

JOURNAL OF THE PENDRAGON SOCIETY

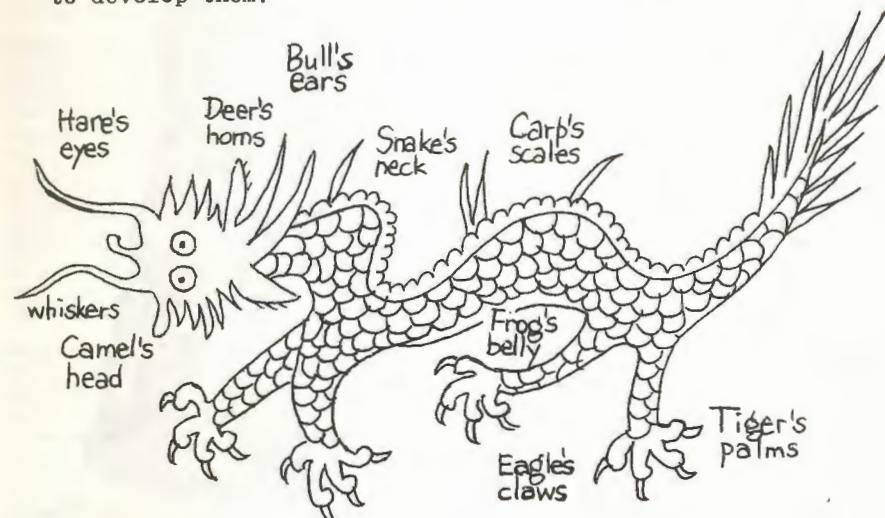
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"Correspondence should be addressed to the Hon. Sec.,
Garden Flat, 22 Alma Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2BY "

As promised in our last number, here is what we hope is a better and more professional "Pendragon" in a new improved format. We hope you will find it to your liking and that you will give us your comments and suggestions on appearance and content - adverse or otherwise!

As an experiment we are basing this number on the theme of Dragons after your response to a request for a dragon-hunt in the last number. We hope to use the concept of a theme in future issues - Merlin will probably be the next theme - but of course this will not exclude your letters or articles on other topics.

If you have any ideas for future themes related to Arthurian myth or fact please send them to us and we will do our best to develop them.



The Chinese Dragon

Editor of this edition: Chris Lovegrove. Illustrations by Chris Bristow, Chris Lovegrove, and Kate Polliard.

Serpents, Dragons & the Mother Goddess

MARILYN PORTER

THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD, AS WE KNOW THEM, WORSHIP MALE GODS. Our traditions of myths and legends are dominated by male figures. Goddesses and semi-divine female figures like Athena and Hera of Greek legend or the Virgin Mary of the Marian cult are pale and insubstantial by contrast with Zeus or Jehovah.

But research is turning up more and more evidence that this Age of Gods was preceded by an Age of Goddesses who were figures of great power and were worshipped extensively. We know the names of many of those who held sway around the Mediterranean, the Middle East and in India. In Syria she was known as Asherah or Astarte; in Canaan she was Anath, in Egypt she was Neith and later Isis, in India she was Danei. If the symbols of spiral and wave are any indication - of which, more in a moment - we can be fairly sure that some kind of female principle was revered from Scandinavia to China, from the Pacific Islands to New Grange in Ireland. There is no need here to go into great detail about these goddesses; there are now several easily available books that cover the subject thoroughly (see below). It is enough to know that originally the Goddess was One. Geoffrey Ashe takes the term 'Ewig-Weibliche' from Goethe - the Eternal-Womanly. She was the Life-giver, the source of all creation, the symbol of fertility, seer and muse. She held life in her hands and, as Ashe points out, she could renew life as well as give it. The womb and the grave were one (maybe a clue to those perplexing megalithic 'burial chambers' without relics) and so, as Hesiod has it, 'death did not terrify'.

As ideas developed and cultures became more complex during the early and middle Bronze Ages (up to 1600 BC) the various aspects of the Goddess were brought out more explicitly - the mother, the virgin, the sexually active woman, the prophetess, the priestess. But the major figures such as Astarte of Canaan kept all or most of these aspects. It was only later, after the fall of the Goddesses, and notably in the Classical myths, that the Goddess was diminished by the separation of herself into a number of distinct goddesses.



Merlin Stone, in a patiently researched work, shows that the background of the Age of the Goddess, while not a matriarchy, was certainly a matrilineal society. And where land and possessions pass from mother to daughter, much more power and independence, especially sexual independence, are open to women. Stone describes the temples where women rejoiced, and where men had a lesser role, or took no part at all. These are

the depraved sexual orgies and rites that were later so sternly condemned in Jewish scriptures. The societies over which the Goddess ruled, although increasingly urban and sophisticated, were basically rural, pastoral, and peaceful - in lands that were generally greener than they are now. This kind of society puts a premium on fertility as the key gift bestowed by the Goddess. In comparison with more nomadic or warlike tribes it also enables women as child-bearers to play as full and as active a part as men. The position of male gods in all this is enigmatic. The Goddesses certainly had consorts - variously seen as sons or lovers. Frequently either in symbol or in reality these consorts were ritually sacrificed each spring to ensure the fertile cycle of nature.

Let us, for the moment, go back to the Serpent and the Dragon. We scarcely need to point out the close connection between these two beasts. In fact in both myth and imagery they are often used interchangeably.

Now, serpents, especially, have always been associated with the Goddess. The most famous example is the Cretan figures holding their snakes aloft as a symbol of power. In other cases, such as the Great Goddess of Lower Egypt, she was actually worshipped in the form of a snake. Then there is also the association of serpents with wisdom and prophecy, for instance the oracle at Delphi who was the Pythoness.

Merlin Stone has two interesting points to make about this last aspect. One is that 'prophecy' did not mean the impoverished guesswork of later times. It was both philosophy and also strategy. This element is still strong in the Greek myths. The oracles consulted did not predict the future so much as tell you what you could do to control it. Secondly Stone cites recent research from the Florida Serpent Rhea that indicates that the bites of certain snakes (if not immediately fatal!) give the sufferers an experience very like that obtained on powerful hallucinogenic drugs.



For the next stage in the argument we must turn to Francis Hitching who gives details culled from a number of sources which indicate - not conclusively I must hasten to add - that the spiral and the wave are among the most ancient and powerful of symbols. Certainly we know that they are found wherever ancient peoples made their mark. What is significant is that Hitching claims that both the wave (or zigzag) and the spiral are symbols for the serpent - the Female Principle of original creative force.

Michael Morris says of the spirals at Newgrange:

'We are dealing with an integral part of total ritual symbolism which the monument expresses. The spiral and the concentric circle are doubtlessly the dominant motifs... At its most abstract level of meanings, the spiral may have expressed the concept of life energy... of cosmic energy and life rhythms with which early man was concerned.'

This kind of notion seems much less tendentious when you read Ashe's account of what early Goddess worship meant in getting some kind of a grip over an alien and frightening world. For this reason he says not only did matriarchal religion and matrilineality survive the discovery of conception, but that the human needs answered by the Earth Mother were so indispensable that She had to be reintroduced into the aggressively male religion of Christianity in the guise of the cult of the Virgin Mary.

In this lightning and superficial glimpse into a whole range of new and challenging researches, one outstanding question remains - Why do we now worship male gods? In other words, why did the Age of Goddesses end?

Having established the supremacy of the Goddess over the known world, the first thing to account for is where did Her male challengers come from in c 1600 BC? Inexplicably, from the arid northern steppes they suddenly descended on the peaceful settled regions of the Mediterranean as bands and tribes of warlike nomadic peoples. Perhaps it was a succession of bad winters; perhaps it was tribal warfare; maybe it was written in the stars. At all events these fierce strong people came, with strongly male-dominated societies and their equally fierce Gods. These were gods of storm and thunder, and they lived on the tops of mountains, and gave victory and successful hunting to those who sacrificed and obeyed their stringent commands.

The invaders found the soft, small-boned herdsmen an easy target - but their Goddess was another matter. The plainspeople were more advanced in all aspects of culture, and both the priestesses and their Goddesses were strongly entrenched. Battles took place between the mountain lords and the serpent and it is this clash that lives on in the countless myths of dragon-slaying - Hercules, Perseus, St George, St Michael, Arthur, Beowulf, to name but a few.

At the same time of course it was necessary to insist that the serpent and the dragon were manifestations of evil, and so we arrive at the story of the Garden of Eden. The place of Jewish religion in this confrontation is too important to skip over here. They do, of course, represent the Goddesses' most brutal and persistent opponents. The Old Testament makes more sense when we see it in the light of a fundamental struggle between

two opposing principles, so fundamental that the one could not rest until the other was burnt out root and branch.

But they didn't succeed, not even the Levites, as is witnessed by the constant renunciations of their peoples. In other less stringent male religions compromises were reached. Sometimes the male God married the local Goddess - not in the old lover/son subservient role - and gradually usurped her supremacy with the added bonus of legitimacy.

Nor does the story end in the Mediterranean. Dragon hills abound today, and despite the Church's efforts to associate the Dragon with the Devil the older notions live on in the associations of the dragon with lost treasures, secret knowledge of fertility. The ley lines - lines of power - are dragon lines. The spirals and mazes that exist on the floors of churches like Chartres or on the face of the earth like Glastonbury Tor are supposed to confer power to this day if they are followed correctly. The Goddess is still with us, and a small part of her is commemorated by the very existence of the Pendragon Society.

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Merlin Stone, *THE PARADISE PAPERS* (Virago-Quartet 1976)
 Geoffrey Ashe, *THE VIRGIN* (Routledge and Kegan Paul 1976)
 Francis Hitching, *EARTH MAGIC* (Cassell 1976)
 Michael Morris, *IRISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORUM* 1974.



Dragon Persecution in Devonshire

An American publication "East West" has been running a series of articles called "The Adams Family and the Grail Tradition" by Andrew E. Rothovius. The article for May 1977, sent in by Patricia Villiers-Stuart, is entitled "The Untold Chronicle of the Dragon Persecution", and puts forward a fascinating hypothesis.

In 1823 John Adams, the second President of the United States, had an inscribed stone laid on the grave of his first American ancestor in Quincy, Massachusetts, which began:

In Memory of HENRY ADAMS

who took his flight from the Dragon/ persecution in Devonshire in England/ and alighted with eight sons, near/ Mount Wollaston ...

This Dragon persecution, Rothovius suggests, is not "the dragon of Persecution" (i.e. a personification of the High Church persecution of the Puritans in England in the 1630s, which caused emigration to New England etc.) since Adams was an upstanding Anglican in the parishes of Barton St David and Kingweston in Somerset.

Dragon persecution, rather, must be a specific persecution of Dragons - "whoever they were".

Rothovius suggests that Henry Adams was a Dragon, "one of a small group of freethinkers and visionaries, centered primarily in Devonshire, who in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I sought to revive the ancient wisdom and right way of living first known and taught among the megalithic peoples of southwestern England thousands of years earlier".

This involved a "knowledge of the precession of the equinoxes by which the rotation of the earth's axis shifts the celestial North Pole in a vast circle that takes 26,000 years to complete.

"In the Megalithic Age, the polestar had been Thuban in the

head of the constellation Draco or the Dragon - hence the name given to those who accepted this fact."

Acceptance of precession would mean acceptance of a cyclic view of history (rather than a Christian apocalyptic view) which would render such believers heretics to a medieval or dogmatic mind.

Rothovius argues for a word of mouth transmission of megalithic beliefs to small groups such as the Dragons in the area of the Glastonbury earthwork zodiac, with works such as the 13th century *Perlesvaus* (The High History of the Holy Grail) enshrining the keys to such beliefs. He points to the fact that the Adams family can be traced back to the 12th century in the village of Barton St David near the centre of the zodiac.

A discussion group was begun at Sherbourne and Cerne Abbas (Dorset) in the 16th century "to plan for the coming of the new and better civilisation ready to be planted across the Atlantic" in the newly-discovered America. Members included Walter Raleigh, Thomas Hariot, John Dee, Kit Marlowe and, presumably, Henry Adams, but the group was dubbed "The School of Night" by orthodox Christians, both Anglican and Puritan.

The death in 1612 of Prince Henry, the 18-year-old son of James I and apparent champion of the "Dragons" left authority free to attack these heretics - thus "the Dragon persecution in Devonshire" - and Henry Adams threw in his lot with the Puritans to colonise America with his family, suppressing meanwhile his "inner vision of their heritage to await the time when it could be revealed openly".

* * * * *

Dragon Persecution in Devonshire

This narrative by Rothovius is highly plausible in some respects, although corroboration of two of his arguments, viz.

1. that there was a direst continuity of a megalithic tradition down to the School of Night; and
2. that the School of Night = Dragons in Devonshire;

has eluded us so far. Jess Foster has done some research here in Bristol which has produced some suggestive though inconclusive facts.

For example, Thomas Hariot, a great though neglected scientist, certainly gathered a circle around him at Cerne Abbas (the site of the ithyphallic giant hill figure) which was called "The School of Night" or "The School for Atheism" by its detractors. His discoveries apparently inspired Descartes in algebra and pure maths.

The sorcerer John Dee, who is credited with having first recognised a zodiac around Glastonbury, also visited Cerne Abbas. We know too that Raleigh interested himself in the Rosicrucians and in prophecy.

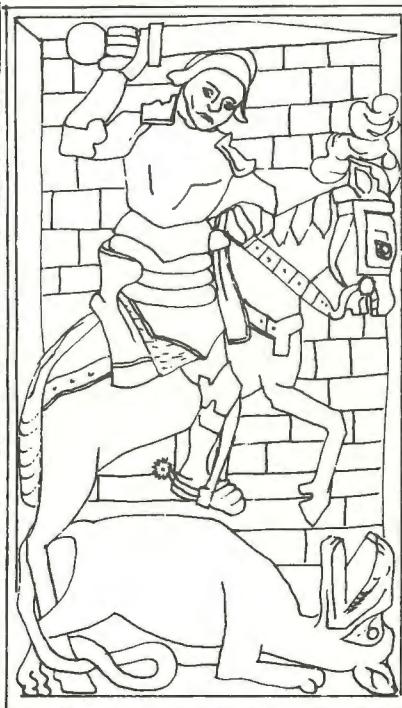
Even Shakespeare alludes to the group in Love's Labour Lost IV, 3:

"O paradox! Black is the badge of Hell/ The hue of dungeons and the Schools of Night,/ And beauties crest becomes the heavens well."

The most famous "Dragon" from Devon - Francis Drake - is apparently not associated with the School. His name translates as Dragon, and his sudden raids, which made him such a bogey for the Spaniards, in life and after death, also confirmed his reputation as a wizard in Devon among his own countrymen.



St. George...carving on a bench end in Hatch Beauchamp Church, Somerset.



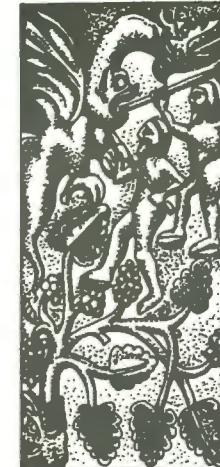
Somerset Dragons

CHRISTINE BRISTOW

HERE IS AN ALPHABETICAL LIST OF A FEW SOMERSET TOWNS AND VILLAGES that have representations of dragons in their churches. They usually take the form of stained-glass windows or carvings e.g. bench ends, screens, crosses etc. Wherever possible I have included local legends concerning dragons.

ALFORD: A bench end shows a dragon looking at a man. There is another dragon painted on glass.

ALLER: A swamp dragon came out of the Athelney fens and was killed by a nine foot spear thrown by a man from Aller.



Two headed dragon on a bench end at Crowcombe.

ASHILL: A Jacobean pulpit decorated with three dragons.

BEER CROWCOMBE: A Jacobean pulpit with dragons round the top.

BRYMPTON D'EVERCY: The church screen has faces and foliage on one side and dragons on the other.

CASTLE NEROCHE: A motte & bailey near Ilminster, was once said to have had a dragon guarding treasure.

CHEDZOY: A bench end showing a dragon encircled by a belt.

CHRISTON: The ribs of the vaulted roof each end in a dragon's head.

CHURCHSTANTON: At Stapley Farm is a field called Wormstall where there is a noticeable hollow said to have been occupied by a "large worm" that was killed by a "valiant knight".

CLAVERTON: The church used to have a wall fresco of St George striking with his sword. There is a drawing of the original on the nave wall.

CROSCOMBE. The people of this

parish sent to Exeter in 1509

for a Jorgemak to carve St

George above the church door.

CROWCOMBE: A 16th century bench end has a carving of a two-headed dragon being attacked by two men. To the south of the village is a wood where a "Gurt Vurm" was supposed to have lived until its roaring mouth.

it was killed by a woodman from Stogumber. As he cut it in half one end slithered away to Kingston St Mary and the other went to Bilbrook.

DINDER: In the chancel wall above a window dedicated to St Michael are two dragons' heads carved during the time of the Normans.

DOLBURY (Churchill): Between Dolbury Camp and Cadbury Camp (Congresbury) there was said to be a flying dragon - the same is said of the Dolbury and Cadbury Camps in Devon.

DOULTON: A "fearful dragon" climbs one of the parapets.

DRAYTON: An ancient cross in the churchyard shows St Michael fighting a dragon.

EAST LYDFORD: A fine alabaster carving of St George and a dragon can be seen in the church.

FARLEIGH HUNGERFORD: The 13th century chapel attached to the castle has a large fresco of George and a dragon.

FLAX BOURTON: A carving of St Michael and dragon above the church door and more dragons on the chancel arch.

GLASTONBURY: The parish church has a chapel dedicated to St George; its screen incorporates old carvings rescued from local cottages and they include St George and a dragon.

HATCH BEAUCHAMP: St George and dragon on a bench end.

HINTON BLEWITT: East altar window with St Michael, St Margaret and St George.

ISLE ABBOTS: St George on his horse carved in a niche outside the church. Also a dragon roughly carved upside down on the font.

KER MOOR (near Dunster): St Carantoc captured a swamp dragon by throwing his cloak over it. He took it to the king at Dunster who told it to depart and do no more harm.

KINGSTON ST MARY: There was a dragon here that was killed by a man who rolled a stone into its roaring mouth.

MARTOCK: Winged dragons are carved on the outside of the tower.

MIDDLEZOY: A wooden chest in the chancel has dragons and geometrical designs on the front.

MELLS: There is a carved column, near a yew hedge in the churchyard depicting St George and a dragon.

MONTACUTE: A legend tells that a shining black cross was found on St Michaels Hill some time before the 12th century. Canute had Waltham Abbey built to house it.

NEWTON ST LOE: A window has St Michael and his sword, another St Margaret with a dragon.

NORTH CADBURY: A bench end shows two dragons hatching from eggs.

NORTON FITZWARREN: A dragon was said to have emerged from a pile of corpses after a battle in which the inhabitants of Norton Fitzwarren camp perished. It was killed by Fulk Fitzwarine. In the church there are many carvings of dragons on the screen including a scene depicting a plough man and a sower being stalked by a dragon. Another group of men and dogs are about to be attacked by a second dragon.

PITTON: A small chapel in the church is said to be on the site of a wattle church built by Joseph of Arimathea. Its screen is decorated with snarling dragons and monsters.

PITMINSTER: There is a 500 year old font with a vigorous carving of St George and a dragon.

RODNEY STOKE: The tomb of Sir Thomas Rodney (1478) has a dragon amongst its carvings.

ROWBERROW: The church of St Michael has a fragment of a Saxon cross showing entwined serpents. It was dug up in the churchyard in 1865 and is now set into the nave wall.

SOMERTON: The roof beams have monstrous dragons carved on them.

TRULL: The 14th century chancel window shows saints Margaret, Michael and George with their dragons.

WELLS CATHEDRAL: A carving of two men thrusting staves into the mouths of dragons. The passage leading to the undercroft has corbels showing dragons biting their tails. St George and St Michael can be seen in many carvings and windows throughout the cathedral.

WEST CAMEL: A fragment of Saxon cross is decorated with interlaced serpents.

WESTON?IN GORDANO: A carved dragon with its tongue out can be seen above two of the miserere seats.

WORLE: Carved miserere showing a man clutched in a dragon's claws. YATTON: St Katherine can be seen slaying a dragon in a carving on a stone corbel.



THREE NORTHUMBRIAN DRAGONS

OUR CORRESPONDENT DEREK BROWN OF GOSFORTH, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, reminds us of three principal dragon legends from Northumbria, "this ancient kingdom where men are of such heroic stature that mighty dragons are called worms!"

1. The Laidly Worm (= loathly dragon) of Spindalestone Hough was actually the daughter Margaret of a king who lived at Bamburgh Castle on the Northumbrian coast. She was turned into a dragon by her wicked stepmother, and saved by her brother, Childe Wynd, who came with the assistance of magic from over the sea, and broke the spell by kissing her, in her dragon form, three times. The step mother was subsequently turned into a toad which still haunts Bamburgh keep. When you are there you believe every word of it.



2. At Lambton in County Durham lived the dreaded and celebrated Lambton Worm. This grew so large that it could wrap itself ten times round Penshaw Mill until Sir John Lambton (who had fished it out of the Wear in the first place) returned from the Crusades and killed it. Unfortun-



ately part of the magic involved in disposing of it required him to kill also the first living thing he sets eyes on after slaying the Worm. By a stroke of ill-fate, his own father is the first living thing he sees after Doing The Deed. Sir John cannot bear to kill his own father, and so brings on his family the curse that no Lambton heir for nine generations would die in his bed. This came about, right down to the ninth heir, Henry Lambton MP who collapsed and died in his coach in 1761.

3. At Sockburn, also in County Durham, lived a serpent of enormous size which was slain by Sir John Conyers, using a falchion. In return for this service to the neighbourhood the Bishops of Durham charged him and his descendants only a falchion to be paid annually as token rent for their estates. The serpent with a severed head still forms part of the municipal arms of Darlington.

THE NORWICH DRAGON

ALLAN EDWARDS OF COSTESSEY, NORWICH HAS SENT IN A BOOK ENTITLED SNAP, THE NORWICH DRAGON BY RICHARD LANE (Trend Litho Ltd, 1976), plentifully illustrated and well researched.

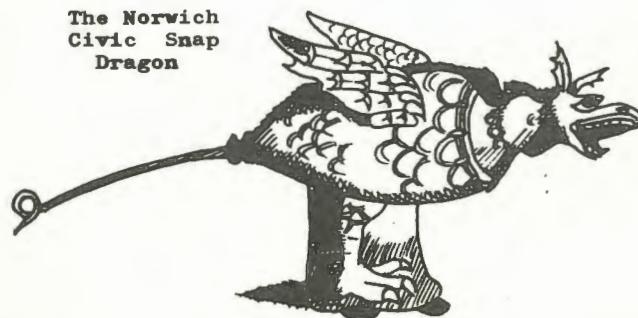
Two dragons "like grotesque puppets from an oriental theatre" hang from the roof of the keep of Norwich Castle. One, the "Mayor's dragon", is the last of a line with a tradition of over 600 years (the other is one of several imitative dragons made by surrounding localities including Pockthorpe and Costessey).

During Henry III's reign the 23rd of April, the date of St George's martyrdom, was declared a public holiday, and in Edward III's reign George was made England's Patron Saint. The Norwich St George Guild, founded in 1385, became one of the most powerful in Norwich, its object being to honour St George and his feast, to worship God, and to pray for the brethren and sisters of the fraternity and for "al men travallian in ye King's viage".

The ceremony that the dragon was used in no doubt had its origins in such festivities as that of Rogation (the three days preceding Ascension) when clergy, officials and parishioners processed round the parish boundaries with a dragon image representing evil "until the third day when it was stoned, kicked and beaten".

(Snaps's construction is a more realistic effigy than the Padstow and Minehead "Hobby Horses", but the two latter are more primitive and grotesque. The Hobby Horses operate on or near May Day (Beltain), a week after St George's Day, and are also connected in other ways with St George.)

The Norwich
Civic Snap
Dragon



A BRISTOL DRAGON ?

CHRIS
LOVEGROVE

MANY OTHER TOWNS MUST HAVE HAD SIMILAR TRADITIONS TO THAT OF NORWICH including, perhaps, Bristol.

There is a green dragon on the arch of St John's near the City Centre (the last-remaining of the old city gates). This dragon forms part of the arms of the Merchant Venturers, successors to the medieval Merchants Guild, and the available evidence points to St George, the dragon slayer, being the patron saint (perhaps with St Clement).

Naturally there was a close link between the medieval governing body and the merchant guild - thus the Guildhall incorporated a chapel of St George - and we find in Bristol as in other towns that the office of Mayor is associated with a key church feast (and also the other kind of feast).

In Norwich the newly-elected 'mayor' (the "Newlex") had a procession with its dragon on or about St George's Day (April 23). In London the Lord Mayor's Show still includes a procession near Martinmas (November 11), possibly originally on All Saints Day (November 1st).

In Bristol the new mayor was inaugurated at Michaelmas (September 29) in the Guildhall, and a procession later ended up at St Michael's-on-the-Mount-without (i.e. outside the town walls). Normally the church of St Michael (another dragon slayer) would be reached by passing through St. John's arch - sporting its dragon.

Alfred Watkins in "The Old Straight Track" notes a four-church alignment (St Mary-le-port, Christchurch, St John's, St Michael's) which passes up Broad Street past the Guildhall, through the arch and on up the hill to St Michael's. A hypothetical dragon procession (nowhere documented I hasten to add) might involve a memory of the power that such alignments are said to hold and which are traditionally associated with dragons.

An extension of the alignment incidentally to the south-east leads very close to the site of the former abbey of Keynsham. Legend has it that St Keyne, who flourished in the 6th century, found her solitary wood infested with vipers and so turned them to stone, thus providing local quarries with ammonites for the many years to come.

KING ARTHUR'S MANCHESTER

SID BIRCHBY

YESTERDAY I SAW ARTHUR'S ROAD UN-COVERED, AND STOOD IN HIS FOOT-steps. It was the road to the frontier against the advancing Northmen, and it has been lost since the last of his battles.

Until Barry Jones set to work, Roman Manchester has been almost a joke. There was a fort, brutally covered by the 19th cy railways, but its only remains are a fragment of wall in a timber-yard. In 1957, A.J.P. Taylor rightly commented that it must rank as the least interesting Roman remain in England, which sets a high standard. The Professor of Archaeology at Manchester University has changed all that.

The Roman fort is wrecked, but he deduced that outside it there must have been a civil settlement inhabited by natives cashing-in on the Legion. Much of this area is covered by the remains of 19th cy dwellings and businesses. These are now gradually being cleared, and the chances of important digs are coming along.

His most spectacular operation in 1972 proved his theories, uncovering beneath the footings of early C19 dwellings clear proof of the sort of C4 civilian activities that he had predicted. In one house was a quantity of broken glass and some gaming dice...the site, possibly, of a tavern. Elsewhere, several smelting-hearths, suggesting smithies for the armourers of the fort.

Mr. Harry Partridge of the Dept. of Arch'y is a gifted artist who has depicted the scene of the 1972 dig most vividly, with the Romano-British workshops being uncovered against a background of modern tower-blocks, with a group of phantom figures from the past gazing upon it all. He showed me round the site of yesterday's dig, a small cleared site about a quarter-mile from

the fort.

It was one of 3 or 4 sites tried out in response to a Granada-TV feature asking for volunteer diggers in the area. There were over 470 replies! Because of my profession at the Town Hall, and my interest in the subject, I was able to provide an extra site to dig, a small cleared site, and as a reward I was well-received at all the others.

My own site, after two abortive trenches, was postponed because there was too much modern fill to be got through in a day. More may come of it in two months' time, when the developers' machines scrape off the overburden and reveal the ancient layers.

The second site proved a Roman road on a line from the NW gate of the fort towards Wigan, where tradition says that Arthur fought three battles. The third was the jackpot, facing NE towards the Pennines and York. A road of C2 date with a C4 posthole containing nails and wood. More postholes for about 30 feet, too long for a dwelling, and perhaps a smithy. An informant had picked up Samian ware almost on the surface. Roman glass and potsherds, and the great find, a block of red sandstone from a gateway of the fort, used again after it had fallen into decay.

The atmosphere of the day was electric with enthusiasm. From the start, the volunteers turned up in hundreds with their spades, trowels and bare hands. They ranged from young boys who knew so little of what they were supposed to look for that they came up to me to ask about a bone that they had found, to experienced adults who had taken part in many other digs organised by Barry Jones. As Harry Partridge remarked, many were inspired by the novelty of the occasion, but at least a few were genuine workers who would be assets in future explorations.

There were the usual show-business events of any TV-covered occasion, such as the demand for everyone to gather on the main site to make it look like the scene of the action. This annoyed the dedicated diggers who had (they said) made all the initial finds and then shot off to see what could be found elsewhere. Mutter-mutter! But Barry Jones and his staff and their supporting colleagues made a remarkable job of handling the unusual combination of an influx of labour, a nationwide TV coverage, and a serious dig, and deserve every credit.

More will come of this one-day event, which in part, I was told, was adapted to absorb the huge influx of volunteer labour, which was once the most difficult thing to obtain on a dig. How does this event concern King Arthur, however?

Firstly, there is no evidence that any such figure as King Arthur ever existed. But it is accumulating, and it seems increasingly likely that he was a historical person operating against the Anglian invasions in the first half of the C6, and that his base was Cadbury in Somerset, the legendary Camelot.

If so, wargame theory can be applied, and this indicates that his staging-area was Caereon-on-Usk, the "city of the legions". What we know of the remains of the Roman road network suggests that the logical advanced base for a camp-

aign against Northumbria was the decayed Roman fort of Manchester.

From Manchester, Roman roads went out towards both Wigan and York, and both are places where there are traditions of Arthur fighting battles. Until today, all we have had to go upon are folktales collected by a discredited local historian named Whitaker. But the new proof of the Roman roads leading from the old fort supports the idea.

The discovery of a C4 posthole driven into a C2 road, with a smelting-hearth adjacent suggests, to me, an armourer's shop plus a gated road in the unsettled late-Roman period. One would expect such a situation as the troops gradually withdrew from the fort, and as its structure fell into disuse, and there would be no surprise if C6 finds were made, showing that defenses still existed in Arthur's time.

As a result of these digs, we are a step nearer to resolving the folk-tales about Arthur and Lancelot, and the outlook is quite promising. In a future article, I hope to set out the evidence, unless more finds delay it again.

Manchester, 20.6.77.

(c) S.L. Birchby, 1977

Margaret and the Dragon

By the 12th century St George was associated with the conquest of a dragon and the freeing of a princess at Silene in Lybia. This story was doubtless taken from the story of the classical hero Perseus who killed the dragon threatening Andromeda at Joppa (near Lydda, the scene of George's martyrdom in Palestine).

If you are interested in Jungian psychology you will see this act of rescuing the maiden as a liberation by the hero of his anima figure from the devouring aspect of the mother-image, the dragon. In a similar way Theseus defeats the minotaur in the cave-like labyrinth, representing the world of matriarchal consciousness, and rescues Ariadne the princess.

By the 14th century, as we see in the Norwich Snapdragon procession, the freed princess is called St Margaret. In the Northumbrian legend there is a twist however: the dragon of Spindlestoke is herself called Lady Margaret, the sister of

CHRIS LOVEGROVE

the hero Childe Wynd and the daughter of a king. The hero ultimately defeats the wicked stepmother who turns into a toad (itself a sort of prototype dragon). The story is thus essentially the same, but the psychologist's "devouring mother-image" has wickedly projected itself on to the defenceless maiden.

Why is the maiden called Margaret?

Margaret (or Marina), like Saint George, is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, but her story is even more fictional. The devil appeared to her in prison in the likeness of a technicolored dragon. He swallowed her up, but whether he found her indigestible or whether she made the sign of the cross accounts differ; in any case he quickly brought her up again.

Whether this is a pious account for us to imitate, a cautionary tale for dragons, or an archetypal Freudian dream, I cannot say.

But it may account for the fact that she is the patron saint of women in childbirth.



The Dragon of the Alchemists

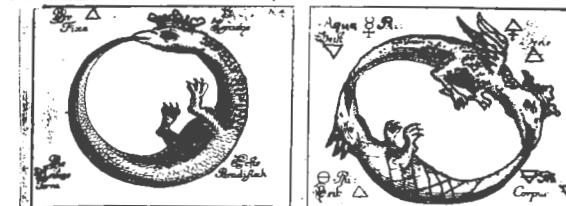
R.A. GILBERT

IN MYTHOLOGY DRAGONS CAN OFTEN BE TRACED TO A "REAL" SOURCE, EITHER SERPENT, SAURIAN OR SEA-BEAST, BUT IN ALCHEMY THEY ARE PURE SYMBOLS - pure, but not simple, and to comprehend the alchemical dragon we must have some idea of the nature of alchemy itself. There is a vast surviving literature of alchemy dating back to the period of its origins, and from scholarly studies of this it is fairly well established that alchemy began in Graeco-Roman Egypt as a proto-scientific quest into problems of metallurgy. It soon involved the search for the means to transmute metals and led to the concept of the Philosopher's Stone, the wonderful substance that was the true medium for converting base metals into gold and, in its parallel role of the Elixir of Life, of providing man with immortality and perfect health. This concept seems to have originated in Alexandria in early Christian times and with its development alchemy was open to radically different interpretations.

On the one hand there were the genuine metallurgists and proto-chemists continuing their work with material substances and seeking, through their practical operations, a material goal.

On the other hand were those seekers whose goal was the unveiling of spiritual Mysteries; they worked with no physical fire but saw in the stages of the alchemical process towards the Stone analogies with the Way of spiritual progress towards the divine, and thus they employed alchemical technology to express their thoughts. As different as these approaches were from each other, they had one thing in common: all alchemists described the Process in terms that were deliberately baffling to the uninitiated. The spiritual seekers sought not to cast pearls before the swinish multitude, while the gold seekers were equally anxious to hide their secrets from the greed of the world at large.

Thus, for the fifteen-hundred or more years during which alchemy was practised, the whole of alchemical literature presents the inquirer with an array of images the variety and complexity of which is unequalled in any other field of human endeavour. Whether they are Alexandrian, Arabic, or from Medieval and Renaissance Europe, alchemical texts are notoriously difficult to follow in their descriptions of the operations of the Process, or Great Work. The stages of the Process, however, remain essentially the same despite almost infinite variation in the number of steps and in the terms and images employed. They involve purification of the basic materials, subsequent preparation of the resulting substances and the treatment of these by a series of secret heating processes until final transmutation takes place. Most commonly twelve stages are given and one example of this sequence is printed as an appendix to this paper. Because the Great Work is predominantly an active process, the imagery employed in describing it is drawn from the world of living, active creatures whether of the real world or of the abyss of the human mind - as with the Dragon, the most potent, ubiquitous¹ and paradoxical symbol of all.



46, 47. Crowned dragon as tail-eater; two dragons forming a circle and, in the four corners, signs of the four elements.—Elearas. *Fables chinoises*, IV.

The earliest form of the alchemical dragon is usually taken to be the Ouroboros (fig 1), the serpent devouring its own tail, which is the Gnostic symbol of eternity but which is not necessarily a true dragon; for the true dragon is the ever-vigilant, powerful and fiery guardian of hidden treasure of both Classical and Norse lore, in which guise its suitability as an alchemical symbol is at once apparent. Although the Ouroboros is older, the true dragon does appear in some of the earliest surviving texts, as in the "Visions of Zosimus", the third-century alchemist who seems to have been both a spiritual and a practical worker and whose words can be interpreted to fit either sense:



cribed in typically paradoxical manner in Martin Ruland's "Lexicon of Alchemy" (1615, English translation 1893, p 128):

"In short, my friend, build a temple from a single stone... Note carefully on what side is the entrance to the temple, and take a sword in your hand; then seek the entrance, for narrow is the place where the opening is.

A dragon lies at the entrance, guarding the temple. Lay hold upon him; immolate him first; strip him of his skin, and taking his flesh with the bones, separate the limbs; then, laying the limbs together with the bones at the entrance of the temple, make a step of them, mount thereon, and enter, and you will find what you seek."

(Jung, *Alchemical Studies* p 64, drawing on the text of Berthelot)
Fig 2: MARS AND THE DRAGON - A DEATH-STRUGGLE SYMBOLIZING PUTREFACTION (Book of Lambsprinch: Hermetic Museum Vol 1)

Whatever their goal, all alchemists utilised physical substances in their writings, for even those seeking interior enlightenment mirrored their inward progress with the active processes of the Great Work.

The most important of these substances were mercury, gold and silver, purified into sophic sulphur and sophic mercury, and in their purified form united through the action of sophic salt which combined the volatile and fixed elements - a union of opposites symbolised by the winged and wingless dragons devouring each other and des-

"Draco is Mercury, also the Black Raven, or the Black on the Floor. It devours the tail, drinks the mercury. It is called Salt and Sulphur of the Dragons. It is the Earth from the body of the Sun. It is killed when it loses the soul, and rises again when the soul returns. The Dragon devours the mercury, like a poison, and dies; again drinks it and is made living. If he puts off all impurities he becomes white and truly living."

But the dragon also symbolises other stages of the Process leading to the final projection of the Stone, as in Pernety's "Alchemical Treatise on the Great Art" (1898, drawn from his introductions to his works from 1758 to 1779):

"During these last two operations the Dragon descends from Heaven, becomes infuriated against itself; it devours its tail, and swallows itself little by little, until at last it is changed into stone" (p 173).

This is really nothing more than an extension of the dual-dragon, deriving ultimately from the Ouroboros, which can be taken as symbolising also the circular nature of the Great Work proceeding from the One back to the One. Further applications of the dragon symbol are found in intervening stages of the Process, as with the Green Dragon which stands for Aqua Regia and symbolises the power of sublimating gold (which is dissolved in this mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acids), or the image of a group of dragons fighting: a symbol of the stage of putrefaction.



Fig 3: Within the dragon is its own healing. Mercury is liquid but can become coagulated. (Book of Lambsprinch: Hermetic Museum Vol 1)

In many cases alchemical texts wax lyrical in their descriptions. Thus we find the "Aurelia Occulta" personifying the Great Work:

"I am the poison-dripping dragon, who is everywhere and can be cheaply had. ... From my snout there comes a spreading poison that has brought death to many. Therefore you should skilfully separate the coarse from the fine, if you do not wish to suffer utter poverty... I am the old dragon, found everywhere on the globe of the earth, death and resurrection, visible and invisible, hard and soft;

I descend into the earth and ascend to the heavens. I am the highest and the lowest, the lightest and the heaviest... I am dark and light; I come forth from heaven and earth; I am known yet do not exist at all" (from the Theatrum Chemicum IV, p 501, quoted in Jung, op. cit. p 218).

The venom of the dragon is matched by the violence of his fire, as in the Ripley Scrowle: "The unnatural fire must torment the bodies, for it is the dragon violently burning, like the fire of hell" (Theatrum Chemicum II, p 113, quoted by Jung, op. cit. p 113).

This attitude is admonished by Petrus Bonus of Ferrara as a fatal error on the part of the alchemist; he should, instead, be enlightened within, thus paradoxically identifying Hell-fire with the fire of divine love. With such texts we become completely alienated from the material alchemists and fully absorbed by the spiritual quest and the continuing use of the dragon symbol becomes something of a puzzle.

To solve the puzzle we must look at the dragon symbol outside alchemy - as a winged, fire-breathing and armoured monster. In many cultures it has thus symbolised ferocity and aggression, as in the Viking dragon ships and in the dragon standards of the Roman army. It is violent and dangerous, the Sumerian Adversary, a symbol of enmity and ultimately of the Devil himself. From this we can see how the spiritual alchemists used the dragon, consumed in the fire of the Great Work, as a symbol of the Enemy to be overcome in the process of man's transmutation into a spiritual being through the redemptive power of Christ, symbolised by the stone. But a

simple religious parallel, with the Devil as a dragon and Christ as the dragon-slaying hero, is inadequate, for the alchemists' dragon is primarily paradoxical with the Stone often being said to be found in the head of the dragon. The "Scriptum Alberti" (quoted in Jung, op. cit. p 316) even identified the dragon with Christ, saying that it lives in eternity and is served by the angels, while the tail is identified with the Antichrist. Christ is also frequently represented as Mercurius, who is described in one of the tracts of the "Hermetic Museum" as being both "true fire" and "venomous dragon" (1893 ed. Vol 2, p 243).

Given such apparently irreconcileable attributes can it legitimately be claimed that the spiritual alchemists were symbolising Christ? It can when we remember that the overtly Christian alchemical texts stem from the centuries that contained the subtleties of scholastic philosophy and, later, the Hermetists and Emblematic poets of the Renaissance, all making use of obscure and complex - but still Christian - symbolism. It was commonly accepted beyond the confines of alchemy itself that alchemical symbolism was Christian; for example, George Herbert borrowed alchemical imagery for his poem "The Elixir" in which the Stone is explicitly identified with Christ.

Again, the Dragon need not be seen solely as the Devil, but rather as Death, for both death and resurrection are contained within the symbol of the dragon, the Stone in the head of the dragon being the resurrected Christ overcoming the final Enemy as Man, too, will overcome death by finding the Stone within himself.

Even this does not exhaust the dragon symbol, for recent interpreters of alchemy have sought psychological explanations for alchemical symbols, and their correlations of symbol with specific unconscious

processes have been as varied as their schools of thought.² They need not, however, concern us here, for such ideas were far from the minds of the alchemists themselves who had their own canon of interpretation, neatly summed up by Pernety (op. cit. p 220):

"The Golden Fleece is guarded by a three-headed dragon; the first comes from Water, the second from Earth, the third from Air. These three heads must be united by the operations into a single one, which will be powerful enough to devour all the other dragons. Call upon God, that He may enlighten you..."

* * * * *

1 It is a fitting paradox that in China, which has the most extensive mythology associated with dragons, the dragon as a symbol is almost entirely absent from alchemical literature. Chinese alchemists, however, had little or no contact with their fellows in the West.

2 The interpretations have been mostly psychoanalytic, largely of the Jungian school but with valiant efforts by Freudians such as Herbert Silbiger.

The twelve successive processes according to Dom Antoine Pernety:

1 Calcination	7 Sublimation
2 Congelation	8 Separation
3 Fixation	9 Ceration
4 Solution	10 Fermentation
5 Digestion	11 Multiplication
6 Distillation	12 Projection

Each stage can be represented by one of the signs of the Zodiac, with Aries for calcination and Pisces for projection.

Bibliographical note

Very few alchemical texts are available in modern editions. Berthelot collected and translated into French many ancient and medieval texts, but the translations themselves are now rare. Renaissance texts have mostly not been reprinted, but some are available in English:

WAITE, A.E. (ed.)

The Hermetic Museum Restored and Enlarged, 1893, 2 vols (re-issued by Watkins Publishing Ltd., 1976).

ASHMOLE, E. (ed.)

Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, 1652 (reprinted by Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967).

Studies of alchemy are legion but few are of much value. The best is undoubtedly:

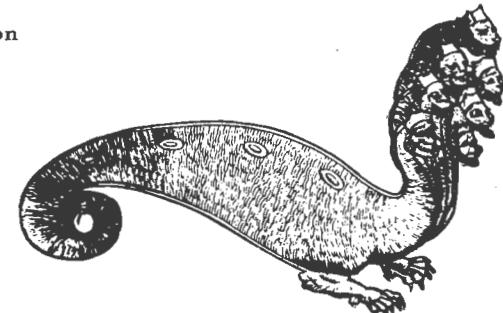
READ, J.

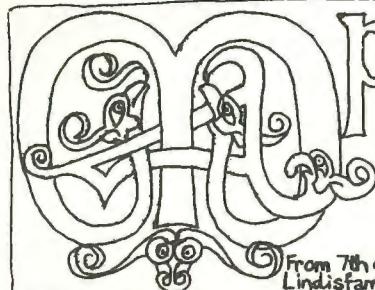
Prelude to Chemistry, 1936.

Another introduction, but with little if anything on symbolism, is Holmyard's "Alchemy" (Penguin).

Works by self-professed latter-day alchemists, such as Cockren, "Lapidus" and the mythical Fulcanelli, are worthless and best left to their own devices.

The literature of Dragons is a subject in itself which will be dealt with in a later paper.

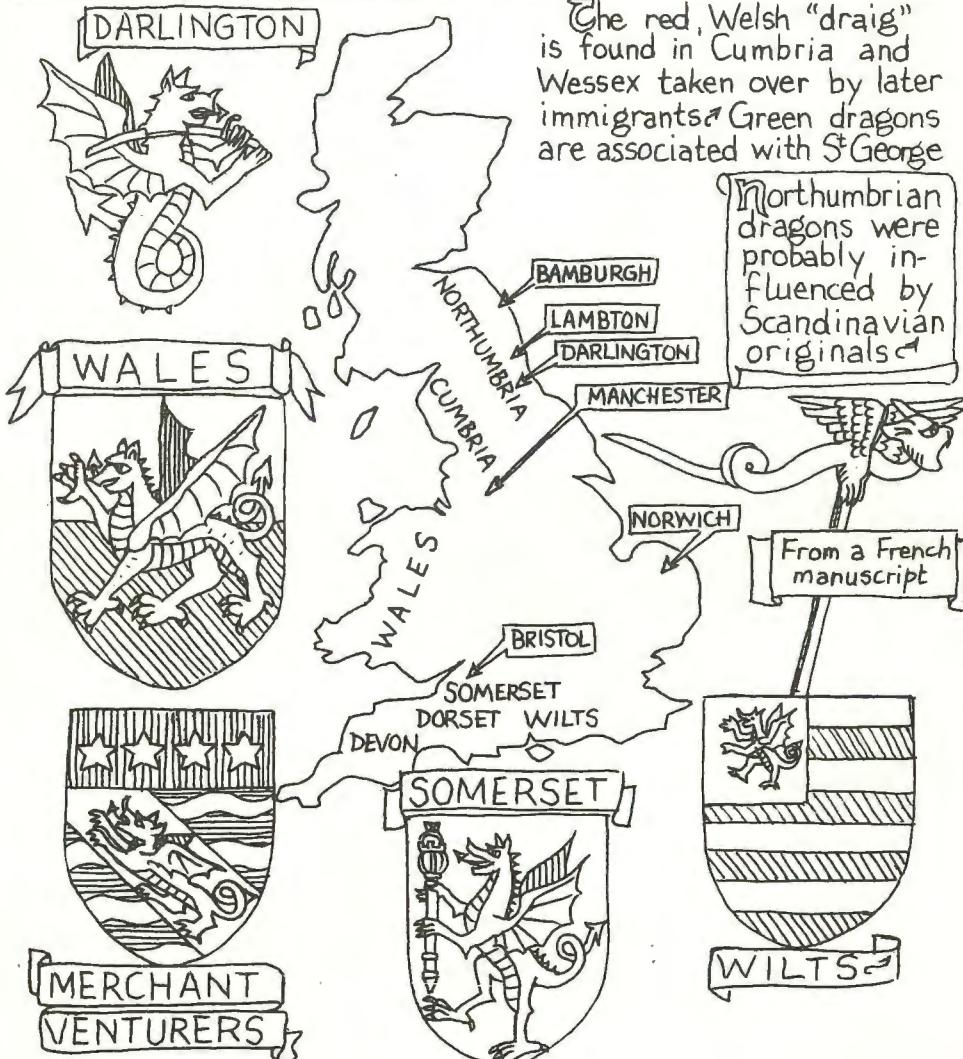




From 7th cent
Lindisfarne MS

showing some sites mentioned ↗
Few dragons are found on shields-
most are supporters -- Swansea,
London, Darlington, Carlisle, Dorset,
Caernarvonshire ↗

Wyverns are a development of the
viper, dragon-like but only biped ↗ ↗ ↗ ↗



T.H.WHITE: "The Book of Merlin". The hitherto unpublished conclusion to "The Once and Future King". Prologue by Sylvia Townsend Warner. (Austin, Texas, and London) University of Texas Press, 1977. XX, 136pp. £5.25.



This book was intended to be the fifth part of T.H.White's "Once and Future King". It was discovered in a Texan library and is now made available in a glossy but remarkably moderately priced edition at £5. 25-

Its value is mainly historiographical: it is good to know more of T.H.White - a diverse and talented writer - and it is interesting to know how he intended the Once and Future King to end. However, I think his publishers made a wise decision at the time, and not only for reasons of war time stringency. It adds nothing (except the final few pages on the deaths of Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere) to our understanding of the Arthurian legend, and, if anything, it diminishes our respect for White as a fine narrative writer.

There are certain truly beautiful descriptive passages, notably of the wild geese, and of the English landscape as Arthur sits brooding over it. The main theme is the discussion of the 'problem of war' as it takes place in the 'Combination room of the College of Life'. It represents, of course, White's own troubled feelings about the outbreak of World War Two and the development of his personal position towards it. It is 'peopled' by animals and birds - our old friend Archimedes, the sensible and tenacious badger and the verminous hedgehog representing the sound sense of the salt of the earth English countryman, all dominated by an increasingly tendentious and cantankerous Merlyn. As he honestly admits at one point "The difficulty of living backwards and thinking forwards is that you become confused about the present. It is also the reason why one prefers to escape into the abstract". But the abstract, the debate on the problem of war, carried on mainly by reference to natural history, becomes sickly anthropomorphic - or rather, anti-anthropomorphic. However appealing in 1941, we can't all become white fronted geese and fly to Siberia. In any case, men are only half animal; the other half is angel (or devil), but that is the dimension White cannot face. It is only as deficient animals that he can face his fellow beings.

The political theory is frankly je-jeune, and even in 1941 (a long time ago now) such crude characterizations of the major philosophies of socialism, capitalism and fascism will not do. They cannot all simply be classified as life in an ant heap. The badger does his best, tripping Merlyn's logic where he can, pointing out difficulties with his (alias White's) rather crass anarchism (or rather, laissez-faire individualism). Nor could White's greatest admirer wholly accept that war is due solely to national property and gland deficiencies. In a final burst of quite un-animal like patriotic feeling (which sends Arthur back to do his duty in the Cl2 and White in the (20th,) the hedgehog's rendering of Jerusalem by the socialist Blake has a certain ironic relevance.

The editor, Sylvia Townsend Warner, is well aware of the book's deficiencies, as she makes clear in her prologue. She still felt it worth publishing, and I am glad she has done so. For those who are interested in White's own internal development the book is fascinating. For those who are interested in Arthur, leave the Once and Future King as it is with its four books.

(Review by Marilyn Porter.)



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