed within the thesis or its conclusions. It was initially proposed that texts were to be considered Historical or Archaeological Texts if they were accounts of Glastonbury's past based primarily upon documentary or material evidence, and were written an academic style. Alternative Glastonbury Texts, on the other hand, were defined to be texts which were based upon similar evidence, but which did not adopt such a style. It might be argued that such definitions of themselves presuppose the existence of two such traditions, and that those traditions are in conflict with each other, and therefore that the subsequent findings are simply an artificial product of the frame of reference that has been adopted. However, it is clear from the subsequent analysis that this is not the case. The detailed discussion of the nature of academic history and archaeology within chapter 4 fully supports the provisional definitions set out within the first chapter, while the detailed textual analysis within chapters 5 to 7 further confirms that they are an appropriate basis for a comparison of such academic texts with alternative texts, which to some extent share but to a greater extent do not share their characteristics. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that these provisional definitions are satisfactory, for the purposes of this thesis.

The situation regarding the existence of a 'tradition' of Alternative Glastonbury Texts is slightly more complex. As was noted in chapter 5, one particularly noticeable feature of alternative texts on Glastonbury is their lack of consistency and their lack of cohesion, both as individual texts and as a collection of texts. This is entirely consistent with the comments above regarding the high degree of individuality observed within these works, and the fragmented nature of the alternative 'tradition'. It is also consistent with the lack of any commonly accepted authorities within this 'tradition', and in particular the lack of any more 'theoretical' texts providing general guidance regarding how such texts should be written, and the principles and methodologies which they should adopt. By way of contrast, it will be noted that the initial discussion of the nature of academic writing within chapter 4 was able to draw upon a wide range of previous works (which indeed are only a small selection from the much greater number which are available), while the Alternative Glastonbury Text tradition does not appear to have generated any such texts at all.[88] All of these considerations would appear to

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[88] This lack of 'guidance' raises the question of the means by which Glastonbury Text authors acquire a common style, to the extent that they do. A number of suggestions on this matter are set out within the sections which follow.

urge the case that Alternative Glastonbury Texts do not as such constitute a proper tradition, whose methods can be meaningfully compared with the academic tradition.

However, further considerations suggest that this is not the case. In the first place, following Hanegraaff (1996) rather than Sutcliffe (2003), it could be maintained that their opposition to mainstream culture is the single feature which not only unites but (to some extent at least) defines the Alternative Glastonbury Text genre. However, the detailed analysis within chapters 5 to 7 provides more specific evidence. Alternative Glastonbury Texts as a body may indeed lack coherence, but they do exhibit a number of features in common (in addition merely to their opposition to academic texts). These include the 'grander purposes' noted within chapter 5, and also the selective use of previous authorities (both academic and alternative), the use of 'argument by suggestion' and the vagueness of both their purposes and their conclusions. As such, it is clear that they do exhibit a significant number of shared features. It is upon this basis, then, that it is concluded that the Alternative Glastonbury Texts do indeed constitute an identifiable tradition, albeit a fragmented and somewhat incoherent one.

Supplementary research questions

In addition to the main research question discussed above, chapter 1 also sets out two supplementary questions. The first of these involves viewing the conflicts between Alternative Glastonbury Text authors and Historical / Archaeological authors within a broader context, and considering what these conflicts reveal about the relationship between Alternative Glastonbury Text authors and mainstream society as a whole. As such, it may be regarded as an extension of the main research question, which addresses a similar issue, but within the narrower sphere of purely literary activity. Indeed, as this thesis has intentionally focused exclusively upon written texts, and these mainly academic or alternative accounts of the legends of Glastonbury, the extent to which it is possible to draw conclusions regarding such wider issues is necessarily limited, without undertaking further research. Nevertheless, much of the work included within the literature review in chapter 3 involved considering the wider social and cultural processes which influence the generation of written texts, while the detailed analysis of academic texts and Alternative Glastonbury Texts within chapters 4 to 7 also offers insights into the societies within which they have been generated. Notwithstanding the limited scope of the work undertaken, it is therefore still possible to make a number of suggestions regarding such wider issues, drawing purely upon the textually-based research that has been undertaken within this thesis.

Building upon the conclusions to the main research question, then, what the conflicts between Alternative Glastonbury Text authors and academic authors suggest is that, as argued

by Ivakhiv (2001, p.11), Glastonbury does indeed function as a heterotopia. It has a culture which reflects (and to some extent replicates) mainstream society in the world around it, but which also challenges that society and seeks to overthrow it. This is evident in the ways in which the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts both imitate the methods of academic texts, with their bibliographies and their references to previous authors, but then also claim to transcend the methods, the findings and the authority of those same academics. It is especially evident in the ambivalent attitude which the authors of Alternative Glastonbury Texts display towards academic authority itself, and in particular towards science. To the extent that academic work can be claimed to support an Alternative Glastonbury Text cause, it is zealously referenced; to the extent that it cannot, it is either derided, or ignored. This creative tension also suggests the mechanism by which the loose collection of Alternative Glastonbury Text 'methods' have arisen, and are continuously learned and adapted in turn by successive authors: it is almost certainly simply by the act of reading previous Alternative Glastonbury Texts, of selectively assimilating those aspects of their methods which happen to appeal to the reader in question (including the freedom to introduce novel approaches), and of then adapting those methods within their own texts, along with any new innovations they have themselves devised. Alternative Glastonbury Text authors are thus simultaneously attempting to escape from the restrictions and limitations of an existing society, to express themselves as individuals, and to form a new society which replaces and improves upon the one they previously left behind them - all at the same time. It is therefore hardly to be wondered at that their works are so full of creative ideas, tensions and inconsistencies; or that the literary tradition that they create is so fragmented, and lacking in cohesion.

In conclusion, then, it is argued that Alternative Glastonbury Texts, and the culture which they express, represent a direct reaction to mainstream society, a critique of that society, and an attempt to replace that society with something which the authors consider to be better. The aspects of mainstream society which the authors consider to be desirable they therefore appropriate, to the extent this is possible; the aspects of mainstream society they consider to be undesirable, they reject out of hand.

Having reached these conclusions, it is now pertinent to turn to the last of the supplementary research questions set out in the first chapter of this thesis: what is it about Glastonbury as a place that has made it such a fertile ground for the generation of myths and legends, within which these conflicting interpretations of the past and aspirations for the future are played out? Once again, the scope of this thesis imposes clear limits on the extent to which such questions may be answered. Nevertheless, the work that has been undertaken does provide sufficient evidence for a number of suggestions to be offered.

Rahtz (2002, p.7; 2003, p.20) suggested that Glastonbury to some extent owed its unique history to its equally unique geography. 'The remarkable form of the Tor', he argued, and the impression that it would have made upon the human mind from earliest times, were the most likely explanations for the subsequent settlement of the area, and for the myths and legends which then accumulated around it. Few of the texts examined in researching this thesis would challenge the importance of the Tor, but many of them would expand upon these sentiments, in line with their differing perspectives and interests. For Prince and Riches (2000), it was Glastonbury's function as a very 'simple' form of religious community which made it the ideal focus for a study on the origin and nature of religion itself; but from what cause did this itself spring? Ashe (1957) and Hutton (2003) have argued that the source of Glastonbury's enduring interest lies in the ambiguity of its history, in the fact that multiple possible accounts of its past can be provided out of which no single one can be proved beyond doubt to be the single 'correct' explanation. And in this it must also be recalled that even Treharne (1967, p.118) and Lagorio (1972, p.230), the very academics who most emphatically dismissed some of Glastonbury's most cherished legends as medieval invention, where nevertheless forced to concede that their investigations and analyses did not completely remove the possibility that those legends were true, that Joseph of Arimathea did really tread the summit of Wearyall hill, and that King Arthur had indeed been buried beneath the sacred earth of the Abbey cemetery.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the conflicting accounts of Glastonbury's past which are offered by Alternative Glastonbury Texts and Historical / Archaeological Texts offer a particularly rich example of a heterotopic situation, where the conflicts between mainstream society (as represented by academic history and archaeology) and alternative culture (as represented by the alternative texts) are expressed through competing accounts of the human past. Such accounts typically arise at the margins of society, where the authority of accepted wisdom begins to weaken, and alternative voices start to express themselves more forcefully. Such a dialogue would not have been possible without a liminal location, whose history offered sufficient material and documentary evidence for academics to meaningfully discuss its history and archaeology, but also sufficient ambiguity for writers of all kinds to speculate about alternative, more romantic origins, and for myths and legends to take root, and to flourish. And that location, as enthusiastically argued by Ashe (1957) and Hutton (2003), and as reluctantly conceded by Treharne (1967) and Lagorio (1976), is Glastonbury.

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135

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