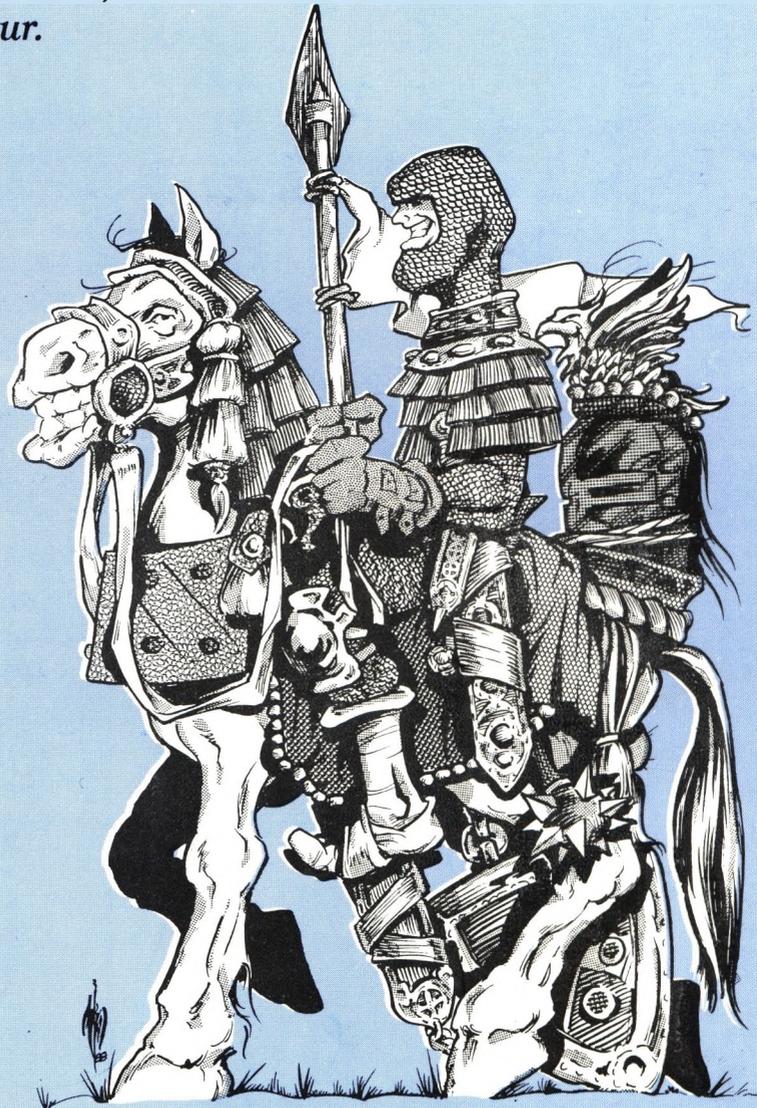


*Assembled 'twixt  
these covers be juicy  
gobbets about the  
Life and Times of  
King Arthur.*



The  
Once and Future  
**ARTHUR**

*EDITED BY  
EDMUND R. MESKYS*

**Edmund R. Meskys**  
Editor

**Anne Braude**  
Associate Editor

**Michael Bastraw**  
Art and Design

**Production**  
Sherwood C. Frazier  
Todd E. Frazier  
Andy Johnson  
Robert H. Knox  
Fred Lerner  
Tamar Lindsay  
Stanley Meskys  
Claire Parker  
John Parker  
Sandy Parker  
Toni Piper  
Jim Reynolds  
Jane T. Sibley

**Layout**



Village West II, P.O. Box 7074  
Gifford, NH 03246  
(603) 524-9555

Subscription are \$15 for 4 publica-  
tions, \$29 for 8 publications. For-  
eign orders must add \$1.00 per is-  
sue for surface mail or \$2.50 per  
issue for airmail. Subscriber infor-  
mation: (603) 253-6207.

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# The Once and Future ARTHUR

THE ONCE AND FUTURE ARTHUR  
A Niekas Publications Book  
PRINTING HISTORY: Niekas Publications paperback edition/January 1989

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For information: Niekas Publications, RFD 2, Box 63, Center Harbor, NH 03226-9729

ISBN 0-910619-03-4

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

# The Uses of Arthur

## Bumbejimas

by Edmund R. Meskys

### INTRODUCTION

Like our *Silverlock Companion*, this book has been a long time coming. I got the idea for an Arthurian issue of NIEKAS when I received a rough draft of Marion Bradley's article about five years ago. I began to think about how every generation seems to need to retell the Arthurian legend but to do so in such a way as to reflect current concerns and styles. The story is basically the same whether you look at Malory, T.H. White, Rosemary Sutcliff, or Marion Zimmer Bradley. However in every case the telling and the parts emphasized are worlds apart.

Our contributors were assigned specific areas to concentrate on but a certain amount of repetition is unavoidable when so many people are writing on the same subject. As the manuscripts arrived I was overwhelmed by the information and ideas presented. I do hope you will find this book as interesting as I did while putting it together.

### BRITISH ROYALTY AND THE ROUND TABLE

Marion Bradley mentions in her article that Henry II was an Arthurian buff. I do not know whether you could call him an Arthurian buff, but he and other British kings certainly made great use of the Arthurian mythos to try to shore up their realms.

I have a tape of a lecture given at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia about ten years ago by Martin Biddle, an "urban archaeologist" who investigated the "Round Table" now hanging on the wall in Winchester Castle. I am uncertain about the spelling of Prof. Biddle's name. The tape is of low quality and no book titles by him which could be looked up were cited. He was introduced as formerly associated with Oxford and U. of Exeter, and currently "Director of the Winchester Research Unit" and "Director of the University Museum at the U. of Pennsylvania."

In early days Winchester was as important as London to the English monarchy

and many kings were baptized, crowned, or buried there. Until the last century many believed it to be the site of Camelot.

Biddle led a team of archaeologists and other scholars who excavated a site in Winchester about to be destroyed by the foundations of a new building. The site goes back to pre-Roman times and many different cities rose and fell there. While he was working there he oversaw the removal from the wall for detailed study of the "round table" which had been in the castle for at least 500 years.

He found by carbon-14 and tree-ring dating that the table was constructed between 1222 and 1236, during the reign of Henry III. It did originally stand on a dozen legs as a table, but these were later removed so it could be hung on a wall. At the same time a strengthening frame was added to allow it to hang instead of stand. There were 24 places at the table, which was made of oak. The carpenters who built it used as a model for its structure the framework of a waterwheel. The table weighs 2400 pounds and is 18 feet in diameter. Prof. Biddle is of the opinion that it was constructed for some ceremony, now forgotten, at which King Henry's court dressed up as the Arthurian knights and sat at the table. Anne Braude pointed out to me an article by Geoffrey Ashe (who else!) in the *Arthurian Encyclopedia* about the round table which refers to Biddle's research without mentioning him by name. The article speaks of festivals called "round tables" which were the 13th century equivalent of the Society for Creative Anachronism. At these knights jousted, danced, and feasted in imitation of Arthur and his knights. Ashe thinks the table was constructed for such a festival but probably not by Henry III for he did not like the "round tables." Ashe prefers Edward I though he cites indications that it might have been built as late as 1344 when Edward III had hoped to revive the Arthurian knighthood. Ashe, writing several years after Biddle, says that the carbon-14 dating confirms the time of Henry III but the tree ring dating indicates the time of Edward III.

Henry VII was not the first king to name a son Arthur, but the Princes Arthur never lived to be king. Anne Braude points out that Prince Charles has a clutch of names, one of them Arthur, and that upon ascension to the throne he can select any of these. Thus while he *could* choose to be Arthur II it is not bloody likely that he will. However Edward VIII was known as David and George VI as Bertie before crowning.

Three centuries after the table was constructed, and probably after its true origins were forgotten, the late Arthur's younger brother, Henry VIII, entertained Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. He wanted to impress Charles so he had the table, which was now mounted on the wall, painted with a likeness of the original Arthur at its center. This Arthur was made to look like the young Henry.

Two dozen names were inscribed around the edge of the table. All but one are recognizable from various Arthurian stories, which list about 300 different knights. However no known work lists these 24 together. It is a mystery why these particular names were chosen.

In 1645 when Oliver Cromwell's army seized the castle they vandalized the table by putting a couple of dozen bullet holes in it, mostly around "Arthur's" head. The table deteriorated and suffered water damage from a window above it. The bullet holes were covered with sheet metal and the table was repainted with the same design in the 18th century, but by an artist of much less talent. X-rays have revealed the original painting and efforts might be made to restore it (or so it was said a decade ago). It originally hung on the east wall of the great hall but had to be moved to the west wall during the Victorian era when two doors were cut into that wall. More repairs were made at that time, and a metal rim was added.

At the time of the lecture the table had not been re-hung and town officials had proposed remounting it on legs so that it could be used by the Queen on a visit. The archaeologists managed to prevent this. It has been completely repaired and remounted by now.

## SLEEPERS

This should be written by Bruce Pelz or have been written by the late Ron Ellik. Both had made hobbies of collecting material on this subject and are/were far more knowledgeable than I.

Arthur is the "once and future king" who is sleeping, and will return in England's hour of greatest need. Other cultures have their sleeping heroes, also. Poul Anderson's novel *Three Hearts and Three Lions* is based on the legend of Holger the Dane who is also supposed to return some day. I have even seen a statue of him sleeping in a chair in one of the public underground passages of Kronenberg (Elsinor in "Hamlet") castle. Frederick Barbarossa is the hero of Pratt & de Camp's *Land of Unreason*. He also appears in *Little Big*. I have heard of other sleepers, too, but have forgotten their names or cultures. The only other one I personally know about is the one of my culture, Lithuanian.

St. Kazimiras was born about 600 years ago when the Lithuanian king married the Polish queen and the two realms were united. At that time Lithuania was the last outpost of paganism in Europe and accepted Western Christianity as a result of the union.

I read an article about him in an early issue of a learned English language quarterly about Lithuanian affairs, LITUANUS, about a quarter century ago. My memory is vague at this point, but as I remember he was very different from the bold warriors usually associated with sleepers. He was sickly and lived a very ascetic life. It was one of self-imposed mortification of the flesh by fasting, celibacy, etc. On the other hand he didn't show off with false modesty. He wore rough clothing that scratched the flesh, but he did so under his silk courtly robes where they didn't show.

He was highly regarded for his sanctity and his patriotism, and after his death legends grew up about his returning some day to help Lithuania in a time of need. Here again he differs from most other sleepers. About a century after his death the Lithuanian army was engaged in a crucial battle and was losing. All of a sudden a mysterious knight in white armor appeared and helped rally the flagging troops to win the battle and then disappeared again. The rumor went around that it was St. Kazimiras.

When I lived in the San Francisco Bay Area I often flew down to L.A. for the weekend and usually stayed with Al Lewis & Ron Ellik who shared a house just outside Santa Monica. They were the usual hosts for visiting fen. I occasionally stayed

with other fen like the Trimbles and, once, the Pelzes. I got to know Al & Ron quite well and between parties, G&S performances (it was Ron who introduced me to G&S), etc., we talked of many things and I learned that Ron and Bruce Pelz both had a hobby of collecting sleeper legends. Ron told me of a number of them and told of how once Bruce came across a man in a library doing research on similar legends. They talked enthusiastically about their rare finds for a while but when Bruce started taking notes the other man clammed up and would say no more. He felt that his collection of knowledge was somehow private and *his* thing and didn't want to share it with anyone.

At the time I asked both Ron and Bruce to write articles about their finds for NIEKAS but both pleaded they were too busy and referred me to the other. I haven't asked Bruce to do a piece for this special Arthurian issue of NIEKAS but when I have asked for other articles in Bruce's fields of expertise he has always pleaded being too busy even though he said the topic interested him and he would have liked to write on it.

Anne Braude has researched this subject and has passed on a lot more information. For instance, some believe Hitler will return. Not all sleepers are royal, but include people like Rip van Winkle, persecuted Christians from the 3rd century, and even people from non-western cultures. She plans to write a piece on this for a future NIEKAS, including the difference between females like "Sleeping Beauty" and male sleepers.



## AND NOW FOR A BIT OF BUSINESS

If you are a subscriber to NIEKAS you have noticed that in addition to your regular issues of the magazine you are also receiving special Niekas paperback book publications. This is a practice we will continue for you and all new subscribers. By doing this we are accomplishing a number of things—not the least of which is increasing the number of copies we print and therefore increasing our revenues which help support the production costs of our various projects.

The book projects seem to be finding more favor with various distribution outlets who have an easier time moving publications on pigeonholeable topics rather than omnibus types such as your typical NIEKAS. So be it.

In addition to our regular general-interest NIEKAS we will be sandwiching-in these special pubs. Stay tuned.

## HALF A BASTION IS BETTER THAN NONE

How d' y' do. Mike Bastraw here.

As fen of my column will note—there ain't one. I have nothing to say on the subject of Mr. Arthur of Camelot that won't be stated much better by others in the following pages. There are, however, several other bits of business that should be addressed before you turn to the main course.

Firstly, as usual, we are pleased and grateful for the wonderful material that all our contributors have given us to work with. Whether scholar, scoundrel, scribe, or cynic (you all know which you are) they have all done a noteworthy job and can take great pride in that.

Our production people (see Page 1) have all devoted much time to this book in the form of proofreading, collating, and providing manpower for all those other little jobs that go unsung but not unappreciated.

Special thanx goes to Margaret Simon who provided the lion's share of the illustrations in this book. You should all know that in addition to supplying Niekas Publications with nifty artwork, Marge is the current president of the Small Press Writers and Artists Organization. The SPWAO looks out for that much-endangered species and we endorse their efforts.

As Ed stated earlier, MZB was his inspiration for this project. She has also helped promote NIEKAS by running a sizeable advertisement in her newest endeavor: MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY'S FANTASY MAGAZINE (P.O. Box 72, Berkeley, CA 94701). Look into it.

Thanx and goodnight.\*

# "Lest One Good Custom Should Corrupt the World. . . ."

## Patterns

by Diana L. Paxson

Dramatic performances are a tradition at Mythopoeic conferences. About ten years ago, Mythcon was held in Sacramento, and members of the local discussion group did a sort of oratorio-style performance of Tennyson's "Idylls of the King". Now for most people, Tennyson is something to be endured in school. I probably enjoyed it more than most, still, the "Idylls" had never been on my list of favorite retellings of the Arthurian story. But with no light but the flicker of candles, and some pretty good voices rolling out that iambic pentameter as if they meant it, suddenly it worked. I thought, *by golly, that man could write after all!* And after that I stopped thinking, because I was standing among the reeds as the darkness gathered, watching Excalibur flare one last time as it wheeled over the grey gleam of the tarn.

The Story—the story that haunts the literature of the English language—had caught me. Again.

It does make one wonder. Why that particular story? Why should it have survived when so many other tales of kings and heroes have disappeared? And why, if we love it so well, should we be driven in each generation—each decade, even—to try to write it again?

Perhaps the Arthurian story is so attractive because it represents a unique combination of two literary phenomena, each of which is itself compelling—the heroic tragedy, and the nucleus for a cycle of legends. Great Kings seem to be a natural focus for hero tales. The motif of the sovereign and his twelve companions is endemic in mythology from Iran to Iceland, providing endless opportunity for cycles of heroic story.

In European literature, Charlemagne was the other natural candidate for immortality. The great emperor became the center of the "Matter of France", a cycle of stories about his twelve peers, including paladins like Roland and Oliver, and the occasional villain, represented by the treacherous Ganelon. Like the Matter of Britain, the French cycle uses a historical fact, the Moorish invasion of Europe, as the starting point for a great deal of inven-

tion which reflects a cultural ethos rather than historical reality.

The Charlemagne tales remained popular through the Middle Ages, becoming more and more fantastic as epic evolved into romance. Similar stories set during the reigns of Charlemagne's heirs were added, continuing to explore the problems of feudal loyalty. But throughout this development, the king, despite his interest as a historical character, remained an archetypal, rather than an actual figure. When Ganelon commits his great treachery at Roncesvalles, it is not (at least not directly) Charlemagne whom he betrays. With the Renaissance, motifs classical and Mediterranean squeezed out the native material. The Romans conquered Gaul a second time, and what they did not do to cut off the French from their heroic tradition was accomplished by the modernism of the Revolution.

The Matter of Britain fared rather better. For one thing, although it hinges on the historical Anglo-Saxon invasions of Britain, the stories themselves are not dependent on that history. As legend, the Arthurian story stands not at the beginning, but in the *middle* of a literary evolution that reaches back into Celtic antiquity. This tradition is the source of most of the stories which were set at the court of Arthur by medieval poets like Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes, enthusiastically mining the mythology brought by the British migrants to Brittany. And those stories themselves had gone back and forth across the strait to Ireland, had been brought to the British Isles from their middle European homeland by the Celtic invaders, or were told them when they arrived in the islands by the children of the people who built the megaliths.

Those tales held the essence of the Celtic enchantment—a vision in which the Otherworld is only the blink of an eye away from our own, of magic swords and fairy women, perilous seats and mysterious cauldrons and fortresses that appear and then are gone. They held all the Celtic passions as well—love and hatred and treachery and vengeance that transcend

mortality. The story of Grainne and Diarmuid was one such, reincarnated as the tale of Iseult and Tristan. Gawain and the Green Knight, the Loathly Lady, all had their ancestors. These motifs not only furnished the attendant tales with magic, but were incorporated into the central tragedy. For in this the Matter of Britain also differs from the others, that the King around whom the tales center is himself a hero, and his story more compelling than that of any of his warriors.

It seems probable that there was at some point a real person who served as the nucleus for the figure of King Arthur. The first Arthurian vision, of which we retain only the faintest of vestiges, was therefore historical. A Romano-British warleader (or several) provided the framework of the military campaigns against the invading Saxons. Was he a Dacian cavalry leader? a British general who fought in Gaul and was called Riothamus? or a bastard British princeling as described in the later tales. Certainly *somebody* must have led them. Whoever did it, the Saxon advance was halted for a generation—from the end of the 5th to the third quarter of the 6th centuries.

The names we have are those of his heirs and supporters—Prince Gerontius (Geraint), who fell at Portsmouth. Marcus Cunomorus (King Mark of Cornwall) who ruled in Dumnonia and Carhaix in Brittany. Gildas tells how the British princes who came to power in the interregnum between Arthur and the recovery of the Saxons abused their own people. Many fled to Brittany, not from the Saxons, but from their own lords. But they took with them the tales of a time, and a King, who had made them free.

Slowly the Arthurian story precipitated out of the mixture of myth and history. To the Cymri, slowly retreating from the Saxon advance, he was a Celtic prince with his warriors around him, sponsoring or leading exotic adventures in the Otherworld. In form, these stories are much like the Irish tales of the Red Branch heroes; the warriors of Arthur are half man, half magic, with powers that would put comics super-

heroes to shame. Gawain is among them, and Peredur (Perceval), searching for one of the ancestors of the Grail.

By the time Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his *History of the Kings of Britain* in 1136, the story had undergone its first major reincarnation. Arthur had become the pattern of early Norman kingship, with his battles, his court, and his order of chivalry. His story served to link the culture of the conquerors to the native tradition by synthesizing older elements and recasting them in a mold that would serve the purposes of those now in power.

For Marie de France, writing a little later in the century, the story of Arthur provided a context for tales shimmering with the exoticism of the Celtic imagination refined by the disciplines of courtly love. Drawing on memories of Breton history and motifs from Celtic legend, she introduced a lush romanticism into the tradition, which was picked up by Chrétien de Troyes and others in the next century.

Chrétien is responsible for one of the major developments in the story—the story of the love between Lancelot and the Queen, which linked an attached hero-tale back into the Arthurian frame, providing an opportunity for Arthur himself to evolve as a hero as well. His stories display the maturing of the ethos of courtly love, and a developing awareness of the conflicts involved in balancing erotic and feudal loyalties. He also reattached the Grail story to the mythos, exploring the relationship between the spiritual path of the knight and Christian mysticism.

The story of the Grail quest was left unfinished. In the century that followed, there was an explosion in Arthurian literature, on the continent even more than in Britain. Poets completed Chrétien's tale, and extended it. The story of Lancelot was elaborated. The legend of Tristan and Iseult was developed in final form and connected to the whole. All these versions served numerous purposes. Some explored the problems of courtly love, while others investigated feudal loyalty; various versions of the Grail legend can be read as propaganda for the Cistercians or other religious philosophies.

The fourteenth century saw a further elaboration, sometimes over-elaboration, of the stories both in poetry and prose. The culmination of this evolution was Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, a massive concatenation of all the material that had become attached to the Arthurian story, including Tristan and the Grail, which was published by Caxton in 1485. Not only did the *Morte D'Arthur* sum up all that had

gone before, as the first Arthurian work to be printed, and the first to be written in the beginnings of modern English, it provided a model for what was to come.

Malory was writing in the midst of the social and political carnage of the Wars of the Roses. For him, the Arthurian story provided a context in which to glorify values he saw being forgotten, and to express the tragic failure of the feudal ideal. Malory's version of the story was definitive. Most of the treatments which followed have reinterpreted the meaning of the story rather than altering or adding content.



Spenser's *Faerie Queene* was a reversion to Arthur's court as a framework that owes as much to Ariosto as to Malory. Aside from some unconvincing attempts to recast Arthur in a baroque mode during the eighteenth century, the next major version of the story was that of Tennyson, who indulged the Victorian passion for the Middle Ages to the fullest and portrayed Arthur as a perfect English gentleman. However he focused once more on Arthur's tragedy. The story gave him the opportunity to explore the suspicions of the 19th century that perhaps progress was not inevitable, the suppressed awareness that even the most noble of experiments can fail. Interestingly enough, in Tennyson's version, the fall of the Round Table is due

in equal parts to the infidelity of Guinevere and the excess of religious enthusiasm displayed in the quest for the Holy Grail.

The twentieth century has seen an explosion in Arthuriana not equalled since the twelfth, and with even greater variety in interpretation. T.H. White's *Once and Future King* mixed allegory and humor and told Arthur's story as the education of Everyman. Even *Camelot* was ORDINARY PEOPLE in medievales. Rosemary Sutcliff's extensive historical background made her Arthur a thoroughly credible fifth century warleader striving to hold back the advancing barbarian hordes long enough to let a little of the light of Roman civilization shine through (*detente*, anyone?). Mary Stewart told the story from the point of view of Merlin the wizard. Marion Zimmer Bradley explored the feminine point of view (with Guinevere as the Phyllis Schläffly of the 5th century), presenting the story from a truly original perspective at a time when one would have thought that all possible approaches had been exhausted, and infusing it with a new spirit of mysticism and magic. With so many splendid predecessors, I myself have not ventured to tackle the story of Arthur himself, but in *The White Raven*, I have tried to set his career in the context of history, and show its impact on the next generation.

However one approaches it, the Arthurian story is set in a time of dangers and changes, a time when people must find the courage to meet a threat to all they hold dear. Because they are human, while they are doing this, they must find a way to continue to live and love. The human dimension of the story is obvious, but that is not what makes this story different from others and forces us to confront it again and again.

I think the compulsion comes from the fact that even as the characters play out their own personal stories, they are also part of a greater pattern. Arthur is not only a warleader and a man who strives to do his duty despite personal misfortunes and failings, he is a sacred king, with a mystical tie to the land and people he rules. In a sense, he has never ceased to rule. He is the *Rex quondam, rex futurus* of the English speaking peoples, the promise that even though the dark overwhelm us, still something will remain.

On the other hand, perhaps that is only a late-twentieth century view. Who knows who the Arthur of the twenty-first century will be? And that is as it should be. As Tennyson pointed out, even good things, to remain productive, must change and grow.\*

# Soul on Ice

## Across the River

by Fred Lerner

Hallowe'en approaches as I write this, and perhaps that's why the notion of cryonic preservation is once again rising from the undead. Several months ago, the Alcor Life Extension Foundation in Los Angeles was asked by the county coroner to produce the frozen head of the late Dora Kent. This illustrated one of the hazards of pioneering in life extension research, and set off a certain amount of silly-season journalism.

Some articles on cryonics are more serious. A recent piece in *NEW SCIENTIST* ("A Glimpse of Immortality" by Stephen Young, 15 September 1988, pp 44-48) examined the processes by which several species of frogs manage to survive subfreezing temperatures. While this research might lead to breakthroughs in human applications, these will most likely be limited to advances in the preservation of human and animal organs for use in transplant surgery. The scientific and technical obstacles to cryonic preservation of humans or other mammals seem insurmountable.

Many of those who write on this subject seem to take for granted the desirability of preserving corpses. (The important thing is to work out the technical details, preferably within their own lifetimes.) They assume that succeeding generations will then thaw out those erstwhile corpses, once they've developed the ability to do so. But I've yet to see anyone suggest any good reason for believing that succeeding generations would take the trouble. Everyone asks the question, "Can it be done?" Nobody asks, "Why bother?"

Why bother, indeed? Will tomorrow's Earth be so underpopulated that the dead must be recalled to life? Will its resources be so abundant that help must be recruited from previous generations to consume them? Will tomorrow's young people so lack worthwhile uses for their brains and hands that they will want to devote their energies to caring for generations of ancestors?

What will the dead of past generations offer their descendants? Not much. Historians and philologists would have the greatest incentive to seek knowledge of the past

from those who lived there. But I doubt that their interests will be any less marginal to the central concerns of their societies than are those of today's academics. Most other disciplines will have little desire to consult experts from the past: what light could a twentieth-century layman shed on questions that might concern future physicists or economists or engineers? Yes, an Einstein or a Gandhi might possess wisdom that transcends the centuries; but the proponents of cryonic preservation say nothing about limiting the treatment to those who might have something to offer the future. Immortality, like political power, is not to be entrusted lightly to those who are most avid in pursuit of it.

Without some advantage to be gained by it, what motivation will our descendants have for thawing us out? The bonds of sentiment might lead someone to undertake the support of the fondly-remembered great-grandparent of his early childhood. But will those bonds extend back through the centuries, or across ties of blood? Perhaps some sect might attempt to augment its numbers by recruiting the dead. (Many a Jersey City election has been won that

way.) But it would take an ascetic sect indeed to prefer this to more conventional and more enjoyable methods of increasing the ranks of the faithful. Devout Mormons might seek among the frozen for ancestors whom they might bring to salvation without resorting to baptism by proxy; but the life everlasting offered by most churches is not a material one.

Even if they had the will, our descendants would be unlikely to have the means to restore life to their frozen ancestors. Grant the most utopian of futures: a peaceful world, its population stable at a sustainable level, its environment undegraded, its viewpoint optimistic. Add to that situation a large number of immigrants from centuries past. How peaceful and stable will it remain? Will the newly revived come into their new world as paupers, their property long since disbursed among generations of heirs and assigns? Or will they assert claims upon the lands and chattels they owned in their previous life? Those who choose to thaw their ancestors had better possess deep pockets—and uncrowded courthouses.

"How peaceful and stable will it remain?" In answering that question we may well find the only good reason a future society will have to recall its ancestors to life. It was not peace and stability that brought the human race down from the trees. Should our descendants discover that they have attained utopia at the cost of their humanity, they might do well to introduce a few wild cards into their society. Perhaps the designers of their utopia would have been so far-sighted as to keep some carefully chosen bodies preserved against the day they were needed.

This is slim grounds for hope. By any rational view, cryonic preservation is an idea whose time will never come. But it is an idea that will live on so long as men and women dream of a second chance at life. And that's a hope that goes back to the Middle Ages. To quote Thomas Malory, "Yet some men say that King Arthur is not dead, but hid away into another place, and men say that he shall come again and reign over England."\*



# Variations on a Theme, Please

## Tape from Toronto

by David Palter

I have a problem with the Arthurian series of stories. There certainly are too many of them. Every time I read one, it is basically the same story even though it may be told from an interesting angle. Nonetheless there is a limit to the number of times that I want to read the same story.

For me, one of the most important aspects of a novel is its ability to surprise me—it lies in my fascination with seeing the twists and trends of the plot which are unexpected. I often find it annoying when I am reading a novel waiting for the next thing to happen and knowing what it is going to be. If I already know what is going to happen why am I reading it? There is a definite sense of futility.

Now, surprise is not the only thing I read fiction for. If it was I would only be interested in Frederick Brown short-short stories. In fact there are works of fiction that are so beautifully wrought, so ingenious and elegant in their use of language and concepts, that they must be savored and can be read repeatedly and yield new pleasures on re-reading.

This is a well-known attribute of better works of fiction and there are certain novels in particular that I have taken great pleasure in re-reading. Three which come to mind are *The Infinity Concerto* by Greg Bear, *Protector* by Larry Niven, and *Lord of Light* by Roger Zelazny. Each of these novels I have enjoyed as much on the second reading as on the first.

Of the many thousands of novels I have read there is only a handful that I have re-read or wish to re-read. In most cases even an immensely enjoyed novel is not one I wish to re-read. I would rather read something new and fresh. The whole concept of a novel is "something new" which is after all what the word "novel" means. This is even more true of works of science fiction than other works of fiction. One of the reasons we particularly love science fiction is because it is more fresh and more new



and more original than other genres.

The Arthurian saga, as it goes on and on, from writer to writer, and from series to series, fails me in this regard. I know what is going to happen. The details vary but the general outline of the plot does not.

I have read three versions of the Arthurian myth: John Steinbeck's version which is extremely close to the original of Thomas Malory, the very famous T.H. White version, and the remarkably lovely and well-written trilogy by Mary Stewart. I enjoyed each of these greatly. They are, however, still basically the same story told three times from three different viewpoints. Admittedly each writer is doing something different but not something *entirely* different.

So when I was confronted by a fourth version, that of Marion Zimmer Bradley, I was tempted to read it because I have always liked her work. She is a brilliant writer and I am sure she had produced something interesting and very different. I have, as yet, not read her version because it suddenly came upon me that I have

heard the story enough times already.

Aside from re-telling the Arthurian myth specifically there are many other stories which use elements of the Arthurian mythology but incorporate them into original stories. For example Roger Zelazny has done this quite interestingly in a short story, "The Last Defender of Camelot." Then there is *The Fionavar Trilogy* by Guy Gavriel Kay which introduces Sir Lancelot and other Arthurian characters into a different universe. Finally a superb fantasy novel called *The Drawing of the Dark* by Tim Powers is one of my favorite fantasies of all time. It brings back certain selected Arthurian characters but places them in a new context.

The idea of writing novels that involve Merlin the magician, King Arthur, Sir Lancelot, etc., in new situations has a certain logic to it

because the original Arthurian legend suggests that these characters are not completely gone. They were defeated in various ways and faded into obscurity but they are still sleeping in a cave or under a lake or in some manner are in a quiescent state from which they may possibly be awakened at some future time. Indeed even the title of T.H. White's novel, *The Once And Future King*, strongly suggests that King Arthur, although he is now gone, will be back. I enjoy this type of story for it has led to some beautiful pieces of writing, and the mythic resonance is very useful. It definitely adds to the flavor of the material when it is handled well.

Thus I enjoy these extensions, but if you are going to tell the story of King Arthur, how he drew the sword out of the stone, his various unwise romantic escapades, his struggle to unite the kingdom, and his ultimate death at the hands of his own son, I would really just as soon not hear that story again.

So this is my complaint and my polemic for this time.\*

## The Haunted Library

by Don D'Amassa

I have had occasion, from time to time, to discuss with habitual science fiction fans, as well as mundane readers with no experience of any aspect of fantasy literature, the fairly recent surge of popularity of the horror novel, starting with the publication of *Rosemary's Baby* by Ira Levin and *The Exorcist* by William Peter Blatty, culminating in the best selling status of writers like Stephen King, Peter Straub, and Clyde Barker. One common request is for a list of books which the novice should read to find out just what horror fiction is about.

Well, lists are a problem. For one thing, there's the question of exclusivity. Try making a list of the top ten of almost any category, and you'll find an eleventh sneaking into your consideration. And if you make an exception in its case, you'll discover a twelfth, and so on.

Then there's a question of definition. For example, do we want to list the ten "best" horror novels, or the ten which are most likely to appeal to the particular reader we are preparing the list for, or ten novels which might best represent the range of the field? And, dealing with horror fiction, how do we make allowances for short fiction, which is possibly not as important a part of the genre as it is with science fiction, but which is certainly too important to overlook. And how do we deal with classics of the genre which may not be up to the current standards of writing, which probably don't reflect what is being done in the field currently, but which nevertheless should not be overlooked?

This is, as you might imagine, all quite perplexing and the rough notes I took trying to prepare a list for this article show evidence of almost as many cross-outs, marginal notes, conditional clauses, and such than many much longer works I've tried to write. So finally I decided to make a few compromises and create two separate, informal lists. List #1 consists of ten classic novels of horror fiction. They do not in any way reflect what is happening in the field of horror fiction today, but together they do, I think, provide a broad overview of the roots of modern horror fiction. List #2 attempts to examine the major writers and

major trends in modern horror novels, and while some of these would probably end up on my list of the "best" horror novels, many would not, although all are worth the time to read. I have excluded from this list the low end of the horror field: routine slashers, the environment gone mad, the seemingly endless rehashes of satanist cults, Voodoo practitioners, demonic possessions, malevolent ghosts, and other familiar plots which are generally handled competently but without breaking any new ground or displaying any fresh insights into the genre.

A final note before the lists themselves. There are a number of new writers just breaking into print whose works show promise or originality or both. Among these are Chet Williamson, William Relling, Stephen Laws, John Gep and Craig Spector, Lee Duigon, and others. There are as well a few more established authors who have contributed a number of interesting books to the genre who didn't make the list only because of the arbitrarily assigned limit of ten (including Richard Laymon, T.M. Wright, and quite a few similarly talented authors). Their exclusion in no way implies that they are unfit to be numbered with those included, and a few days from now I will probably think of at least one or two books or authors that I regret having overlooked. So it goes.

To the lists then—if they still hold any attraction after all the caveats above.

### THE TEN CLASSIC HORROR NOVELS EVERYONE SHOULD READ.

1. *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. The most famous vampire of all time. Despite the stilted style and overly histrionic dramatics of most of the characters, this still contains some of the most evocative scenes in all of vampire literature.

2. *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. Another novel that has become a part of the language. Technically science fiction by some definitions, this story of a man who creates life from fragments of dead bodies contains a very difficult prose by modern standards, but the plot has become one of

the dominating themes in science fiction and horror literature.

3. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. Another novel of the consequences of acquiring forbidden knowledge, and an interesting variation on what is essentially the werewolf theme as well. This is surprisingly difficult to find in soft cover, considering that it is more readable and compelling than either of the preceding two titles.

4. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The blend of detective fiction and horror story continues today, as does the theme of apparently supernatural phenomena being explained away finally in mundane terms. Although there is no fantastic element in this novel it is nevertheless a classic "horror" story.

5. *The Werewolf of Paris* by Guy Endore. Probably the most famous and most literary of all werewolf stories. It is set against the background of the French Revolution, filled with its wry wit as well as gruesome themes, chronicling the life of a man who slowly comes to realize that he is not entirely human.

6. *The Phantom of the Opera* by Gaston Leroux. Frequently filmed, this is another horror story with no fantastic element but it is one of the most famous tales of perverted revenge of all time. A disfigured composer seeks vengeance and vindication from his secret hiding place in the sewers below a famous opera theater.

7. *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson. Included because of the impact it made on me when I first read it. Matheson posited a world in which the last normal human wars against a population turned into vampires, only to discover finally that he has become the horrifying apparition in their eyes that vampires have traditionally been to our own kind.

8. *Conjure Wife* by Fritz Leiber. The best novel of modern witchcraft I have ever encountered. A college professor discovers that his wife is a practicing witch and compels her to stop, following which all the bad luck and malevolence which she had deflected catches up with a vengeance.

9. *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* by

H.P. Lovecraft. Included more from a sense of duty than anything else, since most of Lovecraft's work was of shorter length, and much was of far higher quality. Nevertheless, Lovecraft shaped the evolution of the genre more than perhaps any writer before the 1980's.

10. *Something Wicked This Way Comes* by Ray Bradbury. A strange carnival comes to a small mid-western town, and its troop begins to interact with the local population in strange, frightening ways. The small-town-menaced-by-some-visiting-power plot has become a standard of the genre, but Bradbury's unique approach through the eyes of a pair of young boys has never been surpassed.

So there we have the classic list. There are no standard ghost stories which generally succeed better at shorter lengths. Read *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson for one of the rare exceptions. There are no poltergeists, zombies, or demonic possession.

#### TEN REPRESENTATIVE NOVELS OF MODERN HORROR FICTION.

1. *The Shining* by Stephen King. If one man dominates the field, it's King. This is my own personal favorite of the man's work, the tale of a "haunted" hotel, but one which breaks with traditional treatments of the theme even while it embraces many of their devices. The reader might choose to sample *Salem's Lot* instead, although this list already includes too high a percentage of vampire stories, or *Pet Sematary*, a suspenseful variation of the classic W.W. Jacobs short story "The Monkey's Paw," or *The Dead Zone*, a fine handling of precognition.

2. *Usher's Passing* by Robert McCammon. My personal favorite from this writer, who has improved dramatically as his career progresses. This novel describes to us the Usher family, the real family whose strange affliction Edgar Allen Poe altered slightly to form the basis of his story "The Fall of the House of Usher." Evocative setting, well developed characters, and a truly original and strange plot.

3. *The Nestling* by Charles Grant. Actually, if I had to pick Grant's single best book it might well be *Nightmare Season*, a collection of four novellas. Grant has written a large number of horror novels that range from entertaining to exceptional, and I could just as easily have substituted *Bloodwind*, *The Pet*, or any of several others.

4. *The Elementals* by Michael McDowell. Another writer with several good books to

his credit, including *Cold Wind Over Babylon*. This one deals with a ruined house which is home to a supernatural force.

5. *The Manitou* by Graham Masterton. Masterton relies more heavily on blood and gore and the gross out than most other writers, but he is one of the few with enough abilities to make this kind of scene real. There are any number of his novels which are technically better written than this, his first in the genre, including *The Devils of D-Day*, *Tengu*, and his recent Dream Warrior series, but for a good introduction to his style and plotting techniques, this is probably your best bet.



Robert H. Knox

6. *Magic* by William Goldman. Perhaps the best example I can think of to illustrate how you can construct a truly horrifying novel without including any element of the supernatural. This story of a ventriloquist whose dummy becomes an externalized focus of his twisted emotions features some of the best characterization in any genre, and one of the best plots of all time. The film was pale imitation.

7. This spot is a bit of a hedge. The vampire has undergone a number of twists and turns recently, in many novels appearing as the hero rather than the villain, either misunderstood or reformed or tormented by his own existence. To see what has been done to the Dracula legend, try any of the following, or any of the four novels published to date by Les Daniels: *Hotel Transylvania* by Chelsea Quinn

Yarbro, still my favorite in her St. Germain series, *Interview with a Vampire* by Anne Rice, or *The Vampire Tapestry* by Suzy McFee Charnas.

8. *Ghost Story* by Peter Straub. Although I have been disappointed with nearly everything else Straub has written this remains one of the most striking, inventive, and horrifying ghost stories of all time. It takes a while to get involved with the characters, but the wait is well worth it.

9. *The Armageddon Rag* by George R.R. Martin. Actually I like the same author's *Fevre Dream* even better, but it's another vampire novel. *Armageddon Rag* is, on the other hand, a nostalgic mix of rock and roll and supernatural horror, exploring an original plot idea, and written with unflagging skill.

10. *The Damnation Game* by Clive Barker. This author's meteoric rise is based primarily on his short fiction, but his first novel is impressive as well. The clash of wills between a man who made a supernatural deal and wishes to welch on the repayment, and the creature to whom he is indebted, is one of the most suspenseful novels of recent years.

As I mentioned before, an eleventh always creeps in, and as much as I wanted to resist it, I have to mention Whitley Strieber's *Wolfen*, one of the most impressive novels I've ever read, and an incredibly strange variation on werewolfism.

Finally, before I close out this installment, a word about short stories. Horror stories proliferate in the small press but have comparatively few mass forums. Nevertheless, there are a number of very talented writers who have specialized in the short form, and no survey of horror literature would be complete which did not mention at least the major writers of the short story. They include (but are not limited to) T.E.D. Klein, H.P. Lovecraft, Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, Robert Aickman, Joseph Payne Brennan, Clive Barker, Stephen King, Ramsey Campbell, and Charles Grant, all of whom have had one or more collections published.

There will always be some readers for whom horror fiction will not work. There will always be some readers for whom some writers in any field will not provide entertainment. But horror fiction as a genre, despite appearances, provides as wide a range of talents, styles, and thematic approaches as any other branch of literature, and more than many. No serious reader can dismiss such a pool of talent without making some effort to discover what is, and is not, worth while in the field.\*

# The King Who Never Lived and Never Died

## Nihil Humanum

by John Boardman

"The islands of the ocean shall be subdued unto his power, and forests of Gaul shall he possess. The house of Romulus shall dread the fierceness of his prowess and doubtful shall be his end. Renowned shall he be in the mouth of the peoples, and his deeds shall be as meat unto them that tell thereof."—Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. 1155), *Historia Regum Britanniae* (tr. Sebastian Evans)

In his 1955 essay "Kynge Arthur is nat Dede," Robert Graves gives the obvious reasons why it is difficult to identify King Arthur with any historical monarch of Britain or to place him definitely in any particular era of medieval British history. By the time Sir Thomas Malory gave the story its more or less definitive form five centuries ago it had collected accretions over the previous millennium of history.

Some modern commentators on the King Arthur legend, including Marion Zimmer Bradley, try to treat him in their novels or historical studies as if he were a sixth century British monarch, with or without supernatural elements to his story. Others, like the late T.H. White, have abandoned history altogether, and treat King Arthur on the terms in which the legend presents him and his society, much as the Baker Street Irregulars deal with the discrepancies in the Sherlock Holmes stories. The former attitude was represented in Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*. The latter view is taken by Phyllis Ann Karr in *The King Arthur Companion*, a book for which I have been waiting for five years.

Ms. Karr's book was first heralded in a rather unusual place—the rulebook for Greg Stafford's game "King Arthur's Knights," which was published in 1978 (Chaosium, P.O. Box 6302, Albany CA 94706-0302). This role-playing game uses a map, not of any real Britain that existed in any era of history, but of the Britain described in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* and other Arthurian romances. While London, Canterbury, and Dover are marked on it, so are Camelot, Avalon, Bedegraine and Gore. The game itself hews closely to the chivalric conventions of Malory and the knights can have encounters with other

knights, with ladies, or with variously disposed sorcerers. They can go on quest for such things as the magic chess set, the spear of Longinus, or, naturally, the Holy Grail.

Stafford gave Karr's unpublished manuscript as one of his sources, and kindly arranged for me to be sent a copy when it was published. (It is \$18.95 from Reston Publishing Co., Inc., Reston VA) *The King Arthur Companion* is a well-annotated directory of the major sources of Arthurian legend, with three separate alphabetized sections on Peoples, Places, and Things. Interspersed are short articles and lists on such topics as "the Fisher Kings," "Holding Court," "Dwarfs," and "Vavasours."

The genealogical complications continually crop up in Malory, in an era where political and social attitudes were heavily determined by such things. (Some of Malory's prison sentences may have resulted from his adherence to the House of Lancaster at a time when the House of York ran England. Nor need we take his two sentences for rape too seriously: in both cases the complainant was not the lady, but her husband!) There is a chart for King Arthur and his royal relations of Cornwall and Orkney, one for the multitudinous relations of Sir Lancelot, and one for the incredibly tangled relationships among the Fisher Kings, the immortal hermit Nascien, and the philoprogenitive King Pellinore. There are also two maps, drawn in Chaosium studios, showing Arthur's Britain, and campaigns he made on the continent against the Emperor of Rome.

Karr makes it quite clear that she is describing the world of the King Arthur of legend, not fifthish or sixthish century Britain. Besides Malory, her principal source is the French *Vulgate Cycle*, a work virtually unknown in the English speaking world. But some earlier sources are omitted. References to them will be found in chapter seven of *Ancient Ruins and Archaeology* (retitled *Citadels of Mystery*) by L. Sprague and Catherine de Camp (Doubleday, 1964). Nennius, the eighth-century chronicler who first mentions Arthur, is omitted, though she tells his

curious tale of Arthur's son Amyr, killed and buried by his father's own hand. There is not even an entry for the historical Aurelius Ambrosius, who won some of the victories usually attributed to King Arthur, who is sometimes called his nephew. Nor does Karr include the popular work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, written about 1136, and an important source for subsequent versions of the legend. Only two of the works of Chrétien de Troyes were available to her, and a language barrier prevented the use of the German versions of the story. Most important, the *Mabinogion*, the Welsh source book for some of the King Arthur tales, is neglected.

However, as far as I am concerned Malory's version is the definitive story of King Arthur, with his predecessors as inadequate anticipations and his successors as feeble imitators. Malory regarded himself (or so he says) as writing sober history, and he culled out all the Welsh and French tales, conflating them into a single narrative. So, it appears, did the authors of the Vulgate version, though they are further removed than Geoffrey and Malory from the half-pagan British originals, and closer to the conventional late medieval knightly romances so gleefully demolished by Cervantes.

Though she is chiefly concerned with Malory and the Vulgate as the sources for her book, Karr often cites subsequent treatments, notably Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Sutcliffe's *Sword at Sunset*, and of course White's *The Once and Future King*. There are even references to "Prince Valiant" and MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL. Of Prince Valiant's creator Hal Foster she says: "Foster's technique of making up his own hero and inserting him into the already existing body of Arthurian material is almost surely what many of the medieval romancers must have done through the centuries; and, had Foster lived before Malory, Val, Aleta, Arn, and the others might well have gotten into Malory and thence into the present handbook." And why not? That's how Sir Lancelot got in; he

was added to the original Welsh romances by French bards.

Throughout the book the entries often show the author's lively partisan feelings. Alone with Mark Twain she does not regard Merlin as a particularly admirable person. After all, he set up what by modern legal usage must be regarded as the rape of the Duchess Igraine by King Uther. And Merlin seems to have engineered the great baby slaughter, or so their parents believed. (Malory, book 2, chapter 27) Like all such atrocities, it was not only evil but also futile as the intended victim, Mordred, survived. (Note the similarities with King Herod's baby slaughter.) Malory's Merlin is most ungracious to women. This might possibly be out of jealousy of his twin sister Gwendydd Ganieda, a shadowy figure of whom Malory tells us nothing and the *Red Book of Hergest* (a source of the *Mabinogion*) very little.

However, Karr rescues Sir Kay and Sir Gawaine from the ignominy into which they fell in the later Arthurian epics. At the beginning they were, together with Sir Bedivere (Bedwyr), King Arthur's closest henchmen and most renowned warriors. In the early chapters of Malory, when King Arthur is still fighting to establish his throne, we see Sirs Kay and Gawaine in these roles. But, later on, Gawaine becomes an irresponsible lecher and Kay a bully. The advent of Lancelot, Tristram, and the sons of Pellinore into the story may have done this to Kay and Gawaine, so it is not surprising that Gawaine is Arthur's strongest partisan in the last great break with Lancelot. Lancelot's little habit of going on killing frenzies, during which he killed three of Gawaine's brothers and all three of his sons, would also account for this. Although Lancelot is presented as heroic in almost every retelling of the Arthurian story, a modern writer could diagnose him as a manic-depressive, based on his killing frenzies and other fits of insanity. Prescriptions of lithium carbonate would have been a blessing to him.

And so we come to Mordred. This son and nephew of King Arthur is begotten in incest with his half-sister Queen Morgawse, half-brother of the noble Gareth, the reckless Gawaine, the ambivalent Gaheris, and the sleazy Agravaire, is in all versions of the story charged with the revolt against King Arthur, with coveting his queen, and eventually with killing him at the battle of Camlann. Well, actually, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles entry for 539—rather later than most Arthurian chroniclers are comfortable with, is: "The Battle of Camlann, wherein Arthur and Medraut perished;

and there was death in Britain and Ireland." For all we know from these lines Arthur and Medraut died fighting on the same side, against invading Saxons. Arthur's successor, Constantine of Cornwall, murdered Mordred's two sons as they clung to the church altars, an atrocity laid to him by Geoffrey of Monmouth (book 11 chapter 4). Constantine did not long enjoy his victory, as he was slain three years afterwards by one Conan(!), his nephew.

As Geoffrey tells it, King Arthur first cleaned up the opposition of the Saxons in Britain, and then went to Gaul to meet a Roman attempt to recover the island. Malory tells it the same way, except that he has little mention of the Saxons, and has King Arthur overcoming petty British kings who would not recognize him as their overlord.

Malory has King Arthur overcoming the imperial forces and marching all the way to Rome, where the Pope crowns him emperor. The king then returns to Britain, where he serves as a sort of background to the adventures of his knights for many years, until the Guenevere-Lancelot affair gets out of hand. But Geoffrey tells an earlier version, whereby Mordred makes his play while King Arthur and most of his army is absent in Gaul. The king then receives word that

"...his nephew Mordred, unto whom he had committed the charge of Britain, had tyrannously and traitorously set the crown of the kingdom upon his own head, and had linked him in unhallowed union with Guenevere the queen in despite of her former marriage." (book 10, chapter 13)

Thereupon Mordred whistled in the Saxons, Scots, Picts, and Irish to his aid; "All told they numbered some 8000 Paynims and Christians." (exaggerations like this are characteristic of accounts of Dark Ages battles.)

Malory does not bring in foreigners, but makes this battle a civil war among King Arthur's subjects:

"...much people drew to him. For then was the common voice among them that with Arthur was none other than war and strife, and with Mordred there was great joy and bliss...the most part of England held with Sir Mordred, the people were so new fangle." (book 21, chapter 1)

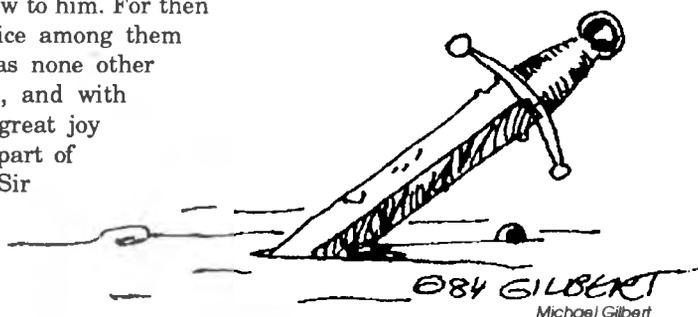
Malory may have been drawing here upon the almost continual peasants' revolts of the later middle ages which you may see described in Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*. If Geoffrey's chronology is the more nearly correct, and the campaign in Gaul immediately succeeded the twelve battles against the Saxon invaders, there may have been some reason for their popular complaint. Geoffrey leaves open the possibility that the queen Guenevere acceded willingly to Mordred's plans, as Clytemnestra did with Aegisthus in Agamemnon's absence. Some sources even hint that Guenevere was the mother of Mordred's two sons.

As far as I know none of the modern novelists who have treated the Arthurian legends have spoken up for Mordred. Yet a case might be made for him. Perhaps the Mordred story is all we have left of the Dark Ages' revolt against the perpetual wars of the petty British kings, led by a man who was a member of the royal family, or who claimed to be.

One step has already been taken in this direction by Ian McDowell in his short story "Chichevache." (ARES #11, November, 1981) McDowell does not make Mordred heroic, but he turns him from the universal villain of the Arthurian corpus to an engaging villain in the style of Sir Harry Paget Flashman. In this story he sets out to slay the monster Chichevache, which was a late medieval joke; the monster only fed on faithful wives, whereby it was gaunt and famished perpetually.

Note that in one version of the story Mordred is the queen's lover, and in another it is Lancelot. So the evil Mordred and the heroic Lancelot may originally have been one and the same character!

Karr's discussion of the King Arthur legend is lively, opinionated, and well worth reading. She openly puts forward controversial identifications of minor personages and places, and unorthodox comments on the personages and events. *The King Arthur Companion* has been well worth the wait. \*



# Kzersatz, Klinzhai, and Ch'rihan

## Linkages

by Pat Mathews

In science fiction we like to have our villains, and the best villains are aliens.

The most widely known enemy aliens are the Klingons, the Romulans, and the Kzinti. The Klingons are, of course, the Star Trek equivalent of the World War II Nazis: totally mean, vicious, and belligerent. The Romulans are an honorable, but different, enemy; so devoted to their own ideas of honor that detente may not be possible, but admirable all the same. The Kzinti are feline carnivores who talk and act like the toughest of tough kitties.

On the other hand, we are *rational* beings, and soon begin to wonder about the nature, home life, and motivations of our villains. Once these are understood, the villains become less villainous and more "human," so the search must begin again for truly nasty bad guys we cannot identify with.

But to understand them, we must realize that even the meanest of villains get, bear, and rear their young; that means some relationship between male and female, between parent and child. It means some sort of semi-protected environment to rear the young, or they'd never live to adulthood. It means, in short, some alleviation of the general nastiness, even though home life in a nasty culture can be truly vile as well.

What sort of lives do these enemies lead at home? According to John Ford's *The Final Reflection*, the Klingon Empire is driven by survival and an ideology stating that you either grow or die. They are, of course, a military dictatorship. Whether or not Klingon trains run on time is never stated. Nor does the reader really see much of their home life despite the fact that the hero begins as a young boy. He lives in an orphanage: It is interesting to note that Klingon orphanages are apparently not hell holes out of Dickens, but more like decent, spartan, rather impoverished military schools.

He is adopted by an aged admiral with a foreign consort. In this book no other kind is shown, leaving readers to wonder what sort of lives are led by Klingon women of this class. The only ones we see are treated exactly as are men and boys, and they are,

like the hero, lineless orphans or naval officers. Perhaps the nobility practices sex selection to get sons only?

(Another book, *Dwellers in the Crucible* by Margaret De Bonanno, states that Klingons have a taboo against sexual assault in the confines of a dwelling. When asked, "Who benefits?" the answer is immediately obvious: Klingon girls and women. This argues great power within the home, possibly matched by some sort of *purdah*.)

But within those masculine confines, there is a home life and a family life. There is love between father and son; friendship between dorm-mates; gallantry toward a well-liked officer.

Diane Duane was responsible for giving the Romulans a name, background, and culture of their own, and a very extensive job she did with it. Previous authors had drawn upon whatever their knowledge of ancient Rome might be and plastered it onto a Vulcanoid race with no ties to Terra at all. Duane details their separation from Vulcan in *The Romulan Way* and laid out their culture. Again, like the Klingons, they are not rich. They are feudal, but not patriarchal.

They practice domestic slavery. Writers have argued that slavery is not practical in a high-tech culture, but they are thinking of industry or agriculture, not the home. Child care and cooking, so far, are best performed by humans; running errands and waiting upon the master or mistress is definitely better done by people than by machines.

They have their own code of honor, a very rigid one, which is falling apart rapidly under the pressure of an outside enemy they all fear. That is, the Rihannsu are being rapidly corrupted by a Cold War mentality. Duane states they have no Emperor; the culture she has shown is ripe for a Caesar; I'm afraid Ael T'Reilliau is the most logical candidate.

At home? Again, there is deep and passionate love between Ael, widowed young, and her late husband. She loves and trusts her son, who violates that love, not from coldness or ambition, but from a greater love. A Terran spy is placed as a slave in

the home of a bitter, single, elderly Rihannsu noble; he comes to treat her like a daughter. Family is shown as deeply important to both Klingon and Romulan—more so than to Terran! And we can only admire that. Perhaps it gives them reason to fight.

Of all the aliens, the Kzinti seem the least amenable to being made likeable. Their females are not sentient, which precludes a home and family life Terrans can relate to. (Many of Niven's alien females are not sentient. If this indicates Niven's viewpoint on the natural state of affairs, it is an interesting thought.)

Yet, in Dean Ing's *Cathouse*, we come to know and truly to like three Kzinti, who are, indeed, the good guys. We even come to have some respect for the Kzinti captain, though not for his crew.

The three Kzinti are not modern beings; they have been in suspended animation for thousands of years. They are of a culture so unmechanized that women are expected to make their own pottery—which is probably as superb as Pueblo pottery—and dig their own burrows for bearing kittens. The military have just begun to talk about breeding females for docile idiocy, and to increase their own aggressiveness by an all-meat diet.

The Kzinti in question are palace servants in a court that has the flavor of the Sun King's court in France; they are, literally, courtesans (a word that began as *courtier*, female, and ended as *expensive prostitutes*, through a process all too common in Terran tongues). They are not only sentient, but feminists, executed by the budding patriarchy for their principles; they joined forces with the ship-wrecked Terran hero on the principle that "my enemy's enemy is my friend."

One of them is pregnant. We see the precarious nature of Kzinti maternity and begin to pity them intensely. Males who would destroy their own new-born sons as possible rivals? There we have villains indeed.

Not surprisingly, the pregnant woman  
*See LINKAGES, Page 67*

# J.R.R. Tolkien's Runes

by Jane T. Sibley

J.R.R. Tolkien was a grand old man of fantasy; his world of Middle-earth and its denizens inspired many to read this genre, as well as more than a few to try to follow in his footsteps. He was an Oxford don, one of the elite few who did research and taught at that august University. With his training and access to sociological and anthropological data, he could build a framework for his fantasy world *par excellence* he drew most heavily on the English, Welsh, and Norse myths.

If you read *Völuspá*, the Norse Eddaic poem of that creation, you'll find our dwarvish friends—in order!—from *The Hobbit*. Gandalf also was named in *Völuspá*, but not as a wizard. But in Gandalf's case, Tolkien obviously knew enough Old Norse to accurately translate the name and give it to the appropriate character: "gand" means "magic", especially chanted (there is a poetic metric form called "galdralag" used for the finest kind of Norse magic). *Gandr* could be used for healing as well as other magic; it was perhaps the most common Norse magical format. "Alf", of course means "elf," "magical elf." And he always used as his sigil  $\mathfrak{F}$  (*fé*), which means "F."

Why would Gandalf sign his fireworks, etc., "F" and not "G"? This was one of the two major puzzles of Tolkien's use of the runes in his work. One explanation is that Gandalf may have reversed the spelling of his name and used the first letter of the new sequence; to wit, "F". This mirror-writing trick was not uncommon especially in magical usages of the runes (see the Kylver Stone for another example; it is an early Swedish stone with a reversed inscription to aid in the magical force of the runes). Tolkien was quite accurate elsewhere in *The Hobbit* (except for some typos in the map runes: it's "when the thrush knocks" not "Hwen the thrush...."). At least, that's what my copy of *The Hobbit* has; subsequent printings may have corrected the error. The runes in *The Hobbit* are English and accurate otherwise.)

Then comes *LotR* and a great big question mark. The runes. Suddenly, the futhork used is completely off the wall, in no ways

corresponding to that used in *The Hobbit*. Runic characters from wildly different locales and times were used and were, it seemed, randomly assigned to a phonetic equivalent. Now, we have the rune  $\mathfrak{R}$  (reithr) meaning "B" not "R", the rune  $\mathfrak{B}$  (bjarkan, "B") for "M", etc. Late period Norse runes jostle elbows with earlier English forms, one rune which I have only found elsewhere on a wand spell of Greenlandic origin, and a few made-up forms. And  $\mathfrak{V}$  now is definitely assigned the value "G", not "F".

What a puzzlement. I researched out over 150 runic futhorks and  $\mathfrak{V}$  is always "G" and  $\mathfrak{F}$  never was. But the biggest puzzlement was that this revolution in writing took place during the lifetime of Bilbo Baggins (a span of somewhat more than 100 years). Imagine if the entire Roman alphabet that we use and have used for hundreds and hundreds of years were suddenly scrambled up, reassigned new phonic values, and then somebody tossed in some Cyrillic, Arabic, and a Mayan glyph for good measure. Do you think that would catch hold and become common usage? Not likely.

Being a wide-eyed college kid at the time I first bought and read *LotR*, and not realizing that Prof. Tolkien was a Big Name, I wrote him a letter asking him howcum? About a year later, a simple legal-sized envelope with a three-penny English stamp, postmarked "Oxford" arrived. This is what Professor Tolkien had to say:

30 May, 1964

Dear Miss Sibley,

Thank you very much for your letter, and for the close scrutiny of my books which I recognize in your questions about the runes I used.

The mystery is easily solved. The runes I used for *The Hobbit* were genuine and historical; those in *The Lord of the Rings* I

myself invented. The resultant discrepancy must be answered by saying that both kinds were in use in Middle-earth.

Yours Sincerely,

J.R.R. Tolkien

(a hand-written addendum followed—and yes, his handwriting is just like the maps in *The Hobbit* and *LotR*—JTS)

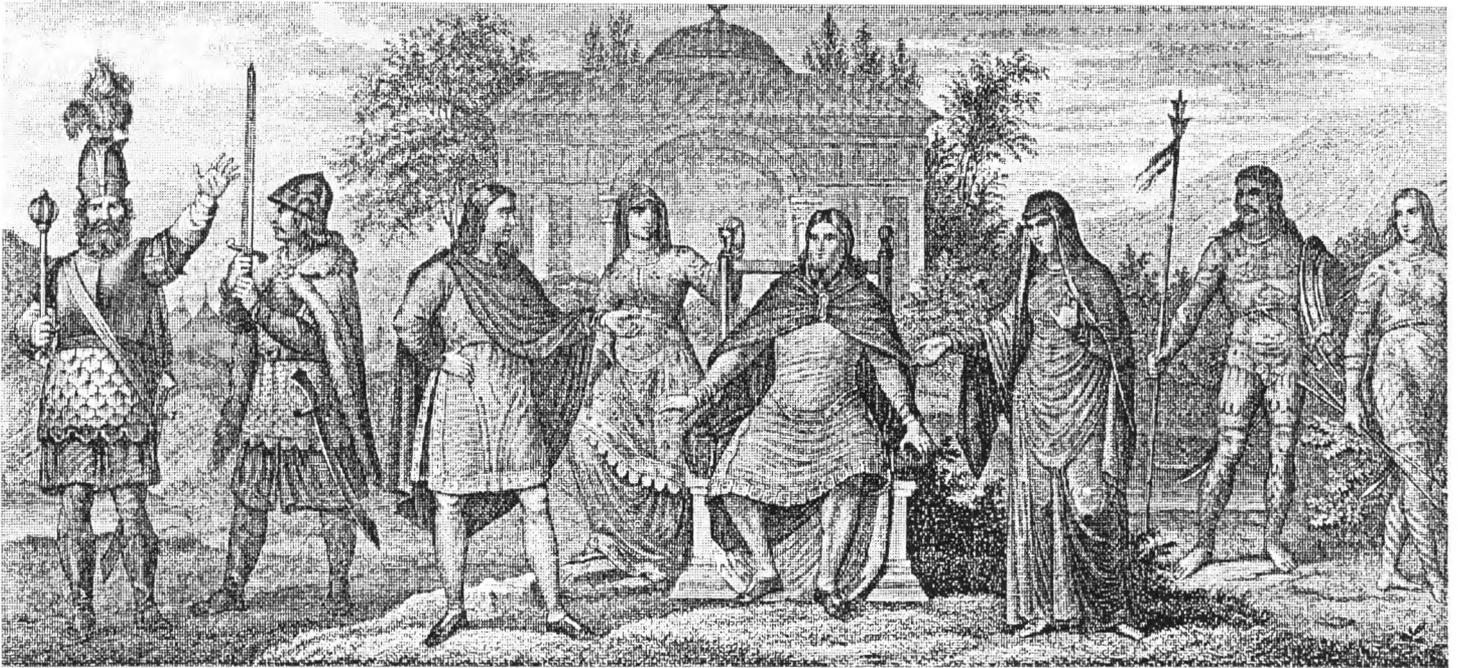
"There is a book about the historical English and related runes (which incidentally quotes from the L.R. on (?) page 33); *RUNES*, by R.W.V. Elliott, Manchester University Press, 1959 (30/-)."

(There was one bit I couldn't decipher (?) ... it sort of looks like a squiggly backwards percent sign. It might be "its".—JTS)

So there we have it. Authoritatively. It was interesting to note that Tolkien calls *LotR* "the L.R."; I wonder who coined "LotR"? I still bet, however, that even with this explanation, that a lot of folks in Middle-earth got confused when they had to read or write anything with two similar systems in use concurrently. Perhaps Tolkien wished to have the *LotR* runes, like the Tengwar, be his own creation and unique to Middle-earth, and not a borrowed item from the real Earth which we Big Folk inhabit. *The Hobbit* had already been published, so what was done was done; the English runes remained in that book. It is interesting that the new runic system was not included in subsequent printings of *The Hobbit*; I guess that Prof. Tolkien decided that it was OK, especially with the pressures of his University position, the growth of attention (and fan mail) due to his fantasy writing, family, and advancing years. It was, after all, a fantasy world, and whichever runic alphabet was used certainly didn't have all that earth shaking an impact on the story.

J.R.R. Tolkien has left the world a grand legacy that nobody can quite touch. He has  
*See RUNES, Page 67*

# The Once and Future ARTHUR



*by Anne Braude*

In 1191, according to the medieval historian Giraldus Cambrensis, the monks of Glastonbury, excavating in the grounds of the abbey, discovered a huge coffin fashioned from the hollowed trunk of an oak tree. Inside were the bones of a very tall man, bearing the

traces of many wounds, and of a woman, to whose skull still clung a tress of golden hair which crumbled into dust when touched. Atop the coffin was a lead cross, inscribed in Latin with the names of the entombed: King Arthur and his wife Guinevere.

The genuineness of this discovery is still being debated. Once dismissed as fraud, a fund-raising ploy by the monks to finance the rebuilding of the recently burnt abbey, it is returning to plausibility; latter-day excavations in the area tend to confirm the monks' account of the gravesite. But in a more metaphorical sense, it doesn't matter. Whatever we may discover about the historical Arthur, including whether or not he really existed, is irrelevant to the Arthur who has captured the imagination of the western world; that King Arthur will never be dead and buried.

It is the purpose of this essay to look at the potency of the Arthurian mythos, to try to account for it, and to survey—briefly!—Arthurian fiction from its medieval heyday to its contemporary renaissance.

The historical Arthur, if he lived at all, lived in a chaotic age. In its dying throes, the Roman Empire was drawing in, leaving its fringes, such as Britain, prey to the incursions of the Saxons and Norsemen, who both raided the coastal settlements and seized land for colonization. The consensus on Arthur today seems to be that he was an aristocrat of Roman-British ancestry who at some time in the fifth century A.D. rallied the British forces and established a high kingship by successfully routing the Saxons in a number of battles, quite probably by creating a cavalry strike force using nearly-forgotten Roman cavalry tactics. For a brief while the British held off their foes; then, after Arthur's death, the Saxon forces triumphed, and the native Celtic British were pushed back into the remoter parts of Great Britain—Wales, Cornwall, Scotland. The moment of glory under Arthur became but a memory, one cherished more fiercely in defeat. The defeated do have longer memories: consider the songs of the Jacobites, the Irish rebels of earlier centuries than our own, and the American Confederacy.

Thus the growth of the legend is traditionally accounted for by its appeal to nationalistic and patriotic aspirations. The earliest tales and fragments, from Wales, Brittany, and other fringes, tell of a mighty Celtic hero. The great Arthurian efflorescence of the twelfth century grew from similar roots. It was a period which knew the havoc of civil war, as Stephen and the Empress Matilda contended for the crown,

culminating in the reign of a strong king, Matilda's son Henry II, who brought order and stability. Both the Norman and Angevin kings of England were vassals to the king of France for their lands in Normandy, Anjou, and Provence (Queen Eleanor's dower), and they had reason to envy him the luster added to his crown by the *chansons de geste*, the tales of Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers. According to the chronicler Wace, Taillefer, William the Conqueror's minstrel, rode into battle at Hastings reciting the *Chanson de Roland*. As the conquerors of Saxon England, the Normans were able to identify with Arthur. Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *History of the Kings of Britain* (c. 1137) gave the world most of the elements of the Arthurian legend, as well as Cymbeline, King Lear, and assorted other treasure trove, made Arthur a conqueror as well as a defender, who invaded Gaul (i.e., France) to defeat a Roman army. The Glastonbury grave discovery, genuine or not, only proves the potency of the figure of Arthur to inspire emotion: who would bother to fake the tomb of someone who didn't matter? And in 1278, during a visit to Glastonbury by King Edward I and his queen, the remains were solemnly interred in a black marble tomb in the center of the Abbey choir. King Edward III, who staged elaborate tournaments as part of a conscious effort to revive the customs of chivalry, encouraged the belief that he was literally a reincarnation of Arthur and founded (c. 1348) the Order of the Garter as his own Round Table. The "green lace" that plays a prominent role in the great fourteenth-century English alliterative romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* may be an allusion to this order.

It was another period of chaos, the Wars of the Roses, that gave birth to the most famous of all the Arthurian chronicles, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. As the age of faith and feudal chivalry was yielding to the rise of absolute monarchy and the dawn of the Renaissance, Malory gave permanent form to its highest aspirations. But it was the Tudor dynasty that really exploited the myth. Henry VII used the fact of his Welsh ancestry and a claimed descent from Arthur, and the premise that he had brought order to England after decades of civil war, to clothe himself metaphorically in Arthur's mantle (and incidentally to obscure the fact that he had no legal claim to the crown). He had the great Round Table in the hall of Winchester Castle (a site sometimes identified with Camelot) repainted in Tudor green and white, with a Tudor rose in the center. He

arranged that his eldest son be born at Winchester and christened him Arthur. (This was the elder brother of Henry VIII, who died shortly after his marriage to Katherine of Aragon; not wishing to lose her splendid dowry, Henry VII married her to his second son by papal dispensation, thus indirectly precipitating the schism between the Church of England and the Church of Rome.) Henry VIII continued to play on the Arthurian symbolism, which was reflected in the decorations at the Field of the Cloth of Gold (1520). When Elizabeth came to the throne, she was celebrated in pageants featuring the Lady of the Lake. The poet Edmund Spenser depicted her in various guises in *The Faerie Queene* (1593-96), most importantly as Gloriana, the Faerie Queene whose destined spouse was Arthur himself, whose supposed adventures before he came to the throne formed the pretext of the poem. Shakespeare did not write of Arthur, though he used the fundamental thesis of the Tudor myth, that dynasty as destined to redeem and restore England, as the metaphorical framework for his history plays. Perhaps the political uses to which the legend was put made it potentially too explosive for public performance, especially considering the bastardy theme and the uncertainty about the succession, as Elizabeth, like Arthur, had no direct heir. Shakespeare had a narrow escape in 1601 when his company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, accepted a bribe from the Earl of Essex on the eve of his rebellion to perform *Richard II* without cutting the abdication scene (as had become standard practice); they were fortunately able to exculpate themselves.

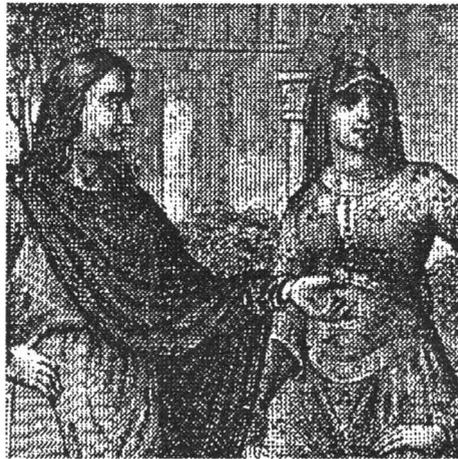
With the decline of romance in literature and absolute monarchy in politics, the legend of Arthur fell out of favor, not revered as an ideal but scorned as a historical fraud. Milton considered writing an epic with an Arthurian theme but concluded that the subject lacked sufficient grandeur and weight. Dryden made a similar choice, though dictated more by pecuniary than artistic concerns: his plays on other subjects were more profitable. He did make an operatic version, *King Arthur*, which had little to do with the legend as we know it but does have lovely music by Henry Purcell. Richard Blackmore composed two allegorical Arthurian epics—Arthur was immediately recognizable as William III—which gained him a knighthood and a dubious literary immortality; he is best remembered for the frequency with which he is pilloried in Alexander Pope's *Peri Bathous*, the first anthology of

bloopers. The Matter of Britain began to come back into favor with the Romantic Revival of the early nineteenth century; it provided themes for many of the popular writers and artists of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and was used by Tennyson as a vehicle to portray the apotheosis of Victorianism.

Our century has also been an age of chaos, including two world wars, a worldwide depression, and the possibility of nuclear Armageddon. Since the nineteenth-century universe, already rocked on its foundations by Darwin, turned upside down in 1914, western civilization—indeed, not just that of the West—has been sorting through a heap of conflicting values in a search for some idea that will sustain us. One effect of this has been an explosion of Arthuriana unmatched since the twelfth century. Recent archaeological discoveries and new excavations have made the search for the historical Arthur more fruitful than ever before, and a number of novelists have treated the story realistically, eliminating or explaining away the fantastic elements and depicting as faithfully as possible the actualities of Dark Age Britain. Even the fantasists have striven to set their tales in an authentic fifth-century culture, rather than the Never-Never-Land of chivalric romance. I know of only two novels that try to deal with the historical Arthur in a modern context with no fantasy element, both of which are thrillers: Elizabeth Peters' *The Camelot Caper* involves an attempt to create a valuable tourist attraction by salting a fake archaeological site with genuine Arthurian artifacts; and in Anthony Price's *Our Man in Camelot*, British counterintelligence foils a Russian plot to disrupt the Atlantic Alliance by faking proof that an American air base has been built on the site of the battle of Mount Badon. Price, a British author, takes it for granted that the British public would in fact find this an outrage, which suggests that the legend still has emotional power in the world of political reality.

These instances aside, it would seem that today, on the whole, it is the Camelot of romance, not the Camelot of history, that inspires the literary imagination. Geoffrey Ashe may devise a genealogy for Queen Elizabeth II that traces her descent from Arthur (see my review of *The Discovery of King Arthur* elsewhere in this issue), but no one takes it all that seriously; a claimant to the crown with a better Arthurian pedigree would not threaten her position. And not even the most unreconstructed Welsh Nationalist (though I can't be sure about the New Age types) still

thinks Arthur will return from Avalon, or a cave beneath the Eildon Hills, to save his people from the European Common Market and Margaret Thatcher. Despite the powers of Morgan le Fay and the Lady of the Lake, historical research has succeeded thus far in disenchanting Arthur and Merlin. (Being myself a partisan of enchantments, I have in idle moments amused myself in speculating what historians of the distant future, perhaps on the far side of a nuclear winter from us, working with the same sort of fragmentary history and



creative romanticizing that surrounds Camelot's king, might make of a hero who sailed off into the sunset, promising his followers that he would return victorious, and then proceeded to do so? Would they assume it to be too symbolic to have really happened? Would they see the perhaps vague references to his enemies as serving the Rising Sun as proof that the story originated as a solar myth? Would they draw charts and chronologies of his landings and battles to prove that no one man could have done so much and been in so many different places in such a short time, and the hero must be a composite figure based on the exploits of several war-leaders? Would the quest for the historical Douglas MacArthur end in the conclusion that he never existed? This is not the idlest of speculations: MacArthur was not a man to overlook the possible symbolic significance of a gesture and consciously imitated the heroes of old. It would not surprise me one bit to learn that he was thinking of the Arthurian legend when he uttered his famous "I shall return.")

But the enduring qualities of the legend come not from its perceived historical truthfulness but from its fidelity to inner truth, just as fairy tales like "Beauty and the Beast" and "Little Red Ridinghood" may be false as descriptions of the external world but depict accurately in symbolic terms the

inner drama of the self's quest for individuation and the process of maturation. The story of Arthur is essentially the story of humanity, as represented in the Bible and in the writings of many historians, and of the life of the individual in this imperfect world as seen by Freud as well as Christianity. Out of a scene of chaos and conflict emerges a strong ruler-hero who establishes his kingdom of order, peace, and justice (Adam ordering the Garden; the ego imposing the form of the superego on the id or, in terms of Transactional Analysis, the dominion of the Adult). This dream of a life ruled by reason, or the Kingdom of God on earth, is destroyed from both sides: from beneath by man's lower nature or the uncontrolled id or Child (the adultery of Launcelot and Guinevere) and inherent human fallibility or Original Sin (the unwitting incest which engenders Mordred); and from above by the thirst to abandon this world and one's responsibilities in it in order to pursue the purely spiritual (the Grail Quest). Arthur and the Round Table represent human life as it is, precariously poised between entropy and transcendence and ultimately unable to maintain its balance between the two. It is this theme I wish to pursue in the rest of this paper, in order to examine the changes that the image of Arthur has undergone as a response to historical conditions and the ways in which each age has found in the Matter of Britain a mirror for its ideal and/or central concern.

I have already discussed the purely historical and nationalistic elements of the early stages of the legend: how Arthur was first a remembered culture hero for the subjugated Celtic peoples and then an adornment to the Anglo-French crown, a figure of equal stature with Charlemagne and a conqueror of Saxons and even, according to Geoffrey, of Rome itself. (In another sense, he was the true heir of Rome; Geoffrey traces his ancestry back to the founding of Britain by one Brut, descended from Æneas and therefore bearing the mystique of Troy.) It was also Geoffrey's *History* which first introduced the notion of chivalry, the precursor of the Round Table: ladies "would not deign to have the love of any till he had thrice proved himself in the wars. Wherefore did the ladies wax chaste, and knights the nobler for their love." The concepts of chivalry and the Round Table were developed in the romances of the later twelfth century, especially in the poems of Chrétien de Troyes, court poet to Marie de Champagne, who with her mother Eleanor of Aquitaine had a formidable influence on Arthurian

literature's becoming a vehicle for the cult of courtly love, "romance" much as we know it today, featuring the anatomization of passion, the idealization of the lady, and the glorification of the role of passionate love in human life. This cult had close, but still somewhat obscure, connections with the Catharist or Albigensian heresy that held sway in Provence until it was extirpated by the crusade of 1208; there was even a Church of Love which parodied Catholic liturgy and institutions. Perhaps partially in response to this, twelfth-century authors such as Robert de Boron and the author(s) of the Vulgate Cycle of prose romances developed and Christianized the quest for the Holy Grail, which began in Crétien as a rich platter with the qualities of a cornucopia, was transformed into the cup (more properly, plate) used by Christ at the Last Supper and by Joseph of Arimathea to catch His blood shed on the Cross and brought by him to Britain when he founded a church at Glastonbury. In the tales of Galahad and Percival it becomes a mystical symbol of the covenant between man and God, used ritually in sacraments in ways that advance the Cistercian views in the ongoing debate about the nature of transubstantiation.

Although they have left us a legacy of much beautiful art and music and of noble ideals, the Middle Ages were a violent and brutal time. Acts of barbaric cruelty which appall even us, who are familiar with Hiroshima and the Holocaust, were committed as a matter of course, not infrequently with the sanction of the Church. These three elements in the Arthurian literature—chivalry, courtly love, and the Grail quest—represent efforts to tame this violence, to introduce civilizing influences into feudal culture: as T.H. White's Arthur was to phrase it, to put Might in service of Right. The code of chivalry embodied in the Round Table provided a pattern for applying Christian moral values—as well as some pagan ones—to the *force majeure* that usually decided issues in the Middle Ages, to encourage the strong to be just, merciful, and unselfish as well. In the eyes of the Church, woman was the occasion and vessel of sin; Mary's virtue could not cancel out Eve's fault. Feudal law gave women few rights: they were primarily chattels to be traded in marriage as counters in political, economic, and dynastic strategies. But according to the doctrine of *l'amour courtoise*, a woman was not merely a woman but a Lady, to be adored and obeyed so extravagantly that it is often difficult to tell merely from the content of a medieval lyric if it was written in homage

to the poet's beloved or to Mary herself. With the development of the Grail legend, the spiritual as well as the moral values of the age were incorporated into the mythos, adding to the *geste* of the knight-errant and the "love-awnter" of the hero of romance the quest of the soul for its ultimate salvation, again knitting together Christian values and the feudal ethos.

Sir Thomas Malory—whether he be in truth the disreputable knight-prisoner of Newbold Revell or the more respectable fellow from Yorkshire suggested by Mat-



thews—like Geoffrey of Monmouth, lived during a time of chaos: the Wars of the Roses. But where Geoffrey shaped the Arthurian material into a patriotic epic, Malory made of it a tragedy; he was the first to see the *death* of Arthur as the inevitable culmination of the entire legend. *Le Morte d'Arthur* is the first compendium to link the entire body of tales to form a coherent whole with a beginning, a middle, and an end—an end implicit in its beginning, a working out of destiny worthy of the ancient Greeks. And, as Geoffrey Ashe points out (Ashe, 1968, pp. 16-17), he offers a more fully realized, and realizable, ideal of Christian knighthood and Christian kingship, a middle way between the traditional lewdness of the secular life ("lewd" originally simply meant "lay" as opposed to "clerical") and the complete abandonment of the world that the vows of the contemplative religious life demanded. Perhaps influenced by St. Paul's metaphor of the "whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:13-17), Malory made knighthood an image of the Christian active life, though admittedly the image often gets lost amid what Roger Ascham called the "open manslaughter and bold bawdry" that fill his pages. The metaphor would gain its full vitality in the hands of an Elizabethan poet who made of it a vehicle for a profound allegory.

After Malory, as recounted above, the

legend fell into disrepute. Between the fifteenth century and the nineteenth, only one major poet, Edmund Spenser, saw in it an analogue for his deeper interests rather than merely a rattling good story or a source for contrived political allegory. If being acquainted with political upheaval is a prerequisite for the serious Arthurian poet, Spenser, as secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, certainly qualifies; and the fact that his much-admired employer's Christian name was Arthur may have influenced him as well. But his idealism and romanticism surely came from his Puritan background and his poetic imagination. The poem operates on several levels: the literal level of the story (but, as Dr. Johnson supposedly said of the novels of Samuel Richardson, reading Spenser for the story is enough to make you suicidal); the level of historical allegory, in which Gloriana and Mercilla represent Elizabeth, Duessa is Mary Queen of Scots, and Arthur himself is Lord Grey; entwined with this the political allegory, in which Duessa is the Roman Catholic Church and Una the Church of England; a certain amount of psychological allegory or *psychomachia*; and the moral allegory, in which the characters incarnate, champion, or quest for an assortment of Aristotelian, Christian, and purely Renaissance virtues.

Four principal literary elements went into the making of *The Faerie Queene*. Two of them, the forms of romance and allegory, were passé even as he employed them. His friend Gabriel Harvey expressed the typical judgment of a Renaissance humanist when he urged the poet to turn to classical models and abandon an old-fashioned and eccentric work which he characterized in the famous phrase "*Hobgoblin runne away with the Garland from Apollo.*" Spenser was also inspired by the newly popular national epic, though he preferred as a model the Italian romances of Ariosto and Boiardo rather than the strictures of the recently rediscovered *Poetics* of Aristotle. The original model was Homer, followed by Vergil's tale of the founding of Rome. The French *Chanson de Roland*, the Spanish *El Cid*, and the German *Nibelungenlied* were inherited from the Middle Ages; Camões glorified the Portuguese in his *Lusiad*; and Tasso intended his *Jerusalem Delivered* as a species of national epic of Christendom. The culmination of the genre was to come in *Paradise Lost*, after Milton discarded Arthur as too narrow a subject and wrote the heroic epic of the whole human race.

A final influence was surely the popularity of treatises on education and ethics:

this may be regarded as the first era of the self-help book. The classical models were the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Xenophon's treatise on horsemanship. The Renaissance brought about a change in traditional values as the rational, ethical world view of the classical came to counterpoise the otherworldly, spiritual emphasis of the Middle Ages. As new possibilities opened up everywhere, educated men sought guides on which to pattern themselves. Some of the more popular were Elyot's *Boke Named the Governour*, Ascham's *Scholemaster*, and Castiglione's *The Courtier*; even Machiavelli's *The Prince* has a certain kinship with the genre.

Spenser stated his own purpose in the Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh usually appended to *The Faerie Queene*: "The general end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline...." It is probably for this reason that he discarded all the traditional Arthurian material and chose to invent an entirely new tale: that of Arthur's exploits as a prince, adventuring in Faerie in quest of Queen Gloriana as his bride. Spenser projected a scheme of twelve books to "pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall vertues, as Aristotle hath deuised." Some of the virtues are actually Christian (holiness, chastity) and others sprang from Renaissance culture (courtesy—used in Castiglione's sense rather than that of courtly love). Arthur, the figure Spenser used to "sette forth magnificence in particular, which vertue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all," shows up from time to time in each book to rescue or aid someone, not infrequently the titular hero of the book. Despite his invocation of the model of Aristotle, Spenser's Arthur portrays Magnificence—which the modern mind is probably not accustomed to thinking of as a virtue at all—in a peculiarly Renaissance sense. Aristotle meant by the term a specifically material generosity in giving; the defect of his magnificence is meanness. Spenser intends something more like achieved nobility of character, what the modern pop-psychology books speak of as "self-actualization" or "becoming the person you were meant to be"; but the Renaissance saw virtues in their social form, manifested in the way a man acts in the world, while we tend to seek a more inward definition expressed in terms of self-adjustment.

What the poet has taken from the Arthu-

rian legends is the name merely; as L.R. Galyon puts it in *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*, "*The Faerie Queene* is a great poem, but not a great Arthurian poem." Its most important debt to the tradition is its use of the concepts of chivalry and the knight-errant, which are here deployed in the service of allegory. Spenser's metaphor for his narrative is that of a ship on a voyage, with the poet as captain—not an unusual one, but used in an unusual way: the ship is not crossing the sea but making a coasting voyage, putting in at one port after



another. In the same way, he uses the principles of chivalry, as well as the multiple-strand *entrelacement* format of the romance genre, to vary the episodes of his tale and to handle his themes with irony. A knight may be temporarily deflected from his main quest by a challenge or a cry for help: his knightly vows demands this; but there may be an ironic conflict between his behavior as knight-errant and as allegorical *persona*. *The Faerie Queene* is the product of a time of transition, when the Age of Faith was transforming itself into the Age of Reason, the feudal era evolving into the modern era, and the star of aristocracy passing its zenith as the sun of democracy could be glimpsed at the edge of the world. It would not be until the twilight of this new age that another great poet would find in the Arthurian mythos themes and patterns for his most profound concerns.

The Victorian era which produced Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the next major poet to treat the Arthurian legend, was also a time of conflict; it may be said to have ended decisively with the holocaust of the First World War, rather than with the actual death of Queen Victoria. It was a time in which most of the elements of the "modern" world came into being: the Industrial Revolution, the rise of the middle class to social dominance, democratic social reform, and Darwinian science. Though it was on

the whole a peaceful time for imperial Britain, there were plenty of conflicts over values, of which the most conspicuous was that between science and religion over the theory of evolution. Our notion of Victorian morality as smug and priggish, however true of Victoria herself, is unjust to the age. It was also a time in which art was becoming more consciously aesthetic rather than social; the medievalism of the Arthurian revival, especially among the Pre-Raphaelites, is to a considerable extent simple reaction against the increasingly bourgeois, materialistic, harsh, and smoke-grimed nineteenth century. It is against this background that we must set the *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson's attempt to depict "Sense at war with Soul." Arthur represents the Soul: as Dorothy L. Sayers points out in her essay "The Writing and Reading of Allegory" (Sayers, 1963, pp. 218-220), the marriage of Arthur and Guinevere is the central image: "Unless...the Soul (Arthur) can retain the allegiance of the Heart (Guinevere), it cannot consolidate its rule over man's nature (Logres), for the realm will be 'betrayed by what is false within'." The Table Round represents this rule. Before Arthur's coming, Britain was a wasteland of brutality. As in Malory and Spenser, the knight-errant becomes a metaphor for the life of moral engagement in the world. Arthur's union with Guinevere, who in the legend brings the Round Table itself in her dowry, symbolizes life ordered by reason and love, a source of vitality and illumination to the land. As Sayers points out, allegory was well-nigh a lost art by this time and Tennyson had problems handling it, especially in "Guinevere," where Arthur sounds like a sanctimonious prig for a while; this is about the only point in the poem where he really resembles his supposed inspiration and incarnation, Prince Albert. (The character probably owes more in human terms to Tennyson's dearest friend, the late Arthur Henry Hallam, subject of *In Memoriam*.) On the other hand, the poet's use of the uncertainty about Arthur's parentage, and the debates it engendered, to allegorize the contemporary arguments about the existence and nature of the soul as framed by science and religion, worked extremely well. He also makes effective use of solar and nature imagery: the bright springlike early poems; the coming of the Grail at high summer, seen by Arthur as "A sign to maim this Order which I made"; the autumnal images of the later poems, when the disruptive influence of the Grail quest and the corrupt infection of the adultery of Guinevere and Launcelot, replicated by

the less noble Tristram and Isolt, bring a chill to Arthur's heart:

Or have I dream'd the bearing of our knights  
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?  
Or whence the fear lest this my realm,  
uprear'd,  
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,  
From flat confusion and brute violences,  
Reel back into the beast, and be no more?

or, as the cynical Tristram puts it to the King's jester:

Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were  
o'er,  
The life had flown, we sware but by the  
shell—

and finally the sunset imagery of Arthur's  
"last, dim, weird battles of the west," fought

...that day when the great light of heaven  
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,  
On the waste sand by the waste sea....

The last stanzas of "The Passing of Arthur" are magnificent poetry, and I regret that the limitations of space do not permit me to quote them in full. It is rich in ambiguity: Arthur speaks doubtfully of voyaging to the eternal summer of the earthly paradise of "the island-valley of Avilion;" Sir Bedivere sees him sailing into "the dead world's winter dawn" and is haunted by Merlin's enigmatic pronouncement, "From the great deep to the great deep he goes." The poem ends with Bedivere on a hilltop, glimpsing, or possibly imagining

...the speck that bare the King,  
Down that long water opening on the deep  
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go  
From less to less, and vanish into light,  
And the new sun rose bringing the new  
year.

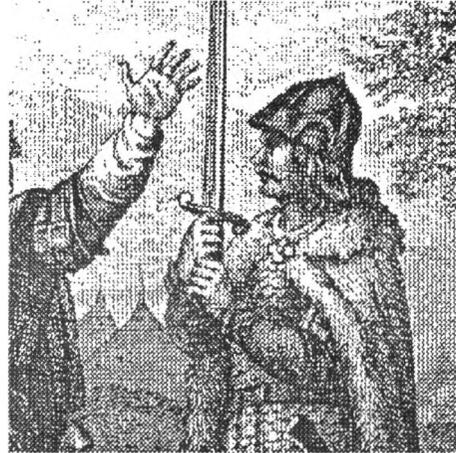
Arthur's dying speech, the famous "The old order changeth" passage, realizes in poetic terms a synthesis of the scientific and religious arguments, with mankind growing and changing, thus in a sense evolving, in fulfillment of the divine will,

For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

Somewhat more realistically, Tennyson ends the actual concluding poem, "To the Queen," with a less optimistic, and somewhat prophetic, image:

The darkness of that battle in the west  
Where all of high and holy dies away.

Our own century has seen an extraordinary efflorescence of Arthurian literature rivalling that of the twelfth century. One reason has certainly been the archaeological discoveries at Glastonbury, Cadbury, and elsewhere which have extended our knowledge about Dark Age Britain in general and specific sites associated with Arthur in particular. This has led to the rise of Arthurian literature in a realistic vein, stripping the story of its myth and magic and making the details as historically accurate as possible, with Arthur as



rex quondam but not futurus. Since the Matter of Britain has traditionally been seen as pertinent to dwellers in chaotic times, the cataclysmic effect of two world wars and the threat of nuclear holocaust have also no doubt played their part. A third cause is a factor in the growth of literature (in the broadest sense of the word) in general—universal public education and the expansion of literacy. The larger reading public means there is a larger market for every sort of story; and the growth of literacy means that there are more people who want to be writers—some of whom are actually able to write. To paraphrase Thomas Gray, there are no more mute inglorious Malorys. As a result, all sorts and conditions of men (and women) have tried their hands at the tale, ranging from run-of-the-mill sword and sorcery and, for stories dealing with the Holy Grail, Cup and sorcery (I owe the term to Spider Robinson) to the great and profound reinterpretations of Charles Williams and T.H. White.

Charles Williams' *Arthuriad* is unfortunately not very accessible to the average reader. Not only are the books hard to come by, but the writing presents considerable difficulties. In the first place, it is not a narrative work but two cycles of lyrics, *Taliessin Through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*. (A third cycle, to be

called *Jupiter Over Carbonek*, was unwritten at the time of the poet's death in 1945.) Moreover, the style of the poems is often obscure—even T.S. Eliot found Williams difficult to read—influenced strongly by that of Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose works Williams had edited for the Oxford University Press. Indeed, the language of some of the earlier poems in *Taliessin* is almost as cryptic as that of the ancient Welsh triads. Finally, the poet was using the legend as a vehicle for some very obscure ideas and interests of his own, including the writings of various Christian mystics; the Theology of Romantic Love, based on the concepts of Co-Inherence, Exchange, and Substitution, which he himself had developed primarily through his study of Dante; and his lifelong interest in the occult, going back to his youthful study of Rosicrucianism (a mixture of Christianity and alchemy) and the Order of the Golden Dawn, whose membership included at one time or another, besides Williams, the occultist A.E. Waite, the poet William Butler Yeats, black magician Aleister Crowley, and Sax Rohmer, the creator of Fu Manchu. Even Williams' friends, with whom he discussed his work, often found themselves baffled by it. C.S. Lewis, in his commentary on the poems in *Arthurian Torso* (1948) confesses his inability to understand the meanings of some of them; and J.R.R. Tolkien commented in a piece of occasional verse:

In that gynecomorphical terrain  
History and Myth are ravelled in a skein  
of endless interchange. I do not hope  
to understand the deeds of king or pope,  
wizard or emperor; beyond my scope  
is that dark flux of symbol and event,  
where fable, faith, and faërie are blent  
with half-guessed meanings to some great  
intent

I cannot grasp....

(quoted in Carpenter, 1978, pp. 133-134)

While Malory was concerned with the political chaos of his own time, and Tennyson with the spiritual, moral, and intellectual conflicts of his, Williams was dealing with a more universal question: the human condition as it presents itself to the Christian poetic imagination. Like Spenser, he was interested not in producing a narrative of the Matter of Britain but in using it as a background and inventing new elements, which became for him resonant archetypes rather than the allegorical symbols of Spenser and Tennyson. His central figure is the Welsh bard Taliessin,

See ARTHUR, Page 69



# My Search for Morgaine le Fay

by Marion Zimmer Bradley

The first thing I had to do, before writing a novel on the subject of Morgaine le Fay, was to determine whether she was an actual—as opposed to a legendary—character. Before doing this, I had to find out if there was any truth whatsoever to the whole mass of Arthurian legend. Some archaeologists—notably Geoffrey Ashe—have spent a lifetime proving it; this should be good enough for a novel, which after all is not a scholarly paper, and deals with invented characters.

Any search for a real-life Arthur, going as it does to the darkest part of the Dark Ages—the very time in English history for which we have no documented evidence at all—must of necessity rely very heavily upon all kinds of other evidence. The first piece that came to my attention was the evidence of names. We may at once dismiss the kind of “evidence” used by such films as *EXCALIBUR*, showing knights in fifteenth century plate armor; we *know* who was king then. Nor is there any doubt about the succession after the eighth century; the rest of the Saxon kings of what is now

England, though perhaps not on the lips of every school child—as is probably the case with the kings of England after the Norman Conquest—is easily accessible to even such desultory scholarship as mine.

However there is a hiatus—a convenient hiatus—after the withdrawal of the Roman Legions and their emperors in the fourth century, and the first of the Saxon chronicles in the sixth. There, if anywhere, we will find traces of Arthur.

We come first to the name. In Roman Britain, the name Arthur was unknown; when we come to the XIXth century, as we see from a few church records, suddenly all sorts of baby boys were being christened “Arthur.” This constitutes a hint; people do not name their sons after somebody they do not like and admire. (How many baby boys named Adolf are found in England, or for that matter in Europe, in the wake of World War II?) It is likely that this name will not regain its popularity in this century. Jacqueline was not a common name for girls until Mrs. Kennedy put a *Jackie* into every first grade classroom.

Once we have established that someone named Arthur was at least enough admired for boys to be named after him sometime in the sixth century, let us examine what small written evidence there is. The monk Gildas, writing in the sixth century, was lambasting current people for not being the fighters—or the patriots—they were in the Good Old Days of King Arthur. There is a monument in Cornwall somewhere commemorating a burial place for Mark, and Drustan; somewhere in my researches I read a reference saying that this stone, mentioning as it does a possible King Mark and Tristan, was the only actual written reference we had to any one of Arthur’s knights; but this reference is chiseled in stone; I have seen it with my own eyes in Cornwall. Elsewhere, the monk Nennius—however reliable this eighth century monk may or may not have been—gives us a list of battles; in one of which he says that “Arthur and Mordred” were both killed. It says nothing about the relationship, or lack of same, between them; everything is legend, and for all we know to the contrary, they could have been, not the king and his nemesis, but the dearest of friends. But if we give Nennius any credibility at all, they did exist; and they died.

After Nennius, we come to Geoffrey of Monmouth; and while he was reliable enough for Shakespeare to take from him some plots of so-called historicals, I personally believe he was England’s first writer of fiction. Despite his detailed biographies of Merlin and Arthur, I personally would not—alone—give Geoffrey of Monmouth enough credence to hang a yellow dog, or even to write a novel on his say so; but the evidence of Geoffrey of Monmouth, *with* the evidence of archaeologist Leslie Alcock, points in that direction.

In the very depths of the Dark Ages, then, we find the old Stone Age hill-fort of Cadbury Castle, in Somerset, which, when excavated, shows evidence that *someone*—whether Arthur or another, re-fortified this defensible place, and occupied it. If he was not Arthur, he seemed to have done what Arthur is said to have done; and what was that? Well, between the withdrawal of Rome and the first of the Saxon kings, he, Arthur or another, some great chief, seems to have fought a series of battles (at one of which “Arthur and Mordred” were killed) which brought a quarter century of peace to England. This may not seem like much, but there have not been twenty-five consecutive years of peace in *my* lifetime. At least this era of peace permitted the Saxons to become somewhat civilized before taking over. So if this Somerset chieftain

was not Arthur—and since he left no marks we have found, and probably could neither read nor write, and could not tell us his name, we may as well assume that he was named Arthur, for he seemed admirable enough, in those days, for people to have named their sons after him—we will never know.

So for the sake of a novel, if not of a scholarly paper, the evidence is good enough; it was good enough for an archaeologist.

But after finding out to my own satisfaction that Arthur had existed, I found at least four “legendary” family trees for him.

These mostly contain the familiar figures of Morgaine, Morgause, Igraine, etc.; and they also contain, everywhere in the legends, the figure of the Lady of the Lake.

Now, Malory (the main source for these legends retold) does not approve of Morgaine le Fay, making her Arthur’s worst enemy and nemesis to the whole world of chivalry. When a man repeats this without citing any evidence of the *evil* of these or any particular woman—or set of women—we may assume a religious or cultural bias. We do know that since Roman days a fierce patriarchy had come into the country with the Norman kings, and they had many political reasons for that. From reading the works of Tacitus and others we know that the Celts did not assume a wholly patriarchal culture; this was a matter of religion. This puts us on the track of the Druids.

Now admittedly, we know nothing of the Druids; going to the writings of Julius Caesar and similar sources to find out about the Druids is a little like going to *Mein Kampf* for the fine points of Jewish culture; for most Romans were trying to eradicate what little remained of the traces of such cultures. But by these and other evidences we do know that the Celts were, although reports of their matriarchy are probably overdone (and of course we can not rely on such writings about “Druids” as were commonplace in Celtic twilight romantic writers), we may say they were not as fiercely patriarchal as the Romans, or the Norman kings who admired them. (Very few peoples were.) To make a common analogy between the Celts and the eastern forest Indians of North America the tribes when at home and at peace seem to have been led by women; women at least know more of domestic matters than men, and when a tribe was not at war, in the absence of the fierce Roman-Norman patriarchy, there seems no reason that women should not be tribal rulers; we know it was often done among the Saxons and others.

We do know one thing; in time of war, as we know from accounts of such things as Boadicea’s rebellion, the woman who ruled a tribe—the queen, whatever she may have been called—chose one of her tribe for Duke of War; and one of the things we do “know” about Arthur is that he is called in all the tales *dux bellorum*, Duke of War. Is it too much to think that Arthur may have been chosen one of their Dukes of War? We do know from Roman writings that the Romans had some trouble with the concept that a queen was not necessarily the property of a king. That there were “Client Queens” we do know from contemporary Roman writings. We also know that the Romans did not approve of them.

We may also assume that it was for some reason like this that Malory did not approve of Morgaine and the Lady of the Lake; but how do we know they may have existed? Simple; for the reason that, although these women never *do* anything in the stories, Malory could not imagine telling tales of Arthur without them. In other words, they were so much a part of the Arthurian legend that their absence could not be imagined. One wonders what these women had been before 1500 years of woman-hating clergy got their hands on them.

It does not—at least to me—take much thought to figure out a connection between Lancelot of the Lake and the Lady of the Lake. That there was a lake, we do know; all over Somerset, we find archaeological and other traces that this part of Somerset was under water, part of a great brackish inland sea which was not entirely drained until the Dutch gave help and advice on doing so in the fifteenth century. In Glastonbury in Somerset—which retains the old name of the Summer Country because only in dry Summer was it dry enough for pasturing cattle—there is a museum showing ancient houses, built on piles in the Lake, by the Beaker Folk, those elusive people—Magdalenians—who reportedly built Stonehenge. (Despite Victorian romance, Stonehenge was built before the Druids ever came to England.)

As for Lancelot, it takes very little thought to define him as a late addition to the myth; he seems to have come from “the French book” for which Malory blames his tale. (The basis of Arthur’s tragedy, as all the legends seem to reiterate, was a king betrayed by his closest friend, we may relegate the role of Lancelot to Bedivere. This is fairly easy to understand; Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine had invented chivalry, and Malory wrote his tale for a romanticized court which had little to do

except play games of chivalrous love. He had to invent Lancelot “of the Lake” to add some love interest for that court. And along with Lancelot came Guinevere.

It is fairly easy, then, to create in imagination the rest of the cast of characters. We remark of the Lady of the Lake that at times she behaves like Arthur’s best of friends, giving him his sword Excalibur. She must then have been a person of some importance, able to bestow a sword, which again gives us the track of the Druids. At other times, she appears as Arthur’s enemy; Morgaine is often referred to as Arthur’s enemy, one of the “damsels of the Lady of the Lake” which again suggests a religious bias; yet it is to Morgaine, despite their quarrels, that Arthur appeals at the end of his life.

This elusive trace of Druidism brings me to the wise man Merlin. In living memory in the Gaelic speaking part of Scotland, the local pastor was referred to, by a simple man, as a “wise Druid.” Yet Merlin, in Malory’s book (which is admittedly a collection and cannot be looked to for consistency) behaves so inconsistently that in Arthur’s long reign that title, (like the Lady of the Lake) or name may have been held by more than one person; hence the two Merlins in my book.

Speaking of that era, Henry II, one of the greatest of Norman kings, was what we would now call an Arthurian buff; he liked playing Arthurian games, and liked to think himself a sort of new Arthur. Looking, perhaps, for a kingly grant, the Abbot of Glastonbury in the heyday of that place discovered on the grounds—or said he did—the body of a Saxon Chieftain whom he identified with King Arthur and of a golden haired lady whom he called—what else?—after the French, Guenevere; this may be very well the old Welsh Gwenhwyfar. Some traditions give Arthur three wives, *all* named Gwenhwyfar. Granted there were fewer given names in those days, but this is ridiculous.

The bodies of Chieftain and “Guenevere” seem to have vanished—if they ever existed—in the debacle that brought down the monasteries in the days of another Henry, the VIII. It was a rough time, but even so, a body seems a little large—and solemn—to be casually mislaid.

Anyhow this is enough evidence for a novel. As I say, the chain of evidence, being little more than an inspired series of guesses, would not suit for a scholarly paper; but then I was not writing a scholarly paper. Heaven forbid! I have no talent for that sort of thing.

But it made a pretty good novel.\*

# Publishing Arthur Machen's Arthur

by C.W. (Ned) Brooks, Jr.

I published *Guinevere and Lancelot and Others* by Arthur Machen as a large sized paperback in December 1986, under the imprint of the Purple Mouth Press. It is edited by Michael T. Shoemaker and Cuyler W. Brooks, Jr.

The only Arthurian piece in the book is the title piece, "Guinevere and Lancelot," which is from *Notes and Queries*. It was published by Spur and Smith in London in 1926, and is in the rare book room in the Library of Congress.

The Library won't allow photocopying of their rare books, because of the wear and tear on the book, I suppose. For that reason Mike Shoemaker went to the rare book room and requested it a number of times until he could finish copying it out longhand. He typed it out from his longhand and sent me the typescript which I then typed into the word processor to produce this book.

"Guinevere and Lancelot" is a retelling of the story of Queen Guinevere's adultery with Lancelot in which the sympathetic character is Lancelot, and Guinevere is a witch. Arthur is only a minor character who sends ten knights to do away with Lancelot. Merlin does not appear at all.

Steve Fabian did three illustrations for this particular story, probably the strongest piece in the book. First is the castle of Sir Sagramore, which has nothing to do with the story. When Lancelot takes Guinevere to Camelot they pass by this place and it's on fire. Their discussion of why it is burning is the only connection with the plot. The second illustration for this story is the incantation, which shows Guinevere, sky clad as it were, performing a spell to bind Lancelot to her. Finally there is an



Stephen Fabian

illustration of the battle in the garden where Lancelot defends himself against the ten knights that King Arthur has sent to do away with him. There is a wizard in Camelot who helps Guinevere with her incantation but he's not named at all.

The other stories in the book are from very diverse sources which are given on the back of the title page.

There's a fragment from *AMERICAN MERCURY* which is not even the whole piece but just a paragraph which I included because I liked it. There is a piece about Gypsies from *Academy and Literature* (1911), "Ritual," one of Machen's best stories, from an anthology called *Path and Pavement* (1937), the introduction to *The Dragon and the Alchemist* by Frederick Carter, a story about Machen and A.E. Waite told by Machen that was published as a separate booklet in 1923 called *The Grand Travail*, "Bridle and Spurs" from

*Bridle and Spurs*. This is a book published by the Rofant Club in Cleveland in 1951 in a very small edition which includes several essays in addition to the title one. *Bridle and Spurs* also has the five essays that Machen wrote and sent to Tom Horan at the DALTON GEORGIA CITIZEN in the early 30's; after Horan resigned as editor of that newspaper he reprinted these in a book of which he made ten copies, called *The Glitter of the Brook*, the only publications until 1951.

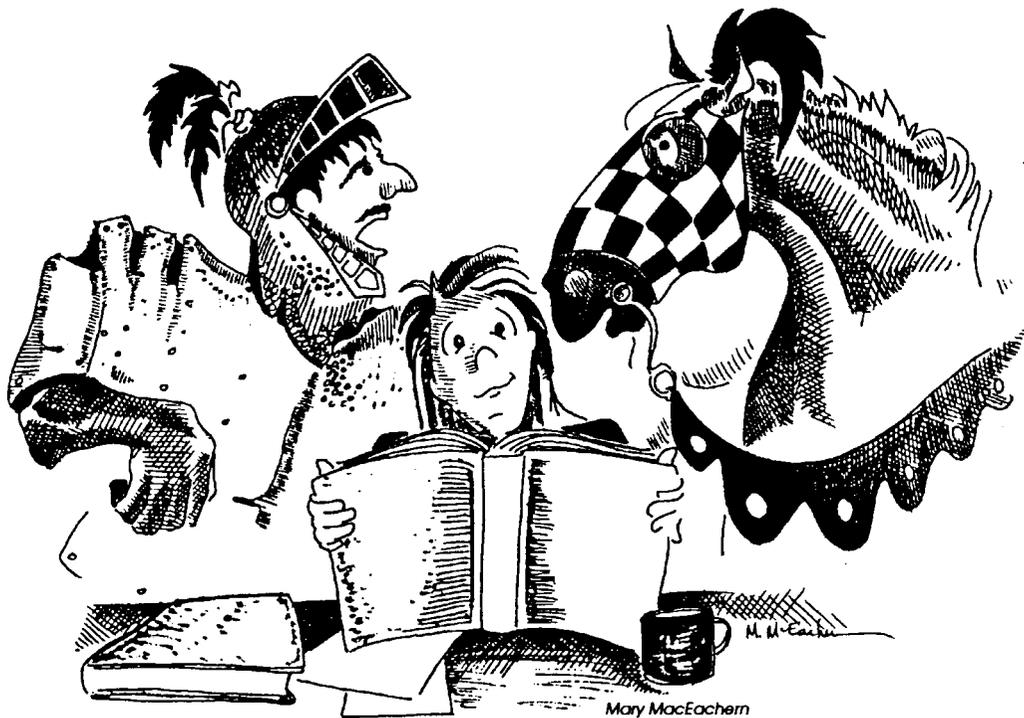
Rounding out my collection are "Local Color" from a magazine called *LITERATURE*, "Art and Luck" is from *THE INDEPENDENT* and the preface to *Afterglow* by Michael S. Buck (1924). Thus the oldest piece here is "Local Color" from *LITERATURE* which is 1898, and the latest is probably the piece from *AMERICAN MERCURY* in 1936. The 1937 piece is probably an older reprint.

These pieces were selected primarily because Shoemaker and I liked them and I thought they had a scene in them which would be well suited to illustration by Stephen Fabian. In the end we did publish one or two pieces that have no illustration. Fabian's ideas of what could be illustrated were, of course, not exactly the same as mine. Naturally he had a large say in it since he is an artist and I'm not.

I had wanted the wrap around cover to consist of a contrast between the two cities mentioned in the introduction, the white city of Machen's imagination and the actual Victorian city of his nightmares which was the result of the industrial revolution, but apparently Fabian didn't feel that this was something he could do. Thus the cover actually consists of a girl who might be Guinevere and a statue of a demon who might be anybody, and a dragon, which is nice but doesn't have much to do with anything in the book. Still, when you get to working with artists you have to go along with their ideas as well, of course.

Besides the art done specifically for scenes in the stories, there is a tailpiece done from a portrait of Machen. Just as I was getting ready to take the book to the printer I happened to find another book which had a picture of a page from the book mentioned in the story about Machen and A.E. Waite. Since it was published in the mid-1800's and nobody could hold rights to it any longer I lifted it from the book where I found it and had it reprinted as a tail piece to the story.

The book is available from a few dealers and directly from Purple Mouth Press for \$10 (713 Paul St., Newport News, VA 23605).\*



# Arthur, the Demigod?

by Vera Chapman

I have always been attracted by the romantic figure of King Arthur, as well as his Knights and Ladies. I remember as a child, being presented by my teacher with a tidy list, with dates, of the Kings and Queens of England, from William the Conqueror, 1066, down to Edward VII, and asking, "But where does King Arthur come in?" Needless to say, there was no answer.

As I went through life I picked up scraps of information here and there, but all inconclusive. Arthur seemed to have no date. I stood on the battlements of Tintagel, and by the hallowed spot in the ruins of Glas-tenbury where two bodies, supposedly those of Arthur and Guenevere, had long rested in a shrine. Of course I read Malory and (later) Geoffrey of Monmouth. Arthur and his knights seemed to be dispersed over the centuries and over the British Isles.

I was greatly stimulated by a charming book written by the late (alas!) Edith Ditmas, treating the Arthurian characters as real people—also by T.H. White who

brought Arthur's world into a new dimension. But it was the Ancient Order of Druids (and subsequently the Order of Bards, Orates and Druids) that gave me the clue that linked up all these scattered and contradictory pieces—Arthur was a god, no less. It is possible to see him as a great traditional archetype of the British people. In fact, it can be said, with some conviction, that the mysterious and elusive St. George of England is Arthur or that Arthur is St. George. The armour, the horse, the spear, the pursuit of evil powers, the great aim and object of restoring and maintaining the peace, liberty and all things good, fit the picture entirely. His sword and spear, shield and magical cup or stone, and his Round Table and band of faithful followers, bring him into relation with the Parsifal knight. He is born in obscurity and is miraculously manifested. With his band (who sometimes are twelve or twentyfour) he goes through his land and subdues it. In

the end of the story he does not die, but is carried away into "the West," and is to come again. All these things proclaim him as the Archetype of Britain who is everywhere and nowhere, was born many times and yet never died—he lies somewhere in Britain, in a cave, asleep with all his knights around him.

When Will Shakespeare makes Mistress Quickly, in reporting the death of Falstaff, say "Nay, he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever a man went to Arthur's bosom," she is not making a malapropism of Abraham and Arthur; I am sure she is not making any error. "Arthur's bosom" would, of course, be more congenial to Falstaff than Abraham's, but I am sure the archetypal Arthur lived on and took his chosen knights into his own peculiar paradise.

So when the Hawthorne is in bloom and Guenevere goes a Maying, let us lift our hearts to Britain's great defender, Arthur or St. George. Perhaps he was also Mithras.\*

by Ben P. Indick

# Johan Stynebec de Montray, Miles: John Steinbeck

"When of IX wyntre age," he wrote in 1958, "When I was nine, I took siege with King Arthur's fellowship of knights most proud and worshipful as any alive." Nor was the young knight unattended; his sister was squire to him, unrecognized until many years later when he wrote the above as potential introduction to his book, adding "Wherefore this day I make amends within my power and raise her to knighthood... She shall be called Sir Marie Steinbeck of Salinas Valley.—God give her worship without peril.—Johan Stynebec de Montray, Miles. John Steinbeck of Monterey, Knight."

*The Red Pony, Of Mice and Men, Tortilla Flat, The Grapes of Wrath*, Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. These are some of the

great victories this knight won, and yet, unknown to his public, as early as 1956, he was writing to his agent that he wished to produce a modern, idiomatic, honest translation of *Le Morte d'Arthur*. He was to spend three years of intense concentration on the task, primarily between 1958 and 1959, at Somerset, England; then, although he sometimes dreamed of the project before his death in 1968, he put it aside, and never returned to it again.

It began when he heard of the discovery of the Winchester Mss. and culminated in decision when Prof. Vinaver published his edition. His childhood love was his motivation; once decided, he embarked on a vast amount of research and reading, even traveling to presumed sites of the story's action. He obtained material and microfilms the world over, immersing himself in the project. His aim was "to keep the rhythms and tones of Malory."

He soon discovered that even Malory, trying to keep the "rhythms and tones" of his sources intact—already ancient French tales—had begun "to write for the fifteenth century and the *English* mind and feeling." Only then, he decided, did Malory's great-

ness become evident. Nevertheless, Steinbeck, doing a specified number of pages a day, was faithful to the particulars of Malory's text; he embellished it lightly in a cadence more accessible to the modern ear, but, comparing it with Baines' working translation,\* it varies little in subject and sequence. He was quite proud of his handling of the story of Merlin and his ultimate imprisonment in a cave by Nyneve, and it certainly exceeds in poignancy the Baines/Malory account; however, it is a difference in degree.

"A novelist," he wrote to his editor, "identifies himself with one chief or central character in his novel. It seems to me Malory's self character would be Lancelot."\*\*\* Surely the brave knight was also Steinbeck's self character; the story of Lancelot gave him great difficulty, and yet it is here that his work flowers most beautifully, and gives evidence of what the completed and eventually revised manu-

script might have been.

As he was completing sections, he would send them to his editor and agent in America. To his surprise, he discovered that their enthusiasm was qualified; he realized that they had misunderstood his motives. "I had no intention," he wrote them, "of putting it in twentieth century vernacular. I know you have read T.H. White's *Once and Future King*. It is a marvelously wrought book. All the things you wished to find in my revision are superlatively in that. But that is not what I had wanted and I think still do not want to do. White brilliantly puts the story in the dialects of present day England. I did not want to do that. I wanted an English that is out of time and place as the legend is... There is something in Malory that is longer lived than T.H. White and more permanent than Alan Lerner [then working on the musical *CAMELOT*] or Mark Twain."

Nevertheless, in August 1959, he was writing dispiritedly to his editor, "the work doesn't jell." And, a month later, "as for my own work, I am completely dissatisfied with it...maybe the flame has gone out." It had been nearly two years of concentration and thinking, and now it was over. It would be six years before his letters even mentioned Arthur again, and then only about his mythological and universal importance, not about the book which had occupied his dreams. Yet, the old preoccupation was not quite lost. In July 1965, he wrote: "I go struggling along with the matter of Arthur. I think I have something and am pretty excited about it but I am going to protect myself by not showing it to anybody so that after I get a stretch of it done, if it seems bad, I can simply destroy it. But right now I don't think it is bad. Strange and different, but not bad."

It was not to be. In 1968 John Steinbeck dies, and not until 1976 did his unedited, uncorrected attempt appear in print, as *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, including letters to his editor). In it we see his refusal to take textual liberties as suggested by his editor, with the consequent lack of individuality for much of what he completed. Yet he did take just such a liberty on at least two occasions: each remains basically faithful to his source, but each is indisputably enriched in the hands of a great writer. One is a scene of brilliant fantasy, and the other one of desperate passion.

In Malory (as translated by Baines) and T.H. White, the fantasy passage is but a few pages, matter-of-fact in Malory, humorous in White. In Malory, Lancelot is sleeping beneath an apple tree, when four

queens, astride mules, encounter him. One is Morgan le Fay, and all four, seeing him, want him for their own. He is brought, still asleep due to a spell cast over him by the sorceress, to her castle, and placed in a cell. They appear to him the next day and tell him he must choose among them, even though they are aware of his love for Guinevere. He disdains all, "lewd sorceresses that you are". Subsequently he is aided in escape by a young woman who wishes him to aid her father. It is as simple in essence as this. White's version is, naturally, more sprightly, if scarcely lengthier. He is content to describe the queens on their mules, beneath a canopy held by their knights, as "looking picturesque." When they pose him their questions, he replies in defense of Guinevere, and tells them: "I certainly won't have any of you for my mistress. I am sorry if it's rude, but that's all I can say... And you are all four of you false enchantresses." They march out "with frigid dignity" and the damsel soon aids him to escape.

In Steinbeck, the episode is pure magic, with the radiance of an illuminated page of a medieval Book of Hours. "The afternoon was thick with heat, the blue sky milky from damp. The high white crowns of thunderheads looked over the hills in the northeast and muttered in the distance..." A jackdaw appears, cawing and cursing. "The great bird sprang aside and the wings of power jerked him into the air, and he flapped powerfully toward a cavalcade, iridescent, warm, in the distance, where four queens rode in slow and unreal pageantry, four queens robed in velvet and crowned, and four knights supported a green silken canopy on their spear tips to protect the ladies from the sun. The Queen of the Outer Isles came first, golden of hair as well as of crown, eyes blue as slate when the sea changes, high-colored cheeks of fast warm blood, her cloak sea-blue lined with sea-gray, her palfrey dappled as a spume-flecked rock. Next came the Queen of North Galys, red of hair, green-eyed, green-robed, with purple under color in her face...and her horse was a red-roan as her hair was roan. The Queen of Eastland followed her—ashen-haired but warm as ashes of roses, eyes of hazel, clothed in a robe of pale lavender. Her horse was white as milk. Last came Morgan le Fay...black of hair, of eye, of robe, and a horse as black and shining as Satan's heart. Her cheeks were white, the living white of white rose, and her midnight cloak was blacker for its points of ermine." Seeing the knight, she "shrilled laughter. 'A tidbit, sisters', she cried."

No less brilliantly, he describes how she places him into "sable sleep" and brings him to her castle, where "there was a moat with stars reflected in its waters, and the dim white hulls of slow-moving swans." When the queens come to him, he asks "Am I your prisoner?" And Morgan replies: "A prisoner of love." Each queen tempts him in turn, and no excerpts can suffice as they offer "sensations, restlessness, memory" and, from Morgan, "power." She sneers, "My sisters have laid out cheese for the mice of small desires... I speak to your mind. My gift—a ladder to climb the stars, who are your brothers and your peers, and from there to look down for amusement stir up the anhill of the world."

He rejects them all, telling of his love for Arthur and Guinevere. The queen-witches are furious. "The red-haired witch of North Galys threw herself on the floor, her hooked fingers clawing the stones. She arched her back and beat her forehead of the floor and screamed until Morgan raised both arms, palms forward. Sir Lancelot crossed his fingers tightly under his robe. He heard the magic words—and the darkness closed like a fist, and the air chilled, and he lay naked on the stones."

Later, having returned after self-imposed exile spent in adventures, to Arthur and Guinevere, he sits "with bowed head in his golden-lettered seat at the Round Table... Arthur on his dais sat very still and did not fiddle with his bread, and beside him sat lovely Guinevere, still as a painted statue of herself." The formalities are acted out, while the knight's heart burns bitterly. After she leaves the room, he leaves, and encounters her. It is the conclusion of Steinbeck's efforts, and a hint of all that might have followed.

"He could see her outline in the dark and smell the scent which was herself. 'My lady,' he said, 'when you left the room, I saw myself follow you as though I were another person looking on.' Their bodies locked together as though a trap had sprung. Their mouths met and each devoured the other. Each frantic heart beat at the walls of ribs trying to get to the other until their held breaths burst out and Lancelot, dizzied, found the door and blundered down the stairs. And he was weeping bitterly."

\*Keith Baines, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Bramhall House, NY 1962. An accurate, condensed translation of Malory into modern English.

\*\*John Steinbeck, *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*, Farrar, Straus, Giroux 1976.\*

# The Last



# Temptation of Arthur

by Phyllis Ann Karr

Merlin was engendered by the Devil. Few modern writers seem fond of this point, and those who remember it may try to explain it away. The medieval writers, however, were reasonably capable of remembering it; and I find that the theory of Merlin having been out to work mischief makes better sense of his actions than does the image of St. Merlin, the Holy Mage.

As King Uther's advisor, Merlin gets Arthur conceived by cooperating in, if not actually advising, adultery against the woman's will; the death of her husband, an erstwhile liegeman of Uther's; and the bloody invasion of the wronged couple's lands. The woman, Ygraine, is never even told until much later that it was Uther who lay with her in her husband's guise; she is kept in suspense, likely wondering if her child, like Merlin, was begotten by a devil, long enough for Uther to play a last cruel joke of feigned suspicion and jealousy about her thickening womb. Can all this be God's will? Was not the medieval mind much exposed to the idea that God could work any miracle, presumably even to getting a good king born without requiring a lot of sinning to go into the process?

Immediately upon the child's birth, Merlin insists on claiming him and spiriting him away—mark this well—before baptism.

One reason moderns like to advance for Merlin's taking the baby to a foster father is that Arthur's life would be in danger were his identity known. Well, perhaps it would, although the barons who had presumably been anxious for Uther to produce a legitimate heir ought to have been equally eager for that heir to live, in which case the result of spiriting him away would have been to help plunge the realm into confusion after Uther's death (which takes place prematurely, but not until more than a year after his son's birth). In any case, it looks suspiciously like a motif of Rumpelstiltskin triumphant. I believe that Merlin's primary motive is to keep Arthur unbaptized. There is no mention in Caxton's Malory that Merlin ever saw to the baby's christening, simply that he took him from Ygraine and delivered him to Sir Ector, who may simply have assumed that the baptism had been taken care of.

To the orthodox medieval Christian mind, an unbaptized infant remained in a

state of original sin, incapable of supernatural grace. An unbaptized king who nobody, including himself, realized was unbaptized should be a perfect tool for the devil's son.

Does Merlin wait until Arthur is grown and then bring him forward with well-garnered legal proofs of his paternity and birth in wedlock? No: Merlin sets up the famous Sword in the Stone test when Arthur is still a half-grown squire too slow of wit even to understand his feat in first drawing the sword. Putty in the hands of a shrewd, old, trusted counselor.

The Sword in the Stone test proves only the claims of a necromancer known to be diabolically descended that "Whoso pulls it out is rightwise king born of all England." Seen in this light, those rulers who refused to recognize Arthur's overlordship at once have some arguably reasonable justification. More bloodshed occurs that might have been averted had Merlin worked matters a little differently.

Arthur being established as boy king, down comes one of his half-sisters along with other heads of subkingdoms and baronies to do him homage. Arthur begets on her a child. Many modern authors make her Morgan, and this may be consciously or unconsciously reverting to a pre-Malory tradition, for two distinct characters may have sprung from a mere translator's error in case endings. Malory, however, names her as Margawse, one of Morgan's two sisters. Moderns also like to throw all or a great deal of the blame on her, even to having poor Arthur seduced. But in Malory's account, Arthur appears to take the initiative; at any rate, they are well agreed and—this is important—nobody except Merlin knows as yet exactly whose son Arthur is. Neither Arthur nor Margawse has any idea that they are being incestuous. Not until a few chapters later does Malory have Merlin bring poor Ygraine back to reunite her with her son, after another bit of cruel and probably unnecessary suspense in which it is made quite apparent that the words "rightwise born" on the Sword in the Stone had *not* made Arthur's specific lineage known.

Whether or not the Sword in the Stone is also Excalibur, the sword which Malory clearly names as Excalibur is given to the boisterous King Arthur by one Lady of the Lake. In late childhood I read a retelling I have never since been able to track down, in which Arthur can row out and take Excalibur only after he makes a definite statement that he fears nobody, neither man nor God. To Christian minds, not fearing God is a symptom of the deadliest

sin, spiritual pride.

Be that as it may, what is present next in Malory's account is the damning episode of the May Babies. Merlin tells Arthur that his (Arthur's) destroyer is to be born on May Day, whereupon the young king has all the babies born that month put in a leaky ship and drowned. (Mordred, of course, is washed up and saved by a good man.) Malory's account is brief. It hardly needed to be long. A bare synopsis would be enough to associate Arthur in the late medieval mind with that other infamous murderer of infants for a similar reason, King Herod.

The Lady of the Lake who gives Arthur Excalibur must herself lie under a cloud of suspicion. A few chapters further on, she reappears to demand that Arthur pay her with the head of Sir Balin, presently Arthur's prisoner at court. Arthur refuses, which may or may not be to his credit: most of us moderns no doubt see his refusal as meritorious, and I agree; but it could be argued that he is going back on his word. When he promised the Lady of the Lake whatever gift she might someday ask in return for Excalibur, he had said, "By my faith," and set no limits.

Out of the long, confusing welter of accusations and counter accusations, deaths, and symbolic overtones in the "Book of Balin," some of the few points that seem to emerge lucidly are that Malory gives an authorial statement that the Lady of the Lake slew Balin's mother, but leaves it to Merlin's mouth to counteraccuse another damsel, the one whose coming to court touched off the affair and who is now serving as Balin's quest companion. I cannot help but notice that Merlin is far more interested in throwing this counter accusation than in making any statement that the dead Lady of the Lake, presumably his own former associate or friend, was innocent of Balin's charges.

Malory's compendium may not always be strictly chronological, but it is only after the tragedy of Balin and Balan that he describes Arthur's marriage. If Merlin is indeed Arthur's evil genius, then the mage's objection to Guenevere should fall under suspicion. Guenevere's father holds King Uther's Round Table, so that it comes back to Arthur, along with a hundred Round Table knights, along with Guenevere.

Moreover the Vulgate makes it plain that Guenevere is a good administrator. While Malory does not re-emphasize this, neither does he deny it. Among other examples, the Vulgate includes the curious affair of the "false Guenevere," a look-alike who persuades Arthur that she is his real

wife. He is ready to have the true Guenevere scalped and partially skinned before banishing her. Lancelot saves her from mutilation by fighting as her champion, afterwards living with her in the domain of a friendly prince for the two and a half years of the false queen's reign, during which time Arthur's realm goes to pot, his subjects yearn to have their true, good queen again, and the Pope tries to intervene with an interdict. After the false Guenevere's death, the true one is understandably a bit reluctant to return to Arthur. The whole episode casts new light on the famous triangle.

Does Merlin, then, oppose Arthur's marriage because he foresees the eventual tragedy (as moderns like to suppose), or because he sees Guenevere's present and potential influence for good?

Certain it is that when Nimue, who is eventually to become the new Lady of the Lake, first appears as a damsel in distress in Arthur's court, during his wedding feast, and when a strange knight chases her in and bears her away by force, Malory records Arthur's reaction, not as outraged indignation, but as relief that the lady who "made such noise" is gone. Without Merlin's instigation, this noble court might never have sent anyone to Nimue's rescue or followed up on the day's other adventures. Such is the chivalry of King Arthur's court in its dawning!

Merlin's part in this particular episode looks of a piece with his popular image. He may, however, simply have hatched lewd designs on Nimue at first sight. Reread without the glosses of Wicked Temptress interpretations, Malory's description of Merlin's enchanted imprisonment sounds as much like self-defense on Nimue's part as anything else.

Merlin being out of the way, Arthur's half-sister Morgan tries first to kill him in a complicated plot and, when that fails, to steal Excalibur, but succeeds only in stealing Excalibur's magical scabbard, that keeps the bearer from losing any blood when wounded. Merlin had counseled the king that the scabbard was more valuable than the sword; thus, losing even the scabbard frees Arthur, in some small measure, from dependence on the questionable if not outright diabolical magic Merlin planned him to have.

Some little while later, Arthur takes his armies across the Channel to wage war on Rome. Malory shows Arthur stirred by the desire of freeing his kingdom from Roman taxation; Malory could not have known what a resounding chord this would strike a few centuries later in U.S.A. hearts, and

he may not have meant it as resounding particularly in Arthur's honor. Even as Rome was trying to restate its overlordship over Britain, so Arthur himself had not long before fought to restate his high kingship over the subkingdoms of Britain. In Malory's time, the tensions of might versus right in medieval feudalism (a highly developed structure) versus early modern nationalism may well have been so complex as to allow readers to sympathize with Arthur or with Rome just as they like. The important part of Arthur's Continental campaign, according to Malory, seems to me an episode that may at first look incidental, that of the Duchess of Brittany.

Arriving on the Continent, Arthur learns that a giant has been ravishing the countryside, and has just captured the Duchess of Brittany, wife of Arthur's cousin and ally, Duke Howell. Taking Sirs Kay and Bedivere, Arthur goes after the giant. They arrive at the monster's lair too late to save Lady Howell: in raping her the huge giant has split her to the navel. They also find the giant eating a man's leg and forcing three captive damsels to roast twelve babies on spits. His pity and compassion roused, Arthur leads the battle which rids the land of this ogre.

At first blush, this looks simply like what we all expect the knights of the Round Table to spend their time doing anyway. But it is, in fact, the first such heroism Malory describes Arthur and his men doing; Sir Balin, who went out questing with the sincerest motives, had been Arthur's courtly prisoner rather than his liege man; and such earlier "knightly adventures" as Malory recounts are entered into in a spirit of larking and have what can most kindly be described as mixed results.

I believe that the still youthful Arthur, who cannot of course remember whether or not he was given infant baptism, undergoes a kind of baptism of blood at the sight of the giant's victims, who can moreover be interpreted as symbols of Arthur's own victims. As the giant has ravaged Brittany, so have Arthur's wars ravaged Britain; as the giant has spitted babies for his dinner, so has Arthur drowned babies for his personal safety; and Lady Howell's own terrible death may be seen as a medieval object lesson in the evil of unbridled lust—a sin to which Arthur is no more a stranger than is many another ruler of history and myth. The blameless husband is a bowlerized view of Arthur; in Malory's apparent sources, Margawse and the "false Guenevere" are only two of Arthur's extramarital affairs.

Thus, in slaying the giant, Arthur in a

sense lashes out against his own sins and excesses, experiences an awful self-enlightenment and natural conversion to his better ideals. Arthur goes on to triumph over Rome and presumably, on his return, does his best to reorient his Round Table towards those goals and ideals we like best to associate with it. Notice that this doesn't happen until Merlin is out of the way.

Even though true episodes of wrongs set right remain sparser in Malory's account than we might have expected, for a while things seem to go better in Arthur's Britain. At least, the first adventures of young Sir Gareth seem to reflect the kind of idealistic striving we think of when we think of King Arthur and his knights.

So far as I have yet discovered, Malory appears to be among the first to interweave the romance of Tristram and Yseult with that of King Arthur. His primary purpose may have been to counterpoint the two love triangles, possibly even using the Tristan one to parody the Arthurian. However that may be, the potential thrust of these stories becomes lost in an overgrown welter of comings and goings, plots and subplots, digressive adventures and misadventures, and seemingly aimless meanderings out of which the clearest and most sympathetic figures to emerge may just be Palomides the Saracen and Dinadan the satirist.

Malory may sometimes appear to be writing this long middle section in his sleep, but I believe he had a definite reason for recounting it as he did. Its seeming aimlessness and lack of clear construction may be seen as mirroring the disintegration of the goals and ideals of Arthur's court—or, perhaps, of their failure ever to take firm root. This section subconsciously re-enforces the impression that the Round Table experiment, however noble in conception, is a failure.

Because it is rotten at the core? I return to the fact that we don't know whether or not Arthur was ever sacramentally baptized, but have strong reasons to suspect not. This point may correctly strike our rational modern minds as inconsequen-



tial; the motives of the adult, in our enlightened opinion, must outweigh anything done or not done to the infant. But this is to ignore the absolutely essential place sacramental baptism played in medieval Christian thought (and still plays in much modern Christian thinking). Unbaptized is essentially unredeemed, and a king in this condition is a king essentially unable to produce lasting good. Arthur's tragedy is that, if he is unbaptized, he cannot know it. Nor, for that matter, can the reader: Malory has buried the point as subtly as any competent modern-day mystery writer ever buried any vital clue. But Malory does make a very great deal of getting Sir Palomides baptized, constantly repeating that no matter how worthy and noble a knight the Saracen may be, he must be baptized to be saved, so that the middle adventures might be called the story of getting Sir Palomides baptized, his friends holding their breaths lest he be killed before receiving the vital sacrament.

The quest of the Holy Grail (which is a search for personal spiritual enlightenment rather than a scavenger hunt for a holy artifact to bring back and put in some physical shrine) may be seen as the last chance of Arthur's court to get back on the right track before it is too late. These are very rich and wondrous adventures, all too seldom done anything like justice in modern treatments; but because the Round

Table itself is essentially beyond redemption by now, the Grail Quest, instead of reviving it, weakens it mortally. Only three of Arthur's knights actually achieve the enlightening vision of the Holy Grail, and two of them, Galahad and Percival, die in the fragrance of sanctity and never return to leaven the court. The third, Sir Bors, returns; but some of his subsequent actions may give us room to doubt how well his shamanistic experience "took." Of the others, many of the best knights die on the quest without achieving it, and many who return seem to come back worse than when they started, so that the last state of the court is worse than its first. Arthur himself seems never to undertake the Grail Quest at all. Perhaps his instinct for self-preservation is too strong.

The tragic and bloody climax of the Arthur-Guenevere-Lancelot triangle is too familiar to need much recapping, but I do want to make one point: the bittersweet vision of a grieving king, forced to condemn his erring wife in accord with the demands of Justice, sorrowfully doing it with such measures as may best facilitate her lover's rescuing her from the stake, appear to be a very recent gloss. Malory's Arthur seems only too eager to burn Guenevere.

Malory does make the point about Justice applying equally to high and low, but at the same time shows Gawaine (so often depicted in modern versions as a firebrand from the word go) trying to persuade Arthur to let Lancelot explain how innocent his presence in the queen's chamber really was and prove it by force of arms. Arthur replies that Lancelot is too able a fighter for them to believe the outcome of his trials by combat, and therefore Guenevere will have the law at once and Lancelot a shameful death if he can be caught. Malory's Arthur rushes the queen to execution with undue haste precisely to try to guard against her being rescued. The Vulgate version describes it even more as what we would call a kangaroo court. The old, fierce, unregenerate side of Arthur seems to have retaken the upper hand.

Ultimately, even the climax of the love triangle, although a grievous wound, is not the direct death blow to Arthur's rule. The Pope finally effects a truce and reconciliation; Arthur accepts Guenevere back as queen, and Lancelot is banished to his own land in France. Lancelot's followers go with him, halving what is still left of Arthur's court; but even from this we may conceive it might have recovered, if only to pass the high kingship on in peaceful succession. So Arthur deals himself the true *coup de grâce* by joining Gawain and pursuing Lancelot

over the Channel to avenge the deaths of Gawain's brothers Gareth and Gaheris, killed during the queen's rescue from the stake. In addition to seeking vengeance, or yielding to Gawain's thirst for it, Arthur makes the judgmental mistake of appointing Mordred his deputy. This suggests that Arthur might have planned on making Mordred his eventual heir; but either Mordred fears to take that chance, or proves too impatient to wait, or possibly cannot be named heir and permanent high king because of his bastardy (though that point does not prevent his calling a Parliament and getting himself crowned by producing premature news of Arthur's death). In any case, the unchristian thirst for revenge in spite of the biblical statements of God and earthly intervention of the Pope ought in any interpretation of Malory to get equal blame with the queen's guilty love affair for causing Arthur's downfall.

Yet the horrors of these last, prolonged, and in large measure senseless battles and deaths seem to purge Arthur once again, and finally. This is the meaning I find in his insistence that Sir Bedivere fling Excalibur away into the water. Too weak to do the task himself, Arthur is irrevocably rejecting Merlin's—the devil's son's and by extension the devil's—influence over his life and soul.

It is only when this is done that the barge appears with its three ladies to take him away to the isle of Avalon. For healing? But the chief lady fears that the wound on her brother's head has grown too cold, and Bedivere later finds the grave of a man who may be Arthur. Malory leaves some room for doubt, but adds the phrase: "I will say: here in this world [Arthur] changed his life." The ladies who brought ashore the body that might well have been Arthur's paid the former bishop of Canterbury, now the local hermit, to bury it in his chapel, and offer a hundred candles. Did they take Arthur across the water to Avalon in order to heal his soul at last with sacramental baptism?

If Merlin is Arthur's evil genius it does not, of course, obviously and necessarily follow that Morgan le Fay is a force for good. They may both be bad, as they both appear in Twain's *Connecticut Yankee*. On the other hand, Morgan is chief of the three ladies who come to take Arthur at the end, and who would seem to pay for his Christian burial. If she is another evil genius, are we not forced to conclude that she and her cohort murder Arthur after taking him away in that barge?

On the other hand, if she and her mother

and sisters fear that Arthur is Merlin's tool, possibly even (despite Uther's eventual paternity claim) engendered by a devil, would not this explain her attempts to assassinate him? If she knows Merlin and the original Lady of the Lake to have been wicked, and Excalibur in its scabbard to be their gift, might she not have the best of motives for trying to get rid of the sword and scabbard?

On the whole, it seems to me no more torturous to draw a good Morgan le Fay out of Malory and other medieval texts than so many writers have found it to draw a good Merlin out of the same. And, since dramatic balance is always the better for having both poles, I prefer to make Morgan the good one.

The above may be an uncommon theory, but I believe that the joy and strength of King Arthur as a mythical figure is that the "Matter of Britain" is amenable to different meanings and interpretations for different eras and individuals. In this respect, if in no other, the fictional Arthur may well be stronger than whatever historical figure may or may not lie beneath the myth.

At one time the Middle Ages seem to have read in Arthur's story a moral lesson against the sin of pride. Arthur's downfall was seen as the result of his war against Rome, which in those versions came later in the saga and supplied a reason for his crossing to the Continent and leaving Britain under Mordred's rule before Lancelot was introduced into the epic. Our age prefers the Tragic Triangle, but this moral has been emphasized long enough now that I suspect the 21st century will see its popularity supplanted by some new interpretation. (Probably not mine.)

To demonstrate that I am not so addicted to my own interpretation as to render me incapable of appreciating any other, I should like to go on record as heartily applauding John Boorman's film EXCALIBUR. It is one of the few modern treatments that dares tackle the Grail Quest head on, to take it seriously in all its glorious mysticism. Making Arthur himself the Maimed King is a stroke of pure genius that changes the Grail Quest into the court's real (if brief) salvation. This film also manages a deft explanation of how Excalibur might be both the Sword in the Stone and the gift of the Lady of the Lake. Unhappily, the version shown on commercial TV cuts the magnificent Grail sequence to virtually nothing, thereby omitting the best part of the film.\*

# Five Songs of Bragdon Wood

by Joe R. Christopher

In Bragdon bricht this ende dai  
Herde ich Merlin there he lai  
Singende woo and welawai.

—Fourteenth-century song

And there Merlin lies until the day of his awakening,  
when the Circle of Logres shall be formed once more in  
this island—but whether he rests in the magic Forest of  
Broceliande, or in the Isle of Bards in Cornwall Crag, or  
beneath the Wood of Bragdon, no one can tell until that  
day. —Roger Lancelyn Green (1953)

## *Triolet*

Neath Bragdon Wood great Merlin lies,  
    sleeping away the centuries;  
long hid from curious human eyes,  
neath Bragdon Wood great Merlin lies,  
and someday he'll awake, arise—  
    but, till that day uproots old trees,  
neath Bragdon Wood great Merlin lies,  
    sleeping away the centuries.

## *Rondeau Variant*

While Merlin sleeps in Roman stones,  
a chamber built that no one owns,  
    above the water seeping,  
    on stony pallet keeping,  
neath Bragdon Wood his power postpones.

On rocky bier he rests his bones,  
while kings are raised whom time dethrones—  
    the world is weary weeping,  
    while Merlin's sleeping.

No cries above bring him their tones,  
no war within his chamber groans,  
    no quarrels draw down their threaping,  
    down to his peaceful deeping—  
though placid rest no pain condones—  
    while Merlin's sleeping.

## *Villanelle*

When Vivien sang her song of old,  
    as Merlin slept enchanted sleep;  
when Nimue tuned her cwyth foretold—

who knows what secrets interfold  
    within those ancient stories deep,  
when Vivien sang her song of old?

Then Bragdon Wood was leafing gold,  
    as birds did carol or through it sweep—  
when Nimue tuned her cwyth foretold.

Like Eden lay all uncontrolled  
    the huge oak trees, before man's threap,  
When Vivien sang her song of old.

Was't woman's wiles which him cajoled  
    till Merlin slept within his keep,  
when Nimue tuned her cwyth foretold?

Or was it Merlin's plan to hold,  
    with hidden purpose slow to reap,  
when Vivien sang her song of old,  
when Ninue tuned her cwyth foretold?

[The substitution of Vivien and Nimue for each other in various versions of Merlin's enchantment and the other episodes in which she figures is an ancient confusion. In the "Merlin" continuation of the French *Vulgate Cycle* she is Viviane or Niniane; and in the *Suite du Merlin* of approximately the same period, she is Niviene or Viviane, depending on the manuscript. This seems to be a scribal misreading. By the time of Malory, Ninia(e)ne had become Nimue. Tennyson used Vivien; Matthew Arnold, in "Tristram and Iseult," refers to Vivian; but Malory's influence has kept the form alive.]



Margaret B. Simon

### *Pantoun*

The water flows in Merlin's Well,  
a Roman well of Roman stone;  
in Bragdon's center lies its spell,  
its secret there and there alone.

A Roman well of Roman stone,  
through centuries the works endure;  
its secret there and there alone,  
in time, in place, in water pure.

Through centuries the works endure—  
liquidity its measure links;  
in time, in place, in waters pure,  
the gnosis comes to him who drinks.

Liquidity its measure links—  
in Bragdon's center lies its spell;  
the gnosis comes to him who drinks—  
the water flows in Merlin's Well.

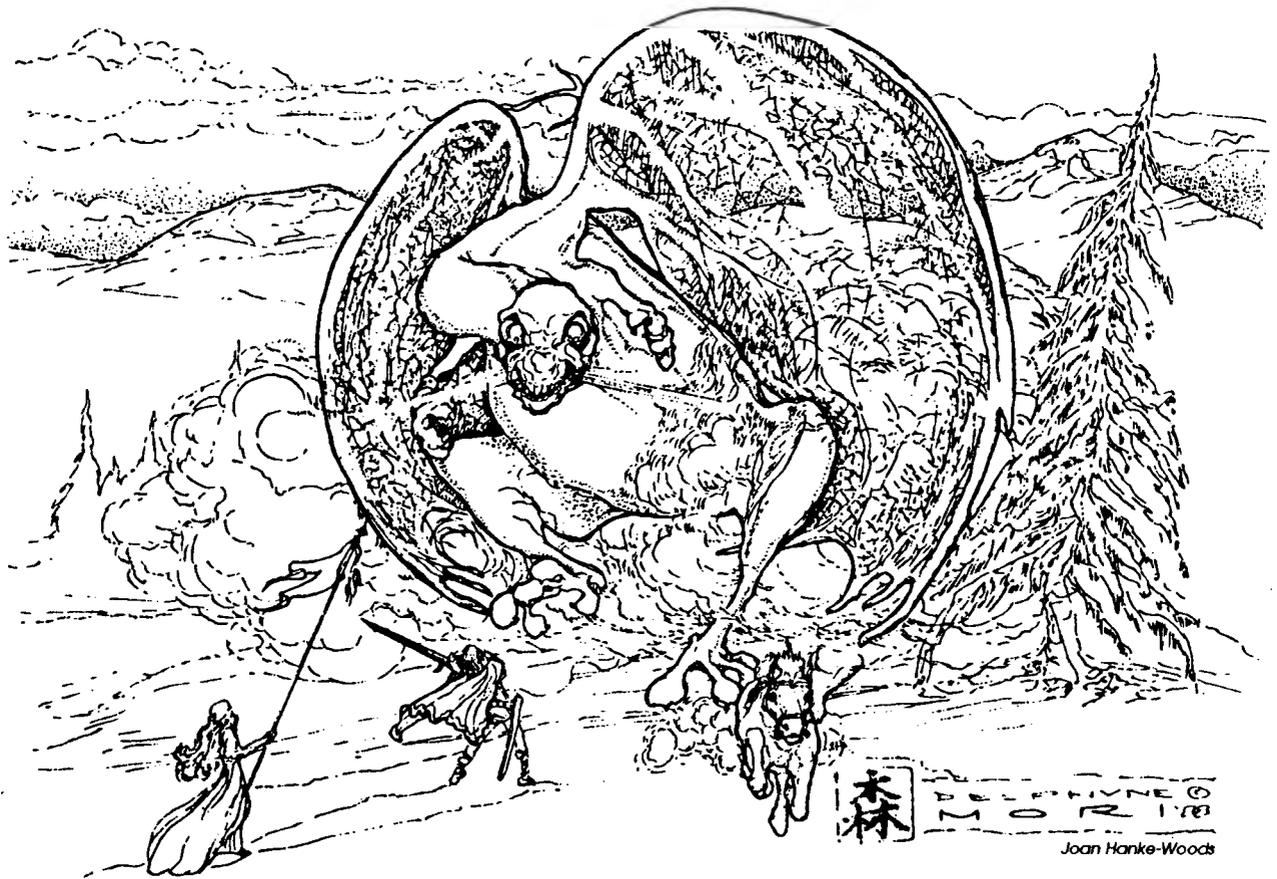
### *Ballade*

When Bracton College compassed round  
a small, green woodland, its freshest prize,  
the monks knew not where Merlin's found:  
neath Bragdon trees this Christian lies.  
In later days the scholars wise  
mistook a legend for a fake—  
a legend which still prophesies  
from Bragdon Wood will power wake.

Merlin was born of virgin bound  
to daemon for the world's demise  
(or so it's said), but doom was downed—  
neath Bragdon trees this Christian lies.  
No secret hid here mystifies:  
a parish priest ruled out outbreak—  
his means? but water to baptize .  
From Bragdon Wood will power wake.

The modern world no sacred ground  
admits, its truths to polarize;  
no holiness beneath a mound—  
neath Bragdon trees this Christian lies.  
"Renewable resource" applies  
to forests for a business' sake—  
no sacred truths this jeopardize.  
From Bragdon Wood will power wake.

Tourist, beware! these groves disguise  
a holy place which saints might shake:  
neath Bragdon trees this Christian lies,  
From Bragdon Wood will power wake.



# Ashes to Arthurs

by Ruth Berman

On Oct 28-29, 1986, Geoffrey Ashe gave talks on King Arthur at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Ashe is the author of several books about King Arthur and in the most recent, *The Discovery of King Arthur*, he argues convincingly that Arthur is not only likely to be of historical origin but can probably be identified with a specific individual, Riothamus, King of the Britons. He thinks it likely that Riothamus is also the otherwise unknown lord who has also been identified as the historical source of Arthur, re-fortifier of the hill fort which has been excavated at Cadbury.

The body of Ashe's first talk was a summary of his arguments in *The Discovery* plus slides, but the question and answer period that fol-

lowed led him into a variety of interesting comments on Arthurian topics.

Someone asked to what extent the Arthurian characters were euhemerized Celtic gods. Ashe said that some of them certainly were, such as Morgan le Fay who grew out of the Morrigan, and some most probably were not, such as Cei, Bedivere, or Mordred. Some scholars, such as Lord Raglan, have argued that King Arthur was a euhemerized god. Ashe disagrees, not only because of the archaeological evidence of Arthur's historical basis and his argument from period continental sources for Riothamus, but because the scholars who think he was an ex-god can't agree on which god he was, and because no record of Artorius as a god's name is

extant.

Ashe was queried about which Arthurian fiction he liked best. He said Rosemary Sutcliff's, and the second *The Hollow Hills* of Mary Stewart's Arthurian books. Both make excellent uses of historical sources. He commented that Marion Zimmer Bradley's version really aims at creating a new mythology, not at a recreation of a historical period. He doesn't like her version, or Parke Godwin's, preferring those that are more historical. He likes a work which is not out yet but is forthcoming from Poseidon Press, a book about Guenevere, *Child of the Northern Spring*.

Question: What gives the story of Arthur its appeal, so broad and so long-lasting? Ashe thought it was the longing for a long vanished golden age, the desire to believe that it once existed, and the hope for its return. Arthur is a shape-shifter, always changing to be whatever ideal is longed for.

Question: What is the basis for Merlin? Complicated, said Ashe. He went on to say that Geoffrey of Monmouth was fascinated by the figure of Merlin and wrote *The Prophecies of Merlin* before his long *History of the Kings of Britain* and he wrote a *Vita Merlini* later. There was a historical Welsh Merlin, a prophesying madman, at the end of the sixth century. Geoffrey of Monmouth dated his Merlin earlier, making him a boy at the time of King Vortigern, early fifth century. There was also a prophet Ambrosius in the time of Vortigern. Geoffrey of Monmouth conflated the two figures, saying that Merlin was also called Ambrosius, and made his Merlin the builder of Stonehenge, which would have had to have been a much earlier date. That element in his Merlin may have grown from an earlier legend of a god or hero who built Stonehenge. Nicolai Tolstoy has written *A Quest for Merlin*, recently published, on the historical background of the sixth century Merlin. Yes, he's related to that Tolstoy. No, he's not Russian. His branch of the family moved to England.

Question: What was armor in Arthur's time really like? Ashe said that there are no sources for that exact period, but there are sources from the Roman Empire shortly before, and from the Welsh kings shortly after. It was probably much lighter than the armor of the high medieval period, probably mail tunic, leather kilt, leather boots, long sword, and lance. It was not a foot-soldiery but a cavalry mounted on horses.

The day after Ashe's talk on the discovery of King Arthur there was a round table on the Round Table, an informal question and answer session with Ashe and a smaller

audience. Professor F.R.P. Akehurst from the French department on the Minneapolis campus and a professor whose name I did not catch from the Duluth campus introduced the session and began it by asking Ashe what interested him most in Arthur.

Ashe said that, considering the title of the gathering, and the circle we had moved the chairs into, it ought to be the Round Table. Think of the size it would have to be, he said, to accommodate so many knights. In T.H. White it's 150 feet across. The Winchester Round Table, a table identified as Arthur's in Tudor times, and still on display at the Winchester Cathedral, is about 18 feet across. Some writers have described the Round Table as ring shaped rather than strictly circular, and that adaptation would make it a little more plausible as a table where all of Arthur's company could sit without having the thing collapse of its own weight. However, he went on, his own strongest interest was in Glastonbury where he lives. In legend it is the site of the first British Christian community and was probably a pagan place of worship before becoming a Christian one. The big hill, the tor, near the abbey has odd markings on it and in legend the tor is hollow and leads to the underworld. Ashe began as an Arthurian writer by writing a book on Glastonbury, which of course had to have a section on Arthur, then a book on Arthurian Glastonbury. Then he got involved in the Cadbury excavations and started writing on Arthurian archeology in Britain in general. As a child he was fascinated by G. K. Chesterton's *Short History of England* and by the section in it on King Arthur and the Grail.

Ashe in turn asked what about Arthur interested us or first got us interested. I said Arthur in literature, especially in Malory. Another said the Roman and archaeological background, although it was Disney's version of THE SWORD IN THE STONE that got him started. Ashe commented that he liked White's novel *The Sword in the Stone* the best of all, especially because it is such an original book. Professor Akehurst said that he loves the Arthurian poems of the twelfth century French poet Chrétien de Troyes and also modern Arthurian stories. Indeed, he had read Twain's *Connecticut Yankee* for the first time only recently. Akehurst is from England and as a child he lived near the iron age hill fort at Badbury by Chisleton and he used to like to go there for walks. Local legend says that Badbury was Badon where one of Arthur's battles was fought. Ashe commented that some excavations

had been done at Badbury recently. It was re-fortified around the time of Arthur although not on the scale of Cadbury. No evidence of a big battle around the time of Arthur has been found there, however.

Ashe was asked to comment on Charles Williams' Arthurian poems which are very difficult to understand. Ashe said, "I find them impossible to understand." He added that Collingwood's theory of the historical background of Arthur in the *Oxford History of English Literature* was Williams' source for his assumption about Arthurian society. Arthur as the Comes Britanniarum, the Count of the British, the last inheritor of the Roman tradition, defending the last of the Roman empire with an army modeled on Roman cavalry.

Someone asked him to outline his theory, again, that Riothamus was Arthur and he quickly summarized his talk of the night before. He added that Jennifer Westwood, the author of *Albion*, has said that she thinks Arthur was historical because of the legend that he has never died. In all the other versions of the National Hero Sleeping Somewhere Or Other the character chosen as National Hero is a historical person.

Question: How does Riothamus fit with the Welsh traditions of Arthur. About as well as could be expected, said Ashe, but there is much material which is clearly legendary mixed in with the Welsh Arthurian stories, and these stories are not fully consistent with each other in any case, so it would be impossible for any theory to be consistent with all of them.

He was asked to comment on the connection between Arthur and the stone which had been found in Britain mentioning Vortigern. Ashe said that Vortigern is now generally considered historical, and, unlike Arthur, he is fairly easy to date as he is mentioned in connection with other dateable people, and the connections seem reliable. Nennius said Vortigern was king during the consulate of a certain Roman, and that would mean he was king around 525. The stone which has been found is near Llangollen in the Valley of the Cross. It is a memorial stone giving the ancestry of the local kings, tracing them back to Vortigern and his wife Serena, the daughter of Maximus. Although Serena does not appear in the written documents extant, this detail could be historically accurate, for Maximus did have daughters who became wards of the Emperor Theodosius after his death, and marrying important wards to local leaders was one common way of discharging the responsibility of the wardship. Other historical sources which

mention Vortigern are Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*.

Akehurst asked if Ashe had a theory as to why there is so little use of Merlin in Chrétien's poems. Ashe said that in Geoffrey of Monmouth Merlin drops out of the story shortly after the birth of Arthur. The Vulgate Roman cycle, which came later than Chrétien, developed Merlin as a major figure who stays active well into the story, although even then he is thought of as gone or dead by the latter part of Arthur's reign. Ashe thought that Chrétien probably had no tradition of Merlin as present during Arthur's reign and Chrétien's stories are of Arthur's knights, not of the coming of Arthur, and so Merlin would not be likely to figure in them.

Someone commented that the absence of Merlin in Chrétien may also be related to Chrétien's avoidance of supernatural incidents as major parts of his stories, and Ashe agreed.

Question: How widespread were beliefs concerning the Grail and Ashe said that questions about the Grail are almost unanswerable. We don't know where it comes from. The tenth century Welsh *Spoils of Annwn* seems to be the earliest extant version of a Grail, and there it is a magic cauldron, and not connected to Christianity. In Chrétien it is something or other, Chrétien does not say what, seen by Percival. The identification of the Grail as a cup or dish or chalice from Christ's last supper came later. The scholar Jessie Weston held the theory (used by T. S. Elliot for the mythology of "The Wasteland") that the Grail grew out of a pre-Christian fertility cult. Such motifs were widespread in Europe. In literature there are stories like the Grail stories from Ireland and Wales. In the extant sources the identification of the Grail as a cup, dish, chalice from the last supper is first found around the 1490's, and it is not known if it was so identified any earlier. Ashe said he considered it significant that when various claims to relics were being made (various churches claimed to have bits of the cross, bones and blood of assorted saints, and so on) no churches are known to have claimed to have the Grail. He thought it likely that its background was mainly pagan.

Akehurst asked him to comment on *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. Ashe said, "Well, it was a stupendous best-seller!" After the laughter died down he added that it was done as a TV series before the book came out and the series started interestingly but got madder and madder as it went on. The book supposes a Priory of Zion, a centuries old secret society somehow tied up with the

true (Merovingian) kings of France and protecting some kind of secret that would destroy Christianity by showing its origins to be false. The secret is that the Sant Greal (Holy Grail) is really the Sang Real (Royal Blood) and that the kings of France are descended from the union of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. "Absolute rubbish," said Ashe, by way of summary.

He was asked about the origins of the Grail. An article came out in a folklore journal recently which argued that the story of the Grail was influenced by the rituals of Sarmatian cavalry units. Ashe said that there are a lot of cranks in Arthurian scholarship but that the Sarmatian theory is interesting and possible. Dr. Helmut Nickel, curator of arms and armor at the Metropolitan Museum, is one who likes the Sarmatian theory. The theory is that auxiliary troops from Sarmatia in eastern Europe were stationed in Britain for a considerable time, historically documented, and there are Arthur-like legends told currently among a group of Caucasian people, including such details as a sword thrown into the water, a marvelous cup, and many great warriors. The Sarmatian troops were commanded at one time by a certain Lucius Artorius. Maybe Artorius became a title (somewhat in the way that Caesar became a title) passed on to other commanders of these troops, and maybe the Sarmatians' folk tales came to be told about the hero Artorius, and so came to be told by the British who heard them from the Sarmatians.

Continuing the Grail theme, someone remarked that it was odd that Joseph of Arimathea came to Britain. "It's a very curious story, that", Ashe agreed. He said it is not clear if Joseph is a Grail legend taken over by Glastonbury or a Glastonbury legend taken over by the Grail. Either way, the choice of Joseph, a minor New Testament character, is an odd one. Sts. Paul and Peter were supposed to have come to Britain in legends and either would have made a more impressive choice of religious hero for Glastonbury. There are no plausible theories to explain the choice. Old Glastonbury families are attached to the legend of Joseph. (They don't actually care that much about Arthur, who is by comparison a latecomer to Glastonbury.) It has been argued that the connection could have been historical. Joseph's wealth could have been in the tin trade, and if so he could have traveled to Britain regularly. Legend has it that he brought the young Jesus with him on a visit to Britain—hence Blake's line about, "And did those feet in ancient times" tread on England's shore.

By contrast the legend that Mary Magdalene came to Marseilles along with her siblings Lazarus and Martha has an obvious and plausible explanation as to the choice of the cast of characters. There is an old church around Marseilles with an inscription to someone named Lazarus, and probably someone thought it was the New Testament Lazarus, and extrapolated accordingly. But there is no such likely explanation for Joseph.

I asked Ashe to comment on William Henry Ireland's choice of Vortigern as the subject of his forged Shakespeare tragedy. Ashe said that Ireland must have thought that Shakespeare really ought to have to have written something about Arthur. He did just about all of English history, and Ireland may have thought that he should have done some more British history.

Question: What is the role of Brittany in the Arthurian stories. Ashe said it was very important. Twelfth century Breton minstrels told tales of Arthur and did much to popularize them. Geoffrey of Monmouth seems to have known a good deal about Brittany. (His Breton place names are usually accurate.) In legend Brittany was settled by colonies sent to Armorica (as it was earlier called) from Britain by Maximus, and there could be some historical truth to the legend. There could have been some small settlements made then, although the main settlements were later, in the sixth century.

Someone asked about the claim of Blackett and Wilson in their *Arthur and the Charter of the King* that they have found a historical Arthurian charter. "They're mad," said Ashe, and added that they do not write in a scholarly manner. For example, they are too vituperative. Moreover, the grave inscription they cite as a major part of their evidence is in bad Latin, and Ashe said that one would expect good Latin in that period. He thinks that the description is therefore probably not genuine.

Lastly he was asked what he thought of John Morris' *Age of Arthur* (1973). Ashe said it was a good book for its description of the period, its economy, agriculture, and so forth. He thought it was rather fanciful on Arthur himself (for example in supposing that Arthur might have been proclaimed Emperor of Britain). Morris made use of sources which were then and are still unpublished, and so it is hard to check Morris's use of them.

Time was up then, and the Round Table reluctantly dispersed. Ashe's command of both range and detail in question answering and his quiet humor made his talks fascinating.✻

# Other Voices

## POUL ANDERSON

My own use of Arthurian material has been slight. *Three Hearts and Three Lions* draws basically on the Carolingian Cycle but of course the Medieval romances interwove the two, and Morgan le Fay appears in my book. Arthur himself is seen to ride forth with his knights in the climax of *A Midsummer Tempest*. *The King of Ys*, Karen's and my four volume historical fantasy, takes place a couple of generations before the time usually assigned to Arthur, and there some foreshadowings. Among them is an apparition of the Morrigan (or Morrigan), the ancient Irish war goddess whom some authorities believe is the original of Morgan. However she was no beautiful witch queen but a hideous giantess.

## LLOYD ALEXANDER

My first Excalibur was a cane borrowed from a rheumatic uncle; my shield, a trash can lid. My armor was dazzling in its magnificence: Merlin had cast a spell on it, so it was invisible, which is the best kind. I had, at that time, acquired a cheap edition of *Tales of King Arthur* and had immediately and permanently become enchanted by its gallantry, honor, chivalry, nobility, and grace—especially when they were cutting off each other's heads or cleaving each other to the chin.

I never played at being King Arthur himself. That would have been unseemly arrogance. I did hope I might become a worthy companion. My dining room table was indeed round; and that was somehow encouraging.

Many decades later, I learned that in reality the Age of Chivalry was almost as brutal as our own. But that is beside the point. For I also learned that King Arthur was more than a collection of bright adventures, and that the essential Arthur is one of our profoundest mythologies, which means that it is one of our profoundest truths.

## JANE YOLEN

Quite simply I count the Arthurian mythos as the Greatest Story Ever Told. I came upon it early, around six or seven, as I read through an encyclopedia my parents had. Howard Pyle, T.H. White both fed my hunger for Camelot. (I did not enjoy Tennyson The volume my parents had was

illustrated and one of the illustrations—under a woman with her hand on her forehead—was labeled “The curse has come upon me cried the Lady of Shalott”, and I thought that it meant she had just gotten her period. Sort of broke the mood!

In college I majored in English and certainly could not have avoided Arthuriana if I had wanted to, but I wanted to so much that when I began writing my own Arthurian stories (*Merlin's Booke* and before that a children's novel called *The Acorn Quest*) I went back to Smith College, my *alma mater* and sat in on Vernon Harwood's Arthurian class. Got to read a lot of stuff I had forgotten—like the *Vita Merlini*.

Yes, there's ells of the stuff out there, both the canonical literature and the new. Some of the new will last and, like the Pyle and White, get co-opted into the canonical pile eventually. I'd like to think that *Merlin's Booke* or at least some of the stories in it, or the later stories like “A Meditation in Whitethorn Wood” (in Godwin's *Invitation to Camelot*) or “The Quiet Monk” (in ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE) will make it. Or perhaps the children's novel based on my story “The Dragon's Boy” which I'm in the process of writing for Harper & Row. But whether or not my stories last, I feel privileged to play in the fields and woods around Camelot.

## GENE WOLFE

I was in Arthur's country last summer—does that count? I could send you a photo of me in a ruined church in Glastonbury. Actually, my Arthurian book has yet to appear. It's *Castleview*, about a Lincoln-Mercury dealer entangled in the machinations of Morgan le Fay. I'll be starting the second draft in a few days, so give it a couple more years, please.

## ALGIS BUDRYS

It is my opinion that the fabled knights of the Round Table were a bunch of teen-age punks. They behaved exactly the way teen gangs do in obedience to adolescent hormone flows. They both enslaved and protected their debs. They performed various acts to impress the debs and to stake out their turf and establish the pecking order among themselves. They had colors which they defended. There is really no

difference between the behavior of the fabled knights of the Round Table and The Blackstone Rangers of Chicago.

## ANDRE NORTON

The one book I found in my research for my Arthur story which I considered was indeed a sharp change on the usual tale came from England. It is: *The Emperor Arthur* by Godfrey Turton (TW Allen).

It must be long out of print now but I found it highly interesting as Merlin is the villain and has a lot to do with getting rid of Arthur rather than helping him as he does in all the other accounts.

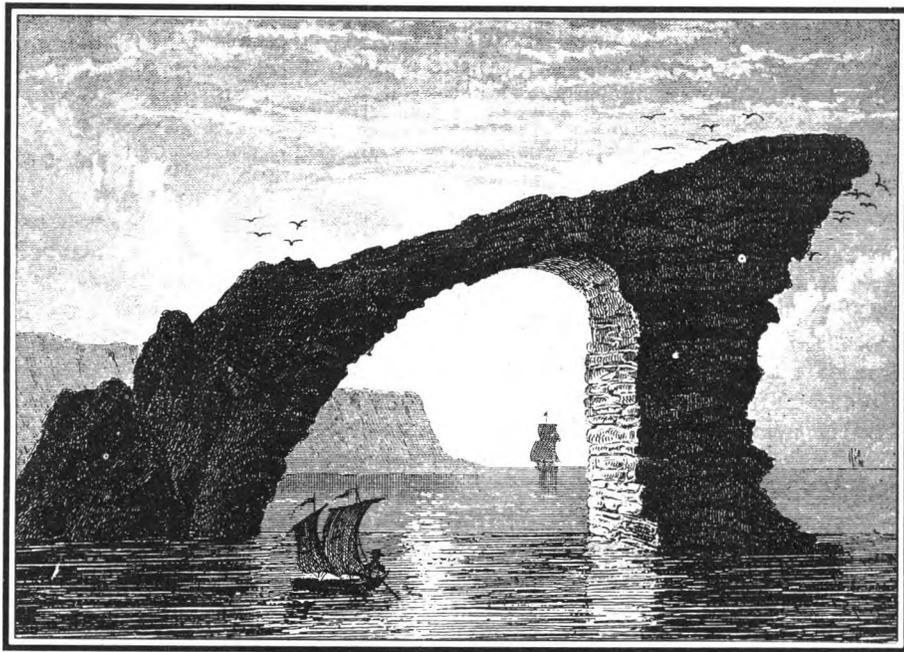
## PHYLLIS ANN KARR

Two curiosities for the Arthurian bookshelf:

*The Boy Knight; or, In the Court of King Arthur*, Samuel E. Lowe, author of *50 Famous Stories*, *The Story of Bunny Patch*, etc.

This may just be *arguably* the worst piece of Arthurian fiction ever published. At the very least, it is a juicy little golden turkey, delicious in its clumsiness. The author, who seems to regard “minx” as an exact synonym for “maiden,” sprinkles his text with such exquisite mock-Malorese as Sir Pellimore's [*sic*]: “As to with whom I quarrel is no concern of anyone but myself.” [*sic*] I have seen this work in more than one edition, including a deluxe, lavishly illustrated printing. My own copy, copyright 1922 by Whitman, I consider especially collectible for an introduction, signed by John Wiechers, which praises the novel for carrying its boy readers into early English history and giving them a correct idea of English habits and manners.

It may not be widely known that James Whitcomb Riley, author of such Hoosier-dialect classics as “Little Orphan Annie” and “The Raggedy Man,” penned at least one blank-verse “Idyl of the King” (not in Hoosier dialect, though with a few curious spellings). It appears in his collection *Armazindy* (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill, 1894), pp. 97-112, and possibly in other collections. This story of Raelus and the robber queen Alstanés appears to be largely Riley's own plot, though it may owe a small debt to the tale of Pelleas and Ettard. It has little other connection with Arthur than the monarch's name; the plot is a slight thing that goes nowhere or, at least, seems unfinished; and I cannot quite tell whether Riley meant it seriously or as parody. It is, nevertheless, a very pleasant Tennysonian pastiche, with here and there some really melodious lines.\*



# Do You Know the Way to Avalon?

Two new books on Arthurian legends shed more light on the mystery of Avalon but their theories ultimately perplex the casual investigator. Nevertheless, I offer them here for your perusal, if not approval. The first tome is Nikolai Tolstoy's *The Quest for Merlin*. This 1985 book (out of print the year it was published) is primarily a study of the legend of Merlin, King Arthur's famous magician. Tolstoy noted that Avalon was located either in the ocean in the west or in English territory, his preferred theory. About 1200 A.D. a French Burgundian poet named Robert de Boron wrote two epics on Merlin and the Holy Grail. In the latter, an account of Joseph of Arimathea's voyage to Britain, it was reported that the Grail was taken to the land in the West and the vales of Avaron. Tolstoy said that Avaron was an old form of the name Avalon. He then promptly asserted that Avalon was believed to be in the Somerset flats around Glastonbury. Unfortunately, he did not present any hard evidence; but it seems that he simply accepted the "localists" theory, placing a transmarine isle in a familiar site on dry land! This is his conclusion despite old bardic tales such as the one summarized on p. 253, which stated that Merlin accompanied the wounded Arthur in a *ship* to a paradisiacal island, the Island of Apples, as Avalon is called in English.

A second book on Dark Age Britain discusses the Avalon enigma in greater detail. Dr. Norma Lorre Goodrich's work, *King Arthur* argued that the Dark Age monarch was real and that he lived in c. 475–542 A.D. However, she claims that he ruled around Hadrian's Wall and Lowland Scotland instead of Somerset, Devon, and

*by Jon Singer*

Cornwall! She insisted that the geographical data fit the north rather than southern and southwestern England but I will let the experts debate that point. I myself am partial to the traditional location of Arthur's realm in southwestern England, which is where most historians and archaeologists have placed his activities, assuming that he really existed. I do agree with Dr. Goodrich's dates for the reign of King Arthur, though, as those do fit the evidence.

What does Goodrich have to say about Avalon? She devotes an entire chapter to the question. First she points out that Welsh, Old French, Middle English, and other medieval epics about Arthur usually stated that Avalon was an isle in the sea or ocean, which could only be reached by a long voyage in a ship. A prelate named William of Malmesbury, a contemporary of Geoffrey of Monmouth, was the official historian of Glastonbury Abbey and he attempted to identify Avalon with Glastonbury. Few dared to oppose his dogmatic conclusions, even to this day.

However, we have all those accounts of a vessel taking Arthur, Merlin, and others over the sea to Avalon. As I pointed out, the marsh which may have surrounded Glastonbury was not a sea! Goodrich found a list of nine other possible locations of Avalon, compiled by the Celtic folklore expert Sir John Rhys. These sites were isles or coastal areas of England and Wales, namely: Gower, Aberystwyth, Gresholm, Scilly Isles, Bardsey, Puffin Island, Man, Tory Island, and Anglesey. Goodrich eliminated most of the candidates for the following reasons: Gower was a peninsula of South Wales, not an island, while Aberystwyth was only an island at high tide. Gresholm and Bardsey were out of the running; although seagirt, they were rocky and infertile, unlike Avalon. Goodrich arbitrarily knocks the Scilly Isles out of the competition because she assumes that Arthur's realm was in Lowland Scotland, which was too far from the Scilly Isles. I should point out that the Scilly Isles may have been suggested as a location of Avalon because of equally famous legends of the lost land of Lyonesse which was supposed to have been near the Scillies, although Goodrich herself made no such identification. However, if Arthur's realm was in Southwest England, not Caledonia, then the Scilly Isles could be a good stop-over point on the way to Avalon.

To return to Goodrich's own theory, where, then, according to her view, was Avalon? She pinpoints two possible locations. Anglesey was the holy place of the

British druids, a sort of Pagan Vatican City. Many Celtic pagan and earlier megalithic ruins can be found there. Man was one of the sacred sites of the Irish sea god Manannan. One of his supernatural palaces was supposedly there. One legend stated that King Arthur went there once and killed the brother of the famous historian, St. Gildas. Goodrich dismissed Anglesey because it was low-lying and always well known, where Avalon was a "disappearing" island in a remote place.

Like me, Goodrich dismisses the Avalon-is-Glastonbury theory and she locates it in the midst of the sea. But she remains a bit too conservative and cannot bring herself to situate it at a truly distant locale across the ocean. For Goodrich, the Isle of Man seems to be good enough. While it fits, she thinks, old literary descriptions of a seagirt island, it is still very near to the English mainland and the Scottish Lowlands. She claims that medieval epics about the Holy Grail fit locales on the Isle of Man, and that the Castle of the Grail, where the sacred chalice was hidden, was on Man. She concludes that the Castle of the Grail was in Avalon. She then equates both with that supposedly mythical isle, which therefore becomes a real place which any tourist could visit in modern times without the aid of supernatural boats. Unfortunately, her sources are medieval epics which have a relatively late date of around 1100–1200 when Arthurian romances in Old French and other western European languages became "best sellers." Despite impressive scholarship, the written sources seem to be very late, as King Arthur lived around 500 A.D. and text in the thirteenth century may not be all that reliable. Yes, Man is an island in the midst of the sea, in this case the Irish Sea, and it is surrounded by mist or storms on many occasions. It was also, and still is, associated with many pagan Celtic myths.

But Avalon was still remote, so remote that it had magical palaces the likes of which Man never had. The fantastic splendor of Avalon's palaces and capital city did not match the medieval or Dark Age buildings on Man; even if the kings and chiefs had castles, cities, and treasures, their wealth did not match the supernatural glories of remote Avalon. Also, even if Man were remoter than Anglesey or at any rate, harder to reach, it was still too near and too well known. I beg to differ with Goodrich on this point and I still agree with those Celtic folklore researchers who equate Avalon with the older oversea isles of the British Elysium. It is interesting, indeed fascinating, to learn that Goodrich con-

cludes that St. Brendan actually reached the New World in the Dark Ages, via the Stepping Stone Route (up to the Scottish isles, thence to Iceland, Greenland, and down to Canadian waters, or by a southern route to the Azores, Madeira, and across to the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico or southeastern U.S. waters). If she is willing to admit that St. Brendan actually reached America, then why could not America be Avalon? But she is unwilling to sail so far into the Sea of Darkness.

Another researcher who concludes that Avalon is somewhere in America is James Bailey. In *The God-Kings and the Titans*, Bailey compares ancient Old World ruins and artifacts to those in the New World and claims that ancient civilizations had reached our shores long before the Vikings. He studies Celtic myths, although very briefly as he is mainly interested in the ancient Mediterranean cultures. He decides that the Celtic legends of lands beyond the Atlantic may be traditions of Celtic discoveries of portions of the pre-Columbian America. For example, Bran, brother of the sea god Mannanan, an Irish deity, went over the sea to America; and the Irish prehistoric legendary tribe of the Tuatha De Danaan also fled there after another tribe, the Milesians, defeated them in battle around 2600 B.C. And Bailey suggests that the Welsh country of Avalon was not in Glastonbury's environs but somewhere in ancient America. There are Indian legends of white gods who sailed over from the east, such as the famous Aztec tale of Quetzalcoatl.

Incidentally, Bailey wrote before Barry Fell popularized research on supposed Celtic inscriptions in America. There does appear to be evidence for ancient Irish voyages; but so far I do not know of hard archaeological evidence for Welsh Celtic voyagers to ancient America. Davies' work on fifteenth-century maps and the career of John Scolvus is our best modern evidence for *Welsh voyagers*. But it is interesting that there are other investigators who are willing to suggest that Avalon was indeed somewhere in the Americas.

Perhaps other researchers will indeed find other clues to Avalon on American shores.

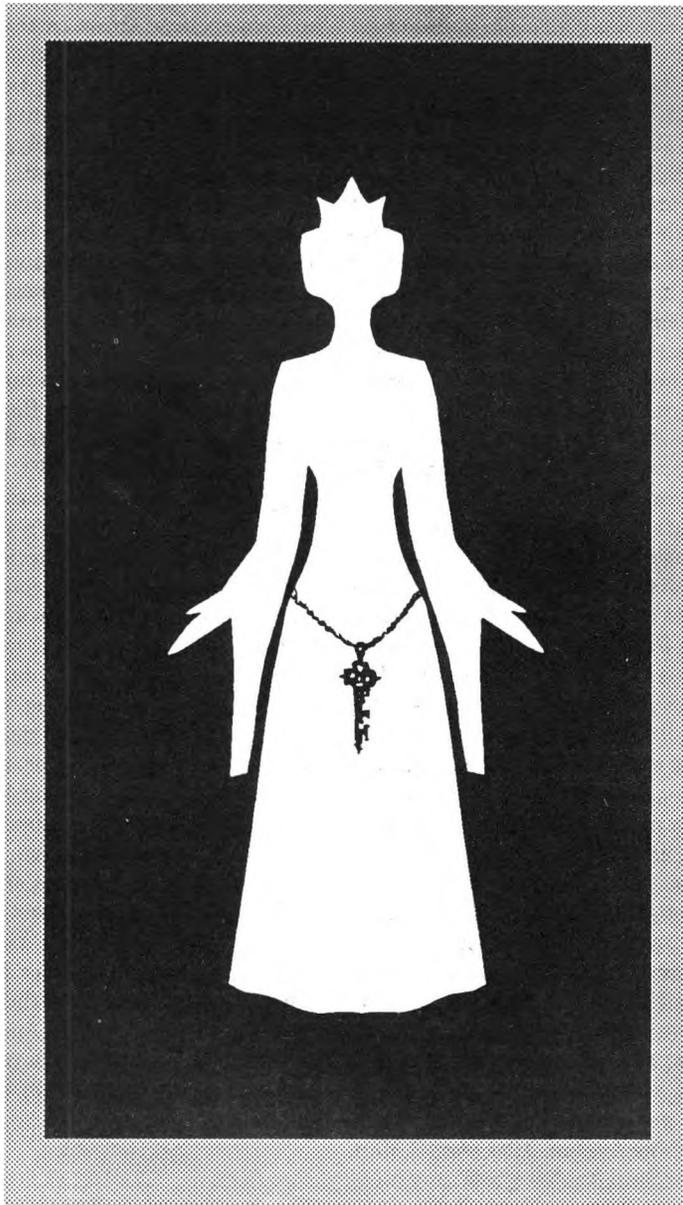
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# White Phantom



Margaret B. Simon

by Alexei Kondratiev

Of all the many vividly expressed archetypes that populate the Arthurian mythos and contribute to its continuing fascination for the modern reader, the one figure that stands at the centre where all the paths of the story meet is not Arthur the messianic Sacred King who acts to realize his vision, not even Merlin the eternal sage who is the master-mind behind the vision, but Guinevere, the Queen. Only through her willing participation can every facet of the vision be realized. It is to her that the Knights of the Round Table bring tribute or accounts of their exploits. It is her childlessness that (in the classic version of the mythos) prevents Arthur from founding a dynasty and perpetuating his vision through time. And it is, of course, her adulterous love for another knight that provokes the disintegration of the vision.

This ambiguous role of spiritual cynosure and irresponsible wanton she seems to play in the story has troubled Arthurian writers down the ages, and led to many variations in the portrayal of her character. While the Mediaeval writers who elaborated the Arthurian canon tended to give her role as Queen a paramount importance, with an inherent dignity irreducible by circumstances (even where they condemned her in some measure), the Victorians who re-discovered the mythos were more sensitive to the moral and psychological overtones of her predicament. Seeing her no longer as an archetype in a myth but as an individualized character in a novel, they asked questions about her personal motivations; they began to wonder whether, in the light of their own moral system, she should be excused or condemned. Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites, full of gallantry towards the "weaker sex", saw her as an ambiguous victim, wrong in her choices but essentially sympathetic. By contrast, in Ernest Chausson's opera *Le roi Artus* the tone of moral condemnation is clear: Guinevere, seeing the disaster she has caused, and alienated even from the remorseful Lancelot, commits suicide in a fit of despair.

And modern writers, for all their better knowledge of the sources of the mythos and their more sophisticated attitudes towards personal psychology, have come no closer to a consensus on Guinevere's true nature. T.H. White's Guinevere is a likable heroine, a deprived child who grows up with great inner potential but insufficient experience, and makes the best of her wrong choice with the help of an essentially cooperative Arthur. Rosemary Sutcliff's Guenumara is a strong, manipulative woman. Parke Godwin's Guinevere in *Fire-*

lord and *Beloved Exile* is also a feisty and self-contained character, struggling to survive in a situation of constant peril. But Marion Zimmer Bradley gives us a completely different interpretation in *The Mists of Avalon*: there, Guinevere is a bloodless wimp, whose weakness is the undoing of the kingdom.

The entire Matter of Britain was, of course, imported into the mainstream European literary tradition from a culture that was in many respects quite alien, and some elements in the mythos would, at a variety of levels, have been opaque to the Continental poets who first adopted it. The Celtic way of thinking about the relationship between humanity and the universe, culture and nature, man and woman, while it still haunts the more archaic strata of European civilization, differs sharply from the world-view of the feudal High Middle Ages. So there was, before the familiar Guinevere of the Romances, a Celtic Guinevere. Because of the dearth of mythological texts in Brythonic languages, we have to piece her together from scattered evidence, but hers is such a powerful image that it is easily discovered. I offer here some personal ruminations—not too disjointed, I hope—on the role of that image in its original Celtic context, and on the problems of interpretation that have arisen as the image migrated into a very different cultural tradition.

Our first clue is Guinevere's own name—in the original Welsh, *Gwenhwyfar*, which can be interpreted as Old Celtic \**Uinda-seibara* “white phantom” or “white apparition”, the second element having an Irish cognate *siabhra* meaning “ghost”, “apparition”, “fairy”. Thus Guinevere is conceived as having some essential link with the Otherworld, that vast, timeless realm of potential being in which our own world has its origin and its meaning. Her role as Queen is archetypal in more than a literary sense: it is the manifestation of an Otherworldly principle that operates directly in human life. She is an “apparition” because she embodies, for earthly eyes, the goddess who is the personification of that principle. And that goddess, the sovereignty-goddess of the Land, is a familiar figure to all students of Celtic lore.

Perhaps we should pause briefly to give an outline of the symbolic system in which that goddess figure operated. For the traditional Celts, no phenomenon was merely an object, external to and not participating in the subject. All things were part of the continuum of consciousness that proceeded from the Otherworld, and that contained—but was not limited to—human conscious-

ness. So the Land—the physical environment of human experience—was not an inert materiality that could be owned and exploited, but an aware, living entity that set its own rules and could grant or withhold favours in response to human activities and attitudes. In the context of this subjective relationship with her human settlers she was personified as a goddess—in fact, *the Goddess*. She had a masculine consort who was associated with mental and cultural phenomena and could thus take on a multitude of forms related to a variety of functions and roles, and who represented the structure of the human tribe (there are many more ramifications to the symbolism of the God/Goddess pair, but we need not go into them here). Thus the relationship between Tribe and Land was patterned after the relationship between God and Goddess. The leader of the human community could, by becoming identified with the God, enter into a marriage with the Goddess, after which the rest of the tribe, his kin, would be kin to the Land and have the right to settle on her. This was the meaning of the Sacred Kingship, and of the “sovereignty” the Goddess granted, which was not a mere legal guarantee of political authority, but something more like a psychic substance, a power that flowed out of the Otherworld to fill a human vessel.

A famous illustration of this concept can be found in the early Mediaeval Irish text called *Baile in Scáil* (usually translated as “The Frenzy of the Phantom”, but more accurately “The Trance of the Phantom”)(1). It concerns the supernatural event through which Conn of the Hundred Battles, a legendary and exemplary High King of Ireland in pre-Christian times, acceded to the Sacred Kingship. In a trance-vision (perhaps as part of a ritual) Conn beholds the ghostly figure of a giant man appearing out of the mist that hides his druids and nobles from his view. This apparition is an ancestor, probably a former High King, constituting a pre-existing link between Conn and the High Kingship. Conn follows the phantom to what seems to be an ancient sacred enclosure near a golden tree (the world-tree, which creates “sacred space” by allowing simultaneous access to many world-levels) where the Goddess of the Land awaits him, seated in a crystal chair. With her is Lúgh, the “Many-Gifted One”, who is the all-purpose God, above all merely functional deities. The Goddess possesses a vessel filled with “sovereignty” (*flaith*), from which Conn is given to drink in a golden cup (evidently a wedding-cup). The liquid is intoxicating and bright red

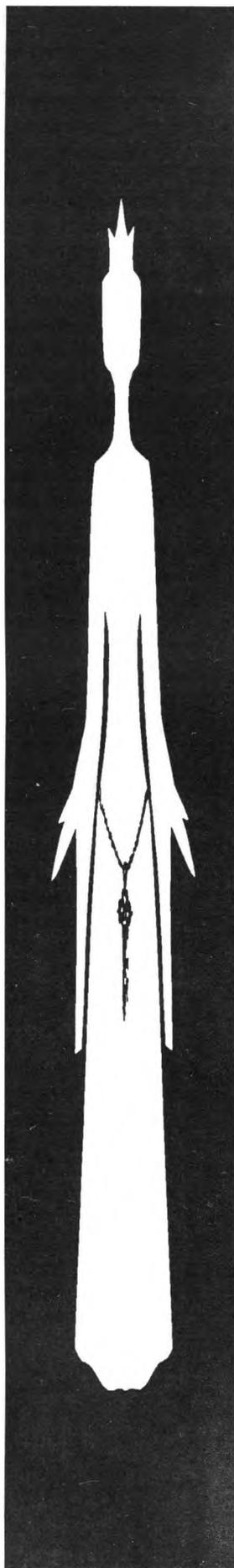
(the colour of the nobility and kingship, but also of the point of exchange between our world and the Otherworld). After the divine/human marriage has been consummated by the transmission of *flaith*, Lúgh—the High King's eternal archetype in the Otherworld—recites the names of those of Conn's descendants who will, in due time, achieve the High Kingship themselves. A druid inscribes the names in ogham letters on staves of yew, which remain with Conn—together with the vessel in which the *flaith* had been stored—after his awakening from trance, as tangible evidence of his experience. Although the story's title is usually taken to refer to the first figure Conn encounters, the term *scáil* (“shadow”, “phantom”, “apparition”) can apply with equal appropriateness to the ancestral ghost, the sovereignty-goddess, or Lúgh: all three are manifestations of Otherworld power that are necessary in investing Conn with his sacred role.

It is clear, from the general tenor of Arthurian stories, that Arthur was conceived as a High King in those terms. Originally a *dux bellorum* or leader of a warrior-band (or, one can suppose, his historical prototype was) who, in his battle to rid Britain of the English, became a messianic redeemer-hero, he was propelled to the High Kingship by the popular imagination as the only proper way of “grounding” the spiritual power he represented. If Arthur had indeed been a High King who had received sovereignty from the Land herself, then his ethnic kin—the British Celts—had an abiding sacred “right” to live on the Land, a kinship with the physical and spiritual reality of Britain that the English could never share. Thus it became important that, whatever inescapably tragic overtones the story of Arthur possessed in tradition, it should conform to the pattern associated with the High Kingship. And Guinevere, the “white phantom” who is Arthur's link to sovereignty, was an essential element in that pattern.

Guinevere has an often-mentioned Irish counterpart, *Fionnabhair* (*Findabair* in its Middle Irish form), whose name is not a perfect cognate of Guinevere's, but may well be related. *Fionnabhair* is the daughter of Ailill and Meidhbh, the famous King and Queen of Connaught who appear in stories of the Ulster Cycle, and, though she is mentioned in a number of stories and poems, is mainly associated with the career of the hero Fraoch (earlier Fraech). The fullest version of this particular tale is to be found in the Mediaeval text *Táin Bó Fraích*,(2) where it has a happy ending (later folk versions tend to make it into a

tragic story). Despite Fraoch's beauty, valour and wealth, Ailill and Meidhbh refuse to let him marry Fionnabhair, who (like her mother Meidhbh, at another level) is a personification of sovereignty and cannot be won without a test. The ordeal that is set before Fraoch is to swim across a lake to an Otherworld island and bring back some magic rowan-berries (red, like the *flaith* in the story of Conn) that are guarded by a dragon. Fraoch succeeds in this task with the active assistance of Fionnabhair herself. For it is a basic rule in such stories that the Goddess can only be won with her own consent. In the First Branch of the Mabinogi, Pwyll can overtake Rhiannon only after he has courteously asked for her cooperation; later, it is her advice that allows him to overcome the obstacles set in his path.

Gwenhwyfar is constantly referred to in Welsh tradition as the daughter of Gogfran (or Ogfran) Gawr. The second element in her father's name means "giant"; and though it could merely reflect a human warrior's tall stature, one should bear in mind that characters in Welsh narrative whose names contain the elements *cawr* 'giant' or *corr* 'dwarf' usually have some Otherworld connections. Gogfran Gawr could thus very well have been an example of the retentive earth-giant father-figure who, in many branches of Celtic mythology, stands in the way of those who seek the Goddess: for example, Ysbaddaden Pencawr, the Hawthorn Giant, father of the summer-goddess Olwen, and Rhiannon's father, Hefeydd Hen. The "Elfin Knight"-type tasks—seemingly impossible, but achieved with the help of supernatural advice or supernatural assistants—that are always assigned to the hero-suitor in this tradition



may have once formed a part of Arthur's exploits. Certainly, even in late Arthurian literature, his marriage to Guinevere takes place in a context of violence and struggle, and can be seen as a reward for victory.

Once established, the High King's marriage to the Land is by no means secure. First, its Otherworld-connected aspect must be fixed and maintained through ritual. Horses, in the symbolic language of the Celts, meant sovereignty—quite appropriately, since cavalry had been the main instrument of Celtic expansion in ancient Europe—and the God of the Tribe was visualized as a stallion for whom the sovereignty-goddess of the Land took on the shape of a mare, leading to a range of kingship rituals involving horses, and to depictions of the Goddess that, even when she is fully anthropomorphic, retain some equine features (as in the case of Rhiannon). Second, the appearance and behaviour of the King should always be such as to provide a credible image of the God. If he suffers a disfigurement, or behaves in an unseemly fashion (e.g., by exhibiting cruelty, or cowardice, or stinginess), he ceases to be worthy of the Goddess's favour and the tribe's marriage with the Land is disrupted. The same, it appears, goes for the Queen: the King's human consort must display some of the ideal qualities of his Otherworldly consort, or his Kingship is in jeopardy. Conn himself, the paragon of Irish High Kings, suffered an eclipse in his glory when he married the treacherous Bécuma, who was clearly not a fitting mirror for the sovereignty-goddess (3). Is not this, judging by the Mediaeval romances, the fate of Guinevere? Is not her betrayal, through adultery, of

an otherwise suitable King the cause of Britain's downfall? Certainly even Welsh-speaking storytellers occasionally thought of her in that way(4); but her situation—and Arthur's—is far more complex, and there is another important element in it that we have yet to examine.

We must remember that, in *Baile in Scáil*, Conn's accession to the High Kingship involves a trio of characters: the mortal king, the Goddess, and Lúgh, the God who is the king's immortal archetype, and eternally the consort of the Goddess in the Otherworld. In Conn's case the attachment of the Goddess to a mortal consort takes place in an orderly and peaceful fashion, with the God playing a cooperative role. But this is not the usual pattern in Celtic tradition: more often, we see a tension between the mortal and immortal consorts. The Goddess, however sincere her love for her mortal suitor, remains understandably attracted to the perfection of the Otherworld; and it takes a considerable show of valour or guile on the mortal hero's part to win her back for himself alone.

The most famous and elaborate representation of this theme is to be found in the Irish story *Tochmarc Étaíne* ("The Wooing of Étaín")(5), where it is told, startlingly, not from the mortal hero's point of view, but from that of the Otherworld pair. The goddess Étaín (modern spelling: Éadaoin) is loved by the god Mider (modern spelling: Mír; he appears to be the same as the Celtic god *Medros* known from epigraphy, though not all scholars concur on this), whose jealous wife transforms her into a puddle of water. From the puddle Étaín emerges as a beautiful insect which, after many adventures, is incarnated as a mortal woman of surpassing beauty. She weds the High King of Ireland, Eochaid Airem, and thus comes to represent his marriage to the sovereignty-goddess. But Mider has tracked down his eternal love and woos her even in her mortal state, though she has no recollection of him. Assuming a variety of disguises he wins his way into Étaín's household and manages to trick the jealous Eochaid into granting him a moment alone with the queen. Then, under the spell of Mider's embrace and of the song he sings to her, Étaín remembers her original identity and her Otherworld love, and abandons her ties to the human world. Despite Eochaid's attempts to stop them, the lovers put off their human appearance and fly away in the shape of swans. This is obviously meant to be a happy ending: although we are told that the bereaved Eochaid mounts an attack on the fairy-

forts in revenge, it is not a deed for which he is praised. In fact, it earns him the curse that will eventually destroy his descendant, Conaire Mór.

But, as we have said, such a treatment of the theme is unique. More often the storyteller's sympathy lies with the mortal spouse of the Goddess, and the narrative focuses on his successful confrontation with his supernatural rival. The middle episode of the First Branch of the Mabinogi presents us with a typical pattern. Pwyll, the mortal prince of Dyfed, has been chosen by the sovereignty-goddess Rhiannon for her consort, although her kin intend her for Gwawl ("Radiance"), an Otherworld personage who is clearly a Mider-figure. When Pwyll and Rhiannon are married Gwawl regains her for himself through a trick similar to the one Mider plays on Eochaid (in both cases, an appeal to the mortal ruler's generosity, i.e., one of the traits that actually make him most "Godlike" and fit for the Kingship!). But Pwyll, following Rhiannon's advice, journeys to Gwawl's court in disguise and bests his rival in an interchange that accents Gwawl's *lack* of generosity, and thus compares him unfavourably with his mortal counterpart. One can see how, despite the Mediaeval idiom which suggests that the woman is passively "given" by one man to the other, it is in fact the Goddess's will that determines her choices, although she responds to specific initiatives her suitors take. She is drawn to her immortal lover's glamour, but above all to her mortal lover's loyalty, courage, and generosity.

There is plenty of evidence that, in its original Celtic context, the story of Arthur and Guinevere contained an episode of precisely this type. No full narrative of it has survived, but the many allusions to it in Welsh poetry—and the well-established mythological pattern it seems to follow—allow us to reconstruct it with fair completeness. Judging by the famous scene on the archivolt of Modena Cathedral, it was an essential element of the Arthurian mythos at the time it first reached non-Celtic audiences. In this tradition Arthur's rival is called Melwas (< Old Celtic \**Mag(a)lo-uassos*, 'great (or 'princely') lad'; *Maelwas* would be the expected form in Welsh; *Melwas* is the Cornish form, implying that the story migrated to Wales from Cornwall), corresponding to the character Meleagant in Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, and to Sir Meliagrance (who abducts Guinevere when she is out "amaying") in Malory. Melwas lives in Glas-tonbury, and so may be related to the figure of Gwyn ap Nudd, the fairy lord

whose stronghold lies under the Tor(6). Out of love for Gwenhwyfar, he climbs up a tree to her window, and the two elope together to his "glass castle" of difficult access. Arthur then goes to reclaim his wife, but there seem to have been two different versions of how he went about it. In the first (and probably the more widespread), he mounts a full military expedition into his rival's territory. This is almost certainly what is alluded to in the mysterious poem *Pryddeu Annwn* ("The Spoils of the Otherworld")(7), which has Arthur engaged in a perilous adventure in which all but seven of his companions perish, but from which he brings back an extraordinary cauldron, implying that he was won back the favour of the sovereignty-goddess (cf. the vessel of *flaith* in *Baile in Scáil*). This version is, one could say, the *Toch-marc Étaíne* seen from the opposite point of view.

There seems to have been another version, however, that corresponded exactly to the tale of Pwyll and Rhiannon. In a fragmentary sixteenth-century *Ymddiddan Arthur a Gwenhwyfar* ("Conversation of Arthur and Guinevere")(8) Melwas and Gwenhwyfar (riding a *green* horse!) are visited by Cei and by an unidentified, unprepossessing stranger who appears to be Arthur in disguise, come to reclaim his wife in the same way Pwyll reclaimed Rhiannon from Gwawl. Gwenhwyfar's remarks make it clear that she is with Melwas of her own free will. And although her return to Arthur may well be the result of Arthur's guile and bravery, it will not come about without her personal consent.

Thus the High King's consort, in so far as she represents the Goddess, enjoys a definite autonomy in bestowing her favour to anyone she deems worthy of it. In pre-Christian times this would certainly have included sexual favours. We get a mythological echo of this in the figure of Queen Meidhbh, who grants all heroes the "hospitality of her thighs", and a historical echo in the classical account of the wife of Argemone, who boasted that Celtic women lay openly with the best of men, whereas Roman women had secret affairs with the most depraved. Guinevere's long list of lovers—which, in early tradition, includes Gawaine, Bedivere, and Edeyrn—probably reflects such practices and would not, originally, have been conceived of as "adultery". It contributed to Guinevere's image as a wanton in some Mediaeval writings, such as her portrayal as an unsavoury "Potiphar's wife" figure in Marie de France's *Lanval*. But the tradition that she had one special lover—the character who

crystallized as Lancelot in the later Arthurian canon—who represented a radical shift of her allegiance away from Arthur doubtless points to another theme in the mythology.

Figures like Melwas, Gwawl, Mider—and their counterparts Aonghus Og, Mabon, Hafgan, etc.—belong to an archetype in Celtic mythology that could be called the "eternal challenger". We have so far seen this figure operating within the mortal/immortal, this-world/Otherworld polarity, challenging the tribe's temporal king to prove that he is worthy of the Goddess and of the sovereignty she dispenses. But the challenge is also seen in cyclic terms, as part of the necessary process of change in the universe. The "eternal challenger" is usually associated with the start of a new cycle, the return of summer, the "light half" of the Celtic year—a trait highlighted by his various names, which nearly always refer to light or youth or growth. On a purely mythological level the theme can be read as the perpetual alternation of the winter-god and the summer-god, the young challenger being eventually defeated with the end of the Celtic year and the beginning of its "dark half" in November, but rising again with the return of spring. The Goddess, representing the unchanging sovereignty of the Land, remains but transfers her allegiance from one form of the God to the other. Yet as with all aspects of the mythology the situation can be transposed into the context of human society. In that context, it can be seen to represent the displacement of the King (who is playing the role of the God) by his successor (who is also assuming the divine role), especially if the successor has come to seem more fit for the position than the King. And since the King's mortal consort does also ritually correspond to her immortal counterpart, the sovereignty-goddess, she could very well follow the mythic pattern herself and dramatize the change in the tribe's rulership by transferring her favours to her spouse's successor.

The fact that Gawain, Arthur's nephew, plays the role of Guinevere's lover in the earlier literature (before the full elaboration of Lancelot's character) is surely significant here, but I would like to draw our attention to the more problematic figure of Mordred. We have been conditioned by virtually the entire tradition of Arthurian writing since the fifteenth century—from Malory to Tennyson to Charles Williams to T.H. White, with the interesting exception of Mary Stewart—to see Mordred as an archetypal villain, who could not possibly

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# The Man in the Mirror --- MILLOL

by Joseph T. Major

The Matter of Arthur has *no* content.

Needless to say, such a sweeping assertion is going to need some sweeping proof. To do so we must first look at the history of the Matter. I am indebted to *Fantasy War-gaming* by Bruce Gallaway *et al* for an explication of the dim pre-Malory period.

The Matter of Arthur began in the sixth century AD, when a Romanized Celt war leader became the center of resistance to the invading Saxons, most likely because of his possession of a following of cavalry—armored men on horseback. It was about this same time that the Roman army in the east finished its transition to similar models. Artorius (the most likely form of his name; I have seen it given as Artos which is similar to Arctos, the constellation of the Bear in Latin) apparently maintained the independence of the sub-Roman British for some twenty years before falling prey to political rivalries. This suggests that he may not have been a ruler himself, but perhaps only the leader of a *comitatus*, armed followers, of horsemen. See Machiavelli, particularly chapter xii of *The Prince*, for the progress of relationships between the rulers and the mercenaries.

You will note the rather large number of “likely” and “suggests” and other words implying tentativeness. There is little

enough that is definite about that period, and any theory which attempts to explicate that time will depend heavily on interpretation and other potential sources of argument.

In the period after that, the Matter of Arthur became the property of those Romo-Britons who were not under the rule of the Saxons. As they became specifically “Welsh” instead of just “British”, so did the Matter. Arthur acquired much of his supporting cast, though not Lancelot, who had to wait until the Matter crossed the Channel. Not too surprisingly, Queen Gwenhwyfar/Guinevere/Jenny/Wander was not then adulterous. Note this point, for it will be more relevant later.

As travel revived, the Matter of Arthur spread to the continent by way of Brittany. Not too surprisingly, it acquired there a French supporting cast, including the knight mentioned in the last paragraph and all his retinue. As it became more cosmopolitan, other legends were assimilated into it. Thus we have the Italian *Orlando Furioso*, to take one example.

Then came printing, and the cast was complete. For the moment we will let lie the long progression from Malory to today, and go back to the *content* of the Matter of Arthur.

As has been said, the original Matter of

Arthur was about a Romano-British hero who defeated the Saxons. What became said of him after his fall was that he had actually gone into hiding and would return some day and drive out the Saxons, thus restoring the original state of things. Note: this means that we would have Romanized Britons practicing Christianity.

The Welsh Arthur acquired much of the impedimenta of other Welsh legend, such as the charming proliferation of venomous animals, large furious giants, and the like. Indeed, as we see in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain*, Arthur became the idealized Welsh hero-king. Thus Geoffrey writes in gory detail of how Arthur and his knights waged war over all Britain and Europe, attended by much slaughter and damnation. Indeed, on reading the description of the battle between Arthur and the emperor Lucius (reprinted in Max Hastings’s *Oxford Book of Military Anecdotes*) I was struck by how it seemed that every Roman knight who was ever overthrown by one of Arthur’s knights has his soul sent straight to hell as a consequence—this will be important later.

And then too, I have an idea of *real* Roman military strategy and tactics in that period, courtesy of the Emperor Maurice and his military manual, *The Strategikon*, and the results of a war between Arthur and the Romans would be most disappointing to any fan of the Matter of Arthur. Maurice characterizes the potential opponents of Rome in one book of *The Strategikon* and gives as well recommendations on how to fight them. In the section on dealing with the light haired people such as the Franks, Lombards, and others like them he advises that they should be dealt with by “well-planned ambushes, sneak-attacks, and strategems.” [*Strategikon*, XI.2] He also recommends bribery, feigned agreements, and attempts at starving them out. The thought of the Table Round collapsing because there was nothing to eat is definitely *not* in keeping with the concepts of the Matter of Arthur.

Once we get into the print shop of Mr. Caxton, things become more detailed, if nothing else. So let us discuss next what came out of that establishment, Malory’s *Morte de Arthur*.

Malory has all the appurtenances of the chivalric Arthur. The social structure of Arthur’s world is that which he was familiar with, though glossed with an idealization which removed such troublesome sorts as Kingmaker Warwick. Likewise, the military structure is that which Sir Thomas was familiar with, barring such inconveniences as mercenaries and uppity peas-

ants.

Even Arthur bears a suspicious resemblance to Mallory's king, Edward IV. Mallory had plenty of time to write, as he was in gaol for having attacked a neighbor's castle with lewd, rude, and crude intent. Edward may have enjoyed the story a lot, but not so much that he took the occasion to deprive its author of his great opportunity for writing.

The morals and ethics of Malory's Arthur are very much those of his period. Thus, knights pursue and kill wives on suspicion; the accepted means of camping for the night is to oust the inhabitants of some "pavilion" or other place of residence; and so on. Now, mind you, Mallory was only describing what was commonplace and accepted by the people of his time. Mark that.

The next noteworthy literary work came about a century later: Spenser's *Faerie Queen*. Spenser is nothing if not a *meaningful* poet. Not only do all the major characters represent the noble virtues, but each also happens to look a lot like someone at the court of Queen Elizabeth, who herself happens to bear a suspicious resemblance to the Faerie Queen. Thus, to be relevant, Prince Arthur (not yet King) happens to look like Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and one of Elizabeth's closest friends at the very least. Spenser was writing in a different meter, using a large number of archaic words, and sticking in political and ethical morals. Not too surprisingly, no one else could get through things and he himself gave up after writing six out of a dozen planned books.

Now note the political matters. For example, Mary, Queen of Scots, appears as the villainous Duessa. Duessa has such wicked things attributed to her as were laid at Mary's door. (Not that the real thing was not interesting enough. Now many Catholic defenders of Mary will admit that after the murder of King Consort Henry Darnley, Mary married by Protestant rites James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell—the leading murderer of Darnley?)

In short, Spenser was attempting to graft onto the Matter of Arthur his moral, ethical, and temporary political concerns. To do so, he added a gloss of incidents and characters (to take some examples from the most accessible commentary, Belpheobe, Britomart [both also considered avatars of Queen Elizabeth] and the aforementioned Duessa) which while they suited their purpose were very much his own invention. And, like the additions of Cei/Kay, Guenevere, and Lancelot at their own times, they were definitely unprecedented

additions. But, it would seem the "standard" cast of characters for the "chivalric" Arthur is that established in Malory.

The next two centuries were marked by an interest in things classical, and no real attention was paid to the Matter of Arthur until the Victorian era. At that point, explanations of Moral Uplift became all the rage, and so we had Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and, on a more prosaic level, Howard Pyle included Arthurian tales among his collected *Edifying Legends for Youth*.

Both of these presented a suitably edifying and proper portrait of the Arthurian world for the young Victorian gentleman. To take one example for which I owe L. Sprague de Camp, when confronted with proof of Guenevere and Lancelot's relationship, Arthur bleats "but ever was I pure save for thee!"—a very Proper Victorian reaction, but hardly in keeping with anything that had come before, and not much since. Note all this.

Meanwhile, on this side of the Big Pond, Mark Twain was examining the Matter of Arthur with an addition of his own. I refer, of course, to *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. In it, Twain discusses such essential sixth century topics of interest as tariffs and protectionism, the problems of journalism, the proper uses of advertising, and questionable stock trading. He also touches on his recurring thesis that the Damned Human Race is not ready for civilization and progress. All this must be remembered and noted.

With the twentieth century came T.H. White. White did a good job of redacting Mallory to the novel. However, in *The Once and Future King*, certain matters appear in an unusual light. Most notably, the Celtic people are depicted in a particularly unflattering light. Then too, in the abandoned *Book of Merlyn* section, Arthur turns pacifist. While these attitudes are not congruent with anything before, they do match White's very well. You must be tired of taking notes, but keep it up.

While White was evolving his work, a somewhat more notorious book came out: James Branch Cabell's *Jurgen*. Among the monstrous clever title character's adventures was one on the fringes of the Matter of Arthur, during the course of which he added the Princess (and soon to be Queen) Guenevere to his list of acquaintances (and maybe more, but he kept on putting out the lights at the most inconvenient times. Must have been tired of being shadowed). This episode is in keeping with the rest of the book, having that fashionable cynical post-World-War attitude of "I'm too clever to be

taken in by any of that idealism stuff." Cabell had it, and his characters (including Guenevere) have it. But Artorius was fighting for things like Christianity and Rome and all that idealism stuff.

Nowadays the Matter of Arthur is written about in both the "historical" and the "chivalric" modes. At the present the "historical" mode seems to have the edge, but that may be because of the best-selling *Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley. What is the most noteworthy thing about this book? It centers on the Women of the Matter.

This may be desirable to restore some balance, though it has been pointed out that the women did not particularly do anything beyond being there. But what hampers the book is that MZB sets up a dichotomy of women-paganism-good and men-Christianity-bad. Not only is this enforcing twentieth-century feminism upon the setting, it sets aside the main part of the "historical" story (look back at what was said earlier about why Artos/Arorius fought). There are many, many other Arthurian works out and more will come out before this is published. What is the point of all this? As we have seen, in all this multitude of writers, there is an utter lack of agreement on any idea beyond, "There once was a leader. He tried to do something, but he was defeated. He is gone now, but he will be back."

All else has varied as the needs of the story teller required. In fact, as we have seen, every basis of the idea of the "historical" Arthur has been contradicted by his followers. Moreover, and more important, this "skeleton" has served as a means for writers to express their own philosophical ideas, whether they be tariffs, feminism, or anti-Irishism.

Indeed, one might say that the use of an imposed (albeit in a "salad-bar" pick-and-choose fashion) set of characters and background has weakened the writing. Someone who wishes to write a really striking and original Arthurian novel would have to be a good writer; creative, talented, and capable of seeing things in a different light. In fact, he would be so creative, talented, and capable that he might well find it just a little bit easier to invent a new background and characters as well.

Or, if I may paraphrase Orson Scott Card, J.R.R. Tolkien's *History of Arthur, Grail and Back Again*, and *The King of Camelot* might have been the greatest additions to the Matter of Arthur ever done, but he chose to write *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* instead and we are the better for that. ♣

The vineyards of Academe bear weird fruit. In my brief and tenureless tenure at Yale, I learned that it is possible to prove any sort of symbolism in any given body of literature if your heart is pure and you need to publish badly enough. This revelation came to me in the midst of a paper on Christ-symbolism, and then I went on to prove that the Paddington the Bear books are really Messianic tracts. This was a grave personal disappointment, as I had been hoping to unearth an interpolated palimpsest in the chapter on "Bunless Friday." C.S. Lewis isn't speaking to me.

All of which is a gentle caveat to the reader of this modest exploration into Arthurian legend. Knowing that anything can be proved given scope broad enough and shovel large enough, you have been Warned.

Now it can be told: Arthur sank the Armada. While he was at it, he won the Battle of Britain as well, and for the same reason. He had the better legend and thus his people partook of a victory-oriented mindset which stood them in good stead even when things looked darkest for Jolly Old.

Let's take a look at the contenders in the Armada Offensive set-to, by which I mean to take you on a brief overview of the chief hero-legends of the two parties involved. Heroes can be counted upon to win battles, more times than not, and when they do lose it is due to something bigger than they are, such as a force of nature, treachery, or past sins of their own forging.

The British national hero is Arthur. No argument there. He held Britain safe against the Saxon invasion, brought peace to the land, instigated a holy quest, and only fell—according to the version of the legend I am following—due to a combination of the three factors I mentioned above: the unfortunate appearance of a snake which caused a man to draw steel at the peace negotiations; the treachery of his own son, Modred; the fact that Modred himself was the result of Arthur's incest with his sister, intended or not. So Arthur fell, but he fell to rise again at some unspecified time in the future. Down but not out.

The Spanish national hero is El Cid. El Cid is actually the Spanish version of the Arab word *sidi*, or *lord*. El Cid's real name



## Flower of England, Fruit of Spain

How a Myth  
and a Mind-Set  
Sank the Armada.

by Esther M. Friesner

was Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar. There has been a lot of debate about whether Arthur really existed, whether he was one man or an amalgam of several outstanding British war-chiefs, and so on. There is no argument about El Cid's reality, for the simple reason that the *Cantar de Mio Cid*—the Spanish national epic like the French *Chanson de Roland*—was put down in written form relatively soon after the events it recounts. It may have been first composed at a time when the Cid's contemporaries were still alive, thereby containing first-hand material as opposed to being purely of the stuff of legend.

Before being committed to manuscript, the *Cantar* made the rounds on the tongues of *juglares*, the wandering minstrels of Spain. This accounts for some variations in different portions of the text. Although debate goes on as to whether the *Cantar* was the work of one or many, it still preserves its sense of immediacy—the feeling the reader gets that someone was there to say "This is how it *happened*," as opposed to the Arthurian, "This is how it *might* have been, or *should* have been."

There is no denying that poetic glossing does take a hand in El Cid's legend. The real Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar was at one point in his career little better than a brigand, a robber baron, and a Christian knight who didn't mind fighting on the side of the Moors if circumstances and the price were right. But if Arthur's legend had been committed to paper a bit sooner—and so given less mutable form than the oral traditions—I wonder how many people would recognize him as the high, noble, tragic figure he is today?

The *Cantar de Mio Cid* is an epic, and like most epics it begins smack dab in the middle of things. El Cid has been ordered into exile by his king, with a royal curse on anyone caught helping him. He has only a certain amount of time to get out of the Castillian territories. He takes with him his faithful band of companions, leaves his wife and daughters in the care of a monastery, and departs. He is a brave fighter, a great tactician, and a man who can command the loyalty of other men, as shown by the fact that so many follow him into exile. He might have remained in Castile and caused trouble, but he doesn't. He remains a perfect, obedient vassal, even though he

has been condemned on false charges.

In exile—in Moorish territory, naturally—El Cid passes from victory to victory. He always sends a cut of the booty back to the king who exiled him.

When he manages to conquer the Moorish stronghold of Valencia, the king decides it might be time to forgive and forget. The rest of the *Cantar* deals with the less-than-lucky royal marriages the king makes for the Cid's daughters, and ends with the Cid's family honor avenged and the girls wed to more deserving husbands, again royal.

Though the *Cantar* ends there, the legend goes on: the Cid held Valencia until his death upon which his wife Ximena took over. But Moorish assaults were too strong to resist. It became necessary to surrender the city, though this would mean death for the Christian citizens. To evacuate them safely, Ximena had her husband's body disinterred, clad in his old armor, and wired to the back of his war-horse. Even though he was dead, when the Moors saw the Cid emerge from the gates of Valencia with the Christians marching out behind him, they fled. Down and Out, yet still useful. The Christians returned to more secure Spanish territory and the Cid was buried in Burgos, where his tomb may be seen.

Now let's have a look at some of the basic differences between the legends of Arthur and the Cid. Arthur is royal, a king; the Cid obtains kingly power, but forever remains the perfect vassal. His virtue is to serve, though he has the clout to seize the crown for himself, would he but use it.

Arthur has the aid of the supernatural. A wizard is his guardian and chief advisor; he doesn't exactly pick up his sword at the local blacksmith, assorted extranormal beings and events crowd his story, and when he dies, he is taken off in a mysterious barge by three equally mysterious ladies.

El Cid has no such luck. The only supernatural event in the *Cantar* is an angel who appears to the hero on the night before he leaves Castile and counsels him not to despair. Everything else, the Cid must do for himself. He fights real foes with real swords. No wonder Cervantes got fed up with all the Sir Sensawonda knights in the novels of chivalry which were popular offshoots of the Arthurian legend. Magic stepped in to help them too frequently. Life wasn't like that. Arthurian legend wasn't like life. The main thrust of Arthur's military career is to keep invaders *out*. He and his knights stand fast together against the Saxon tide of barbarism, with the church

behind them. In the Cid's world, the invaders are already *in*. The Moors have occupied most of the Iberian peninsula for at least 300 years and the Spanish are fighting a slow battle to expel them, a battle that will not end until 1492.

El Cid's most important military commitment is first, to survive in his exile, while providing for the survival of his faithful followers. Second, it is to clear his name with his feudal lord, even though he was guiltless. He is a godly man, but aside from having one lone warrior-bishop in his entourage, you never get the sense of Church solidarity backing him that you get with Arthur. He is vouchsafed no grand vision of the Grail. Of course, when you stop to think of what the Grail quest did to further the breakup of the Round Table, maybe El Cid was lucky.

Arthur is betrayed by his queen, who is barren. El Cid's wife bears him two daughters and remains faithful to him despite long years of separation during his exile. (Ximena began as Rodrigo's mortal enemy—he having killed her father in a fair matter-of-honor fight—and also bore him a son who died in battle, but these incidents are outside the scope of the *Cantar*.) Arthur dies grandly and tragically in civil war with Modred. Some versions have this as single combat against Modred. El Cid dies in bed, of old age. Arthur is scheduled to reappear after his supposed death—"Not Dead, Just Sleeping." El Cid does reappear after his, but no one pretends he is anything but a skeleton in armor. Again, no miracles for Spain.

By and large, El Cid seems to be ahead of Arthur on points when it comes to his life as an individual, especially on the domestic front. However, because El Cid retains his individuality, because his story is so tightly tied to reality, because it is more possible to believe that El Cid existed as a real person—one man, not a braided megahuman—than it is to believe the same of Arthur, perhaps because of all this, the legend of El Cid can not stand up to the legend of Arthur.

People create legends, but these same legends later tend, in turn, to mold the descendents of the people who made them. National heroes have an especially strong tendency to do this. Hitler wasn't just talking about Siegfried for fun: he used the German national hero as a point for focusing his people's eyes on victory. (Siegfried died stabbed in the back, over a domestic spat, but Hitler never seemed to give that angle much publicity.)

Where does this take Arthur and El Cid? Picture the eve of the Armada battle. Spain

is the most powerful nation on earth at the time. Her ships rule the seas, and now she has drummed up a whole new flotilla wholly for the purpose of flattening the English. She has the wealth of the New World backing this, not to mention her Continental holdings.

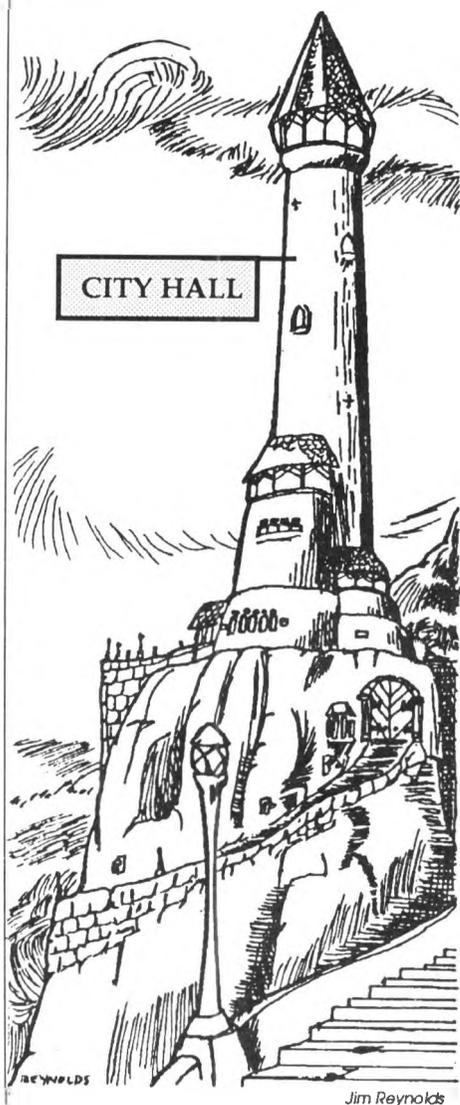
But England has a legend. Arthur stood firm against an invading tide as great as the Spaniards, and conquered. It wasn't rational to expect victory over the Saxons, but Arthur was fighting to keep the invaders *out* of his homeland, Arthur always had supernatural help of some sort, Arthur had the Church—and therefore God—on his side and Arthur always won. (When he did lose, he lost against a foe from within.)

Hmmm... supernatural help? Where *did* that sudden Channel storm come from?

And what of Spain? She had El Cid, and while he does overcome impossible odds in battle many a time, he is a legend more tainted by a reality. He submits to a greater human authority. He does not fight an unjust verdict, but accepts it. He is a good Christian, but he is still only one. In short, he is the individual while Arthur is the Organization Man. Arthur has vast powers backing him, and is transformed into the symbol representing Chivalry, Christianity, and the Inviolability of English Soil; El Cid has himself. He symbolizes nothing beyond that, except perhaps the outmoded political concept of the Perfect Vassal.

Symbols have it all over individuals when it comes to giving a body of people a victory-oriented mindset. Individuals can be heroes, or they can be decidedly less. The individual mostly responsible for the Armada debacle was Philip II of Spain, who in turn appointed the Duke of Medina-Sidonia as commander of the Armada. He didn't think it made a difference that this individual duke knew nothing about ships and got seasick. And so the English won, and so they had—and have still—a legend and a symbol to inspire hope and victory. Siegfried might have had the mighty sword Nothung and the power to understand the speech of birds but he was a hero foredoomed. If the Germanic gods themselves were slated for destruction in the *Götterdämmerung*, what chance should a mortal hero expect? Nothung and bird speech one era, bombing civilian targets the next, the technology changed but the end result was destined to be the same: the British would follow Arthur's lead and hold out against the invaders, bravery forever bound to belief. Arthur will be back some day; Siegfried won't.

Believe.✱



# Political Arthur

by Scott E. Green

ally trained British military officer who commanded a large regiment of professional cavalry and was based in Northumberland and the Scottish lowlands. He was probably related to several native royal families and was the most powerful political figure in Roman Britain. Yet, like Caesar, he avoided wearing a crown or making a claim to the Imperial purple like so many earlier British based Roman generals.

He would have avoided placing himself in conflict with any significant Imperial or Provincial law. Overtly, his conduct would have conformed to the statutes. When he found himself in open conflict with written law he would have deferred to the law so as not to put a strain on his political relationships.

The second figure was a sixth century kinglet or noble based in Cornwall or Wales. He was probably related to the first Arthur. He may have been a non-Christian or a follower of Pelagius. In any event he would not have been supportive of a state church that would have the authority to anoint monarchs.

With military and political skills he became de facto British leader in the fight against Saxon and Irish invaders. Like the first Arthur he almost certainly had no civil title that would imply sovereignty over the whole of what was Roman Britain. Yet, he would have been the actual leader or the first among equals.

Both of these individuals were not the center of power but the servants of power.

The first Arthur had to submit to surviving Roman laws (including respecting the sovereign rights of municipalities) and tribal law in order to carry out the task of defending Britain.

The second Arthur did not have to contend with Roman institutions. However, the power of Druids, especially those known as Brehon judges who had the power to overturn the decisions of kings, was revived. He probably had to tolerate the temporal power of Christian bishops and abbots (though he was always ready to suppress their more violent ways). Lastly, there were Saxon mini-states which had allied themselves to the sixth century Arthur. The power of their legislative institutions which were the ancestral institutions of the British Parliament had to be respected.

The result was that you had two men who were heads of government constrained by laws, not absolute monarchs who were the state.

How else would one explain Malory's Arthur, a man who could not pardon his own wife even though his political power was apparently unchallengeable? When he faltered in carrying out the law, that became the basis for a rebellion that sought to remove him because he ultimately disobeyed the law.

I believe that future research on the Arthurian cycle ought to focus on its importance to Anglo-American political culture. Only then can we fully appreciate the importance of Arthur to our civilization.\*

In the vast mass of literature about Arthur and the Matter of Britain, the emphasis of discussion has been on the mythic, historic, cultural, and literary importance of Arthur. However, nothing has apparently been said about the importance of Arthur to Anglo-American political culture. By this I mean the importance of Arthurian material as a source for political institutions and not as part of political propaganda. The Arthurian cycle describes Arthur as bound by law, not above it. Why is Arthur described as a man of law? I believe that you have to look at the historical Arthur.

I adhere to the theory that there were two figures who constituted the Arthur of myth.

First was a fourth century profession-

# The Spoils of Annwfn

by Joe R. Christopher

Said Arthur, "Raise the sails, my men—  
We'll cross the sea as dark as wine,  
To seek *Caer Siddi's* host;  
Three ships we'll sail." (But oh, alas!  
Three sailed upon the sea like glass—  
Three sailed and two were lost!)

Sang *Taliesin Manyborn*,  
"The sails are filled with rosy morn—  
We'll seek *Caer Rigor's* host!  
To west, to west!" (But oh, alas!  
Three ships upon the sea like glass—  
Three ships and two were lost!)

Cried *Llacheu*, Arthur's youngest son,  
"The maidens nine will grant us fun  
When dead's *Caer Feddwid's* host—  
So let us sail!" (But oh, alas!  
Three sailed upon the sea like glass—  
Three sailed and two were lost!)

Said *Cai the Fair*, "What great expense  
a blue-rimmed cauldron to bring hence,  
To seek *Caer Fandwy's* host,  
But honor's done!" (Yet oh, alas!  
Those men upon the sea like glass—  
And all but seven lost!)

Cried *Custaint*, son of *Banon*, loud,  
And *Anwas Winged*, and *Bedwyr* proud,  
"We'll seek *Caer Ochren's* host!  
We'll scale the walls!" (But oh, alas!  
Three ships upon the sea like glass—  
Three ships and two were lost!)

*Gwynn Godyfrion* cried, "Our souls  
no dream's illusion ever foils,  
Nor yet *Caer Goludd's* host!  
We'll break the gate!" (But oh, alas!  
Three ships upon the sea like glass,  
And all but *Prydwenn* lost!)

Said *Llwch the Windy-handed*, "I'll seize  
no cauldron, but *Caledfwlch* ablaze  
Caer *Wydr's* sword embossed,  
And shatter all that city!" (Alas!  
Those warriors on the sea like glass,  
And all but seven lost!)

This poem is based on the Welsh "Spoils of Annwfn," the thirtieth poem in *The Book of Taliesin*. It is one of several Celtic poems and tales which predate Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of Arthur, Geoffrey establishing the more familiar traditions. So far as the present author knows, the only other literary use of this poem is John Masfield's "The Sailing of Hell Race" (in *Midsummer Night*, 1928), which, however, is a very free handling with a Christian after-world substituted for the Celtic other-world. This poem was first published in *MYTHRIL*, 2:3/7 (Fall 1975), 9; it is copyrighted 1975 by the Mythopoeic Society and reprinted by permission.

*Caer Siddi* (l. 3) = the Faery City (or fortress).

*Caer Rigor* (l. 9) = another of the names for the four-sided, four-cornered house of the dead.

*maidens nine* (l. 14) = those who kindled the fire for the cauldron (in the next stanza).

*Caer Feddwid* (l. 15) = the City of Carousal.

*Cai* (l. 19) = the later Sir Kay.  
*the blue-rimmed cauldron* (l. 20), or perhaps just its rim, was also covered with pearls.

*all but seven* (l. 24) —the seven men who survived are not named in the original poem; the nine names mentioned in this version are all drawn from early Welsh references to Arthur's host.

*Bedwyr* (l. 26) = the later Sir Bedivere.

*Caer Goludd* (l. 33) = the Inward City.  
*Prydwenn* (l. 36) = Arthur's ship.

*Llwch Llawwynnawg* (l. 37), related to *Lugh Loinngheimionach*, the Irish god of sun and storm = the later Sir Lancelot du Lac.

*Caledfwlch* (l. 38) = the later Excalibur.

*Caer Wydr* (l. 39) = the City of Glass.



# A Hebrew Arthur

by Ruth Berman

An unusual sidelight on Arthurian legend is *King Artus, a Hebrew Arthurian Romance of 1279*, a manuscript edited and translated (original and translation on facing pages) and with commentary by Curt Leviant (NY: Ktav Publishing House, 1969.) An earlier translation by Moses Gaster appeared in 1909, but that edition provided only a brief commentary dealing primarily with the origins of the text. Leviant gives detailed notes and a broader discussion. (Also, Leviant had the opportunity to check the manuscript itself, finding some small errors in the published text of 1885, edited by Abraham Berliner, which Gaster used for his translation.)

The anonymous author gave the date 39 (= 5039 = 1279 C.E.) in his introduction. The presence of a few Italian loan words in the Hebrew text implies that the author was an Italian Jew, probably translating from an otherwise unknown Italian version of the story of Arthur, and that version was based on earlier French versions.

The body of the text told two Arthurian stories, the triangle of Uther, Igera, and the Duke of Cornwall, which led to the birth of Arthur; and the story of the tourney at Winchester where Lancelot, attending in disguise, met the Maid of Astolat. The second story was meant to continue through the discovery of the guilty love between Launcelot and Guenevere to the destruction of the Round Table but the manuscript breaks off in mid-sentence while the tourney is still going on. The break is in the middle of a page, too, so it is not simply a question of a manuscript with pages missing. What kept the author from completing his manuscript is a mystery that will probably never be solved.

The choice of King Arthur as a hero suitable for Jewish readers in the middle ages may seem surprising—and it evidently

was surprising at the time. The author defended himself on the grounds that amusement was good for mental health and that the story was morally edifying. "Owing to my sins my troubles have grown...and I fear lest I fall into melancholy, that is madness, to which death is preferable. Therefore I have translated these conversations for myself in order to calm my mind." (pp.9,11), and, "The second and most important reason for my translation was that sinners will learn the paths of repentance and bear in mind their end and will return to the Name as you will see at the conclusion" (p.13). It's a sad irony that the author didn't get to the conclusion after all. (The Name is a periphrasis for "God", as pious Orthodox Jews avoid naming God directly except in religious ritual).

As Leviant points out, the author Judaized his text in several ways. First, he omitted all references to Christianity but one. For example, he mentions the story of the quest for the Grail as part of a paragraph introducing his second story, but he does not choose to explain why the Grail was thought worthy of a quest. References to Christmas, masses, and other forms of Christian worship are likewise omitted. The exception is the comment that before going on the quest, Lancelot "went to his confessor, who had shut himself into a retreat, and he confessed all his sins to him, including that of adultery" (p.27). Leviant speculates that the author may have retained that one because the concept of repentance is important in Judaism and it was the central point of the Arthurian story for this author.

Secondly, where appropriate, the author used Biblical phrases to describe Arthurian events: for example, "the king made a great feast for all the people and all the

princes" (p.17), as in the Book of Esther, "The king made a great feast for all his princes and his servants." Leviant comments that by the omission of the time of year and by the choice of words the author "managed to change a Christmas feast into what might be called a Purim feast" (p.65). That way of putting it strikes me as exaggerating slightly the degree of "Judaizing" involved; the characteristically Arthurian elements involved, such as the tournament at the feast, would probably have kept the story strongly exotic for its first audience, even though the changes would have made it less so.

Thirdly, the author coined words or phrases for technical terms: a word (from the Hebrew noun for "horseman") for "to be knighted," and equivalents for Grail, saints, and religious oaths. The manuscript uses "Sangraal" (Holy Grail) in giving the title of the omitted Grail story, but in summarizing it refers to it as "the Quest of the Dish" (p.25). Leviant points out that the word for dish is not a general one but a specific kind of dish: "*Tamchuy* is a charity bowl, from which food was distributed to the hungry and the needy" (p.25). Saints (p.31) became *k'doshim* (the holy ones), and the oaths (pp.33,45) became thanks to H (for *ha-shem*, the Name) and "the living God." (The latter phrase is no longer exclusively Jewish—"Though I've belted you and flayed you, by the livin' Gawd that made you, You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!" I suspect the wider use came through philo-semitic Puritans.) I wonder if the author chose to play down Merlin's magic—having Merlin tell Uther that he would "endow you with the Duke's likeness" (p.19) is another way of Judaizing the story, in accordance with the Biblical condemnation of magic-working. Leviant points out (p.85) that some other versions, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's, are similarly evasive in describing Merlin's ability to disguise Uther, but he does not discuss the motive for omitting direct description of Merlin's magic.

Although this version of the story of Arthur, in itself, is of interest as only a very narrow segment of Arthurian literature, one part of Leviant's commentary deals with Arthurian literature as a whole. In the section "Jewish Aspects of Some Arthurian Motifs," he discusses the probability that the inventors of Arthurian legend were influenced by Jewish legends (especially from the Bible, but perhaps also from later commentaries). He argues that King David, especially, must have influenced the development of King Arthur. [Levi-

See *HEBREW*, Page 69

# Kay and Morgan and Me

by Phyllis Ann Karr



My first Arthurian phase began with Prince Valiant, continued with Howard Pyle, and lasted through most of my pre-teen years. It was a pleasant, undemanding stage when for some unremembered reason Percivale or Pelleas tended to be my favorite knights, though already a fascination with Sir Kay was beginning.

Reading T.H. White's *Once and Future King* awoke my second Arthurian phase, while I was in high school. Deciding to become an Arthurian scholar, I memorized the sons of Lot and of Pellinore, after which I proceeded to add characters of my own to the cycle and write stories about them for several years after my graduation from college. An isolated few tales about my tarnished knight Harald de Folgeste and Joiselette the "Wandering Christian" even saw print eventually.

In the 1970's I submitted one of them, "The Wolves of Severtatis," to Jessica Amanda Salmonson, who told me it was "sword and sorcery"—I had never heard the term before—and passed it on to Greg Stafford. Thanks to this, several years later he commissioned me to do research for an Arthurian game he was designing.

At that time, I worked as a cataloger at the University of Louisville Library. Among the volumes I cataloged was a full set of *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, as edited by H. Oskar Sommer. Greg's commission gave me the excuse to spend many happy hours with those volumes, my old copy of Malory, and any other Arthurian material that came my way. I came to regard the Vulgate, which appears to have been Malory's "French boke," as more or less definitive, though there never was any question but that I must make room in my personal Arthurian canon for "Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight" and certain bits from Chrétien de Troyes.

It was Greg Stafford who reshaped my

reams of research material into *The King Arthur Companion*, saw the product to press, and is keeping it in print and available from Chaosium, Inc. Meanwhile, the material fermented in my brain until my Arthurian whodunit, *Idylls of the Queen* came forth. It has always seemed to me one of my best novels.

Two more volumes should have come forth with *Idylls*: a collection of individual stories of the various women who appeared in Arthurian lore, and a novel told from the viewpoint of Morgan le Fay. A novella, a novelette, and two short stories were finished for the former project: one of the short stories, "Two Bits of Embroidery" (originally entitled "Elaine of Astolat"), has finally been published in Parke Godwin's 1988 anthology *Invitation to Camelot*; the other short story, "The Lady of Belec," has just been bought for *WEIRD TALES*.

The novel went into paralysis in 1979 when I learned that the great Marion Zimmer Bradley was also at work on a novel about Morgan. Obviously hers, already being assured of publication, would see print first in any case. Mine, if it were subsequently to be published, would look like a rip-off. To guard as much as possible against actual copycatting, I vowed not to read her version until after completing mine. Since *Morgan the Goddess* remains unfinished, I have not yet read *The Mists of Avalon*.

Of such other modern treatments as I have read, I am always amused at the way virtually every new "realistic" one is hailed as something ground-breaking in its very conception, as if realistic, quasi-historical treatments had not been *predominating* for some decades now over the more "traditionally" mythical, magical ones. But at least almost every "as it might *really* have been" novel seems fairly individualistic

and unpredictable.

In the more "mythically" oriented fiction, I sense an insidious trend at work in the numbers of new writers who seem to take either T.H. White's version, or Mary Stewart's, or both as equally authoritative with Malory. Granted that Malory's version might also be called a distortion of the Vulgate, the Vulgate a distortion of the Welsh tales, and so on back almost *ad infinitum* until the truly definitive stopping point may remain forever debatable, it nevertheless strikes me as vaguely akin to literary incest for modern writers to depend so thoroughly upon their contemporaries' interpretations. Granted that White's work may possibly owe some debt to the Arthurian brittleness of John Erskine, and Stewart's to the magnificent historical fiction of Rosemary Sutcliff; still, I believe it would be better to guard against such trends and go back at least, say, to Tennyson and Twain for our original research.

The favorite modern interpretation of the story of King Arthur seems to boil down to the idea that Arthur was The Last Candle Against the Wind, who held the Light of Civilization alive against the Tide of Barbarism for one last generation. His great work was finally destroyed by the guilty love affair between his wife and his best friend, in which Arthur was ever the patient, suffering Voice of Reason, refusing to see his wife's guilt until forced at last to apply his own law of justice to her; but in the nation's memory Arthur became enshrined as the Hope, Glory, and Inspiration of England forever afterwards. (Of course, it is largely the descendants of the Saxons, against whom Arthur fought, who proceeded to enshrine his name. It is as if in a few more centuries the descendants of Native Americans will regard General Custer as a great hero. But never mind that—The Ideal Must Live.) In all this, of course, Merlin is the Eternal Great and Good Wise Man. T.H. White and Mary Stewart both say so, and for once they have Tennyson backing them up on the point, so who can possibly doubt it?

I, for one. White's Merlin is a charming old fellow, but he is not the Merlin I find in Malory and the Vulgate. (As for Mary Stewart's Merlin, I would sooner be marooned on a desert island with Fraser's Harry Flashman, who at least wouldn't encompass my death as soon as he took the bee into his bonnet that his deity was commanding it for some Higher Purpose.)

*Idylls of the Queen*, my "Arthurian Ladies" stories, and *Morgan the Goddess* rest on the groundwork of my own heretical interpretation of the myth.\*

# GINČAS



Jim Reynolds

## SILVER LoCs

[Discussion of *Silverlock* by John Myers Myers and *A Silverlock Companion*, edited by Fred Lerner, Niekas Publications, 1988.]

### Ruth Berman

Back in 1960 Bruce Pelz started to do a guide for the references in *Silverlock*. He published references for chapters 1 and 2 in his ANKUS #1 and had a few more references to add in the next couple of issues. He got sidetracked with other things and never finished the article. Looking at his set of references I see only one which gives added information to what is in your "Readers' Guide": "Broceliande Forest" occurs as a place name in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. It is interesting to note that you found all the references he listed as ones he hadn't been able to track down with the exception of "Warlock Mountains" which you define in terms of the meaning of "warlock" only. It could be that that's one of the few where Myers didn't have a more specific reference in mind.

### David Palter

The thing that most puzzled me was the note in the bibliography commenting that *Silverlock* is neither a work of science fiction nor fantasy. Obviously it is not a work of science fiction but it seems rather clear to me that it is a work of fantasy. It is

obviously about mythological characters and it takes place in an imaginary realm called "The Commonwealth." Now you might say that the Commonwealth is not imaginary but is real. It is the realm of literature. Well, literature is real, the books are real, but they are books. They are not an actual geography you may physically visit. We only mentally visit them.

Perhaps the bibliographer feels it is real, it is not fiction. This might be cute in the sense that devoted STAR TREK fans sometimes like to imagine, and for all I know even believe, that STAR TREK is real.

I would hesitate to adopt that attitude towards *Silverlock* or towards any piece of fantasy. At one time in my life I made the mistake of treating a work of science fiction as though it were reality, that being my interlude of religious cultism with the Church of Scientology. Scientology is, in fact, a religion based entirely on science fiction. Having done so I have come to believe that it is very risky to confuse fantasy and science fiction with reality. It is amusing and you can have fun doing it, up to a certain point, but that way lies madness.

I am impressed with John Myers Myers' ability as a poet, particularly the concluding poem which is untitled.

At the same time I do not think that John Myers Myers is entirely correct in being so insistent, as he is in various quotes that appear throughout the *Companion*, on the

importance of poetry. We are told at various times that no writer can be a really good writer unless he has written poetry. We are also told that poetry must have rhyme and meter and cannot be allowed as blank verse. We are also told of John Myers Myers' own unique accomplishments in inventing new forms of poetry.

All of this suggests to me that John Myers Myers is getting a little bit carried away on this subject. I do not deny that he is a good poet. I do not deny the value of poetry. I do not deny that writers can improve their craft through the study of poetry. But I don't go to his categorical extremes. I see no reason one could not neglect poetry and still be a good writer, and certainly no reason one could not write good blank verse. In fact, I have some poetry in my collection which is blank verse that I am quite fond of. And it means something to me. Now

whether it means something to John Myers Myers, I don't know.

Nonetheless John Myers Myers is a delightful writer and I respect him and his opinions even though I do not agree with all of his opinions.

### Anne Braude

Fred Lerner's *Silverlock* theme park in NIEKAS 37 is not only a great idea but a good mental game for bored fans: making up additional attractions. I submit Rosalette's Boutique.

### Ben Indick

No matter how much one thinks one knows, there is always an unexpected surprise. After all these years I figured I knew the fantasy field pretty well. But when I received *A Silverlock Companion* I discovered I'd missed entirely *Silverlock*. Possibly it was because I was growing disenchanted with the fantasy genre when the book was published in 1949, and would soon drop out entirely for nearly 15 years. I do not know how large the cult readership is for this book but several of my friends even better read than I in the genre were unaware of it either.

I managed, with difficulty, to find a copy, used at that, the second Ace printing, 1979.

Fred Lerner has edited with love, erudition, and intelligence a very fine book of essays and a remarkably complete readers' guide, enough to make anyone want to read the original.

Myers isn't unique in having his hero encounter literary references. Walter Scott had Robin Hood in, I think it was, *Ivanhoe*. Walter de la Mare's Henry Brocken meets fictional folk in the novel titled for him. And of course after Myers, Philip Jose Farmer would have similar fun in his Riverworld series. A writer so in love with the folk of romance and legend would, I hoped before I began to read, give me again the thrill of discovery and exaltation that came with Tolkien, Eddison, Peake, Austin Tappan Wright, and T.H. White. Alas! I cannot enshrine John Myers Myers with that august company.

I must agree with the critic of the first edition who was less than enchanted, although I found the book, at least in the first and last parts, fun. There are also moments of beauty. Perhaps my problem is that I read it 40 years too late. However for me it is his style that divides it from the works I consider beautiful.

When I read each of the names I listed above I was truly lifted from myself. *The Worm Ouroboros* by E.R. Eddison, difficult indeed to read because of his prolix language, nevertheless is the very stuff of heroism, of beauty in a fantasy. I can just see still the Lord Brandoch Daha and his cohorts fighting their way. And Peake, whose *Gormenghast* is not literally a fantasy, but is marvelously written. I always thought of it as a Dickensian fantasy. Austin Tappan Wright—*Islandia*, a love story, not a fantasy either except for the presence of a fantastic island. But what a love story! Three loves, and one never forgets it. Tolkien? T.H. White? What can I say about my one, two favorites!

When I said that it was Myers' style that differentiated from the others, I meant that the style he has chosen is to write almost wholly in the vernacular, filled with period slang. The obvious intention is to avoid any forceful language or emotion. No highfalutin medievalism here and little mysticism either. Clearly Myers' idol is the Mark Twain of *Connecticut Yankee* who had little use for the romantic hand-wringing and sighing of the esthetes of a generation earlier. For me this approach robs Myers' work of the beauty I associate with such an adventure.

Many of the characters are those I've always loved. It has more than one might imagine. Pathfinder. The Mad Hatter, though I must say that his tea party is too Carrollian. Very little Myers there. It's all Carroll. Sir Gawain plus his green giant. Dr. Pangloss who is still convinced, even while forced to row his arms off, that this is the best of all possible worlds. A rather

transmogrified Sam Houston and his Alamo cohorts. Circe, a no-nonsense farm woman here. Hester Prynne, letter and all. Puck, a wise guy.

Myers has a passion for the Norse and Gaelic and near unpronounceability of names is not uncommon. For me he is at his best with these celebrities when he leaves their identity up to the reader, and to diligent researchers like Fred and Anne.

In the last part of the book when he finally begins to grow more serious and less blithe he is given to identifying them as though unconfident of the reader, although he usually offers clues enough. Happily Puck is one of those unnamed and appears in one of my favorite scenes. As it is in a forest and we see various lovers pursuing and being pursued it is clear we are in Shakespeare's Arden and the errant prankster is Puck. The hero has been pining for the sweet innocent Rosalette who is in love with Aucando. Each is a combination of various romantic medieval names. Puck, dripping his petal dew hastily—"I've got to skiddadle" he tells Silverlock—flashes by and mischievously doses Rosalette and Silverlock. For a few precious moments the girl thinks she is in love with Silverlock. They kiss closely, repeatedly, in one of the few genuinely rhapsodic episodes of the novel.

Myers touches love again as possession and even jealousy when Nimue, "who had already bound up poor old Merlin under a rock like a grub," holds Silverlock in helpless and willing thrall for a time. Emotion does lend empathy to a book but there is very little emotion, truly, in this book for me at least. Obviously not for many others. While the book has its cult, I needed the stronger emotion and the language that accompanied Rosalette and Silverlock in that one moment—the only moment in the book when he truly expresses love. With Nimue it's almost a compulsion. She's a witch and she bewitches Silverlock for a time until he is finally freed of her.

Incidentally, I prefer T.H. White's Merlin buried somewhere in a tree, not under a stone like a grub.

I imagine all of the poetry in the book has been set to music by the fans. It lends itself to this type of treatment, almost to a folk song type of music. Perhaps such music would give the book that bonhomie, that feeling of closeness, that the reader wants and which I felt was lacking. One fine bit of poetry, and it really is lovely, indicates that contemporary writers are still moved by the book. It was adapted in 1986 and 1987 by Stephen R. Donaldson and he does give due credit for the titles of the two

novels of his "Mordant's Need" series. "Steeped in the vacuum of her dreams, a mirror is empty till a man rides through it." Donaldson changed it slightly. He called one book *The Mirror of her Dreams* instead of "the vacuum of her dreams", and *A Man Rides Through*. Obviously Donaldson, a young man, is a very successful writer who is quite moved by Myers. I can only concede that I've lost my sense of wonder.

As we look at this book and think about the various things that Silverlock went through and encountered in his journey, it's obvious that it isn't a true story of an adventure. It's the author's musing and dreaming about those characters he loved. Otherwise we have to assume that for all eternity Hermia is being pursued by Lysander and Demetrius through the forest, instead of just that one moment when Silverlock happens to come through there. Circe, on the other hand, has a farm yard full of animals and so isn't necessarily just waiting for Silverlock. But in general it would just seem to be the author's way of remembering all the characters of fiction whom he has loved. They certainly are unusual ones when you consider that he puts in people like the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter* and the unfortunate hero of *Crime and Punishment*.

The slang, apparently, was criticized by some of the writers of his time who probably also wanted a more heroic fantasy than he was willing to give them. But when I think of the few moments which I did like so much, they remind me of John Steinbeck's writing in his translation of King Arthur, when Lancelot sees Guenevere at the table to which he has been invited. The expression Steinbeck used caught all the pain, the anguish, that a man in love would feel. That pain and anguish is not in *Silverlock*. One takes it for what it is. A sort of glorified comic book, occasionally getting serious. And at least certainly expressing love for what we all love, these characters who have been with us for so long.

Fred Lerner's column in #38 shows again his love for Myers' book. I regret I could not share it. Surely it is my loss. But there you are.

#### WAHF

The following made brief comments on *The Silverlock Companion*: Buck Coulson, Dick West, Gene Wolfe, Jane Yolen, Andre Norton, Jacqueline Lichtenberg ["Splendid work, very impressive"], Lloyd Alexander, and Piers Anthony ["Curious about John Myers Myers' work which I have not seen. I looked him up in the *Science Fiction Encyclopedia* and he wasn't listed."].\*

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**THE DISCOVERY OF KING ARTHUR**, Geoffrey Ashe (in association with Debrett's Peerage). Anchor/Doubleday, 1985, \$18.95, hc.

Geoffrey Ashe is the doyen of contemporary Arthurian historians, as Leslie Alcock is of Arthurian archaeologists and Mary Stewart of Arthurian novelists. This is the most recent of a series of books attempting to trace the facts behind the legends, and it has a surprising, though admittedly not entirely new, theory of the identity of the historical Arthur—an enchanting and elegant theory, though based, alas, entirely on speculation.

Ashe begins with a reconsideration of Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *History of the Kings of Britain*, completed around 1136, is the basic source for most of the Arthurian tradition. Geoffrey's work, which also contains the original legends of King Lear and Old King Cole, is nowadays regarded as more fiction than history—I once wrote a paper to prove that he was the first historical novelist—but it does contain nuggets of fact for the diligent miner. Oddly enough, Ashe finds his choicest morsels in the part of the tale usually thought of as having been made up out of whole cloth by Geoffrey: the account of how Arthur went to Gaul to do battle with the Roman "Procurator of the Republic," Lucius Hiberius, who had demanded tribute from Britain as a subject nation of the Empire.

The first point of interest is that not only Geoffrey but practically every historian or chronicler who mentions Arthur agrees that he lived in the fifth century A.D., an assertion which archaeology (especially the Cadbury excavations) tends to confirm. Ashe demonstrates why a British king of this period would become the center of such a powerful and enduring legend as the Arthurian mythos. It was a period in which the Roman Empire was crumbling from the lack of a strong central power to resist the ever-increasing barbarian incursions. Rome itself was sacked twice during the century, in 410 by the Goths and in 455 by the Vandals. Emperors of the West had the life expectancy of mayflies. The peoples of the former Imperial territories did not particularly miss their foreign rulers, but they did miss the stability, order, safety, and prosperity that came with Roman rule. They longed, not for Rome, but for *Romani-*

*tas*—and for a *Restitutor Orbis*, a savior who could restore civilization as it had been. Several promising successors to the Imperial purple were so hailed, but none fulfilled their promise.

In Britain, however, matters were different. As Geoffrey records, the native British had been undergoing a similar ordeal under the high kingship of Vortigern, whose solution to the Pictish incursions was to allow Saxons to settle in Britain as auxiliary troops, giving them land in return for military service against the Picts. It didn't work out: the Saxons started raiding the British and making alliance with the Picts. Around the middle of the fifth century, things got better, at least partly because the British had strong and effective military leadership: one name mentioned is Aurelius Ambrosius, whom Geoffrey made the uncle of Arthur and Mary Stewart made the father of Merlin. Apparently, in the 460's Britain enjoyed a revival of *Romanitas* under one or more high kings who fitted the *Restitutor* image well enough to become the stuff of which legends are made.

Now comes the really nifty bit. One crux of the "Arthurian problem" has always been: If Arthur was such a great king, why is there no mention of him in history except in sources from Britain and the British colony of Armorica (now Brittany)? What Ashe produces (admitting he is not the first to do so) is an important British king mentioned in continental sources *but not found in any British sources*, with a very plausible argument that the two are one and the same.

In 467, when there had been no Emperor in the West for over a year, Leo I, the Emperor in Constantinople, appointed one of his own nobles, Anthemius, to fill the vacancy. The new Emperor's most pressing problem was the ambitious King of the Visigoths, Euric, who already ruled much of Spain and was working on the conquest of Gaul. According to Jordanes' *Gothic History*, in 468 Anthemius took the unprecedented step of seeking a British alliance. The British king Riotimus or Riothamus led a force of 12,000 men to Berry, presumably having landed at the mouth of the Loire. This episode, much distorted, could have given rise to Geoffrey's tale of Arthur's enterprise against Lucius. In the Arthurian legend, the king came to Gaul a second time, in pursuit of Launcelot and of Guinevere, whom her lover had rescued from execution for adultery. He is besieging Launcelot's castle when word comes of the treachery of Modred, who had been left as viceroy in Britain. Arthur returns home,

does battle with Modred, and either dies, no one knows where, or vanishes mysteriously. Legend has him carried away by Morgan le Fay to her magical isle of Avalon to be healed; some dubious history and contaminated archaeology seems to indicate that he was buried at Glastonbury Abbey, traditionally identified with Avalon, the "isle of apples." The story of Riothamus has no Launcelot or Guinevere, but it does have a treacherous deputy: Arvandus, the imperial prefect of Gaul, who had sent a letter to Euric advising him that his way to conquest would be clear if he crushed the British force. The letter was intercepted; but it was made public at Arvandus' trial for treason, and the damage was done. Euric took the hint and, probably in 470, routed the British. Riothamus rallied what men he could and retreated into Burgundian territory: nothing further is known of his fate.

Why should Riothamus be identified with Arthur? Aside from the fact that their dates coincide, as do their careers (albeit roughly), there are a few suggestive items—I hesitate to call them "facts." Ashe gets around the name difference with a plausible argument that "Riothamus" is a Latinized version of a British *title*, not a name: a title that translates more or less as "high king." (He has a similar argument about the name Vortigern.) Riothamus may well have been the title given to a Romanized Briton named Artorius. (Ashe also argues that the Romano-British name Artorius itself, of which Arthur is a Britannification, is quite rare and extremely unlikely to be in use outside this particular period of history.) In the second place, although actual dates are conspicuous by their absence in Geoffrey's account of Arthur, he does give a chronological fix by mentioning the Emperor Leo I (reigned 457-474), Pope "Sulpicius" (no such person, but the name is probably a garbled form of Simplicius, Pope from 468-483), and Lucius (possibly to be identified with one of the last mayfly Emperors of the West, Glycerius or Lucerius, whom Geoffrey's hypothetical sources may have dated—wrongly—469-470). Triangulation from these references produces the precise date of Riothamus' expedition. How much credibility all this has depends, of course, on the validity of the philological speculation involved—a practice I tend to take a jaundiced view of, though Ashe's arguments are fairly conservative and a far cry from the wild preposterousness of the theories of some of the myth critics. What really tips the scales for me, however, is a geographical reference. The last we hear of Riothamus is that he

was retreating from Bourg-de-Deols back into Burgundy via Bourges; the source here is Gregory of Tours' sixth-century *History of the Franks*. If you draw a line between those two towns and project it eastwards into the Duchy of Burgundy, you come to a town called—Avallon. It is found just where you might expect a wounded leader to be taken by a retreating army. Now, all those other names are speculation; but Avallon is right there in living color on page 76 of Shepherd's *Historical Atlas*. It is enough to convince me that, if "Riothamus" was not "the real Arthur," he was at the very least one of the strong high kings of Britain whose deeds were absorbed into the *Restitutor* mythos. But of course I, like Geoffrey Ashe, very much want to believe in a historical Arthur: I hope I succeed as well as he has in keeping wishful thinking firmly in check. (He does let go in the appendix, frankly labeled "A Fancy," where he draws up a hypothetical genealogy that makes Elizabeth II a direct descendant of Arthur. Oh well, he is the founder and chairman of Debrett's Arthurian Committee; let him have his fun.)

*The Discovery of King Arthur* is a well-written and scholarly study that ought to interest all but the most stubbornly romantic Arthurians, and I recommend it highly. As for the connection between the Arthur of literature and the Arthur of romance, I will let Ashe himself have the last word:

*During the Cadbury excavation, for which part of the money was raised by public appeals, some criticism was leveled at the project on the grounds that it was a deception. To the public, it was argued, Camelot meant only the Camelot of romance, which was obviously not there. When people grasped that it wasn't, they would feel cheated, and fund-raising for other excavations would then be harder. This was plausible, yet it turned out to be utterly wrong. The public appeals brought in increasing sums year by year. When guiding parties of visitors I was often surprised by the degree of their acceptance. They saw only trenches and postholes, pottery shards and corroded knives, tumbledown bits of wall. Yet, generally speaking, these were enough to evoke the spell. For at least a very large number of people it seemed not to depend on any particular imagery. As in the literary field, the quest was neither irrelevant nor destructive. The trenches, postholes, and so forth simply became part of the mythos. (Discovery of King Arthur, p. 190)*

Anne J. Braude

**THE ARTHURIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA**, Norris J. Lacy, ed., Peter Bedrick Books, 1986, 650 pp., \$16.95 pb.

If you already have Phyllis Ann Karr's *King Arthur Companion* you may think you don't need this book. Wrong. The two are perfect complements to each other. Karr concentrates on the content of the stories: people, places, and things. Lacy covers these in much less detail; but, on the other hand, he covers everything else. Not only are there the expected entries on the familiar Arthurian classics from the *Mabinogion* to Tennyson, there are entries for all the modern Arthurian stuff—not only T.H. White and Mary Stewart, already famous, but Susan Cooper, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL. The only significant omission I found was a lack of any mention of the Prince Valiant comic strip, which could be either because the editors were too highbrow and academic to read it or because the editor doing modern Arthurian fiction and the one doing Visual Arts each thought the other was covering it. The entries also cover obscure Arthuriana—did you know there was Arthurian literature in Japanese, Yiddish, Tagalog, and Serbo-Croatian?—and there are extensive articles on major themes and subjects like the aforementioned visual arts, Arthurian scholarship, and archaeological discoveries (this last by Geoffrey Ashe, the Isaac Asimov of Arthurian studies). Each item is signed with the initials of its contributor, and there are bibliographical notes. Particularly useful is the introductory analytical index, in which all items treated are arranged by category, for instant cross-referencing.

I don't think I'd go quite so far as to say that if you only own one Arthurian reference book, this one should be it, if only because I don't believe that anyone interested enough in Arthuriana to buy a reference book at all should stop at one. And Karr's book, published by a role-playing game company, would be more suitable for anyone who only wants a Who's Who of the legends. But for anyone curious about the history and development of the Matter of Britain; anyone who wants a handy guide to postmedieval as well as early Arthurian fiction; and anyone interested in the historical, critical, and archaeological aspects of the field, this book would have been well worth its original hardcover price of \$60, and it is a steal at \$16.95. Very highly recommended.

Anne J. Braude

**SWORD AT SUNSET**, Rosemary Sutcliff. NY: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1963.

It is reputed the best "historical" treatment of the Matter of Britain: what the last great defender of Romano-British civilization against the barbarians, destined to become legendary, might have been. The supernatural is excluded, though *wyrd* is not: a strong fate lies on Artos, and he turns from any temptation to set it aside. Seduced by Ygern, he will not by ending her life cut the thread when she reveals her identity and motive. In time Medraut comes to claim his birthright; and so the doom is at the last fulfilled. Guenhumara, too, has her doom to work. I cannot fault the story as story.

And yet: the characters did not, for me, come alive in the spaces between the chapters (as others *have* done). Like "Savonrola" Brown's literary executor, I watched them and I watched them; not a little finger did they raise. Is this a flaw in a completed tragedy? Do we care what Hamlet did at Wittenberg? Still, I feel disappointed; and I believe that the style has more than a little to do with it.

It is a convention that a first-person narrator must have total recall and a fluent narrative style; but the style given to poor Artos—not, of course, in dialogue—is relentlessly literary. A story must evoke, in the proper places, sight, sound, smell. But the narrator must be *characterized* by his attention to such things: they must bring him alive as well as the scene. Here and there the scene is made vivid.

But when I read, of springtime, that "Green flame ran through the woodlands, and above the marshes the furze was on fire," I can only think that no man, not even a Celt, ever spoke like that.

*Dainis Bisenieks*

**THE TOYNBEE CONVECTOR**, Ray Bradbury, Knopf, NY, 1988, 275 pp., \$17.95.

Although Ray Bradbury has been busily producing plays and screenplays, when he publishes a new book it truly is an event—particularly when the book is a collection of new and original short stories. His last collection of short stories was published eight years ago, and those stories were, for the most part, reprints of earlier works.

Bradbury may be billed as the "greatest living science fiction writer," but any real student of his work knows that he doesn't really write science fiction at all. And this new collection cannot be labeled "science fiction" by any stretch of the imagination.

Two of the tales involve time travel, and one story, reminiscent of *The Martian Chronicles*, takes place on Mars. The rest are a mixed blend of fantasy, horror, and mainstream stories.

Most of the 23 stories explore a central theme—the loss of innocence and the longing to return to a simpler, more innocent world. In "The Last Circus," for example, a boy suddenly realizes that he is growing up and he laments for the loss of his childhood, which is represented by the circus metaphor. The protagonist of "One Night of Your Life" mourns the break-up of his marriage and longs to return to a world of simple, innocent love. Even the mass murderer in "At Midnight in the Month of June" wants to return to a childhood of milk and cookies.



*Margaret B. Simon*

The disturbing part, of course, comes when we realize that we cannot recapture that innocence, except in memories and in stories. Bradbury relates America's loss of innocence. We are no longer the idealistic patriots of 1776, but have become the "ugly Americans" of 1988, complete with atomic bombs and psychopathic killers.

In some respects, Bradbury himself has lost his innocence as he tackles the problems of modern society. Stories like "Long Division" and "Promises, Promises" deal with divorce and adultery—light years away from the "father knows best" ideals of *Dandelion Wine*. These stories appear quite simple at first reading, but have a haunting quality that, like a subtle but lingering perfume, refuses to go away even after the book is put down.

*The Toynbee Convector* may not be the vintage Bradbury of the 1950's—those stories are among the best in American fiction—but the style is distinctively his: nostalgic, poetic, and deceptively simple.

As always, Bradbury's images carry the mood of the story as he writes directly from the heart, expecting and eliciting an emotional response to his prose. You'll find no great new ideas here, no new technology or interesting gimmicks. Instead, the book contains just good old-fashioned writing tempered by maturity and experience. The few mediocre stories in this collection are forgivable and the rest are unforgettable as they look at the loss of innocence in our society and in ourselves.

*Jim Anderson*

**THE ADVENTURES OF DR. ESZTERHAZY**, Avram Davidson, Owlswick Press, forthcoming.

I can claim to have read this work more often than anyone except the author: by way of copy preparation: twice over, for those five tales which appeared in *AMAZING*. And, after such an acid test, I still *like* them. (I am not in the other sense an interested party; I'm only a hireling of George Scithers, at hourly wages.) And I am not of one mind about Davidson's other works. Some of his stories are glorious triumphs of style over substance; others, not so glorious. I have found one novel (*Ursus of Ultima Thule*) radically unreadable; another (*Rork!*) radically un-readable. It *should* be possible to read a tale more than once, even, or *especially*, after one knows the outcome.

Style plays its part here; and Davidson is a stylist, who has not his like. Often he plays, and plays on and on, with words, images, characters. On and on; this could get wearying, and in other works does. But after a while one notices how *skillfully* the elephant is figure-skating....

Content: what is most notably solid, above all in the first five (but later-published) tales, is the setting: the ramshackle 19th-century Empire of Scythia-Pannonia-Transbalkania—which Dr. Eszterhazy, while fearing for its fate, loves. I find it more real than those People's Republics which are all that one will find on a modern map. The characters we meet are almost all comic, but also touching and even tragic. (The last tale has nothing funny in it at all.)

The polymath Dr. Eszterhazy (the first tale shows the start of his quest for knowledge) is not exactly a psychic investigator; there are so many things (some, in fact, mentioned) he could and did do in the purely natural realm. But the kind of thing that excites *our* interest has been his subject of study, too...though he could not, as

today, take a degree in it. So these stories do generally hinge on something at least paranormal. They range from the thrilling lighthearted to the episodically nightmarish: something I saw in *Vergil in Averno* also. That, at least, cannot be taken in large doses or in every mood. But you will buy this book to be richly entertained.

Not many will have the old Warner paperback *The Enquiries of Dr. Eszterhazy*, duplicating the latter half of this book.

Davidson is at work on an Eszterhazy novel; a self-contained episode is to appear in WEIRD TALES.

Dainis Bisenieks

**A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY ART**, Robert Weinberg, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 346 pp., 9.5 x 6.5 in, 1988, \$49.95.

No other genre has received as much attention for its illustrators as science fiction and fantasy. One publisher alone, Gerry de la Ree, has produced about 20 books and portfolios of Virgil Finlay, Stephen Fabian, Hannes Bok, Edd Cartier, and Clark Ashton Smith, with many of his other titles so profusely illustrated as to virtually become art books. The number of books of science fiction art, both in the United States and abroad, is so large it has never been adequately indexed and many of the histories of science fiction are so lavishly illustrated, in color and black-and-white, as to lay legitimate claim to being art books as well as histories.

A magnificent three-volume boxed set of the artists who illustrated the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs was produced by Russ Cochran, a specialty book publisher. Coffee-table books of individual fantasy artists' work are not uncommon and even the artists of fantastic comics, such as Alex Raymond, Hal Foster, Windsor McKay, Dick Calkins, and Joe Schuster are accorded elegant presentation and reproduction.

From the very beginning of the science fiction magazines the illustrators were critiqued by the readers as intently as were the authors. Frank R. Paul, whose ability to capture the spirit of science fiction has never been surpassed, was still so popular in 1939 that with the entire panoply of writers, editors, and artists to select from he was made the guest-of-honor of the first World Science Fiction Convention. For those not aware of it, Paul was the major illustrator of the first science fiction

magazine, AMAZING STORIES, in 1926. Before that he had contributed superlative interior wash and line drawings for SCIENCE AND INVENTION, which ran science fiction every issue for many years previous to the launching of AMAZING.

Relatively few artists of competence illustrated most of the science fiction magazines in the '30's and '40's. In addition to those named Hans Wesso, Elliot Dold, and Lawrence were exceptional and Howard V. Brown and Hubert Rogers did some fine cover art. In recent years, particularly with the flood of paperbacks, scores of young illustrators of outstanding talent have appeared, particularly in color work.

Weinberg in this volume takes a historical slant, emphasizing artists of unusual merit in fantasy illustrating from the 1890's up to the present. He has made an attempt to be definitive and has worked like a Trojan to gain information on both popular and little-known illustrators of science fiction and fantasy. Many of those who were very popular have been taken for granted literally and no attempt has been made to assemble data as basic as the dates of their births and deaths. In this regard in reviewing the book a scholarly handicap must be given for Weinberg has not had other bibliographies of fantasy artists to build on. He has had to go out and scavenge for his material, taking it where he could find it. Fortunately, Weinberg is still young enough so that he can carry on a continuous revision of his dictionary. He might not have to sit back and watch someone else use his work as a base and claim entire credit for a worthwhile and necessary project.

First of all, there are no illustrations in this book. That is the way it was intended. As I said, there are scores of picture books of fantasy artists and it is no problem to find samples of their work. The gap comes in discovering whether they are alive or dead, where they came from before they began fantasy illustrating, and where they went after they left. With book artists in particular, it is difficult to find a ready reference as to which works they illustrated. Before there were science fiction magazines there were artists who did outstanding work in the genre.

Take, for example, George Roux or Edouard Riou who sometimes had as many as 120 illustrations in a single Jules Verne book. Where do you readily find anything about them? Between 1890 and 1910 there was the remarkable work of Warwick Goble illustrating not only *The War of the Worlds* but also other novels and short stories by H.G. Wells. During the same period Henri

Lanos, a superlative stylist, possessed of an outstanding imagination, was notable any time he appeared. His striking illustrations on the tabloid-sized, fine paper, GRAPHICS in 1898 to 1899 were reduced for the first book publication of *When the Sleeper Wakes* (Harper & Bros, 1899) and then re-drawn for re-printing in the first issue of AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY (Winter, 1928) so as to reproduce on the rough finish paper. During that era Frank Pape was a popular illustrator who did marvelous magazine and book illustration.

A serious error which must be corrected in a future edition is the omission of Eric Pape who illustrated a number of H.G. Wells stories including "The War in the Air" done for the American PEARSON'S MAGAZINE in 1908-09, 20 of which were reproduced in the book (Macmillan, 1908). There also was an unusual series of illustrations by A. Michael in the PALL MALL serialization of that novel in England in 1908, 16 of which were reproduced in the first hard cover edition by Bell the same year. These were outstanding enough to rate him an entry which he doesn't receive. But Weinberg does include from that era Paul Hardy who was omnipresent in the British magazines of the late Victorian period illustrating science fiction, Stanley Wood who enhanced "Stories of Other Worlds" by George Griffith, later revised as a book under the title *The Honeymoon in Space* (Pearson's, 1909), and Fred P. Jane (founder of *Jane's Ships*), renowned for his illustrations for books of George Griffith, H.G. Wells, and his own science fiction novels such as *To Venus in Five Seconds* (1897). From this period, too, we find Claude Shepperson who did 65 illustrations for *The First Men in the Moon* by H.G. Wells from Britain's STRAND MAGAZINE, but when COSMOPOLITAN serialized the novel in the United States they had it illustrated by a new artist, A. Herring, who Weinberg does not include, but who is quite superior.

There seems to be an indication here that it was assumed that British and American magazines and British and American book publishers always used the same set of illustrations, and as can be seen by the foregoing this was not always true.

Though he has not been able to obtain much information on some of the landmark ARGOSY and ALL-STORY cover artists who did fantasy, at least Weinberg has included the prominent ones and most of them cannot be found elsewhere. There is Clinton Pettee who did the cover for

*Tarzan of the Apes* on the October, 1912, ALL-STORY magazine, a painting that has literally become an icon for the depiction of Tarzan ever since. J.P. Monahan, whose distinctive style was instantly recognizable, not only on the Munsey magazines, but on PEOPLE'S and who must be a contender if not the champion for illustrating fantasy for those publications. Modest Stein is a name that has achieved fame outside of pulp magazine circles but during World War I and into the '20's he was heavily used on the Munsey publications and did covers for Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ray Cummings, and Ralph Milne Farley and did the November, 1942, cover of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION illustrating "Overthrow" by Cleve Cartmill. Paul Stahr did many science fiction covers for ARGOSY, easily recognizable by the fact that they looked like posters. This is a holdover from the start he got in commercial art by painting posters for road shows. Robert A. Graef was most often seen by ARGOSY readers. Though Stahr and Graef are slotted as belonging to the late '20's and early '30's both of them were in full swing as illustrators for leading magazines before World War I.

A great many other illustrators of science fiction for publications which are not science fiction magazines are covered by Weinberg in this volume. They include Boris Artzybasheff, the Russian born artist who became nationally famous on the covers of TIME, who had done jackets for books by L. Sprague de Camp and Charles Finney; Mahlon Blaine whose bizarre and erotic line drawings were featured in special editions of books in the late '20's and early '30's and who did the jackets for many Edgar Rice Burroughs books for Canaveral Press; Joseph Clement Coll, arguably the greatest pen-and-ink illustrator ever produced in the United States who illustrated *The Messiah of the Cylinder* by Victor Rousseau and the frontispiece of *Moon Pool* by A. Merritt; Herbert Morton Stoops, for many years the premier cover artist of BLUEBOOK magazine who illustrated *Jungle Tales of Tarzan* by Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Kioga series by William Chester; Wallace Smith, whose illustrations for Ben Hecht's *Fantazius Mallare* in 1922 landed him in jail, and was rediscovered by science fiction fandom in the '40's and his illustrations were printed in offset fanzines and a portfolio of them was produced with an introduction by Ronald Cleyn.

Naturally, biographical sketches of most of the magazine artists and paperback and book illustrators are included here, not

excepting the popular, young contemporary talents. Under each biography Weinberg has listed works illustrated by the artist.

Leading off the volume is a long history of science fiction and fantasy art with emphasis on the magazines, the most comprehensive such yet to appear. What is unique is an essay entitled "What Exists" in which Weinberg reviews the location of known originals by many of the artists covered in the book. There is a listing of awards given to science fiction artists and to whom they were given, and a bibliography of books and articles about fantasy art, as well as an index of biographical entries and a comprehensive index of the contents of the volume.

Naturally there is a great variation in the amount of information available on individual artists. Inadequacies are indications of human research limitations for one man and not a lack of effort. To make a point of them would be comparable to belaboring shortcomings in Samuel Johnson's first major dictionary of the English language. Webster's unabridged dictionary wouldn't exist if Samuel Johnson hadn't started the ball rolling.

A few comments. Frank R. Paul was not discovered working on a "rural" magazine by Hugo Gernsback but he was a cartoonist for the JERSEY JOURNAL. Jersey City, NJ, was the second largest city in the state at that time with a population of 300,000. Howard Brown's early work was not done for ARGOSY in the late '20's, but he was a regular interior illustrator for REDBOOK magazine in 1906 and 1907. He appeared in PEARSON'S MAGAZINE in 1910. He was a cover artist for POPULAR SCIENCE after World War I and did most of the covers for Hugo Gernsback's SCIENCE AND INVENTION from the early '20's on, including the 1923 cover for the special "scientific fiction" number. From 1929 on he was a regular cover illustrator for Hugo Gernsback's RADIO CRAFT, SHORTWAVE CRAFT, and TELEVISION NEWS. In other words, his science fiction illustrating was no happenstance, he was thoroughly familiar with the field and had a talent for drawing technical scenes. His black-and-white work in 1906 was far superior to anything he ever did for ASTOUNDING STORIES in the '30's. He also did science fiction covers for POPULAR MAGAZINE in 1930, four for "Margo the Mighty" by Sean O'Larkin alone.

This is certainly a basic reference book for anyone who cares about science fiction and fantasy art and for any library.

Sam Moskowitz

**CELTIC MYTHOLOGY**, Ward Rutherford, Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, U.K., distributed in U.S. by Sterling Publishing Co., 2 Park Av., NY NY 10016, 1987, 160 pp., \$9.95.

**PRACTICAL CELTIC MAGIC**, Murry Hope, Aquarian Press (as above), 1987, 256 pp., \$9.95.

Despite the fact that a great many of us come from British and European origins, we know very little about the customs and beliefs of our own direct ancestors. Both of these new books are intended to correct this by approaching the subject from different viewpoints. The Rutherford book deals more with the heroic aspects of the Celtic myths, the bards, Druidism, and the shamanic tradition, whereas the Hope book focuses on magical systems, mythical beasts, archetypes, and initiation. You might say that Rutherford will appeal more to the historian in the reader while Hope will be preferred by the magic oriented SF and fantasy fan. I mention SF and fantasy, as so much of Celtic lore finds its way into modern paperback novels. This is not to say that one book is superior to the other, as both have much to offer—it really depends on where your interests lie.

Rutherford notes that there is no direct evidence that King Arthur ever existed but feels this is immaterial as Arthur has gained a foothold in popular folklore every bit as substantial as Sherlock Holmes did. He cites contemporary documents that omit the name of the victorious commander of the Battle of Mount Badon, an omission comparable to omitting the name of the Duke of Wellington as the victor of the Battle of Waterloo.

The Celts used to go into battle naked. Perhaps this is a custom we should have preserved in this century. However, he says that you should not get the impression that these people were a bunch of barbarians—sort of an early version of the Hell's Angels. He says their fierce attitude hid a cultural sensitivity that resulted in the production of many fine works of art.

Rutherford says that there were three main classes in Celtic society—the Druids, the Vates (or diviners), and the Bards. The Roman occupation of Britain put an end to the military aspect of the Celts. The Irish love of a ballad is a remnant of the ancestral musical heritage. The Scottish tartan is a reflection of the weaving skills of these people, so there are still many cultural influences extant in today's world. One thing I found particularly intriguing is the reference to "magic islands" in the mythology. According to tradition, these places

were areas haunted by good and evil spirits, places where no one ever dies and "where the inhabitants had the power to whisk certain individuals to their domains with the speed of thought." In the section on shamanism, it is fascinating to reflect on how one set of customs in human society resembles another many thousands of miles away (i.e. the American Indians and the Eskimos). It is as if there is a built-in timing mechanism in the genetic structure. Apparently the practice of scalping your enemies originated with the Celts. All the major legends are covered and Britain and Ireland rate separate chapters. There may be some very odd factors at work in the past, as there is a tale that the people of Ireland are said to have come "out of the skies." Rutherford feels that this may have some connection with the lost land of the North—Hyperborea.

The Hope book has a major chapter on the Welsh and Scottish traditions which the Rutherford book lacks. There is a majesty to the huge hill figures such as the Cerne Giant that still impresses visitors today, and these elaborate constructions are dealt with in depth. The author cites a fascinating encounter with a ghostly figure dressed in Bronze Age attire while on a visit to Silbury Hill. It stepped in front of the headlights, then vanished. The pantheon of the Celtic gods and goddesses is listed with analysis of all the various characteristics of each. Ogma, for example, seems to have a relationship with the astrological sign of Leo as he is described as "the Champion," "the Sun Faced," and "the Lion Skinned." He was the deity of learning and writing. There are a number of helpful charts so one may understand the ties between the various god figures.

A chapter in this book is devoted to the Arthurian tales, as well as the religious significance of the Holy Grail (supposedly, it was fashioned from the emerald that dropped from Lucifer's forehead when he fell from heavenly grace—noteworthy is the fact that in the East god figures are frequently depicted with a jewel in the center of the forehead, traditionally corresponding with the seat of psychic powers—the pineal or "third eye"). The Cup or Cauldron legend has overtones of fertility rites and predates Christianity by thousands of years.

Mr. Hope believes that the custom of morris dancing also originated in fertility rites and was designed to energize the growth of crops. This is in a chapter on the occult significance of Celtic music. In the realm of folklore it is stated that the fairies of Shakespeare's plays may be based on

the legend of a short troglodyte race that occupied caves back in the dim pre-history of Britain. The author even goes so far as to suggest that the traditional science fiction concept of parallel universes may bear some relationship to the actual existence of creatures that are prominent in folklore. He speaks of inhabited energy zones that can be perceived by anyone who has gained control of the right hemisphere of his or her brain. If the rational reasoning left side was not as strong in ancient times, it may be that the individual back then had much more contact with the so-called "super-natural" than we do today.

Diagrams on "tree magic" bear a great deal of resemblance to the Hebrew Kabbalah. There is a fascinating chart on what members of the Round Table are linked with various signs of the zodiac. For example, Sir Gawain is connected with Leo, and Sir Lancelot with Sagittarius. The chapter on Earth rites at such places as Glastonbury leads to speculation that modern-day UFO sightings occur frequently at such places due to the abundance of natural energies (possibly electromagnetic). Certainly psychic powers of various types seem to be enhanced, and we must not forget that Merlin was supposed to have been buried there.

Speaking personally, I found the Hope book to be superior, as it attempts a much wider perspective. However, both books have their virtues, and will inform the reader of aspects of our heritage that have large been forgotten in the mists of time. If you write historical or fantasy fiction dealing with this period, you will find both books invaluable for research material. One would think from the titles that they are dull, scholarly works but nothing could be further from the truth. Detailed and interesting for those who love the mysterious past.

W. Ritchie Benedict

**WEIRD TALES**, Summer 1988, Special Tanith Lee Issue, \$3.50.

**WEIRD TALES**, the classic of the pulps, has been rejuvenated and is back with a vengeance.

No, that is not a cliché; vengeance, horror, and the just plain strange have been the stock-in-trade of **WEIRD TALES** since its first incarnation, way back when in the 1920s. And no one does the strange and uncanny quite like Tanith Lee, the featured author in this, the second edition of the magazine's umpteenth reincarnation.

Lee's vivid prose bears only as much resemblance to most writing as the richest fudge bears to a cup of weak cocoa—and her two featured pieces, "The Unrequited Glove" and "The Kingdoms of the Air," are like a trip to the chocolatier's. In the first, a rich man's fey, jilted mistress exacts a rather unusual revenge from a distance. In the second, a knight gone questing learns why adventures end more often in failure than in death. Both are written in Lee's detailed, descriptive style that yanks the reader back to reality at the end, leaving only the feeling of having been reluctantly awakened from a fascinating dream.

An added bonus for Tanith Lee fans is an interview in which the author discusses the nature of horror, the appeal of vampires and her methods of writing. There is also a bibliography.

(Speaking of which, I lost my paperback copy of *Sung In Shadow* in a tragic accident involving a faulty set of bathroom pipes. Daw tells me it is already out of print, after being published for the first time in 1983; if anyone has a copy he or she is willing to part with, I gratefully and graciously accept it.)

The rest of this issue of **WEIRD TALES** is no less enjoyable. I especially liked Morgan Llywelyn's "Princess," a brief and poignant twist to a familiar fairy tale, and Ken Wisman's "My Mother's Purse," about a child's determination to see the well-guarded contents of that magical receptacle, his mother's pocketbook. Other stories that are included are "The Initiate" by Ronald Anthony Cross, "Bad Lands" by Nancy Springer, "Fruiting Bodies" by Brian Lumley (chilling and somewhat nauseating for those of us with strong imaginations and weak stomachs), "After the Last Elf is Dead" by Harry Turtledove, several good pieces of verse, letters and book reviews.

This resurrected entity is also graced with quality stock and binding, including cover art which both evokes the old **WEIRD TALES** and illustrates the new. The magazine is about 130 pages long, with wonderful graphics and easy-to-read print but, alas, no familiar smell of wood pulp. Perhaps when I find this issue in my closet 60 years hence, it will have gained that one omission that keeps it from being utterly satisfying.

The subscription rates are \$18 for six issues and \$34 for 12 issues. Send funds to **WEIRD TALES**, Dept. T, P.O. Box 13418, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Fawn Fitter

**SISTER LIGHT, SISTER DARK**, Jane Yolen, St. Martin's Press, NY, 1988, 244 pp., \$16.95.

It used to be that science fiction was considered to be a strictly male domain, with fantasy largely being assigned to female readers. Of course with the great changes in role models during the 1960's there has been much crossing back and forth over these barriers. Jane Yolen is now well known for her many works of fantasy and children's literature.

This new book is very strange in a number of ways. It draws upon a deep well of folklore, myth, and historical fantasy. It is a coming-of-age story set in a matriarchal society. Each part of the story is preceded by a prologue explaining the prevailing myths and the history is related in a separate section by a narrator presumably many thousands of years in the future looking back on a more primitive society, much in the way present-day historians regard the myths of Beowulf and others. The heroine Jenna is a warrior and was raised on a mountainside after the death of her mother. She has a friend Pynt from whom she is inseparable. There is an earth Goddess figure known as Mother Alta who advises Jenna. As in all medieval fantasies there is a conflict and the land is torn by war but this is not your typical work of sword-and-sorcery.

True, there are ballads and poems throughout commemorating events in this strange world, but they are not epics of magic—more of legend. Jenna must contend with the figure of Skada who is her dark sister. She comes from a mirror in what science fiction writers would call an alternate world.

I got the impression that the author must be deeply immersed in Jungian psychology, for there are echoes of this throughout the book. Dr. Karl Jung had the concept of the "shadow" which is a repository of all the negative (or at least disowned) traits we try to hide from the rest of the world. Sooner or later though, we must confront this figure before it grows too powerful for us to control. In the second Star Wars movie, **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**, Luke Skywalker confronted the spectre of Darth Vader in a cavern. When he struck at it the head rolled off. The face behind the mask was revealed to be his own. The confrontation with the shadow can be symbolic, as in a dream sequence, or actual. In **JAWS**, the shadow figure was a giant white shark and police chief Roy Neary had to confront his fear of death in order to destroy the creature. Jungian or

Freudian psychology usually figures in some way in all the great horror movies. Jung had another concept too—the anima or animus—the male or female side of every man or woman—something else hidden in the subconscious.

In this book the fact that we have a society of warrior women means that the hidden male side of the female has become predominant. I found that it much resembles some of the fantasy works of Michael Coney. It is extremely well done, but this type is an acquired taste and may not be for everyone. It is never quite clear whether the society is extraplanetary, postholocaust, or what, but in terms of the impression and atmosphere that Ms. Yolen is trying to convey this is not strictly necessary.

The plot moves well and the characters are well drawn. Fans of the genre might find it a different pace from the usual blood/magic style of fantasy. It is intended for an adult audience, even though the roots are in children's literature. Children, however, will not be able to grasp the deep psychological references, so it appears the author is trying to have the best of both worlds. I must admit quite frankly that this type of book is not my favorite kind of reading, but I must admire the skill and detail that has been put into it. An unusual switch upon the standard fare, but be warned—it is not for everyone. It should find a wide audience among female fans of fantasy. However, and I do not say this simply because the author is a woman. It just has that "feel" to it.

W. Ritchie Benedict

**THE BEST OF SHADOWS**, Charles L. Grant (ed.), Doubleday Foundation, 1988, 240 pp., \$15.95.

Mr. Grant admits in his introduction that his anthology is not, strictly speaking, a "Best of"—he would rather call these stories from past *Shadows* (1-10) "distinguished representatives of what I hope are distinguished examples of another of the genre's camps." Some of the camps that he has purposely avoided are those who present members who SHOUT "Boo" at the tops of their lungs rather than whisper the sweet words of horror.

"Naples" by Avram Davidson is a decidedly downbeat little

stroll through that city with a unique punchline made possible by that leisurely travelogue. This story opened the first *Shadows* and won Best Short Story World Fantasy Award.

Another World Fantasy Best Short Story Award went to Tanith Lee's "The Gorgon". A writer who swims out to a small Greek island to meet the title character encounters a most unexpected fate.

Remember being in bed, at night, in the dark, alone with your imagination? Nancy Holder does in "Moving Night".

Economy is a necessary quality of short stories. In the span of a few thousand words, characters, locations, moods, and situations have to develop *and* be entertaining. "Jamie's Grave" by Lisa Tuttle is a good example of where all these elements are not only presented but are interdependent. Some good digging here.

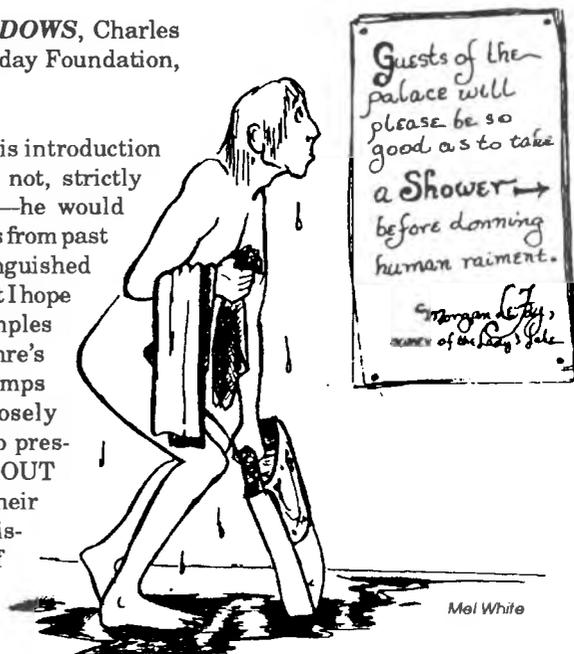
Marc Laidlaw has another go at children abed, at night, in the dark, etc. in "Sneakers".

A lesser Stephen King story, "The Man Who Would Not Shake Hands", is a predictable *club* yarn—but don't that boy from Down Maine-way keep it interestin'?

"At the Bureau" by Steve Rasnic Tem is a nifty little vignette length bit reminiscent of Heinlein's "All You Zombies" or "By His Bootstraps".

You get six more stories for your money, along with appendices of the *Shadow* series by volume and by author. Enjoy.

Michael Bastraw



Mei White

GREAT HUGO!  
THEY ACTUALLY  
ARE GOING TO HAVE  
A LETTERCOL!



# Laistrai

William Rotsler

## Steve Stiles

8631 Lucerne Rd.  
Randallstown, MD 21133

I particularly enjoyed your column, Ed, as well as Anne Braude's. It's a major effort of will not to pounce on Poul Anderson's asinine swipe at us poor misunderstood (gasp!) liberals; it seemed on a par with characterizing conservatives with being greedy and warlike. Although, come to think of it....

John Boardman's article on Wally Wood caught my interest inasmuch as Wally was one of my idols back in my teenage years. I even remember thinking, back when I was twelve and devouring my first issue of *INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION*, that if only I could someday draw as well as Wally Wood my happiness would be complete, and all the other benefits would follow. Well, twelve year-olds shouldn't be held responsible for all their insights, and in light of what happened to Wood, this is grimly ironic. John suggests that alcoholism and self-destruction are common among artists, and certainly there were many 20th century artists hooked on the bottle; it was a certain romantic macho image that was almost an expected image, and solitary work involving creativity on demand can create stresses leading to drinking problems. But I think that Wood's demons went deeper than that. Interviews with other EC artists frequently mentioned that Wood was a complex man who kept his emotions tightly in check. When I was lucky enough to visit Wood's studio, I was often confronted with a man who could be alternately warm and friendly or guarded and paranoid. On one occasion he impressed me with a very knowledgeable critique of Heinlein's writing, and it was obvious that here was a pro who kept in touch with his SF roots. Unfortunately, the 60's and 70's offered Wood very little opportunity to do what he did best, and as the Big Two had a virtual stranglehold on comics publish-

ing back then, most comic book illustrators had to work in a kind of paternalistic serfdom, with little negotiable power—or get out. *WITZEND* (which, incidentally, was originally intended to be Dan Adkins' fanzine) was an attempt to break out of that, but the audience and distribution network just weren't there. It's saddening to think that if Wood's health and morale had held together for a few more years, he would have had opportunity and freedom aplenty in today's wider direct-sales field. A field he and *WITZEND* helped to create.

## David Palter

137 Howland Ave.  
Toronto ONT M5R 3B4  
Canada

Buck Coulson is correct. It is not necessarily true that someone who likes Leslie Fish will automatically like Phil Ochs. I should say that people who like Leslie Fish certainly have some very real potential for also appreciating Phil Ochs. There is a connection between the musical style and the musical philosophy of Phil Ochs and Leslie Fish.

In general this is a wonderful issue. I enjoyed every column. Anne Braude's "You're Entitled to Your Own Ridiculous Opinion" makes its point extremely well. I do agree with her that Creationism and the neo-Nazi attempt to write a revisionist history of the Holocaust are sufficiently dangerous to public sanity not to warrant the protection of freedom of speech. I think that the freedom to promulgate insanity in a society must have some limits. It is also clear that any time you attempt to set such limits there are great hazards as well. Once you begin censoring you will not necessarily know where to stop. I guess that on the whole I would rather see no censorship than too much censorship.

I also enjoyed Diana Paxson's "Exploita-

tion and Inspiration, the Search for Roots." I would never question her right to discuss mythology of any origin regardless of her own personal ethnic background. Ideas belong to everybody.

For the most part I agree with Don D'Amassa's piece on horror fiction. I've read quite a bit of horror fiction, particularly by the two masters of the field, Stephen King and Peter Straub. I must agree that the quality of their writing is frequently superior to that of most science fiction. A lot of horror fiction is merely a horrifying form of science fiction and the distinction is wholly arbitrary. I don't agree with him 100% because I think there is a lot of horror fiction that is quite unoriginal and formulaic. [Sturgeon's Law! erm]

Harry Andruschak's speculations about Moriarty's paper on "The Dynamics of an Asteroid" are more plausible if less exciting than those of Dr. Asimov.

Judith Holman's illustration in the "Jest Ahht" section is quite evocative. It suggests a whole imaginary world in its own way.

The centerpiece of the magazine is Piers Anthony's "Wordly Goods." I am quite impressed with Piers Anthony's writing and he makes his point extremely well about the importance of language and writing, and the dangers of censorship. I enjoy the fact that he states that censorship is the work of Satan, although it is interesting to compare his article with Anne Braude's column. With censorship as with all things we want to avoid going to extremes.

I don't agree with Ray Nelson that science fiction necessarily has poor characterization and should not have good characterization. I do agree that characterization is not the central purpose of science fiction and that one can write very good science fiction with minimal characterization, as Ray Nelson himself has done. But at the same time it's possible to write good science fiction with good characterization and it can only add to the fiction if you do so.

I am once again quite impressed by Sam Moskowitz and his very lengthy section in Gincas giving further information on the background of H.G. Wells' concept of the land ironclads, and also explaining his own role as a scholar of the science fiction field.

In reference to Joseph Major's comments on the blind wanting everything they can get from the government, I understand the Libertarian principle that it is better for all altruistic processes to be voluntary than coerced through government but, let us face it, we don't live in a Libertarian soci-

ety. Given the society that we do live in, the fact that most altruistic activity is through government is something we must expect until such time as there are revolutionary changes in American public consciousness. Although at times I have great sympathy for Libertarianism, I have to wonder whether there are enough people in the world who are capable of assuming a degree of personal responsibility that is appropriate for the amount of liberty that a Libertarian would grant them. Liberty is only valuable if it is used responsibly. If liberty is used irresponsibly it is simply an invitation to criminality.

I appreciated Michael Bastraw's tribute to Robert A. Heinlein. There is no doubt in my mind that Heinlein was one of the greatest science fiction writers, if not the very greatest of all time. His death certainly should be appropriately noted in science fiction fandom. The passing of Robert A. Heinlein is in a very real sense the end of an era.

The back cover illustration is quite charming. I am not exactly sure what it is a picture of but I would say that it is the interior of a very complicated spaceship or a space station. It has a very interesting density of structure. The front cover is also quite lovely and striking in its use of green as well as black and white.

#### **Sam Moskowitz**

361 Roseville Ave.  
Newark, NJ 07107

I was very pleased with your presentation of my letter. There are, however, two errors to correct. On p. 37, top of the second column where it says "Swinton later sued for libel and lost." It should be "sued for libel and won!" He was not the first to conceive of the tank-type vehicle but he won because Wells used unflattering statements regarding his character so that who invented the tank became a side issue.

On p. 39, last paragraph of the article where it states I wrote an 1,800 word article on the science fiction writing class in history which I conducted at City College of New York (now City University of New York) in 1953, that should be 18,000 words. That's right, 18,000 words.

#### **Laura Todd**

404 Brower Ave.  
Oaks, PA 19456

This may seem a mundane subject to some, but I would like to say a few words about

recycling. I guess we all know about our country's trash crisis and about the striping of our world's forests to produce paper. I recently came across a unique catalog of recycled paper products put out by the Earth Care Paper Co. This company, in addition to offering attractive stationary and greeting cards, sells office quality paper by the ream at a reasonable price. The catalog includes samples of various grades of paper, and I tell you it is as good as or better than the usual tree-wasting kind. They even have a #20 bond suitable for manuscripts.

In the past one of the objections to recycling has been that "There's no market for recycled products." Here's our chance to show them they're wrong. Write to Earth Care Paper Co., P.O. Box 3335, Madison WI 53704 and ask for their catalog. I hope you won't consider this a commercial. I'm not making any money out of it. Just consider it a public service announcement on behalf of our planet.

So, David, you've solved the Middle East crisis, eh? Assuming you can get the Israelis to move to New Mexico en masse, how do you think the local Native Americans will feel about it? Perhaps they'll just take the place of the Palestinians, eh? (Of course one might say that they're in the same situation as it is, having had their country taken from them already.)

I was very interested in Piers Anthony's comments on Amnesty International and the effectiveness of letter-writing appeals on behalf of prisoners of conscience. He says that letter writing is a waste of time because despotic leaders will not be influenced by these appeals. I have just joined A.I., and the whole time I was writing my first batch of letters, I wondered if Anthony could be right.

A.I. often quotes former prisoners to the effect that "after 100 letters, I got my shoes back. After 200, I got a visit to the doctor...." The prisoners also stress the psychological boost they received from knowing they were not forgotten. For this reason alone I feel it is worth while to write letters.

As to Anthony's claim that a despot, like a schoolyard bully, will not be moved by appeals to conscience: maybe he's right, but on the other hand, maybe some bullies are the sort of cowards who will hesitate to commit their atrocities if they think someone is watching. Some believe that Hitler would not have carried out his genocide program if the world had protested more strongly; he went ahead after assuming no one cared.

#### **Anne J. Braude**

Mole End  
6721 E. McDowell #309A  
Scottsdale, AZ 85257

Diana's column was (as usual) both enjoyable and enlightening. On trying to create something original in the context of traditional lore—to wear, in Robert Graves' phrase, "the family nose for individual use"—I have particularly enjoyed two approaches to the problem. One is that of Patricia Wrightson, an Australian writer who mixes creatures from the mythology of the aborigines with contemporary events and characters. Her books are mostly published as juvenile/YA, but a few years back Ballantine/Del Rey put out her trilogy, *The Ice is Coming*, *The Dark Bright Water*, and *Journey Behind the Wind*. Akin to this is the so-called Urban Faerie genre. Unlike the more traditional door-into-Elfland approach, where a character from the contemporary world enters Faerie and has adventures there, these writers set their stories in the contemporary world, and it is the otherworldly beings who have to adapt. My favorite writers of this ilk are Emma Bull (*War for the Oaks*) and Charles de Lint, whose books have a strong admixture of horror that almost, but not quite, puts me off. Of course, Charles Williams and Diana herself have done the same with archetypal and mythical figures.

Diana talked about Western imperialism in religion and the contemporary reaction against it; I am surprised, since she is a musician herself, that she did not refer to the revival of interest in ethnic music, especially in the Roman Catholic Church's willingness to allow non-Western settings of the Mass, such as the Congolese "Missa Luba" popular in the Sixties. I have a lovely recording called "A Mass and Hymns from the Monastery of Keur Moussa, Senegal": it combines African and French Catholic influences. They use quite a lot of stringed instruments; the result is often more like the music of medieval minstrels than like "Missa Luba".

If John Boardman enjoys sword-and-sorcery parodies outside the comics field, he might try Terry Pratchett's first two Discworld books, *The Colour of Magic* and *The Light Fantastic*, which send up Conan, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, and Pern. The third book isn't a parody, and I haven't seen the later ones yet. [At NoLaCon Terry Pratchett told me he is working on the 9th Discworld book! erm]

David Palter's proposal to relocate Israel in New Mexico is not likely to go over too well with a few folks who might justifiably feel that they have a prior claim—such

as the Zuni, the Apache, and the Navajo, for starters. Not to mention that since the worst-case scenario for the Southwest features fierce conflict over water rights, they might find themselves smack in the middle of the same military/political situation—this time fighting people who know how to do it, as cattle ranchers have been shooting up sheepherders and farmers for well over a century, not to mention the range wars among themselves. I can see the movie version now: ARIEL SHARON VS. BILLY THE KID.

My own solution to the Middle East problem, which looked a whole lot more plausible before peace broke out in the Persian Gulf, was to wait until Khomeini's autogenocidal war against Iraq had succeeded in exterminating the entire population of Iran, and then hand the latter country over to the Palestinians, who would be getting a bigger and much richer territory to compensate for losing what they regard as home. (The above remarks are not intended to imply that the Iraqis are the good guys in the Persian Gulf war; there are no good guys in that war.) A recent issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC (TNR) contained a more seriously intended suggestion that a Palestinian homeland be created within Israel as a sort of Bantu republic, completely surrounded on all sides by Israeli territory; the surrounding corridors of Israeli land (the country is too narrow for them to be more) would be fully developed, instead of just the area on the Mediterranean coast. This would assuage Israel's greatest fear: that an independent Palestinian state sharing a border with one of the surrounding Arab states could be used as a staging ground for terrorist raids or invasion. The plan has one slight flaw: I cannot conceive of either side actually accepting it.

Piers Anthony is dead wrong when he compares Amnesty International's letter-writing campaigns on behalf of Prisoners of Conscience, aimed at dictatorial regimes, to sucking up to a bully—they are rather *ganging* up on a bully: all the little guys getting together to tell the big guy they won't let him pick on them any more—a traditional literary theme at least since the Exodus. Piers (who probably knows better when he stops to think of it) forgets that even though they have an enormously good opinion of themselves, bullies and tyrants also want to be popular, to have the good opinion of others. Why else did the Nazis, who were so sure that their Final Solution to the Jewish Question was a good and a right thing, take such pains to keep the death camps a secret from the rest of

the world? Wouldn't they have assumed it would eagerly follow their example? Why else does the Ku Klux Klan want its own newscast on public-access cable TV? Why else is the foreign press banned from covering events in South Africa and on the West Bank of the Jordan? Why else does the South African government not dare to lock up Archbishop Tutu? And why else has the Thatcher government just banned the live radio and TV coverage of Irish spokespersons for those groups that they have designated (without any sort of due process) as pro-terrorist? (One group included is Sinn Fein; it will be interesting to see if the ban is applied to the campaign speeches of that party's elected member of the British Parliament.) Recent news stories about that action and the concurrent ruling that remaining silent during interrogation may be regarded as incriminating, against which there is no recourse under Britain's unwritten constitution, reminds us how frail a barrier protects our First and Fifth Amendment rights.

Piers is also slightly off beam in his interpretation of "the Word" in the Johanne gospel. The word translated here is the Greek *logos*, a term used by Philo of Alexandria to mean God's creating and revealing mediator, after the Stoic *logos*, the principle and pattern that gave the world or cosmos its character and coherence. Paul uses the term *sophia*, Christ as the wisdom of God, drawing on the OT tradition of Lady Wisdom, the self-revelation of creation and the revelation of God in and through creation, sometimes identified with the pre-incarnate Christ or seen as the missing female element in the Godhead. (I would like to thank *Harper's Bible Dictionary* for making me sound as if I actually know what I'm talking about.) So "Word" actually means not the basic unit of language but something more like grammar as a whole—the form or pattern that organizes language into meaning.

Which is not to say that I don't agree wholeheartedly with his comments that follow, especially with his passion for evocative words (one of which is, in fact, "grammar," cognate with "gramarye" (magic), "grimoire" (a spellbook), and "glamour" (originally a spell). Check out such words as "enchantment," "evocative," "incantation," and "rune" in Eric Partridge's *Origins* (which no word freak should be without) to see the fundamental manifestation in human thought that language is power. Just for the hell of it, since I had the book out, I checked my favorite word, "mole," and was led first to "meal," then to "mould," which of course suggested "mouldiwarp";

"warp" led me to "vervain" (where I found that, obviously enough, "mouldiwarp" means "earth-thrower") and finally to, of all places, "verse." Does all language inevitably lead back to language itself? Other wonderfully evocative poems besides "Recessional" include Masefield's "Cargoes" (Ninevah again), Chesterton's "Battle of Lepanto," Stephen Vincent Benet's "American Names" ("Bury my heart at Wounded Knee."), and just to show that modern poets haven't lost the knack, Archibald MacLeish's "You, Andrew Marvell," with its wonderful patterning of time and history.

On fiction, especially fantasy, and truth: I think Plato was the first to accuse the poets (i.e. fiction-makers) of telling lies—in particular, smutty anecdotes about the gods—and to advocate getting rid of them. (On the natural antipathy between poets and politicians, see MacLeish's "A Poet Speaks from the Visitor's Gallery.") Perhaps the classic defense is contained in Sir Philip Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* (1583): "Only the Poet, ... lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature.... Her world is brazen, the Poets only deliver a gold." (I have modernized the spelling.) Ursula K. LeGuin put it even better in her introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*: "Fiction writers, at least in their braver moments, do desire the truth: to know it, speak it, serve it. But they go about it in a peculiar and devious way, which consists in inventing persons, places, and events which never did and never will exist or occur, and telling about these fictions in detail and at length and with a great deal of emotion, and then when they are done writing down this pack of lies, they say, There! That's the truth!"

On David Shea's "Cultural Analysis of Pern": I can't remember any cats, but there are canine turnspits mentioned in the description of the kitchens at Ruatha in *Dragonflight*. If you're only bringing useful animals, you presumably (unless you're in a Heinlein novel) don't bring cats, since you're not bringing mice; but it's odd that high-tech space colonists would take along not herd, guard, or watchdogs, or even hunting dogs, but a breed whose practical use went out around the time of William and Mary. [Even if mice didn't manage to stow away, wouldn't the colonists have to worry about native animals that filled the same ecological niche? erm] [If the niche is that of household pest, it didn't exist before the colonists came; if it is simply that of

small scavenger, the niche for cats is presumably filled by what already preys on the mouse-equivalent.ajb] The Conclave sounds as if it is derived from the Anglo-Saxon Witenagemot, which was a sort of cross between a Privy Council and a House of Lords. It had the right to choose the successor to the king, but was restricted to choosing among candidates of royal blood. The sexual license of the Weyr is not just a matter of privilege; it is partly a reflection of the fact that human pairings are sometimes dictated by dragon pairings. It may have originated as a design to spread the gene for telepathy with dragons as widely as possible.

Shea discusses the Harpers' Guild as a conservative force for cultural uniformity, even comparing them to the Jesuits; but he overlooks the revolutionary role played by the Harperhall under Robinton in effecting the reforms advocated by Benden Weyr and in changing its own craft with innovations like cross-crafting and female apprentices. In inimical or ultraconservative holds, the resident harper acts almost as a secret agent (like the Jesuits in post-Reformation England?). An interesting and thought-provoking essay.

Tamar Lindsay's piece on Crocodile Dundee and Peter Pan was also good. I speak as one who has seen neither Dundee film (the sequel, according to the reviews, doesn't develop the potential of either main character) but who has read *Peter Pan* in both novel and play forms: the stage directions in the latter transform the tone, giving it a very different message from the sentimental one we are familiar with. I also enjoyed reading her Magic Lantern Reviews, though it seems that Tamar, to paraphrase Will Rogers, never saw a science fiction or fantasy film she didn't like; some of her recommended ones have been panned by every other reviewer I've seen. Incidentally, she should have warned people concerned about their cholesterol level, not diabetics, about the schmaltz level of *THE PRINCESS BRIDE*: schmaltz is chicken fat. One absolutely marvelous fantasy film I've seen recently was the PBS repeat of Douglas Fairbanks Sr.'s 1924 silent version of *THE THIEF OF BAGDAD*, in a style influenced by Diaghilev that makes it almost balletic, with wonderful Art Nouveau sets by William Cameron Menzies. Parts of the film were tinted—not colorized: the entire frame was colored in varying intensities of one shade, like a sepia print except that these were red or green or blue. The Cavern of Fire, the undersea sequence, and the conjuring up of an army a la Cadmus were spectacular.

Despite all the innovations in special effects these days, have the movies produced anything that stirs our sense of wonder more than this film or Cocteau's *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, both made during the silent era?

It's ironic that just as Ed cuts off the ongoing discussion of Kent State in *NIEKAS*, the whole complex of Vietnam-era issues is revived by the controversy over Dan Quayle's National Guard service. Of course, the thing that most distresses me about Quayle is that he graduated from DePauw University. I'd like to point out that when I graduated, the standards were much higher. (I have a probably unjustified queasy feeling when I think that there is a man who might become president in the near future who is younger than I am.) My grades were good enough to get me into not only Indiana University graduate school but Berkeley (where I actually went) and Phi Beta Kappa as well. (This with a double major: English and History.) I applied for a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, usable anywhere, and for one of the National Defense Educational Act fellowships that the IU Department of Comparative Literature had to bestow. I got the Wilson, but only made the first alternate for the NDEA, so was not motivated to go to IU. I suspect that one reason I lost out was that the NDEA was intended to promote the study of strategically important foreign languages, such as Russian and Chinese, and one of my languages was Latin. On the other hand, if the Punic Wars break out again, I'll be ready. To make one more odious comparison, Hendrik Hertzberg reported in a recent *TNR* that Quayle flunked the departmental exam supposedly required for graduation, but got his degree anyway. (Pulliam family members could probably get away with axe murder at DePauw; the family are *big* benefactors.) I not only graduated with Honors in English but was invited in my senior year to participate in Honors seminars in two other departments (Classics and History), only it turned out to be illegal. (I got into the Classics seminar anyway, by registering under a different course number: since there were only four senior majors in the department, the chairman—and only full-time faculty member—was willing to cut corners.) I also was able to arrange tutorials at various times in my undergraduate career in Japanese history, 19th and 20th century French poetry, and Catullus and Horace. DePauw in my day was a wonderful place for anyone who went to college with the intention of actually learning something. Incidentally, Quayle's argu-

ment that his grades being too low for admission to IU law school should be offset by DePauw being a tougher school doesn't hold up: the catchment area for the Indiana University graduate and professional schools includes quite a few other high-quality private colleges, such as Earlham and Wabash. Maybe I should be running for vice president? As soon as I can get a charisma transplant....

And now for something completely different: a kind word about Mike Bastraw from me. I liked his requiem for Heinlein. I have a suspicion that if you gathered the entire membership of SFWA in one room and asked them, "Which of you first got interested in science fiction because you read a Heinlein juvenile when you were between twelve and fourteen years old?" every person under fifty would stand up. That was the age at which I first read *The Rolling Stones* and *Have Space Suit, Will Travel*, and I still read them with enjoyment. The quality in Heinlein's writing that most impresses me is the sheer proliferation of invention: *Methuselah's Children*, for example, which is a short novel, contains enough ideas for two full-length novels and a handful of short stories. The only book I've read by another author that seems to have the same quality is David Brin's *Startide Rising*. Does anyone else have a candidate for the vacant throne? Maybe I shouldn't ask; think of all the godawful fantasies blurbbed on their covers as successors to *Lord of the Rings*.

#### **Ben P. Indick**

428 Sagamore Ave.  
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Talk about timeliness. Ray Nelson is talking about his little short story which has seen many transmogrifications and the very day I read this article the film version opens in New York City. Most critics liked it, the *NEW YORK TIMES* did not. Fie on them! I doubt I shall see it. I am still suffering acute indigestion after the unpalatable other alien flick, *ALIEN NATION*. It seemed as though it would be witty with that title, a potential pun, and with an early shot of a sleazy movie house in the near future showing *RAMBO VI*. The wit ended there. Maybe Ray's will be better.

I also liked David Palter's Swiftian satire on the relocation of Israel. It would have been better had he eliminated nearly all the sober prelude. After all, we know the problem and if some of us do not then the essay will be of no interest anyway. Swift's "A Modest Proposal" arguably, to

use a popular word already a cliché, the best short satire ever, wastes no words at all and is the more smashing for it. Back in undergraduate college four decades ago my roommate told me his prof. had made him read a terrible, nasty, vicious essay. It was of course Swift, and I could not convince him it was satire. Hmm, David would not be on the level, would he? Before Israel Baron Hirsch or Rothschild suggested relocating the persecuted Jews on a huge chunk of African land. The Ethiopian Falashas might have had some cautious words about that proposal and I think the deserts of Australia have been mentioned as well.

I had trouble swallowing the latest books by old favorites Asimov and Clarke which Pat Mathews praises. I fear I am getting old and curmudgeonly.

### Ruth Berman

2809 Drew Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55416

Piers Anthony says in "Wordly Goods" that he suspects his affinity for the name "Xanth" derives from the similarity to Xanadu. Was that a joke? Surely his affinity for the name Xanth derives from the similarity to pierXANTHony? [I believe his first name is pronounced "pierce". erm]

Thomas M. Egan's letter on *Dungeons & Dragons* doesn't seem to deal with the majority of D&D players. It isn't all that easy to get so wrapped up in the role-playing game that your mind gets totally absorbed. A few people get so caught up in games like chess or *D&D* or in worlds of fiction like Dickensian London or Star Trek as to lose themselves as in a cult. But most of the fans of such fantasy games and fictional worlds find themselves refreshed by the recreation. There is a reason the word comes from "re-creation." He comments that a sense of perspective is needed to avoid the suicides that have taken place among the game's devotees. Possibly, but first one would have to establish that there are suicides among the game's devotees, I mean apart from the number one would expect to find in any large group and allowing for the higher proportion of adolescent males in the sample as they are the group with the largest proportion of suicides. The Game Manufacturers' Association, (c/o Howard Barasch, South Games, Carrollton TX 75006) put out a handout, "The Assault on Role-Playing Games" on March 1, 1988. It was reprinted May 28, 1988, by John Boardman in his *DAGON* #373. They argue that there are probably fewer suicides among *D&D* players than among the gen-

eral teen population because suicide victims are generally loners with poor personal skills and few friends whereas role-playing develops social skills and provides gamers with a strong framework of friends. On the face of it this argument sounds more than likely. It is probably its critics rather than the gamers that need to be reformed.

### Robert H. Knox

17 West St.  
Laconia, NH 03246

The front cover by Larry Dickison is pretty good, tho far from his best work...the seated character resembles a thinner Ed Meskys who has apparently taken up cancerettes (perhaps due to computer stress). Nick Cuti's back cover is uniquely effective, as usual. I can't come up with a good reason (or even a rationalization) why the second color wasn't used on the back, tho I can assume that the absence of inside covers is for purely monetary reasons. Still, all that white space seems a waste.

The general layout has never looked better, and resembles that of a prozine. However, I doubt that the Mac or the laser printer or the virtual elimination of cut-and-paste work has any bearing on this (sarcasm).

I note the general decline in art quality with dismay (I of course refer to the artwork which hasn't been published elsewhere). For example, the piece on page 28 is quite inept and clearly below previous standards; I certainly never would have used it. It isn't all that difficult to get quality submissions if one wants to badly enough, and I hope to see NIEKAS start doing so again, as it would make the mag damn near perfect. Let's not forget, either, that Good Artwork Sells Mags.

As to the columns and articles, I certainly don't pretend to find all of them fascinating, but this lot is better than average. Being somewhat of a WWII enthusiast, I enjoyed Bumbejimas thish. Hey, what if Hitler had had the neutron bomb and lost it in a poker game??

Mathoms is something of an anomaly this time: a Braude essay which can be appreciated by your average reader! Very enjoyable, tho actually a lengthy version of that popular proverb about opinion, which is far too notorious to bother quoting, but nonetheless a time-tested truism.

It's good to see D'Ammassa back defending our beloved Horror Fiction. Alas, tho: SF is to Horror as the Hatfields are to the McCoys, so we may as well get used to the idea and read what we like. Even so, I

wouldn't complain if NIEKAS were to devote more space to Horror topics, unlikely as it seems.

I'm glad Boardman's essay on Wallace Wood and the "Wizard King" saw print, but it does contain some mis-information. *The King of the World* is a reprint of "The Wizard King," a very limited edition which Wood published himself in 1978. This edition was hard cover with black-and-white interiors. The strip was originally to have been the first in a trilogy which explains the abrupt ending. Wood did in fact publish the second volume of this trilogy, *Okin, Son of Odkin*, but by this time was in very poor health and blind in one eye. To look at the artwork therein, one would assume he couldn't see out of the other: it is positively Wood's worst effort, and is best forgotten. This could very well have been the last straw which drove poor Woody to suicide.

Anyway it was not this material which later was published in *Wood Worke* but the three-part "picto-fiction" prototype called "The World of the Wizard King," which resembles the later work only superficially. None of this stuff is very easy to find nowadays, and the reader whose interest is sparked by John's column is likely to find this frustrating at first. Keep at it, tho: this is good stuff, well worth seeking out.

Palter's column on the Israeli situation is not so much badly written as inappropriate for the magazine. As Humphrey Bogart once said: "I don't like disturbances in my place—you either lay off politics or get out!" Seriously, I don't believe the average NIEKAS reader wants to see this kind of crap. I certainly don't, and I believe it should cease. Now.

Is Tamar Lindsay a sadist or what? Her idea of a film review apparently is a synopsis of the film followed by a statement of Yay or Nay as to whether it's worth your time or not. A review's purpose is not (or should not be) to tell you everything that's going to happen in the film!

Some great quotes thish, but I liked this one from Piers "Wordly Goods": "Our greatest preoccupations are sex and obesity, while there is overpopulation and starving in Africa." One question, tho: is Piers referring to the SF community in particular or humanity in general? You never know, quite, with Piers—he's such a cynic. I only wish you could get him to do "Piers' Cantina" again. Fat chance, what?

Also some great typos thish, the winner being "...slower-child idealism."

By the way, the two paragraphs I wrote for "Jest Ahht" (one, not two) got through with only nine changes...must be a record for me.

**Jon Singer**

4 Eld St.

New Haven, CT 06511

I knew about the star scam. Actually, only the I.A.U. (International Astronomical Union) can name stars, either by law or tradition. The best way to get a star named after yourself, family, or friends, is to find one! Then you have to prove that you found it first, send the exact location into the I.A.U. or some major scientific or astronomical journal, usually by computer net. In the old days it was by telegram. You give the coordinates in astrographic format. Then they name it after you if they so choose. Also, it is more likely that you will get a comet or asteroid named after yourself since those are found more frequently, but that is still a great honor. Think of all those textbooks with your name in them. The process for discovering a comet or asteroid is the same as that for a star, but nowadays one or two others find it concurrently, so your name might be hyphenated with some amateur Japanese astronomer's name. In other words you don't have to pay some outfit. Also, if you make a major discovery in another field, are an artist, or a Greek god from 3000 years ago, then you might have a good chance of getting a star, comet, or asteroid named after you. But most ordinary people won't, except if they find one themselves with a telescope. Most stars in the catalogs already have names, albeit the names are boring numbers which are their celestial coordinates on star maps.

I liked the back cover more than the front cover.

**John Dalmas**

As for Nuevo Mexico as Nuevo Israel large tracts of the state are arid and semi-arid public domain grazing lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. These might be obtained more readily than privately held lands. A more difficult problem would seem to be water rights. Because of the very different climate and very limited water ability the European and eastern North American doctrine of riparian rights doesn't apply.

Generally in the interior west water law is written into the state constitutions, and in New Mexico I believe that you will find that the so-called Colorado doctrine applies. By this water rights are owned by legal entities, individuals or corporations, which are very jealous of them. This makes it very difficult to irrigate lands which have not previously been irrigated. I don't recall how this applies to deep ground water. There is a considerable area of the

high plains of New Mexico that has an excellent ground water supply, the Roswellian Artesian Basin, almost certainly in private hands. Perhaps large tracts could be purchased there that might be suited to irrigated agriculture.

In my current project, *The Lizard Mission*, I have New Israel a republic on the Gaspé Peninsula and westward north of the St. John River and west to the Linier River. That would not, of course, work with the existing Quebecois population, but what if....

**Margaret Baliff Simon**

1412 N.E. 35 St.

Ocala, FL 32670

How do I nominate Anne Braude for "Best Fan Writer"? It would be a grand idea to support her in this nomination, for her talent at writing articles is incredible, highly select. [You have to be at least a "supporting member" of the current worldcon, Noreascon, and fill in the nomination form when it arrives. The address to join is P.O. Box 46, MIT Branch, Cambridge MA 02139. I believe a supporting membership is still \$20 though an attending membership is up to \$70!!! erm]

As a teacher with a sensitive and quite vivid memory of my own childhood, "Wordly Goods" is an article that sparks my interest to the extent that I will be reading and re-reading it for some time to come.

I much appreciate Mike's taste in layout and choice of art for format. I also enjoyed fully Larry Dickison's cover—that "says it all!"

**Richard Brandt**

4740 N. Mesa #111

El Paso, TX 79912

The lineup for #39 is very promising; I'm very interested to see what John Sayles has to say, since he's much more than a "genre" film maker!

The Founding Fathers may not have had HUSTLER magazine and the KKK in mind, as Anne Braude suggests, when they drafted the first amendment. However, I'm hopeful that they had *my* opinion in mind, and my opinion is that the law should be tolerant not only with the opinions with which we disagree, but with those we find absolutely repellent (as I find the KKK), or those we merely find crass and vulgar (as I find HUSTLER). Deny revisionists the right to question the Holocaust and you imperil the right of any researcher to question the official line on history. Censor books, magazines, or videos on the grounds

of "pornography" and you deny millions of consumers the exercise of their right to some harmless entertainment.

The advocates of "creation science" are not fighting in the interest of free speech, since their efforts have revolved around either compelling schools to profess a theory that is arrant nonsense, or compelling schools and publishers to silence themselves on the subject of evolution. Creationism is not an example of abuse of free speech, but an attempt to suppress it.

I came across Don D'Amassa's book at the Wal-Mart before I received this issue with the article. I never expected to see a book by Don, and if I had, I wouldn't have been expecting a horror novel; sign of the times.

Note to David Palter: West Texas is already on the verge of going to war with New Mexico over their water supply; do you really want to inflame the situation by dropping the State of Israel into the middle of things?

Tamar Lindsay may not be aware that "the never-never" is a name from Aboriginal myth, so it's not unreasonable for Mike and Wally to use it for their business. Just one reason why her view of DUNDEE as a retelling of *Peter Pan* is compelling but doesn't necessarily reflect the film makers' intent.

You slipped up on Tom Egan's review of Alan Dean Foster's novel, which is spelled *Slipt*. That book inspired in me a vision of Foster selling it to his publisher: "It's about someone with telekinetic powers, see, and they can make things blow up real good, and a sinister organization which is chasing after them, but it's an old man instead of a little girl so it's really not like *Firestarter* at all, see?"

Enough of this chastising the compilers of *Fancylopedia III* for their tardiness. I'm sure it won't take any longer to get it into print than, say, *The Last Dangerous Visions*.

**Buck Coulson**

2677W-500N

Hartford City, IN 47348

I've always objected to the the idea that outsiders can't write science fiction. *Most* science fiction by outsiders is ridiculous, but historian George R. Stewart won the first International Fantasy Award in 1951 for his future-disaster novel *Earth Abides*, and that award wasn't given by a popular vote but by a panel of experts. Also, Philip Wylie, noted primarily for popular fiction and his theory of "Momism," wrote several science fiction novels from 1930 to the

1950's—his later ones weren't anything to brag about—and at least one of my favorite short stories, "Blunder." And of course, quite a few "outsiders" have written good fantasy, from Mark Twain to J.R.R. Tolkien.

I wonder at a peaceful and prosperous Germany after WW I, though. The country was in a financial collapse well before Hitler; Hitler's rise to power came primarily because the old aristocrats could or would do nothing to halt the depression, which was much worse than ours. In fact, radicals came to power in both the US and Germany because of the world wide depression; it's just that Roosevelt's radicalism was more humane than Hitler's. For that matter, Italy and Spain also got fascist leaders because of the world wide depression; probably other countries did as well. If Hitler hadn't taken over Germany, it would either have gone Communist or fallen to another fascist leader. None of which is enough to make me actively dislike a book, but I'd quibble a lot.

For my part, I believe that individual opinions, up to and including the ones held by the KKK, are fine. When those opinions are translated into actions against other citizens, then it's time for law to step in and stop it. If the right-to-lifers object to abortions; fine. Publicly hassling people entering abortion clinics, or blowing up the clinics, should be illegal. Getting a law passed against abortions would, however, be acceptable (though I doubt if Juanita agrees with me on that). I'd vote against such a law, but the other side has a right to work for one. Creationists have a right to their opinions, but without legal backing they have no right to censor school books.

Sam's use of illustrations to support his point about tank treads is ridiculous; illustrators quite frequently change descriptions in the text. As good an artist as Kelly Freas is, he once put a helicopter into a book cover when I had specified a hovercraft in the text. I suspect that in the early days of science fiction, illustrators were even more prone to this defect, because science fiction ideas were new and different and the illustrators had already learned from conventional fiction how things "ought" to look. Also, an illustrator's job is not to follow the exact author's description, but to tell the story to a casual browser. Juanita's novel about Hammurabi's Babylon had a cover featuring a medieval Italian gown on the heroine, Roman armor on the hero, and Norman long-swords in the hands of the people in the background. But it sold more copies than anything else she's written, so the artist did his job, despite

the idiotic appearance of the work to anyone with a knowledge of history. In short, illustrations are no proof of anything about the story. The rest of his argument seems perfectly cogent. His "fig. 3" appears to show that Wells wasn't much of a prophet, anyway, as far as tank treads go.

#### **Robert Bloch**

2111 Sunset Crest Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Once again NIEKAS commits the sin of literacy but that's forgivable. I can't help but wonder though how much of the content is intelligible to today's generation of young fans. In any event, I do appreciate it and am particularly pleased to see Sam Moskowitz represented and given the opportunity to refute some of the allegations which seem to have no substance. I'm into the second of four works contracted for and hope to finish up next year.

#### **Jane Yolen**

Phoenix Farm  
31 School St., P.O. Box 27  
Hatfield, MA 01038

Perhaps you are correct as many of us do read widely, however at several sf/fantasy conferences, I asked from my high seat on a panel for a show of hands. "How many of you, in your pleasure reading, read 100% sf/fantasy?" and there was a large show of hands. "How many read 75% sf/fantasy?" and almost all of the rest responded.

My hope is that most writers of sf/fantasy are widely read and have expectations of a similar wide-ranging interest in the fans but less and less often is that so. And now we are seeing new writers who have grown up *only* on sf/fantasy books and films so that the field is becoming more self-referential, not less. I advocate more outsiders in, more insiders out. Good books is good books, I say. (And good literature a rare beast, whether written by an Ursula Le Guin inside or an Isak Dinesen outside our conventional perimeters.) It is this continuing discussion of inside/outside that I find appalling; the use of "mundane", etc. In fact I—who had by that time published 50 books, most of them with a fantasy/sf basis—did not discover conventions and fandom till ten years ago. Was I an outsider or an insider? Have I changed? What has changed me?

A final question—am I beating a moribund equine?

#### **Dave Waalkes**

1302 Oregon Avenue  
Woodbridge, VA 22191

My compliments, it [NIEKAS 37] looks *great!* I have only begun to read it, but it was immediately evident that doing so will no longer entail the effort required in the "old days."

Mike, I was gratified to read your column on Heinlein. And I envy you the forum of CompuServe in airing your feelings. I mentioned Heinlein's death to a couple of people and they didn't know who the hell I was even talking about. It was good to read your comments. Thanks.

The only other article I've had a chance to finish is Anne Braude's Mathoms. Bravo her comments regarding creationism-with-a-lower-case-c. Since leaving the (apparently) sheltered rationality of a college town, I have grown increasingly disillusioned with people. I happened to mention the Soviet Venera probe on Venus to someone and she replied in all seriousness, "Oh, I've been there. The people are really nice."—fer sher, fer sher. Ok, she was a nutcase. But that kind of casual irrationality is different only in degree from that displayed by the devout fundamentalists. These people I can no longer dismiss as wackos; I am intimately associated with some of them daily. They are ordinary, normal people until you say the wrong word (like evolution, even if not in an origin-of-species context!!!). We coexist in the same office space, but seem to occupy different realities. There is no reasoning with people who seem to have an aversion to analytic thought. Well, my soapbox is too rickety for this; let me just extend thanks to Anne for her rational words. With two daughters approaching school age, I am increasingly concerned with the issues of fundamentalism and the repression of education in this country. (Nothing pisses me off faster than someone saying, "Yes, but evolution is just a guess!" (Assholes.)

#### **Alexei Kondratiev**

35-12 161 St.  
Flushing, NY 11358

The issue of cultural exploitation raised by Diana Paxson is, I think, a very legitimate and timely one. The raiding of mythological traditions to fuel fantasy fiction of all kinds continues, yet the variety of the sources does not seem to have expanded the scope of the genre, as one might have hoped.

Usually the individual traditions are treated as fancy new clothes to put on the

same old sword-and-sorcery framework—new monsters for the *D&D* game—without any attempt to integrate the fresh viewpoints the traditions can provide. A Russian folk-tale, a Celtic Fenian adventure, a Hindu philosophical myth, a Polynesian heroic voyage, are all reduced to the same comic-book formula. When such a venture becomes commercially successful, and the author becomes famous for his association with a culture he in fact knows very little about, the sense of illegitimacy and exploitation can indeed become excruciating. Yet the point is not so much that writers shouldn't write about cultures they didn't grow up in, but that they should do their research at more than superficial level. Someone who "scans" another culture's literature (in translation, of course) for the odd character or creature that appeals to him, takes such elements out of their context and into a completely alien one derived from his own cultural conditioning, and then claims to be representing that other culture, is simply indulging in piracy.

Very different is the writer who feels strongly attracted to the general ethos of a foreign culture, intuitively understands some of its mythology, and then makes a conscious effort to deepen his understanding (by getting acquainted with the language, history, socio-economic background, etc.). If he carries this self-education process far enough, he will have earned the right to speak for the culture, because he will in some sense be a part of it. The same is even more true of anyone who claims to identify with a religious or ritual tradition that is not native to him—the opportunity for power and profit (in this New Age) is often much greater than in the literary field, and politically voiceless minority cultures (the usual targets) rarely have effective means of fighting back. Charlata-nesque, commercially successful exploitations of Celtic, Native American, and Hawaiian spiritual traditions are so widespread that they hardly call for comment. Yet with genuine dedication outsiders *can* find their places within such traditions.

I'm not sure if one should really speak of two separate Qabalistic traditions—rather of the same tradition expressed in two completely different milieus, with different results. Pico della Mirandola and other pioneers of Christian/esoteric Qabalism made an in-depth study of the system in its original Hebrew context before they applied it to their non-Jewish environment; and they took this last step because the system, even though it had been generated by a particular culture for its own pur-

poses, impressed them by its universality. They were led to make certain correspondences that Jewish Qabalists would reject (Microprosopos = Christ, for instance), yet none of these choices violates the structure and spirit of the system as originally formulated, and bears witness, rather, to the knowledge and understanding of the innovators.

A word on shamanism: I see a bit of confusion growing, in common discourse, between traditional shamanism and the neo-shamanism that has been spreading largely in Neo-Pagan and New Age circles. Both systems share a common vocabulary, but are otherwise quite different. In cultures that traditionally recognized a shamanic role, the shaman is an exceptional individual, set apart from the rest of society by something in his nature. His vocation is usually presaged in childhood by a susceptibility to certain illnesses—especially of the psychosomatic kind—which culminate in a violent identity crisis in which his personality is completely restructured, turning its weaknesses into strengths and into channels to the Otherworld (I can speak of this, to some extent, from personal experience). If he receives proper training from experienced shamans, he will be able to control his new-found faculties and use them for healing.

In modern neo-shamanism the mythological constructs that the traditional shaman uses as signposts in the Otherworld and the techniques by which he enters the Otherworld state become part of a communal exercise open to all seekers, whether they have a classic "shamanic personality" or not. Of course, if properly applied, the ecstatic techniques will work. But the result will be, in psychodynamic terms, much more like a voodoo ceremony: a perfectly legitimate religious experience in itself, but not quite what the traditional shaman experiences.

I don't mean to imply that there's a rigid barrier between the two forms, or that traditional-type shamans cannot arise out of a neo-shamanic context. But in extreme cases one can see how covering both of them with the blanket term "shamanism" could be offensive. Imagine, for instance, how a traditional Native American shaman who has arrived at his powers after long years of struggling and suffering, might feel when faced with a day-long workshop at a New Age center (taught by an Anglo who's gotten all of his knowledge from books) which claims, for a few hundred bucks, to make shamans out of *anybody* with a bit of drumming and strenuous dancing. Granted, that's an extreme case,



but things like that *do* happen, and make certain distinctions necessary.

**Harry J.N. Andruschak**

P.O. Box 5309  
Torrance, CA 90510-5309  
My column in the next NIEKAS will deal with pro-space organizations that a fan might be interested in. I need information on the smaller groups. Anyone having information on other groups, please send it along to me.

I have re-joined the Planetary Society, joined Jerry Pournelle's new Lunar Society, and since I was a Life Member of the old L5 Society, I am currently a Life Member of the National Space Society that was formed by the merger of the L5 Society and the National Space Institute.

This merger may well be the most interesting part of my next column.

It is not working too well.

From the September 1988 issue of SPACEWORLD, the monthly publication of the NSS, comes the following quote from Dr. Glen P. Wilson, Executive Director Emeritus.

"Membership at the time of the L5-NSI merger was 17,641: 11,865 NSI members, 5074 L5 members, and 702 members of both. A year later the numbers were 19,879: 7,771 old NSI members, 3,677 old L5 members, 621 members of both, and 7,810 new members."

You don't have to be a genius like Dr. Shack the Quack to see that those figures represent a high turnover in the membership. Why? I'll tell you why in detail in NIEKAS 39. Another statistic that should not surprise you is that the average length of membership in the new NSS is less than 4 years.

I voted against the merger. And when we voted on a new name for the combined organization I voted for Space Frontier Society. At least the new National Space Society is honoring the lifetime memberships of those former members of the L5 Society who shelled out the several hundred dollars to buy them. However, no new

lifetime memberships are being offered in the NSS and I don't know why.

#### **We Also Heard from...**

Piers Anthony, Ray Bradbury, Mrs. Virginia Heinlein (Thank you for sending the copy of NIEKAS with the obituary by Mike Bastraw and please thank Mr. Bastraw for me for doing such a wonderful piece of writing.), Betty Woods [especially liked Piers Anthony's "Wordly Goods"], Joan Hanke-Woods, and Frank C. Bertrand [I liked the font selection in #37 a lot better than that in #36. The computer style type in #36 was distracting from the rest of the issue and did not blend in well or did not complement the font for the text body].

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#### **LINKAGES, continued from Page 12**

and another join forces to set up a family of their own: Kzinti men can simply not be trusted. That makes them villainous; they are also shown as incredibly stupid, both ancient and modern. One exception is the captain, who finds a sentient female "a warrior's wildest fantasy in fur."

It is interesting to note that the head honcho in the modern Kzinti culture is called "The Patriarch of Kzin." If anyone can read that without picturing an umbrella-eared felinoid in a square black headdress that covers his neck, growling the Greek Orthodox mass through a long white beard, without laughing, s/he's hopeless. But it speaks to the all-male culture of modern Kzinti.

The three major enemy aliens mentioned seem to be alien in direct proportion to their masculine nature. What's more, though two of these three authors are men, the aliens' intelligence is shown as inversely proportional to their masculine nature.

Rihannsu women are at least equal, but have adopted masculine ways and pursuits, especially war. However, their greatest value is apparently family. Klingon women are apparently honored either as support troops or as attractive mates or both, and little or no contradiction is shown between the roles, but the hierarchy is commanded by men. However, family life has considerable importance, at least on Klinzhai. Kzinti have bred themselves into sex roles as specialized as that of ants, reject anything we would regard as family life—and have lost four wars with the Human worlds.\*

#### **RUNES, continued from Page 13**

also brought the usage of runes to the attention of the modern English-speaking fantasy-reading world. Previous interest in runes had been essentially from either a strictly scholarly or (especially in Nazi Germany) a neo-ritualistic standpoint. Tolkien used the runes as they were used of old: for messages, both open and cryptic, for identifying sigils, and for magic. (Yes, I know that Harold Shea found out that the word "man" suddenly was spelled "𐌿𐌺𐌿"—hooray for accurate Old Norse and Norse runes there!—when he took his first trip, but that was only one instance in the whole work). Tolkien really understood what the runes were and about the various levels they traditionally were used for. They come naturally in his books, as does the wealth of other, just as archaic or elusive, lore that unobtrusively adds such a wealth of texture and detailed socio-anthropological logical elements to the *marvelous* world called Middle-earth.\*

#### **PHANTOM, continued from Page 41**

represent a rightful challenge to Arthur. Yet if we go back to the origins of that ancient character we realize that his villainous aura seems to have coalesced through a series of misunderstandings by later writers, and that the basic mythological elements in his story rather point to his heroic nature. Mordred is the son of Arthur's sister, and thus in line to succeed Arthur according to the matrilinear system followed by the Picts and perhaps other peoples in early Britain; and he is also Arthur's own son, and thus his heir by the patrilinear standards of Celtic society. Such an unusual lineage suggests a messianic figure, certainly a desirable High King of Britain. This is reinforced by the story of his birth: as a child thrown out upon the water to die but miraculously recovered (or simply a child who survives a massacre whose object was to destroy him), he follows a pattern characteristic of the redeemer-hero in many cultures. There is an uncanny kinship, in this respect, between Mordred and Taliesin (not to mention Jesus and Krishna, and Moses in the bulrushes). It is not even certain, in the earliest references to his participation in the battle of Camlann, that he was Arthur's adversary. But even if he was, this could have been seen as an entirely proper development in his role as Arthur's successor and incarnation of the "eternal challenger". Mordred's original Welsh name, Medrawt, could possibly be interpreted as \**Medrātis*, 'one who is like Medros/Mider'.

So Mordred's liaison with Guinevere in the last days of Arthur's reign (later described as his "rape" or "abduction" of her) was very likely, in the oldest version of the story, initiated by the Queen herself. Arthur was ripe to relinquish his position to a young successor who was physically, morally and ritually fit for it, and Guinevere's action made the transfer of sovereignty ceremonially clear(9). Yet even in the early Welsh sources this final episode of the Arthurian saga seems to have suffered from garbling and inconsistencies, as though there were some resistance, on the part of the storytellers, to the obvious mythological pattern of the plot as they had received it. What happened?

In the first place, the historical Arthur's career was, in the long-range view, a failure. The English were not driven out of Britain, after less than a century they were again expanding their territory at the expense of the British Celts, the British claim to the sovereignty of the Land was being mocked without hope of redress. Since both Arthur and Mordred died at Camlann, no successor remained to carry Arthur's banner against the enemies of the Britons. But Arthur was transformed into a "sleeping hero", a redeemer who would come back some day to finish his interrupted work. As such, he was the repository of all Welsh hopes, and could not be viewed in anything but the most idealized terms. He could have had no part in his own failure: the culprit had to be Guinevere, or Mordred. In time the latter would come to fill the part of arch-villain quite comfortably, but Guinevere was never quite absolved, and the taint of her "sin" continued to hover over the tradition, finding ever new expressions in the literary creations of the passing centuries.

It was not easy, however, to make Guinevere—the image of the Goddess who was the source of Arthur's sovereignty—into a true villainess. To discredit her was, at some deep, essential level, to discredit Arthur. So one finds the expedient of the "False Guinevere", a dark double of the Queen who can be made responsible for her more unpardonable failings(10). In the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* ("Triads of the Isle of Britain") this figure becomes Gwenhwyfach, the "sister" of Gwenhwyfar, found nowhere else in the tradition, and who is the cause of the "blow" struck against Gwenhwyfar which precipitates the battle of Camlann and Arthur's downfall(11). This "blow" itself is the subject of much confusion: no one seems to agree on who struck it. The Triads imply it was Gwenhwyfach. In later Welsh tradition it is Mordred/

Medrod, already established as a villain. But the evidence of mythology strongly suggests it was Arthur, since it fits so well into the pattern familiar in Welsh (and other Celtic) folklore of the Otherworld consort who leaves her husband when she is struck unjustly or for no reason(12). Perhaps, in a very early version, Arthur struck Guinevere in jealousy when she had *not* in fact given herself to Mordred, and this compelled her to transfer the sovereignty of Britain to his nephew. It may even have been, shortly after the event, a mythological way of explaining the historical Arthur's failure. But the idealization of Arthur in later tradition would have made such a reading of the story unpalatable.

Continental writers, however, who received the mythos as an exotic fantasy and were not conditioned by the political and cultural expectations of Welsh and Breton Celts, felt free to elaborate on all aspects of the relationships between the characters. Obviously the Arthurian adventure had been, ultimately, a tragic one. But who was to blame for the breaking of the dream, for the collapse of what was perceived, in the world of the later romances, as a great spiritual enterprise? Of course Mordred was a handy villain, whose portrayal grew blacker with every new generation of writers, but he could hardly have accomplished such destruction by himself, unabated by the spiritual or moral failings of someone at the heart of the realm. So, was it Arthur or Guinevere? Arthur, surely, was not without failings, and it was easy to pick out his main burden of guilt: his incest with his sister, and his attempt to murder the infant Mordred. The tradition accepted this as a factor in his downfall, but still, he was the hero, it was as difficult, for purely narrative reasons, to tarnish his image as it had been for political reasons among the British Celts. Therefore the greater burden of guilt had to lie on the adulterous Guinevere.

Ideas of marriage had, of course, changed drastically since the first elaboration of the mythos. To the Celts, who by and large treated the sexes as equal if different, marriage was a relatively flexible arrangement between two partners and their families. Adultery was a serious issue if it endangered the arrangement, but there seems to have been a number of acceptable occasions for extramarital sex, and true disagreement could find release in divorce. Contrast this with the ideology of the High Middle Ages, according to which marriage was a solemn and indissoluble bond allowing no sexual expression beyond its confines. On top of this, a traditional reading

of some Pauline passages in Scripture, plus the Church's Mediterranean heritage and the collusion of many social forces, ensured that the wife was the inferior partner in the relationship. Though in theory both man and woman were held equally responsible in honouring their vows, the woman was chattel, belonging first to her male relatives and then to her husband, and thus in practice more strictly bound to fulfilling society's expectations. Someone like the libidinous Queen Meidhbh—if her story had entered the mainstream of European literature at the time—could not have been conceived as anything but a villainess. Guinevere, her Arthurian counterpart, met with predictable censure.

Yet being a woman, in the Western literary tradition, had its advantages. The very inferiority of women could make some of their foibles excusable: after all, weren't they *constitutionally* more carnal, more ruled by their senses than men were, and therefore less morally accountable when acting on their own? One could be forgiven a certain fascination for observing and recording their antics. A growing awareness, through the Middle Ages, of people as individuals with complex emotional motivations specific to themselves led to tentative depictions of female psychology. Mixed with this were the seeds of rebellion: an obscure sense that some essential aspect of femininity was being repressed, that the strictures imposed by marriage were wrong, the ferment of emotional preoccupation that expressed itself in the ideal of courtly love. So Guinevere was never made as black as Mordred. She was, after all, a woman, trapped by her nature, easily seduced. Her many extramarital adventures were reduced to just one indiscretion, not with the evil Mordred, but with a positive, courageous, otherwise completely honourable figure, the irresistible Lancelot. This was her one tragic lapse from the majesty of her Queenship: an ambiguous, almost forgivable lapse, which writers felt free to judge in a variety of ways.

As the Arthurian material evolved into its modern phase, distancing itself from both its Celtic roots and the political overtones it still had in the Middle Ages, the original significance of Guinevere became harder and harder to recapture. The establishment of the State as a patriarchal institution held together by very "male" concepts of power quite obscured the ancient idea of Sovereignty. The notion that Arthur would have been *granted* Sovereignty by the living reality of the Land because he was somehow spiritually *fit* for it—although

traces of it were preserved in the story (the sword Excalibur, his relationship with the Lady of the Lake)—and that the source of that authority was a female figure, manifested as Guinevere, jarred with the modern imagination. Arthur was head of a State, holding power he had accumulated—*earned*—by military means. The continuation of his rule depended on political maneuvering—the loyalty of his knights—first and foremost, and only secondarily on metaphysical dimensions of virtue. Guinevere betrayed him (although, as we have seen, her "feminine" weakness partly excuses her) by coming between him and his best knight, Lancelot. Yet all three characters were allowed to retain enough attractive traits that their situation could be poignant and involving from a psychological point of view. Their motivations and reactions were explored in realistic terms, using a modern understanding of human behaviour, and their archetypal roles, though never really discarded, faded gradually. In some of their most recent avatars—perhaps the ones most familiar to contemporary readers—they have almost become a trio of well-bred middle-class people guarding an awkward secret.

It is with something of a jolt, then, that we turn from this all-too-human scenario of amorous intrigue to contemplate the primal image of the original Guinevere, the "white phantom" from the Otherworld, the eternal Goddess-power of the Land, whom no mere man could possess without her consent. She is the source of the only kind of power that matters, and upholds a chieftain's authority by the bond of love between them. She is the *bean-sidhe*, the *dame blanche*, the immortal presence that haunts a tribe's territory, mourning the passing of a temporal ruler, but always linking him to his successor. If she is slighted, if the earth that is her primary manifestation is ill-used, she withholds her favour. Perhaps, in this era of greedy, competing States, of soiled rivers and wasted land, writers attracted to the ever-vigorous Arthurian mythos could do worse than to return to this ancient conception of Guinevere, clothe her image in words of renewed power, and send her out to bless the spirit of our time.

#### NOTES

1. Myles Dillon, *Early Irish Literature* (Chicago, 1948), p. 107.
2. *Táin Bó Fraích* (Wolfgang Meid, ed.), Dublin, 1974.
3. *Ériu*, vol.3, p. 155.
4. cf., for instance, Triad 80 of *Triodd Ynys Prydein*.

5. *Tochmarc Étaíne* (Osmond Bergin and R.I. Best, ed.), Dublin, 1938.
6. Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York, 1927), pp. 190-1.
7. *The Book of Taliesin* (J.G. Evans, ed.), Llanbedrog, 1910.
8. John Rhys, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* (New York, 1966; first published 1891), pp. 56-9; cf. also *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, Rachel Bromwich, ed. (Cardiff, 1978), p.383.
9. Loomis, pp. 339-43.
10. *Trioedd*, p. 156.
11. *Trioedd*, pp. 145-6, 206.
12. John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx* (London, 1901), pp. 1-38.\*

**HEBREW**, continued from Page 48

ant's discussion in this section is based on another of Moses Gaster's articles, "Jewish Sources of and Parallels to the Early English metrical romances of King Arthur and Merlin," in the *Publications of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, London, 1887, but covers more parallels and in more detail, with more specific references to sources.] Some of the smaller parallels Leviant suggests seem to me unlikely—for instance, the equation of the wise advisors, Ahitophel, whose wisdom was considered supernatural in later commentary, and Merlin, who was literally supernatural, or the harpers David and Tristan. However, the major parallels—the adulterous loves of David for Bathsheba and Uther's for Igera, producing the great kings Arthur and Solomon, or the rebellious sons Absalom and Mordred—are strikingly close.

I was surprised that Leviant did not include in his list of parallels the two hot-tempered nephews, Joab and Gawaine. With Charlemagne's Roland, they make a curious trio of generals, each the son of the king's sister, each a loyal leader in the king's army, and each getting the king involved in disastrous fights. Perhaps Leviant excluded this example because there is also a close Celtic parallel, Gwydion the son of Don, King Math's sister, in the *Mabinogion*, although Gwydion is not as rash and headstrong as the three humans.

Leviant's commentary is thorough and interesting, both for his discussion of this unique manuscript, and for his discussion of the wider issues. His edition of *King Artus* makes an enjoyable book.\*

**ARTHUR**, continued from Page 19

here (as in some of the early Welsh material and briefly in Tennyson) King Arthur's court poet. His major theme is *incarnation*—primarily that of God in man as Christ, but also of spirit in flesh, of love in action, and of poetry in words. The two archetypes which dominate the cycle are the Empire of Byzantium and the Forest of Broceliande. Byzantium is the incarnation of form, of order, of the masculine principle; it is ruled by the Emperor, who is a type of God the Father and Creator. Broceliande is the womb of matter, the abyss, the formless origin of forms; it is the realm of Nimue, the archetypal Mother called *Natura naturans* by the older poets and philosophers. She sends her twin children Merlin and Brisen (Time and Space) to establish the Kingdom of Logres, where Empire and Forest shall meet—as Lewis puts it, "the wood wholly informed by the city, the city fully energized by the wood" (Williams and Lewis, 1948, p. 102). The concept of Logres, in earlier Arthurian literature merely one of the kingdoms of Britain in which adventures take place, is used by Williams (and by Lewis in his Williams-inspired fantasy novel *That Hideous Strength*) to signify what we may call the Platonic form of Britain, the ideal unity which haunts it. In order to incarnate Logres, Merlin is sent to Camelot to establish Arthur and the Round Table, while Brisen goes to Carbonek, the castle in Broceliande where the Hallows—the Grail and the Spear—are hidden, to have charge over Helayne, the Grail King's daughter, who is to bear Galahad, the fruit of Logres who will by achieving the Grail open the way for the *Parousia*—the Second Coming of Christ. Where the Grail quest was for Malory and Tennyson the ruin of Arthur's Round Table, which drew away the best knights, destroyed the worst, and shattered the fellowship for ever, it is for Williams the intended culmination of it, the means of healing the Maimed King and of incarnating Carbonek in Camelot. Camelot itself, which Williams calls "London-in-Logres," is that "one brief shining moment" in which Logres informs Britain, when ideal and reality are one—which perhaps explains the political appeal of the legends about it to royal families from the Plantagenets to the Kennedys.

The establishment of Logres is a condition of the Second Coming, of which Galahad is an ectype. Williams makes the Arthurian myth into "the story of a proposed Parousia which is historically thwarted by the failure of Logres and fulfilled by the voyage of the achievers of the

Grail to Sarras. The myth is presented as a paradigm of the fundamental spiritual laws of human life, a model of how the Second Coming operates in human experience." (Cavaliero, 1983, p. 117) It fails because Arthur chooses what Williams elsewhere calls Gomorrah and symbolizes by a succubus: self-love, which is ultimately illusion preferred to reality. This choice comes early in the first cycle, *Taliessin Through Logres*, at a moment when Merlin atop a tower beholds all the Empire, while Arthur contemplates his queen and his friend:

So, in Lancelot's hand, she came through  
the glow,  
into the king's mind, who stood to look on  
his city:  
the king made for the kingdom, or the  
kingdom made for the king?  
Thwart drove his current against the current  
of Merlin:  
in beleaguered Sophia they sang of the  
dolorous blow.  
(*"The Crowning of Arthur,"* p. 21)

Arthur's choice is manifested and symbolized in Mordred, the son he begets on Queen Morgause of Orkney, who has come to the coronation, when he still does not know that she is his half-sister. As Galahad is a type of Christ, the failure of Logres is a type of the Fall: the Grail withdraws across the sea to mystical Sarras and Logres sinks back into the discord and disunity of mere Britain. But that is not the end of the story. As Lancelot, now a priest, celebrates Mass, Taliessin sees above the altar Christ/Galahad manifested in fire; and in Britain a saving remnant of Logres remains—the household of Taliessin living by its rules of work and prayer. (The Company at St. Anne's in *That Hideous Strength*, who oppose the satanic designs of the N.I.C.E. and are aided by Merlin, is a continuation of this remnant.)

Williams' Arthuriad is the most explicitly Christian treatment of the story since the thirteenth century, and the least storylike. The other great Arthuriad born out of the first half of our century is the first truly great Arthurian novel, one which makes its principals rounded, three-dimensional characters with motives that we can understand. T.H. White's version is by far the most popular; undoubtedly millions who have never read the book have seen the Disney cartoon of its first segment, *THE SWORD IN THE STONE*, or *CAMELOT*, the musical adaptation, on stage or screen. The *NEW YORK TIMES* literary critic Orville Prescott calls *The Once and*

*Future King* one of the seven best novels of its decade. White also focused on the ideal represented by Camelot, but for him it is not mystical but a very human effort to solve a basic social problem—the use of force. White’s thinking was conditioned by the world wars of his time, as may be seen by the changes he made in *The Sword in the Stone*, originally published in 1938, when incorporating it into the final version (1958) which also transformed it from a children’s book to the opening movement of a tragic tale for adults. His work is at once the most fantastic and the most realistic of Arthuriads—fantastic because he takes the magic of Merlyn even further than the medieval purveyors of the marvelous; realistic because he gives Arthur some very modern problems to deal with. White’s Merlyn educates the Wart, as the boy Arthur is called, by turning him into various animals, enabling him to lead their lives and speak with others of the species. In the prewar version, the theme of these lessons is ecology and an understanding of evolution: what today we call the Spaceship Earth concept of the precariousness and interdependence of life and the necessity to respect it in all its forms. In the revised version, Arthur becomes first an ant in a colony run on the principles of communism, totalitarianism, and militarism, then a wild goose in a flock whose communal life represents a libertarian individualism and freedom. The ants are exhorted to war with slogans that savagely parody the propaganda of Communist, Nazi, and Free World nations alike; when the Wart describes the concept of war to one of the geese, she is shocked and sickened. In the non-magical portions of the story, the lovingly detailed portrayal of domesticity and everyday life in the Middle Ages shapes a future king who cares for the arts and fruits of peace more than the excitement and glory of war. This is the purpose of Merlyn’s education; White is the first author to find a reason for the secrecy of Arthur’s birth and the obscurity of his early life that fits into the major thematic pattern of the cycle.

The problem with which the newly crowned Arthur is faced is that of Might: warfare is a sport to the heavily armed and nearly invulnerable feudal aristocracy, like foxhunting to their Victorian descendants, while it is an unmitigated disaster to the hapless peasantry. The first solution he devises is total war: maiming and killing are no longer reserved for the common folk. His second is the invention of the idea of chivalry embodied in the Round Table, a way to harness Might in the service of

Right; his knights will aid the weak against the strong and fight for justice rather than self-interest. Here White makes another of his brilliant innovations: in his scheme of things, the Matter of Britain is the true history of England, or “Merlin’s Isle of Gramarye” as he calls it in Kipling’s phrase; the assorted Norman and Angevin and Capet kings are creations of myth and legend. Thus he assigns all the dark side of the Middle Ages to the period before Arthur and the splendid side, the artistic, spiritual, political, and moral achievements, to Arthur’s reign.

The Round Table works only too well. Right and Justice *are* established; and Might, with its occupation gone, begins to fester. Blood feuds and gamesmanship recur. Arthur concludes that the whole idea was wrong: Right cannot be founded on Might. Seeking a new channel to drain away the destructive force of Might, he devises the Grail Quest. It is a shining hope, but ultimately a failure, as the knights worthy of the Grail are translated to Sarra and the unworthy are made no better—and in some cases worse. The result is that the tone of the Round Table becomes a kind of cynical worldliness, a disillusion with all ideals. Arthur concludes that Might is a mental illness of the human race which can never be made a positive force, and invents Civil Law to replace chivalry: matters will no longer be decided by strength but by the impersonal justice of the state. But Mordred makes use of this to bring down disaster by charging Lancelot and the queen with adultery and treason; Arthur is forced to let the law take its course. One calamity after another follows, culminating in the usurpation of Mordred, who begins by inventing Nazism and ends as a lunatic. On the eve of his last battle, Arthur sits in his tent despairing, trying to figure out why war seems inevitable to the human race. Returning in memory to the lessons of Merlyn, he sees the salvation of the species in the abolition of boundaries and divisions that set men against one another, and the hope of achieving this in culture: “If people could be persuaded to read and write, not just to eat and make love, there was still a chance that they might come to reason.” Here White returns to the original Spaceship Earth moral of the unrevised *Sword in the Stone*; a later, profoundly misanthropic work incorporating some of the excised materials and supposed to take place as a kind of dream vision at this point in the story, *The Book of Merlyn*, was published posthumously, as the publisher refused to include it with the tetralogy because of its

morbid tone.

At the very end of the story, White makes his last and most brilliant innovation: Arthur entrusts the ideals of Camelot, the candle he has carried in the wind, to his page, ordering him to leave before the battle and preserve the light for future generations: the child is a boy from Newbold Revell in Warwickshire—young Thomas Malory.

I won’t even attempt to deal comprehensively with the mass of Arthuriana that has appeared in the last half century; I will only sketch out the main channels and mention a few of my own favorites. The school of realistic historical fiction is the one that least appeals to me, as I am primarily attracted by the mythic and symbolic elements; of the many works in this area, Rosemary Sutcliff’s *Sword at Sunset* is preeminent. Of the numerous works which have blended historical realism with fantasy elements, the most successful both artistically and commercially have been Mary Stewart’s Merlin trilogy (*The Crystal Cave*, *The Hollow Hills*, *The Last Enchantment*) and *The Wicked Day*, a final volume dealing with events after Merlin disappears from the tale. This last is particularly ingenious in making Mordred the hero and narrator, retaining the received story pattern but reinterpreting events to make him victim rather than villain. Gillian Bradshaw has also written a fine Arthurian trilogy: the first volume, *Hawk of May*, is Gwalchmai or Gawain’s account of himself and how he escaped his witch-mother’s evil influence and won a place in Arthur’s cavalry; it has a strong fantasy element which includes a visit to Tir-nan-Og. The second volume, *Kingdom of Summer*, continues Gwalchmai’s story, though the narrator is now his bodyservant and the role of magic is greatly diminished. There is a somewhat jarring discontinuity between this book and the somber concluding volume, *In Winter’s Shadow*: the narrator is Gwynhwyfar (Guenevere), Gwalchmai has become a minor figure, and there is no fantasy element at all. There is, however, one stroke of brilliance—Bradshaw’s explanation for the mystery of Arthur’s passing: he was seen to fall, but a later search of the battlefield failed to discover his body among the strewn corpses stripped of any identifying trappings by looters. This has the ring of historical truth. Another innovative treatment is Phyllis Ann Karr’s *Idylls of the Queen*, which turns an episode from Malory into a formal detective story, with Sir Kay the Seneschal including crime-solving among his household duties and Mordred

acting as Watson; in lieu of medical examiner and forensic expert he has the magical assistance of the Lady of the Lake and Morgan le Fay.

The most controversial of recent treatments of the tale is Marion Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1983). She has in effect turned the traditional version on its head by making Morgan le Fay the central point-of-view character and Arthur betrayer as well as betrayed. Morgan (here Morgaine) is one of five strong women who are the major players—a further departure from tradition in that women in the Arthuriad, except for Guenevere and T.H. White's terrible Morgause, have tended to be rather shadowy and bloodless characters. The thesis of Bradley's book is a belief as old as the human imagination and as recent as the more offbeat speculations of quantum physics: the concept that belief itself creates reality, and ideas and beings in which mankind no longer believes fade out of the material world. This is happening, at the time of the story, to Avalon, the central shrine in Britain of the ancient Celtic Goddess-worship and the last refuge of the Druids.

Once the Christians led by Joseph of Arimathea had lived in peace on Avalon, building a shrine there but not attempting to impose their own beliefs, accepting the Druid teaching that all gods are but faces of the unknowable One; now a new and less tolerant form of Christianity is abroad in the land, one that sees other faiths as error and other deities as diabolic. To protect Avalon, Druid magic has caused the ancient isle of the Goddess to become an alternate reality to its analogue Glastonbury and recede into the mists of the Lake, where it can be reached only by those who possess the magic or insight to perceive it. Viviane, Lady of the Lake, has a plan to unite all the peoples of Britain against the invading Saxons under a king who will look to Avalon and the old religion, in pursuit of which she marries her sister Igraine to Gorlois of Cornwall, to whom she bears Morgaine; later she uses her powers to cause Igraine and Uther Pendragon to fall in love as well as to bring about Gorlois' death. She arranges to have their son Arthur fostered secretly after attempts on his life; Morgaine she raises in Avalon to be her own successor.

In order to breed a High King who will unite both the Avalonian and Romano-British royal bloodlines, she arranges for Morgaine to serve as the priestess at Arthur's kingmaking in the Great Marriage by which the king marries the land. When they recognize each other the next

morning, both are horrified. Morgaine, pregnant with Mordred, renounces Avalon and flees; Arthur, despite being gifted with Excalibur, the sword of the Druid sacred regalia which will bind the older races of Britain to his rule, bears a resentment to Avalon and its Lady which will later become an open breach: under the influence of the narrow-minded and fanatically Christian Gwenhwyfar, he puts aside the ancient Pendragon banner for the image of Mary at Mt. Badon and eventually becomes Christian himself. Once Arthur is born, Igraine's part is mostly finished; in the rest of her appearances we see primarily her somewhat unconvincing wavering between

Christianity and the old religion. The major conflicts are governed by the plans of Viviane; of Morgaine, who first serves Avalon, then flees it, then returns after Arthur's breach of faith to her priestly vocation, trying first to revive the worship of the Goddess in her husband's kingdom of North Wales and then to take from Arthur Excalibur and the enchanted scabbard she had made for it, now that he has forfeited his oath to Avalon; of Igraine's ambitious and amoral sister Morgause, wife of Lot of Orkney, who has fostered the son of Arthur and Morgaine and has her own plans to rule through him; and of Gwenhwyfar, weakest and least admirable character among the principal women, but one who does grow in the course of the story and who is on the whole more an object of compassion than of scorn.

*The Mists of Avalon* is a rich, complex, and deeply moving novel which recreates in a convincing manner the lost Britain of the pre-Christian Celts. It portrays the feminine side of heroism, the strength to endure suffering and the loss of love, rather than the male heroism of power and glory. There is a double tragedy: not only the eventual failure of Arthur's Camelot but the conflict between mutually opposing ideals and the final loss of Avalon, which recedes even farther into the mists where now it can be found only by the spirit. The Druid elements are convincingly integrated into the traditional tale, especially the Holy Grail, which is both the cauldron of Ceridwen and the cup of the Last Supper by the end of the narrative. And the book provides a brilliant solution to the problem of the traditional Morgan le Fay, whose confusing role in different versions of the Matter of Britain makes her sometimes Arthur's enemy and sometimes his ally.

When *The Mists of Avalon* first appeared, it was attacked by some devotees of Arthurian tradition as an illegitimate version

because of the way it reinterpreted characters and recast events. On the whole, this is not the kind of thinking that makes for good scholarship and criticism; it is the kind of attitude that makes for going down to your local cinema and picketing THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST. The Matter of Britain may be seen as a loom and a bundle of threads whose colors, lengths, and materials limit what can be woven: within those limitations, the variety of patterns is limited only by the imagination and ability of the weaver. Bradley's book preserves the *essence* of the tradition: the tragedy, the conflict between different ideals and between love and loyalty, and, most important, the *weight* of the story—the sense of a triumph of Light over Darkness and, in the tragic outcome, of some vital spirit flickering but not completely quenched. I suppose one can imagine a truly illegitimate Arthuriad, one perhaps in which Arthur is more brutal than the Saxons or Launcelot is a coward, but on the whole legitimacy is a criterion for the interpretation of a work, not of its creation. The most famous illegitimate interpretation on record is probably William Blake's comment that in writing *Paradise Lost* Milton was of the Devil's party without knowing it; it resulted from Blake's imposing his own theological notions on the poem—and from not reading it carefully enough: proper attention to the text clearly reveals that Satan is a counter-jumping poseur who happens to have good lines. His ideas are shoddy, but he clothes them in eloquence. Unfortunately, in the hands of a poet of Milton's stature, the eloquent expression of shoddy ideas amounts to great poetry, to the detriment of the understanding of the poem by succeeding generations of lesser theological sophistication. The oddest illegitimate interpretation I know of is the medieval reading of the *Roman de la Rose*, which is an allegory of the psychology of courtly love, as Christian allegory; it is simply the most eccentric instance of the tendency of the age to impose allegorical interpretation on everything in sight—literally (see the medieval bestiaries). A similar impulse in our own day tried to read Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* as an allegory about nuclear weapons, much to the author's dismay. The Matter of Britain is an accretion of so many levels, from ancient Celtic myths to modern political allegory, that it is susceptible to a diversity of interpretations. The fact that *The Mists of Avalon* is such a powerful and moving book is its own justification; it is no more illegitimate than the choice of Vergil and the medieval writers to regard the Trojans

as the heroes of the *Iliad*, an interpretation that the poem itself justifies despite its author's original intent.

What of the "future" part of my title? Where can we go from here with the story? A popular theme in children's fantasy has been to exploit the traditions of Arthur and his companions awaiting their return; though to the best of my knowledge the only one who has actually been depicted as returning is Merlin. The story of Arthur and his knights asleep in a cave somewhere, with forces of evil moving to destroy them or prevent their reawakening, provides the plot of Jane Louise Curry's *The Sleepers* and Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. Merlin's enchanted sleep is even more popular. His nightmares are a source of natural disaster in Peter Dickinson's fantasy of a post-scientific future, *The Weathermonger*. He is a principal character in Susan Cooper's Dark is Rising series, in which he not only helps to protect the Grail and Arthur's sword from the forces of Darkness but also brings Arthur and Guenevere's son through time to be raised in contemporary Wales. He is also reawakened in C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength* in order to wield on behalf of the Good his ancient magical powers which predate the division between Light and Darkness; the story is much influenced by the novels of Charles Williams as well as his Arthurian poems. In Jane Yolen's short story, "Epitaph" (in *Merlin's Booke*, Ace, 1986), a team of archaeologists discovers and opens his coffin; exactly what happens then is ambiguous, but the one Celt among the reporters covering the event has a glimpse of doom. In the title story of Roger Zelazny's 1980 collection *The Last Defender of Camelot*, which was also dramatized on the TV series "The Twilight Zone," Merlin reawakens after a thousand years; his Dark Age notions make him, despite noble intentions, more of a menace than a mentor in the contemporary world. Launcelot, his life magically preserved, joins with Morgan le Fay to prevent a fatal resurrection of Camelot. While there have been stories that discard the mythic overtones of Camelot, and even stories that mock that ideal, this is a rare instance of a consideration of it in relation to our own time in which it doesn't come off as wholly preferable.

The most recent use of the myth in a more or less contemporary setting is Gael Baudino's *Dragonsword* (Lynx Omega Books, 1988). The actual setting is a fantasy world which has been mentally projected, at a time of great emotional stress, by an Arthurian scholar at a California

university. The man is a narrow-minded, autocratic male chauvinist, and the world he has created reflects his biases and limitations. He inhabits his own creation as a preternaturally able warrior trying to drive the invading Dremords(!) out of Gryllth. Into the midst of this eternal war comes an Amazonian warrior who is the avatar of his graduate assistant, a burned-out veteran of Kent State who still holds to the ideals of the Sixties and doesn't see war as a way of life or even a natural activity. What she does see is that she might just be fighting on the wrong side: not only are the Dremords in some ways a morally superior culture, but the goal of driving them back to their native land overseas is impossible, as "overseas" does not exist; Gryllth was created in a fragmentary state. She is also able to see what the professor/warrior denies—that somewhere in this world is the Holy Grail. The story ends (*Dragonsword* is the first volume of—surprise!—a trilogy) with his death and replacement by her as the sustaining mind of this world, with the resolve to heal its divisions and to find the Grail. This is an innovative fantasy and a promising beginning by an author who is a harper, a morris dancer, and a practitioner of Dianic Wicca.

We have looked at the historical Arthur and the Arthur of fantasy as they have appeared in the past and in the present; most of the possible changes have been rung on most of the possible themes, though it would be foolish to suggest that they have been exhausted. Future versions of the legend will most likely, however, fall into the domain of a new genre which deals specifically with the future—science fiction. There has been at least one effort to treat the original story as SF, with Merlin as of extraterrestrial origin, in *Merlin's Mirror*, one of Andre Norton's less successful efforts. Another variation, Adrienne Martine-Barnes' *The Dragon Rises* (Ace, 1983), has the premise that Arthur is but one incarnation of the Dragon, the eternal spirit of War—"Chaos masquerading as Law," one of the characters calls him—whose other avatars have included Vlad Dracula. The novel deals with his incarnation as the admiral of a space fleet in a distant future. It is good space opera-cum-romance but has little in common with the Matter of Britain: the hero has no special destiny, the Launcelot-figure not only is not his rival in love but is not even his most important aide, and the story ends with his retirement from active service, presumably to live happily ever after. On the other hand the most successful science-fiction epic in history has featured a young hero of

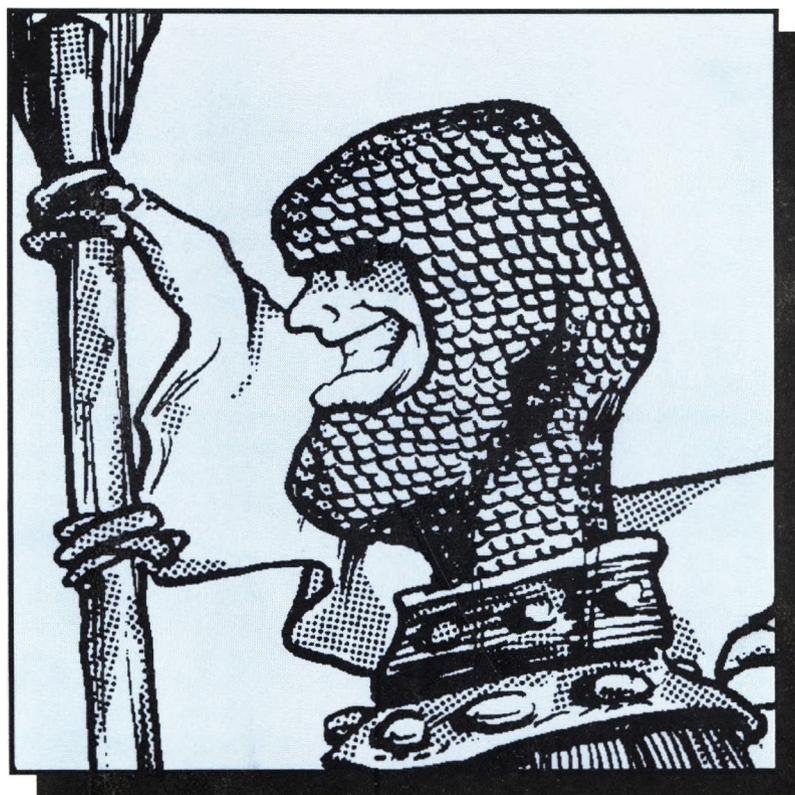
mysterious parentage, a wise and mystical adviser, a sword of extraordinary power, a best friend who is also a rival in love, and a struggle between Good and Evil on which the fate of an empire depends; George Lucas has studied myth and legend to good effect. The Arthur of the future may be heir to the throne of a galaxy rather than a nation, his Excalibur may be fusion-powered, and his foes may be not Saxon pirates but Denebian arachnoids; but as long as mankind—or sentient beings of any kind—look for a hero to stand against chaos and darkness, as long as we have to choose between destiny and private happiness, and as long as we struggle against entropy and are finally defeated by it, the story of Arthur and the Round Table, of Camelot and the Grail, will haunt our imagination.

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