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Igraine XXXII No 4

editorial

XXXII No 4 *Summer 2005*

Ian Brown

This issue's themes

The mother of Arthur has been known by many names – Eigr (Welsh "maid"?), Ygerne, Igerna and **Igraine** being just some of them – and this issue attempts a portrait of who she may originally have been. It also examines some aspects of medieval and more modern attitudes to womankind (Shani Oates' piece first appeared in *The Cauldron*).

Another strand that runs through these pages is that of the **grail**, as depicted in art and in the written word. Though British study of Arthuriana in popular culture lags behind North America, the epitome of quested-for ideals is alive and well as a figure of speech. Not all instances are frivolous or OTT. Four law lords ruled against writer and broadcaster Marcel Berlins' argument that allegations of impropriety during jury deliberations ought to be investigated. Berlins, commenting in *The Guardian* in early January 2004, wrote that "in effect, the majority view means that it is better for wrongly convicted defendants to spend perhaps years in prison rather than tamper with the holy grail of **jury room secrecy**". Here is the grail in its darker aspect, as spotted by Steve Sneyd. Do point out similar grail references, ludicrous or otherwise, and, who knows, maybe points mean prizes!

Other themes

To pre-empt a particular query about last issue's **Arthurian Beasts**, yes, it is true that there is a small hawk called a **merlin**. According to a note from Steve Sneyd, this does not take its name from Arthur's wizard, as one might expect, but from Old French, the 14th-century name for the bird being *esmerillion* (Modern French *émerillon*). In contemporary Britain *falco columbarius* is relatively common in upland areas, but breeding pairs on Exmoor have dwindled from five in the early 1990s to two in 2000, "due mainly to human disturbance".[1] To counteract the apparent lack of any recent fledglings the RSPB, the Exmoor National Park Authority and both the Avon & Somerset and Devon & Cornwall police forces have teamed up to protect breeding merlins, with the National Trust helping to carry out a full survey of both birds and breeding areas.

The catch-all theme for the *winter* issue is now **The Treasures of Britain**. This can be interpreted in its more specific sense of the late medieval Welsh tradition of *Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain*, "The Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain", or in a more general sense – though with an Arthurian dimension, of course! Before that, the *autumn* issue is one of those catch-up issues; with the broad theme **Heroes and Villains** this number will attempt to include a number of outstanding submissions, but exactly how successfully will remain to be seen!

Failing a fully-fledged paper, do send us any item, however small, you think suitable for inclusion in our regular features – *Old News* (historical, especially Dark Age, research or discoveries), *Reviews* (books, TV, radio, music, films, games), *The Board* (Arthuriana in modern popular culture) and of course *PenDragon* (are you thinking what we're thinking? If so, or if not, do write!).

[1] "Exmoor merlins under the spotlight" *Birds Vol 20* No 7 (Autumn 2005) 89

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Contents

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Vol XXXII *No 4* Summer 2005 *Theme this issue* **Igraine**

Illustrations / picture research Ian Brown, C Lovegrove and Simon Rouse

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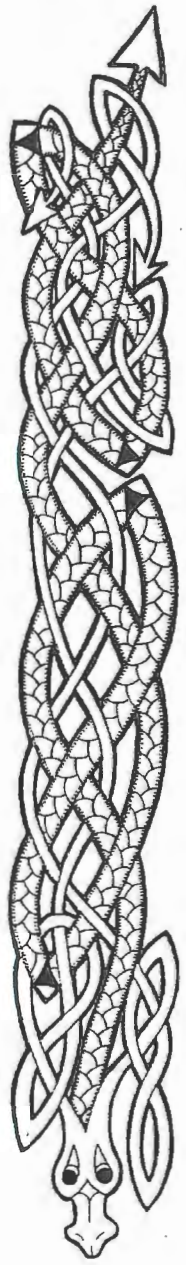

The Role of Igraine in the Arthurian Legends

Anita Loughrey

In the Arthurian legends, it is the women who possess the true power. Most events that occur in the myths are caused or affected by women. Igraine is no exception.

What's in a Name?

Igraine comes form the British name Eigr. She is also known in Latin as Igerna, in Welsh as Eigyr, in French as Igerne. In Thomas Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur she was originally known as Ygrayne and it was modernised to Igraine. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, Kevin Crossley Holland's *Arthur and the Seeing Stone* and Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* she is known as Ygerna, and in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* she is called Arnive, a German version of Igraine.

John and Caitlin Matthews suggest that these variants are derived from the Celtic title Tigerna or lady, and is a royal title in the same way as Pendragon is a title.[1]

Matrilineal succession, where succession is passed through the female line, was an ancient feature of all native European peoples of pre-Celtic times. Igraine was the daughter of Amlawdd a descendant of Joseph of Arimathea. She married Gorlois, the Duke of Cornwall and they had a daughter named Morgan. She was tricked into a union with Uther Pendragon whom she later married.

From this union came Arthur who had a mix of Pendragon and Arimathean blood. According to Marion Zimmer Bradley, Igraine was a priestess of the Celtic earth goddess and granddaughter of Merlin, therefore adding the blood of Merlin to Arthur. It is not surprising that Arthur was 'destined for greatness'. Igraine's lineage shaped Arthur's destiny. It is almost inevitable he should seek the Holy Grail. The quest was in his blood.

Rape and Misconception

Arthur is shrouded by mystical intervention and divine destiny, especially his conception. Igraine and Uther's magical consummation is the beginning of the entire Arthurian saga. Without their encounter, King Arthur would not exist nor would the wealth of stories about him. It is also the stimulus for Arthur's tragic end.

Uther's seduction of Igraine parallels the legend of the Greek god of thunder's union with the mortal, Alcmene. Zeus transforms himself to look like her husband Amphitryon. Alcmene gives birth to the hero Hercules. Like Zeus, Uther is described as a great warrior, characterised by a bad temper.[2]

Some argue Igraine hated Uther for killing her husband and deceiving her with magic. Other scholars insist she took on her role as queen willingly and produced a daughter with Uther called Anna. Most accounts suggest that their union is one of love that grew over time.

Geoffrey of Monmouth writes: "From that day on they lived together as equals, united by their great love for each other; and they had a son and a daughter. The boy was called Arthur and the girl Anna." According to Geoffrey, Anna is the mother of Gawain and Mordred. By presenting Arthur's birth as illegitimate, it is possible to defend the rebellion of Mordred as an attempt to claim

[1] See also Chris Lovegrove "How Igerna conceived Arthur". *Ed*

[2] See W M S Russell "Alcmena and Igraine". *Ed*

the throne that was rightfully his. In this way, the sin of Uther comes back to his son and leads to his ultimate demise.

Morgan too, never forgives the deception of her father and continually plots Arthur's downfall. Her devious acts of revenge are the basis of many of the Arthurian legends. Igraine's seduction is the catalyst for this revenge.

Lord Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* suggests a completely different origin for Arthur. Tennyson's version has Merlin finding baby Arthur who is brought to the shore by the ninth wave that crashes down aflame in the dark night. Tennyson probably devised this version because the illicitness of an affair was too shocking for Victorian readers but it diminishes Igraine's role within the legends.

The Lost Son

Igraine represents the mother aspect of the Goddess, but as a character in the myth, she is not allowed to raise her son. He is taken by Merlin and fostered by Sir Ector.

Both the magic of his conception and his fosterage are themes found in many of the ancient Celtic myths. To give fosterage to a child is an act of responsibility and honour and the mother shows her faith and trust by relinquishing her child for this higher honour and destiny. During the reign of Uther, hiding Arthur in a place of safe fosterage was the best insurance for his safety. Arthur's dubious paternity could also be viewed as reason for fosterage.

In *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Igraine refuses to accept Arthur as her son because of the controversy surrounding his birth. However, when he comes to the throne all is forgiven and they are reunited.

The theme of lost son is reoccurring in Celtic myths and legend. Rhiannon, the Celtic goddess of inspiration and the moon loses her son when a monstrous hand comes down the chimney at his birth and seizes him. Igraine's loss is echoed when Perceval's mother breaks her heart waiting to hear news of her son and again when Elaine tricks Lancelot into sleeping with her and then loses her son Galahad to become a knight.

The guilt of leaving their mothers also affects each of the hero's actions within the Arthurian tales, shaping their characters and destiny. Arthur may have been a totally different person if Igraine had bought him up.

Goddess

Portrayals of Igraine vary from author to author but, on the whole, she is viewed as the perfect wife and mother, chaste and faithful. Igraine is enacting the part of the Celtic goddess. The concept of maiden, mother and crone has been personified in the Celtic myths and it is the mother aspect of the goddess that Igraine represents.

Igraine's positive virtues are emphasised by Uther's overwhelming desire for her, causing him to disguise himself as her husband, and the only reason Igraine let him into her bed was because she believed he truly was her husband. A woman with these qualities would inspire a man to be noble and brave. Not only did she inspire Gorlois and Uther but she also inspired her son, Arthur.

Yet, the goddess needs a male consort, for without one she cannot reproduce, demonstrating a need for balance. As mentioned, this coupling of males and females has a knock-on effect throughout the Arthurian legends.

Queen of the Otherworld

The Celtic tradition of a land of women is another strong theme. It is the sacred place to which all men are drawn. In Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival,* Arnive dwells in the Castle of Maidens. This castle contains a pillar that displays events within a six-mile radius. The palace is protected by strong magic created by a magician who accompanied the queen. It is a place of mystery and solitude.

Similarly, Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval, Le Conte del Graal*, claims after Uther's death, Ygema retired to a palace she had built for herself known as the Chastel des Merveilles or 'Castle of Wonders'. In this castle, the white-haired queen adorned in white with golden flowers waits with her daughter and grand-daughter for a true knight who will restore them to their rightful place. Her grandson Gawain answers this quest. Igraine enquires after her son and Gawain is only permitted to leave on the promise he will return. She handles herself with dignity that becomes the great queen that she is.

In these tales, the castle represents the Otherworld and has a mystical aura. Igraine portrays the traditional role of Queen mother. She remains in touch with court life whilst exercising her otherworldly role. Caitlin and John Matthews point out that, like Arianrhod, the Celtic moon goddess, Igraine achieves a solitary and powerful seclusion within her own fortress, an image of power.

Conclusion

Igraine is the mother of the hero, Arthur. Her legend is a mix of historical and mythological information. She is connected to the legend of the Grail through her lineage and after her role as mother is completed she fades from the real world to become Queen of the Otherworld in the Castle of Marvels.

At each stage of her extremely limited story, she is powerful and has a lasting affect on the rest of the legend. The themes that she begins are continued into the other romances. She is indeed the mother of a King.

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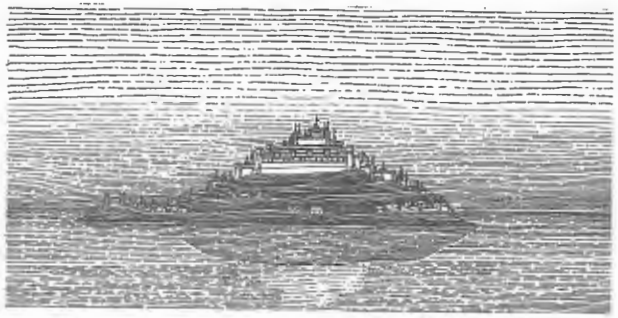

Island fortress Ian Brown

Alcmena and Igraine

W M S Russell

There is a striking parallel between the conception of the greatest hero of the ancient Mediterranean and that of the greatest hero of medieval Europe. I begin with the Greek. The tale of his conception is told as early as Hesiod, and by later Greek writers including Apollodorus and Diodorus Siculus; there were plays on the subject, all now lost, by Sophocles, Euripides and Philemon.[1] [2] Our first surviving play on the subject is therefore Plautus's comedy *Amphitryon*, and I shall therefore use the Latin names of the gods and the mortals.

Amphitryon, commander of the Theban armies, is campaigning against the Teloboean people. Jupiter transforms himself into a perfect likeness of Amphitryon, and his faithful pimp Mercury assumes the likeness of Amphitryon's slave Sosia. Jupiter pretends to Alcmena he has hurried back to be with her after victory over the Teloboeans (which had indeed occurred), and the innocent Alcmena enjoys a night with what she supposes is her husband. The fun begins, of course, when both Sosia and Amphitryon return. The simple-minded Sosia has an identity crisis when meeting, apparently, himself, and the expected comic misunderstandings arise between husband and wife. Finally, Jupiter reconciles them by telling all, and Alcmena has twins. One boy is Amphitryon's own son Iphicles, and the other boy promptly strangles two enormous serpents – he is, of course, Jupiter's son, the supreme hero Hercules, the Heracles of the Greeks.

When the plays of Plautus became freely available in the 16th century, the subject of the *Amphitryon* was irresistibly attractive to dramatists. Dozens of plays on the subject were written, starting with Rotrou and Molière, mostly in France but there is one by Kleist. When, in 1929, Jean Giraudoux's superb version was performed, he was able to call it *Amphitryon 38*.[3] The story had such an impact in France that to this day the French word for *double* is *sosie*.

I turn now to Geoffrey of Monmouth.[4] Gorlois, duke of Cornwall, leaves his wife Ygerna (Geoffrey's version of Igraine) in the impregnable castle of Tintagel. King Uther Pendragon lusts after her, but of course not being a god he cannot transform himself into Gorlois's likeness. So his faithful pimp Ulfin consults Merlin, who provides potions to make Uther like Gorlois and Ulfin and himself like Gorlois's retainers Jordan and Britaelis. (For some reason Malory exchanges the assumed identities of Ulfin and Merlin.)[5] Ygerna, as innocent as Alcmena, enjoys a night with, apparently, her husband, and conceives Arthur.

The obvious parallel is the transformation of the god and the king and their pimps to effect the conception of the hero. There are other parts of the whole stories which bear no relation to each other. Amphitryon and Alcmena had various adventures before settling in Thebes, which bear no relation to the early history of Gorlois (nothing is recorded of Ygerna before her deception by

[1] Frazer, Sir James *ed transl* (1921) *Apollodorus: the Library* (2 vols, London: Heinemann) Vol 1, 174, *n*1
[2] Nixon, P *ed transl* (1916-1938) *Plautus* (5 vols, London: Heinemann) Vol 1, vii
[3] D'Almeida, P (preface) (1984) *jean Giraudoux: Amphitryon 38; Jean-Pierre Giraudoux: Amphitryon 39* (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle) 5-7*:*
[4] Thorpe, L *ed transl* (1966) *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) 205-208
[5] Vinaver, E *ed* (1977) *Malory: Works* (based on the manuscript discovered in 1934; Oxford: Oxford University Press) 4

Uther). Jupiter does Amphitryon no harm apart from cuckolding him, but Uther, apparently because Gorlois will not play complaisant husband, invades his realm; he is actually killed in a skirmish while Uther is enjoying his wife. This of course enables Uther to marry her and legitimise Arthur, a formality hardly necessary for the son of the Father of the gods.[6] [7]

God and hero

In their later life, the two heroes have, as far as I can see, only two things in common. Each had a powerful female enemy, respectively, the goddess Juno (Hera) and Morgan le Fay. The ending of both was ambiguous. Among the Greeks,

'the offering to a hero was called *enagisma*, and differed in clear ritual ways from the sacrifice to a god, *thusis*. The hero's altar, called *eschara*, differed from the god's altar, *bomos*. It was lower, and hollowed to allow blood and other fluids to flow into a trench. The victim was held with head down, whereas for the gods it was held with head up, and the worshipper never shared the feast, as he often did with a god; instead the victim was totally burned.' (This was called a holocaust.) 'It was felt unlucky to share food with anyone underground. And this was the crucial belief associated with the ritual distinction: the Olympian gods were up in the heavens, the hero, like the ordinary dead, was in the underworld.'

Now, during the classical period, Heracles was the only being 'to receive both the *enagisma* of a hero and the *thusis* of an Olympian god: this double cult is attested in a number of places.' Homer equips him with two souls, one enjoying Olympus, the other a shade in the underworld.'[8] The ambiguity in Arthur's case takes the form of the well-known doubt: was he buried, at Glastonbury or elsewhere, or was he waiting in Avalon (or as a chough!) to return as the Once and Future King? Apart from these two similarities, *the careers of the two heroes had nothing in common.*

[6] Apollodorus 2.4.5-8
[7] Thorpe (ref 4) 205-208
[8] Russell, W M S (1984) "Heroes in Ancient Greece" in Davidson, H R E (*ed*) *The Hero in Tradition and Folklore* (London: the Folklore Society) 112-141, especially 120 and 123

Fantasies

Now the similarity between the two conception stories, with transformations of seducer and pimp, can be accounted for, like all cultural similarities, in one or more of four ways. There is convergence, when similar factors in different societies lead to the same results, and parallelism when convergence is specially easy since both societies share factors that were latent in their common ancestors. Thus common culture patterns in, for instance, Celts, Greeks and Indians may have evolved from factors latent in their Indo-European ancestors. Now fantasies about the births of heroes have converged in many societies, for psychological reasons discussed by Freud.[9] But the transformation motif is highly specific, and, so far as I know, unique to Heracles and Arthur. This suggests diffusion or stimulus diffusion, that is the transmission by speech or writing from one society to another of either a whole culture pattern (diffusion) or the rough idea of one, so that the second society produces its own version (stimulus diffusion).

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find out whether Plautus's *Amphitryon* was available in the 12th century. As late as the 14th century, only eight of his twenty-one plays were known,[10] (the rest were discovered in 1429),[11] and still fewer were probably available in Geoffrey's day. The odds are therefore against *Amphitryon* being one of them, but I must leave this to expert medievalists. If it was, Geoffrey could have read it, for his contemporary William of Malmesbury knew what of Plautus there then was.[12]

Although, as we have seen, the conception of Heracles was dealt with repeatedly in Greek literature, this does not seem to be true of Latin literature. Surprisingly, even in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the great transmitter of Greek legends to the Middle Ages, there is only one line about the transformation (of Jupiter alone, not

[9] Freud, S (1950) *Collected Papers* (5 vols, London: Hogarth Press) Vol 5, Chapter 6
[10] Highet, G (1967) *The Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 84
[11] Reynolds, L D and Wilson, N G (1974) *Scribes and Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 123
[12] *Ibid*, 99

Mercury): Arachne's tapestry showed how Jupiter 'was Amphitryon when he took you, Alcmena'.[13] So if *Amphitryon* was not available to Geoffrey, simple diffusion was hardly possible. But there is one other possibility. Byzantine scholarship was superb, and the great libraries of Constantinople had not yet been destroyed by the barbarians of the Fourth Crusade. So the story might have been picked up by North Europeans who had some contact with the Greeks – merchants, or the Varangian (Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian) Guard of the Byzantine Emperors, or members of the First Crusade. But in the absence of more definite evidence, I must leave the question open.

[13] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6,112 (my transl)

Letters

SIGHTS AND SITES

BBC2, 9pm, 29th July, on the programme *Coast* exploring the coastline of Britain, whilst visiting the Paviland Cave in Wales, it was claimed that "To an archaeologist, Paviland Cave is like the Holy Grail." This is, apparently, because the oldest known human burial in Britain was found in the cave, dating back approximately 30,000 years. Another Arthurian reference occurred a few minutes later, when Saint Govan's chapel was visited, with a passing mention of the tradition of it being the last resting place of Sir Gawain. In the previous episode in the series, Tintagel was visited for a moment, with a passing reference to the obvious connection, before attention was turned to the tradition of Cornish wreckers.

Anyway, I just thought I'd share that with you, as it does seem that the Grail is becoming something of a buzz-word in documentaries (which has got to be good for the continuing awareness of the Arthurian legends; but let's hope it never becomes as prevalent as "absolutely"!)

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough

It seems to have gone unheralded that [the editor has] escaped from the drab suburbs of Bristol to the heart of Celtic Wales. I can picture a stone dwelling with a blazing log-fire for story-telling of an evening, while outside the mists are swirling around the Preselis – all of which makes me most envious!

The Arthurian connections you dig up are fascinating, and lead off to all kinds of unexpected corners of past and future. We were in Cornwall [in 2003] and saw, for the first time, 'King Arthur's Stone' by the river at Slaughter Bridge, where it must have lain for hundreds of years, mostly unnoticed. What with that and the recent discovery at Tintagel of a piece of slate from the 6th century, inscribed with Arthur's name, there can surely be no doubt that Cornwall is the prime site for the Arthurian story. Where else could Camelot be but by the river Camel!

Richard Carder, Bath, Somerset

I recently joined the Kent Archaeological Field School and whilst searching their web site www.kafs.co.uk looked through some of the articles available on the Practical Archaeology page. Issue has a paper given by W M Flinders Petrie on November 1917 entitled "The Tysilio Chronicle" which members may find of interest. I had never heard of Tysilio before although I expect some of the longer standing members may have. I'd be interested in any comments they may have to make on this paper.

Marguerite Rivers, Cambridge

◆ *The Paviland cave is in the Gower peninsula, and Govan's Chapel in Pembrokeshire, not far from the lily-ponds of Bosherston, spuriously claimed as the last resting place of Excalibur!*

I suspect a tongue in Richard's cheek over the Cornish sites! The Tudor antiquarian Richard Carew read ATRY into the Slaughterbridge stone's inscription

LATINI IC IACIT / FILIUS MAGARI

which actually means "Latinus' [memorial]. Here lies the son of Magarus". Pages 164-5 of Leslie Alcock's Arthur's Britain *(Pelican paperback 1973) elucidate. And of course Tintagel's 'Arthur Slate' reads*

PATERN... / COLI AVI FICIT /
ARTOGNOV... / COL... / FICIT

which may be tentatively translated as "Paternus [descendent] of ancestor Coll made [this]. Artognou [descendent of ancestor] Coll made [this]". Pages 264-268 of Christopher Gidlow's The Reign of Arthur *(Sutton paperback 2005) discuss the slate.*

continued on page 13 ▶

How Igerna conceived Arthur

Chris Lovegrove

Igraine Simon Rouse

Once upon a time, the "last King of Egypt" was Nectanebos, a royal sorcerer. While in disguise as a court astrologer in Macedonia he becomes infatuated with Olympias, queen to Philip of Macedon. Nectanebos tells Olympias that she will mate with the Egyptian god Ammon, who is described as "white haired, with the horns of a ram above his jaws". The first harbinger of the god is to be a serpent which slithers into Olympias' room in the palace. Needless to say, the god Ammon is in reality Nectanebos in disguise, and it is Nectanebos and not Philip, Olympias' husband, who is responsible for the conception of the child who will become Alexander the Great. He later becomes the child's tutor.[1]

The Romance of Alexander, from which this story is taken, was extremely popular in various versions in the medieval period (Ranelagh 1979).[2] All are ultimately based on a "pseudo-historical Greek narrative of Alexander, probably written in Alexandria towards the end of the 3rd century" (Engels 1998: 16). The author is known as Pseudo-Callisthenes because the work was purportedly by Aristotle's nephew Callisthenes, a contemporary of Alexander. A Latin translation appeared in the 4th century, with a popular abridgement in the 9th and a new Latin translation in the 10th.[3]

Table 1. Conceptions of Alexander and Arthur

hero	Alexander	Arthur
father	Philip, king of Macedonia	Gorlois, duke of Cornwall
mother	Olympias	Igerna
real father	Nectanebos disguised as god Ammon	Uther disguised as Gorlois
attribute	ram's horns, serpent body	"Pendragon" (wyvern)
site of palace	Pella, Macedonia	Tintagel, Cornwall

There is no doubt that Geoffrey of Monmouth would have been aware of this popular medieval tale with its hero conceived by a shape-shifting king (complete with ram's horns and serpent body) on a queen in her royal palace. And so when he came to write his *History of the Kings of Britain* in the third decade of the twelfth century he had no need to look further for an exemplar for the conception of his hero, Arthur, especially as there seemed to be no extant story of Arthur's origins. And perhaps he was encouraged to set the tale at Tintagel because he was reminded of the tale of

[1] Parts of this paper have previously appeared in Lovegrove (1980).

[2] Ranelagh (1979) includes an extract from *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes* translated by Albert M Wolohojian (Columbia University Press).

[3] Laurence Harf-Lancner *transl ed* (1994) *Le Roman* d'Alexandre (Paris: Livre de Poche, Librairie Générale Française). I am grateful to W M S Russell for these details on the *Romance*'s availability in the medieval period

Nectanebos by the proximity to Tintagel of St Nectan's Kieve (or St Nectan's Glen).

Following his exemplar, Geoffrey makes Uther be consumed with lust for the wife of his subject (VIII: 19). Merlin facilitates Uther's access to Igerna at Tintagel by disguising Uther as Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, and Ulfin and Merlin himself as two of Gorlois' men. In this way Uther begets Arthur on the unsuspecting Igerna. Meanwhile Gorlois is killed in battle elsewhere and so Uther is free to marry Igerna; both, we are told, "were linked together in no little mutual love" (VIII: 20). Arthur is born in due course.

Uther

There is no evidence that Uther existed as an identifiable individual much before Geoffrey wrote his *History* (though he is named in the poem *Pa gur*, dated to around 1100 by Sims-Williams, 1991: 41). However, medieval Welsh traditions could suggest that Geoffrey's Uther may have evolved into a wizard figure independent of Merlin's influence. In the medieval Welsh *Triads* we read that one of the Three Great Enchantments of the Island of Britain was caused by Uthyr Pendragon. He then taught this enchantment to Menw, Teirgwaedd's son ("little son of Three Cries").

This Menw is also known from *Culhwch and Olwen* where he too is a great enchanter: "should he come to a heathen land he might cast a spell over [Arthur's men], so that none might see them and they see everyone." Menw also casts a calming spell over a giant mastiff and transforms himself into the likeness of a bird. In the 15th century, a triad lists Menw as one of the Three Enchanter Knights of Arthur's Court (Bromwich 1991: 215-16). These views of Uthyr and Menw as shape-shifting magicians are a far cry from Geoffrey's portrait of Uther as a military man, but are reminiscent of the enchanter Nectanebos.

Arthur's origins

Except for diehard romantics, observers are generally agreed that Geoffrey took a mass of disparate traditions and histories and conjured the tale of King Arthur out of these materials. Where linkages were lacking, he would have fallen back on familiar narrative patterns to fill in the gaps. While there is no exact fit between the tales of the two conceptions, as the table makes clear, the parallels are striking, nevertheless.

This kind of mysterious conception is found in the traditions of all kinds of cultures and all manner of religions (including, of course, the story of Jesus). Geoffrey may have consciously made Arthur's origins parallel the origins of many Celtic heroes, of course (Rees and Rees 1961: 223):

(a) the advent and future greatness of the hero have been foretold (Merlin's prophecy of the Boar of Cornwall);

(b) his advent is destined to bring death or misfortune to a presiding power (Gorlois in Cornwall, the Saxons in Britain);

(c) certain difficulties have to be overcome before his future mother can fulfil her destiny – she is closely guarded, confined in a fortress and her own resistance has to be overcome by cunning (Uther's disguise);

(d) there is a mystery about the hero's begetting – whether he has an earthly father or not, he is usually begotten by another, a king, a man from another ethnic group, or a supernatural being.

Igerna

Arthur's mother has little or no personality in the *History*. After Geoffrey wrote, Igerna (*Eigr* in Welsh) starts to appear as the aunt of St Illtud, with a respectable royal ancestry herself, but little else is said of her. Did she have a real existence? Victor Canning's novel *The Crimson Chalice* gives her a setting on Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel. This may be because a 5th or 6th century memorial tombstone on Lundy reads

... IGERNI ... ITIGERNI

At first sight the initial word looks very suggestive, until we realise that it has a genitive case-ending for a masculine name. In this case, Charles Thomas suggests restoring this as CONTIGERNI (or even VORTIGERNI) FILI TIGERNI, that is "the stone of Contigernos (or Vortigernos), son of Tigernos" (Selkirk 1969). While Geoffrey may just possibly have known of the IGERNI stone on Lundy, there doesn't seem to be a general association between Igerna and the island.

However, the name Igerna itself may ultimately be genuinely Dark Age, or even earlier. The names of St Kentigern (= Contigern) and the tyrant Vortigern ("great

king") both preserve a similar element. This element is preserved in Modern Irish *tigern* "lord" and both Medieval and Modern Welsh *teyrn* "monarch" (MacKillop 1998). Does Igerna's name, which looks as if it might derive from a root *tigern-*, actually reflect her role as female ruler or queen? Or is there more?

The capture of ancient Troy by the Greeks after a long siege was viewed as the rape of Athena its patron goddess, especially when her talisman or *palladium* was stolen from there; it is tempting to see Tintagel as a British equivalent in Geoffrey's narrative. Uther is told by Ulfin that there is no way into the fortress of Tintagel, and thus to Igerna, except by a narrow isthmus of rock which "three armed knights could hold". But by Merlin's deception – Geoffrey's version of the wooden horse of Troy – three un-armed men gained entry without bloodshed, for when Uther, Merlin and Ulfin approached, the porter "swiftly unmade the doors, and the three were admitted". And so "the King lay that night with Igerna". Was Uther celebrating a sacred marriage with "the Queen"? And was this Queen the embodiment of a goddess?

Rhiannon and Pryderi

The First Branch of the Mabinogion is known as *Pwyll Prince of Dyfed*, after its principal protagonist. Like the other branches the tale is made up of episodes, some almost independent of each other, reflecting the way the final version has been arrived at. Pendefig Dyfed (the Prince of Dyfed) is persuaded by a ruse to swap semblances for a year with the Lord of the Celtic Underworld, Pen Annwfn, taking on each other's roles. The Prince, however, remains chaste with the wife of Pen Annwfn. To redeem an insult given to Pen Annwfn, the Pendefig Dyfed has also to battle another Underworld king (probably Pen Annwfn in yet another guise) at a ford, a contest which the Prince wins. After a year they are transformed back to their own guises of Pendefig Dyfed and Pen Annwfn.

The next episode is the successful wooing of the supernatural woman Rhiannon by Pendefig Dyfed. It is possible that this episode has suffered a dislocation and that it should have preceded the transformation episode (Gruffydd 1953 *passim*, especially chapter II). It then seems likely that Pen Annwfn would then have sired a child in the guise of Pendefig Dyfed on Rhiannon who by then was the Prince's wife. This child is given various names, but Pryderi ("care") is the one that sticks. He is later fostered by a prince called Teyrnon and his wife.

There is a parallel with an Irish medieval tale of the conception of Mongán the Fair. The King of Ulster is tricked into agreeing to swap guises with the Irish god Manannán, and in return for the Ulster king winning a battle against the King of Lochlann[4] Manannán will get to sleep with the Ulster king's wife. The child Mongán thus gets to be identified as son of either father according to which tradition was recounted. How this Irish tale might relate to the Welsh story and to the tale of Arthur's conception is complex, but the common elements of putative fathers, transformations and battle are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Conceptions of some Celtic heroes

Child	Mongán Finn ("the fair")	Pryderi ("care"), *alias* Gwri Golden Hair	Arthur
Mother	Fiachna's wife	Rhiannon, wife of Pendefig Dyfed	Igerna, Gorlois' wife
Mortal father	Fiachna Finn, King of Ulster	Pwyll, Pendefig Dyfed ("Prince of Dyfed")	Gorlois, duke of Cornwall
Super-natural father	Manannán mac Lir	Pen Annwfn	Uther Pen-dragon
Battle with	King of Lochlann (Other-world) or Scotland	Hafgan, a king in Annwfn	(Gorlois)
Where	Over the sea	At a ford	At fort of Dimilioc, near sea

What exactly seems to be happening here? A clue can be found in some of the

[4] Lochlann is the Irish Otherworld over the sea, often identified with Scandinavia or Scotland.

names of the *dramatis personae*. Firstly, Rhiannon: her name derives from the Celtic **Rigatona* meaning Queen Goddess, and comparative mythology suggests that she is related to Epona, the Celtic horse goddess. Now, the name of the character Teymon (who fosters the infant Pryderi and who appears to be Pen Annwfn in yet another guise) derives from Celtic **Tigernonos*, "the Great King, the God King". As Gruffydd points out, an *-onos* (masculine) or *-ona* (feminine) termination in Celtic names is the "usual mark of a divinity" (Gruffydd 1953: 98-100), and so we see that a divine or semi-divine child is the offspring of Rigatona-Rhiannon, the Goddess Queen, and Tigernonos-Teymon, the God King. In the corresponding story of the conception of Arthur we have our hero as the offspring of Igerna (**Tigerna*?), the Lady or Queen, and of Pendragon, the Chief Ruler. In both cases a mortal male spouse – Pendefig Dyfed in the Mabinogion tale and Gorlois (perhaps related to *gwr*, "man" in Modern Welsh) – is duped, and a battle near or over the water (symbolising a boundary with the Otherworld) is fought.

Epona Chris Lovegrove

Did Geoffrey know a version of the Rhiannon tale? I suspect his choice of names for his principal characters is suggestive. Did he know a version of *The Romance of Alexander*? It is more than likely, given what we know of both Geoffrey's erudition and his eclecticism. Was there a genuinely British tale of the conception of Arthur at Tintagel by Uther on Igerna? Ah, that we may never know.

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PEN-DRAGON

► *As for the editor's relocation, yes, the image of stone dwelling, log-fires and Preseli mists is bang on! The Preselis have a double Arthurian link, first as the source for the bluestones of Stonehenge (built by Merlin!), second because Arthur and his men hunted the giant boar Twrch Trwyth all over the hills in* Culhwch ac Olwen.

St Tysilio's name famously occurs in the longest place-name in Britain, made up for tourist purposes (here split up into its constituent parts): Llanfair-pwll-gwyn-gyll-goger-y-chwym-drobwll-llandysilio-gogo-goch *(St Mary's church in the hollow of the white hazels, near a rapid whirlpool and St Tysilio's church, near the red cave).*

His cult (and likely sphere of activities) was in Montgomeryshire, though there are outlying church dedications to his name in Anglesey, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. Figure 21 of E G Bowen's The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales *(University of Wales Press 1956) shows the distribution of sites dedicated to Tysilio in Wales. Llandysilio in Pembrokeshire includes a number of Dark Age stones, including memorials to Clutorix and Evolengus (the latter probably of Irish descent).*

The Wisdom of Courtly Love Shani Oates

Pure philosophy is spiritual striving through constant contemplation to attain gnosis of God...

Hermes Trismegistus

Sophia

Philosophy questions our deepest assumptions and perceptions. It is a process of the reasoning mind – it is not logic – an aspect of our psyche, our self-image, which guides our thoughts towards consciousness (awareness of true essence), preparing it for true gnosis. Indeed, the term *philosophy* means "lover of *Sophia*" or Wisdom (Freke & Gandy 2001: 43), the feminine emanation of God; as such she has been the lover and inspiration of all seekers of Gnosis for millennia. This Goddess represents the psyche within each one of us, which we strive to integrate to achieve this completion – a true life's work. Sophia, as the highest wisdom, manifests as the higher self, the true self, taking the traditional role of female *psychopomp*, the light and guide through the initiatory Mysteries of Life: those of sex, birth, death and rebirth.

Within esoteric Christianity, founded upon an amalgam of Jewish and oriental mystery traditions, the early Christians recognised in Mary the Mother of Jesus, one manifestation of Sophia; in the Magdalene, beloved of Jesus, another. As Virgin and Whore, they represent pure psyche and manifest embodied psyche – higher and lower aspects of the Goddess, separated by analogy within Mystery Schools to reveal the original nature of the 'pure' and the later redeemed aspects of the united soul, the complete, wholeness, the perfect (Freke & Gandy 2001: 92). Gnostic inheritors of this infant faith reflected these beliefs in the following poem:

I was sent forth from the power,
I am the honoured and the scorned one,
I am the Holy One and the whore,
I am the Mother and the Daughter,
I am called Sophia by the Greeks,
And Gnosis by the foreigners.
I am the one whose image is great in Egypt,
And the one who has no image among the foreigners.

In 431CE at Ephesus, the pagan site of Artemis, the title of *Queen of Heaven* was bestowed upon Mary in recognition of her metaphysical role within the Mystery Traditions where it was already taught that as Bride of God, she was not mortal. Within the wonderful Old English *Dream of the Rood*, its heavy Christian overtones fail to subdue Mary in her role as initiator of the Annunciation, for it is the *gift* of herself to God that prompts his response – " bride of the most excellent Lord of Heaven, Lady of the heavenly Host ... you alone ..." Why these roles are relevant, will soon be made clear as we trace these ideas from the ancient world into that of the medieval, where the fusion of this knowledge formulated the greatest threat to the Church – that of heresy, particularly that of the Gnostics.

Ancient philosophy held the Body, as physical form, to be the outer self; and the Soul, as the Psyche, the mind, was the inner self. *Pnuema / nous* or consciousness was perceived as the animating divine spark, the experience of the 'knowing' principle. Therefore the true mystery of Gnosis becomes a conscious awareness of God (Freke & Gandy 2001: 63). Hence, he who truly knows himself knows God. In Greek myth, Psyche (the soul-self) is rescued by Eros (Love) personified in the adoration of the ideal woman; as the object rather than the subject of his desire, she becomes the vehicle for his Gnosis – his completeness, his perfection.

Gnostics believe that from our fall into gross matter, there are three stages by which we can return to grace (Freke & Gandy 2001: 80):

1. The psychic – where through our repentance, we realise the need to change, and our wish to be purified.
2. The pneumatic – our redemption, which hones our devotion, focus and will through

its *desire*, its *love* of the Goddess.
3. Finally, The Mystical Union, or marriage – true bliss: full conscious awareness of self and deity.

These understandings were developed and incorporated within the Heretical teachings of the 10th century Gnostics – the Bogomils of the Balkans, who founded the sect known as the Cathars in France, Spain and Italy. They claimed to be the inheritors of the true faith, heirs to the mysteries and wisdom of the ancients, a belief for which they paid the ultimate price – that of death, instigated by the hand of a vengeful Church in one of the most vicious pogroms of all time.

It has been suggested by many scholars and poets (the Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rosetti, to name but one) that this deeply mystical faith influenced the literary genres of the medieval period, leading Victorian academics in 1883 to subsume all forms under the term of *Courtly Love*. It is argued that hidden within the prose and verse are the secrets of salvation, of completeness through the adoration of Truth and Beauty, of Wisdom, manifest in Woman, as the soul seeks to be pure, to be perfect. But there are problems inherent within this supposition; mainly those of variety of form and subject matter, ranging from the vulgar to the devotional, and from farce to adventure. What all these lyrical forms share, are a common interest in the joys, despairs, longings and satisfactions of the many forms of love, either requited or unrequited; a recognition of the magnetism, magic and mystery of love. What we need to do now, is to explore in depth this enigmatic genre to determine its connection to the Cathars, Gnosis and Sophia.

Courtly love

Within the closing years of the 2nd millennia, modern academia recognised that previous pre-requisites for the term *Courtly Love* were vague, erroneous and restrictive, and so the boundaries were moved, separating genre that still avoid tight classification (Boase 1977: 117). From their summative research, it was concluded that, for a few short decades, a genre later to be eclipsed by the popular Romances emerged within the Southern regions of France, around the Languedoc and Provençal; these regions were the heartland of the Cathars, the heretical sect devoted to Sophia, Goddess of Wisdom. Here, Neoplatonic ideals of a *fine* love, a *pure* love of the highest mystery evolved, that of *fin d'amors* – the soul's nostalgic and insatiable desire to dissolve itself in the unity from whence it sprang.

Troubadours and Menestrals were the means by which mystical teachings became transported, formalised in song, prose and verse. Ironically, numerous works recognised the irony of a world that dishonoured women, yet almost deified her as the virtual personification of Love (Grant & Kay 1999: 35). Art, as life, reflected this paradox. Outside Provençal, the punning and satirising of love sought expression within various literary forms; in general the mediating theme was one of ennoblement and perfection, acquired through the love of a *gentil* woman.

Of course, *love* as a medium for ennoblement had been widely acknowledged by the Classical poets Virgil and Plato, but the concept of *woman* as a focus, in whose devotion and inspiration engendered mans' elevation, appears to be a new innovation. This ran parallel to Church theology, where man was obliged to emulate Christ's humanity – to seek a 'perfect love' through the rising *Cult of the Virgin*, a clever synthesis of pagan (latent) sexuality and Christian morality, exploiting the conflict between body and soul as the highest dynamic. This was a massive paradigm shift from earthly to divine love, from the profane to the sacred. Worship of the Virgin responded to a vital necessity for the Church while under threat and pressure – adapting what it could not suppress (Warner 2000: 135-7).

Folquet de Marseille, a Troubadour, wrote: "God, in whose power it lies, had made me standard bearer for my Lady of the *Pure in Love's High Kingdom*" [my emphasis]. Although clearly dedicated to the Virgin Mary, its context is in her role as Sophia. Cogent to this, the infiltration of a miasma of Oriental ideas permeated the West via Arab texts and treatises, which, in the Church's haste to achieve *prisca sapientia* (ancient wisdom), they avidly translated. Their contrary doctrines, perceived as heresies, were cleverly re-worked to conceal their truths. But, despite

the many forms of newly developing genre, *salvation* through *love* remained the underpinning theme. Nowhere was this more deeply imbued than in the lyrics of the Troubadours of the Languedoc; here, perfect love reached its apogee in the genre *fin d'amors*, and one upon which we shall now concentrate. It is noteworthy that the term 'fin' within *fin d'amors* stems from the term *fyn* – an alchemical definition that denotes absolute purity (without flaw or blemish) within gold and silver smithing.

Southern France was geographically close to Northern (Muslim) Spain. Thus it can be observed that the seeds of 7th century Greco-Arab love poetry *Udhri*, extolling the unseen heroine as a focus for the poet's aspiring gnosis, germinated in the fertile sociological and religious grounds of the Languedoc. Guillaume IX, Duke of Aquitaine (1071-1127), a warrior Knight, crusader and amorous lover, is generally credited by most academics as the first Troubadour within Provence, the heart of the Aquitaine (Burrow & Turville-Petre 1995: 81). His family held many dynastic ties with Muslim Spain and he effectively combined 10th century Arab *kharjas* (songs and refrains) with the contemporary styles of the *jongleurs* (wandering entertainers).

Themes of erotic love and mysticism introduced spiritual elements not present in earlier works such as the *Eddas* and *Sagas,* which were primarily tales of bravery, adversity and courage interwoven with praeternatural events, unfolding to reveal the spatial history and beliefs of migrating peoples. Kieckhefer (2000: 105) posits that, even here, women are often central to these plots, acting as healers and guides, albeit in the roles of seductresses and hags. Thus it was in the rich and illustrious courts of Southern France that *fin d'amors* developed from *Gai Saber,* a form of suave paganism, a happy *wisdom* (my emphasis) or gay science to challenge the Christian ideal of fidelity, marriage, manhood and virtue. Both Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204), wife of Plantagenet King Henry II of England (also known as holder of the Devil's crown), and her own daughter Marie of Champagne (*c* 1198) endorsed the many forms of *Courtly Love* centred around traditional themes of vassalage, fealty and love longing experienced as *joy d'amour* – the agony and ecstasy of frustration.

For a time, Bisson (1999: 220) believes that women suspended the reality of their tedious existence, their status as mere chattels, plunder and loot, subject to rape, defilement and abduction, subservient to their husbands and fathers within matters of state and politics. Instead they focused on more pleasant interludes, fictionalising men as their captives, subject to their every caprice and whim. Indeed, many impecunious Knights, deprived of land through primogeniture, did receive *gentil* tutelage, fully endorsed by the Church, from such ladies as these. However, themes of manners and coquette, intrigue and elaboration have obfuscated the true nature of the Cathar wisdom native to these people. The eloquent wit of the Troubadours added piquancy to their sauce with themes of Gnostic and Islamic heresies, rich in cosmological speculation and hermetic principles, providing a sharp contrast to Christian pedagogy; wisdom was the highest prize, sought through the Grail.

Father Denomy (1947: 59) recognised, nearly sixty years ago, the inherent anathema to the Church within the *Cult of the Beloved*, whose basic principles were:

1. Ennoblement of human love.
2. Elevation of the beloved to a superior position than the lover's.
3. The concept of love as ever insatiate, of ever increasing ardour.

He further postulates them as distinct from all other forms of love explored by the troubadours and *trouvères.* By the above definitions, the surge of the lover to rise in worth and virtue towards the beloved, through the force and energy of desire, to seek *spiritual* (my emphasis) elevation through her, was a heresy of the highest order. This compels everyone to love, since only through it can one be ennobled and virtuous. Curiously, it condones fornication, adultery and sacrilege as sources of virtue, since no bar exists. Its expression is both sensual and spiritual, an heretical paradox.

Ferranto (1975: 66) asserts that evident within this paradox, woman, as a unified construct, deified as *Love,* becomes its earthly manifestation. Unity with her (on a psychological level) brings man into harmony with the macrocosm. But, she adds, later, this harmony is rejected in favour of

fragmentation of the psyche; the individual quester becomes aloof from society, where woman tests and tempts, rather than inspires him. These Aristotelian influences replace the platonic idealism and, as a symbol, woman barely holds her status; as intermediary between man and his God, whose union is now being sought *through* her, no longer *with* her (in a truly narcissistic way), his ideal self is projected onto, then reflected back from her. Duncan (1995: xviii) further argues this was nothing more than a device adopted for man's own idealisation of self, realised through the projection of his *anima* onto woman as the external focus for his elevation; thus achieving wholeness and integration with his own feminine aspects and attributes, balanced and in harmony with his own base male instincts, now tempered and conquered. Heer (1993:130) concludes woman as custodian of man's soul – God's surrogate. Yet this Jungian analysis reveals clues to the deeper mysteries behind these reasonings.

Marcabru (*fl* 1135-50], himself a troubadour, proposed that it was indeed the love of the *lover* and not his *beloved* that ennobled a man (Denomy 1947: 60). Nowhere is this more clearly evidenced than in the tale of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Here the unknown author implies that women are untrustworthy, the devices of whom conceive his failure. Gawain's love, more for himself than for his Lady, facilitates his denial and rejection of her gifts, offered for his salvation. Although the deceit he pays for is clearly his own, he denies responsibility for it (Newman 1968: vii). His failure to recognise her value and worth as an earthly manifestation of Sophia starkly contradicts the blazing pentangle of the five knightly virtues upon his shield, which when yielded, induce completion – perfection. For him, Eros (Love) and Psyche (Soul) fail to unite. His eternal reminder of this regret is symbolised in the acceptance of the green girdle, worn in the fullest sense of penitence, as a talisman into which it is hoped that all the grace and wisdom of 'woman' will be imparted. Seen by some as an ambiguous emblem of success (in that he lives and defeated the Green Knight), the following line taken from the poem clearly states otherwise: *the token of untrawthe that I am tan inne* (the sign of that untruth which I am found in).

Arthurian romance

Later legends known as Romances developed this theme, reflecting the highest ideals (spiritual) as subject to love, war, fate and fortune, heavily influenced by the *Roman de la Rose* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Germane to the Romance were the myths and legends of Arthur, once and future King, conceptualised as Celtic King and supreme emblem of Honour. Now, the 'courtly' knight, magically empowered, began his epic spiritual quest, depicted within numerous Grail Legends, where women once more play strong though no longer central roles within this emerging allegorical genre. It is important to remember that the Grail within Celtic myth confers the power of fecundity and wealth to he alone who prevails the true and correct understanding of the Goddess, expressed in their relationship with her earthly manifestations – women. Thus *sovereignty* represents autonomy for her and land and title for him, a pagan concept, ironically Christianised prior to the Church's purge against the Dualist Heretics *c* 1209 (Jones 1985: 16).

Sovereignty as a principle is preserved within the legend of the *Tale of Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady* (Lady Ragnall), where ultimately his rights to success and fulfilment, conferred through her, are dependent upon his recognition and honour of her own autonomy; love requires freedom of will and awareness of something not possessed. Chrétien's *Perceval* exemplarises these concepts; in it, he depicts the rape and abuse of fairy maidens who provide hospitality to wayfarers, as the reason for their disappearance.

Germane also to many ancient mystery cults (particularly of Ishtar and Tammuz) is the principle of *ritual* love of a woman, especially one of a higher status than the lover; his spiritual and physical fulfilment is possible only through her Love. Jones (1985: 16) also confers the possibility of the Mystery Cult of the Grail as a survival of these descent myths where he is reborn through her Love and his subservience to her. Medieval troubadours aware of these traditions may have included this powerful praxis, immortalised within their lyrics. As each subsequent author reworked these

themes, the original subtleties relating to the sublimation of the male ego became subsumed within Christian overlay, obscured from all but the alert reader. Ironically, many troubadours were clerics, and their depiction of women as hags and temptresses, nymphs and seductresses, serving to distract the hero from his quest, fails to conceal their true role as initiator and guide. Kieckhefer (2000: 17) suggests that allegory and mysticism were employed by the Church in their concealment of the roles of women relative to man's fate, repressing the truth within their patristic works.

Total communion on all three planes of mind, body and spirit, bound in truth to each other only, is a concept almost entirely absent form all love lyrics outside the Languedoc. Again, Denomy (1947: 30) advises that in the mystical Neoplatonic philosophy of Avicenna (987-1030CE], sensual love is freely celebrated as a way to spiritual fulfilment. In his *Treatise on Love* human love of the sexes is perceived as a positive and contributory role in the ascent of the Soul on its journey towards union. This ennobling power becomes the driving force to perfection – The Supreme Good. He believed that only through such pure love could man seek the source of virtue. Common within Arabic philosophy were the double truths, the esoteric and exoteric doctrines, the former often at variance with the latter's orthodox teachings. Avicenna wrote:

"This book contains indications on the basic notions of metaphysics and annotations on its propositions – he only who is endowed with the necessary aptitude may study it, while he who is deprived of that aptitude, may draw no profit from it."

Avicenna and his contemporaries expounded how love is a vital source of divine inspiration, yet this great good, can also be considered a great evil by the church. Certainly, Chrétien, court lyricist to Marie of Champagne, expressed such insights into the incompatibility of *fin d'amors* within the Church's teaching. Mary too becomes a Muse to man's achievements, a foil for his needs, pains and devotions. Boase (1977: 126) maintains that Marianism was to a great extent the cause and consequence of the perceived decadence of Troubadour poetry. During the 12th century, the Church moved to consecrate marriage (something it did not actually achieve until 1563) which was, of course, anathema to the Cathars. This tension affected all literary motifs within the cultural phenomenon of Courtly Love.

The dichotomy of man as both a child of nature and of God is clearly expressed within Chrétien's *Lancelot*; but, his later work *Perceval* provides further endorsement of *fin d'amors* – pure, perfect love, the central tenet of Cathar gnosticism. Within this tale lies the grail at its deepest level, in the feminine mother symbol; his grief over her death is expressed through his failure during the encounter with the 'Mothers and the Lady' (Heer 1993: 146). Both Grail and Lance mature as sexual symbols. In their union lies completeness, wholeness; this is why he seeks the Grail, the thinly disguised mystical symbol of the Goddess, the understanding of which will facilitate his receiving it. Jones (1985: 5) stresses the irony of a Church that began its purge, the Albigensian Crusade against Gnostic heretics in 1209 who understood the significance of the grail, yet adopted the *Eucharist* into its own dogma in 1215.

Wolfram's *Parzival* and Gottfried's *Tristan*, both written in full allegorical style, also promoted the higher principles of love. Moreover, Gottfried knew well the Cathar mysteries, revealed in the lovers' administration of the sacrament of the 'pure', a total binding spiritually, physically and emotional, above all earthly ties, true only unto themselves and a higher *wisdom*.

Feminity

In another work, *Bel Inconnu,* written in the late 12th Century by Renaut de Beaujeu, women are extolled as the source of everything that is good, a theme germane to *fin d'amors;* moreover, man must honour and serve her. Later, in *Nekyia* (a work similar to *The Inferno*), our hero descends to the underworld Castle within the City of the Dead; here, only the most rigorous trials will engender his full growth. Triumphantly, his salvation from the severities of painful transformation is the receipt of 'the serpent's kiss', whereupon his work of *perfection* is complete (Heer 1993: 157). Among Gnostic sects, the serpent as a sacred beast was the ultimate symbol of salvation. Esoteric and

exoteric doctrines / mysteries of the divine Goddess (revealed in allegorical myths of a primordial mother and father) encode profound philosophical clues concerning our essential nature and our transformational relationship with Wisdom / Sophia, especially in its promise that "those who understand it will not taste death" (Freke & Gandy 2001: 3).

C S Lewis (1979: 48) considered allegorisation of pantheism within poetry a device pre-requisite to monotheism, illuminating the way forward, teaching, instructional, and heretical, facilitating absorption of pagan texts and themes. Indeed, allegory became very popular, utilised as visual and poetic aids. Their highly transportative media found expression in the cosmos of ineffable archetypes, the *pleroma* of mystery, and in the cosmos of appearances, the *kenoma* of manifestation. Love is thus revealed as the Pleroma of the Law – ourselves as products of God.

One such mystery play allegorises the attack by the devil on the soul, as the siege of a Lady (Sophia – the soul) in a castle of earth (the body). Christ (to whom our hero is supposed to relate) in the form of a suitor knight offers to save her from her foe. But he must first face many dangers on her behalf, the final one to his death (mirroring his own crucifixion / initiatory journey). Christ is, in effect, both lover and saviour of the soul (Wisdom / Sophia), redeeming her from her earthly bonds. Thus does true love of a man for a woman elevate them both (Burnley 1998: 186)! These scripted explorations of the psyche on its journey towards fulfilment were later synthesised with the Cult of the Virgin, where Mary as Sophia replaced woman as man's initiator.

Women as her earthly manifestations devolved into marginalized stereotypes, reflecting once again the roles of hags and temptresses – for men, the message was clear, duty and honour before love. After the horror of the Albigensian Crusade themes of love turned to those of either pious, vacuous love or idyllic earthly love. No longer was *fin d'amors* the focus of ennoblement, which had since its inception been a synthesis of Gnostic, platonic, pagan and Arabic ideals, exemplified in women as representatives of the Goddess Sophia / Wisdom. Throughout the Medieval periods in England, France and Western Europe beauty and grace had been the inspiration of the poet. They evolved into fantasy constructs of idealised femininity, the noble virtue of which masked her higher purpose. Complex rules of conduct, of ritual and worship of the glories of womankind were given full expression; but only in the Provençal *fin d'amors* did it achieve its true literary purpose, that of maintaining the mysteries, for all those with eyes to see and ears to hear. Transcendental expression became metaphors for the divine, mechanisms for those within the esoteric circles of the lavish courts of the Languedoc.

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Dancing with Arthurian Legends, Druidry and Jung

Part 2 Sonja Strode

Bridging alchemical ideas

It is impossible to write everything here about Perceval, Arthurian legend or Jung's ideas. Some of Jung's writings, however, were never published especially those emphasising Gnosticism, a movement from Christianity to pagan beliefs or a seeking of 'the inner sun and the God within' (Crowley 1998: 63). This 'inner self' is suggested on the church door at Tréhorenteuc, near the Arthurian Centre at Comper, France, thus: *La porte est dedans* (the door is within). That marvellous old church reveals combined Celtic, Christian and Druidic images in superb stained glass windows. Well worth a visit.

Jung later abandoned Gnosticism: he sought to 'bridge' that and his own ideas (Crowley 1998: 64). Sweet fusion! The old, old story of the History of Ideas! How many, moreover, have had experiences which prompt the realisation that 'any encounter has the possibility of being an abundant and fertile *nemeton* experience'; that 'sacred awareness is no longer limited to just a particular holy place' (MacEowen 2003: 134). How many have entered Merlin's 'lonely clearing ... temple of the Celts' – a special place ... that 'symbolic projection from the sky over the earth, both a place for the cult and transcendental meditation' (Markale 2000: 334)?

Once, in deep darkness moonlight danced on a building just beyond some trees; the building proved to be a stone bridge. A magical experience for me! It prompted many questions in me, subsequently developed in my PhD; in turn, in quite an unexpected alchemical way (see Jung and Von Franz 1988: 179), that experience has provided another stepping stone to this point on my own 'journey'.

Whatever spiritual path one takes – indeed, many now pick 'n' mix several 'paths' – as Royce affirms, many of various faiths recognise Glastonbury as linked to 'Spiritual Resurrection – a main aim of real alchemy'. Jung's dissatisfaction, though, led him to research, reflect and write about 'alchemy' and the relationship of the individual and humanity to the cosmos (Crowley 1998: 64f). Ultimately, he developed his 'individuation' thesis and explored Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism and quantum physics (*ibid* 72-98).

Jung and Von Franz (1988, avant propos) state: "The relationships between the Grail legend and alchemy are so rich and so fertile that it is a wonder why Jung did not include them in his psychological research on alchemy. The reason must be that Madame Jung [Jung's wife] had studied the Grail legend for thirty years and hoped to publish a very detailed work on the subject".

Important for Jung, however, was to find out what the 'Self wants you to do in the world' (*ibid* 89). The spiritual philosophy of modern Druidry shares some links with Jung's insights; it articulates a similar approach to being in the world – an active 'being' related to more recent holistic and environmental movements. It also values more introspective moments, like contemporary shamanism, meditation and quiet contemplation. The notion of a 'cosmic Christ', as mentioned earlier, figures here, too.

Dreams and shamans

For Jung dreams are significant. He dreamed about the Grail whilst in Calcutta: a transformation was signalled; his life's work was not over; his stay and experiences in India were part of his destiny. So he returned to Europe. Such personal transformation equates with an alchemical process relating to a person's psychological and spiritual development as in the Perceval story.

Jung later offered interesting interpretations of the Apocalypse relating to what might be called the collective 'self' where Sophia, the Divine Feminine, would herald a new era: male destructiveness would be harmonised via restoration of the feminine.

Shamans (Crowley 1998: 110) experience initiatory experiences. They can be 'called to their vocation in different ways' (Drury 1996: 6). 'Spirit helpers' may also 'appear to shamans' in a dream (Drury 1996: 27).

A *shaman* is a 'sacred practitioner' whose

essential role is to 'heal the community of its physical and spiritual ills' (Crowley *ibid*); s/he is forever 'alert to the intrinsic perils of human existence' (Drury 1996: 6). The term 'shaman' may originate from Siberia (Ashe 2002: 124). Shamanism – the 'master-thread of druidic ancestry' (Ashe *ibid*) – also shares much with Native American spirituality (Crowley *ibid*: 110-11). Prof Miranda Green documents lengthy shamanic practice in Celtic Britain (Green 1997: 33). Anthropologist Joan Halifax sees shamans as uniquely being 'able to behave as both a god and a human'; s/he is 'an interspecies being' and 'a channel for the gods' (Drury 1996: 6). Merlin's role in the Arthurian legends (Markale 2000: 288) is such a figure who 'gives the signal which puts into play the presence of forces where, in some part the conclusion cannot be imagined.'

The shamanic path/way explores other realities and consciousness, often producing knowledge and insight as 'gifts' to help the individual and society. Christ, the Buddha and Mohammed may be viewed, like Merlin, as shamans.

Shamanism is then "the art of effectively bridging the worlds of physical and subtle reality so that they are brought into harmony and wholeness" (Matthews 2003: 235). Shamans may have innate gifts or be born into families 'gifted with shamanic skills'. They are then trained further though Spirits choose and train some (*ibid*). People throughout the world may possess 'second sight' or 'divinatory knowledge' (*ibid*: 236; Bouchet 1996: 95). The shaman's craft involves not only 'images by means of words and music, but the manifestation of truth in both physical and subtle reality' (*ibid*).

Evidence suggests (Ross 1995: 430) Arthur awaits 'divinatory knowledge' as in the *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (*The Dream of Rhonabwy*). Merlin, Arthur's mentor, had clearly developed shamanic powers (Barber and Pykitt 1993: 31). Of course, Royce (2002: 39) argues that Morgan and Arthur are not meant 'to be historical beings. Far deeper mysteries are intended, but history is a good vehicle for transmission' – a view echoed by Lovegrove (2003: 33): seeing such stories as 'objective history in the modern sense is to fundamentally misjudge their purposes'. Some argue the same for Christ's 'story'; others recognise the latter's historical basis yet argue his spiritual philosophy was very similar to that of the Druids, Ancient Celtic Church and/or other spirituality or religion found before Christ's time or even contemporaneously.

Marrying magical myths, faery, legend

Jung continued delving into various spiritual alternatives and traditions: all providing him with answers about the present and future (Crowley 1998: 128), the latter connected to the New Age of Aquarius[1] – a 'turning point in the development of consciousness' where 'old symbols were being reborn in new forms to suit different times and cultures'.

Jung argued for a renewal of age-old myths, the cessation of literal interpretations of religions; he nonetheless recognised key messages inherent in them. Such messages pervade *Faery* (J and C Matthews 1993) for 'Archetypal images and experiences ... still work today in the psyche' ... and 'Only where faith and dogma have hardened into empty forms ... in our civilised, technicalised, rational-minded western world have they lost their magical force and left man helpless and alone' (Jacobi 2002: 217). For some, *faery* tradition will help transform the 'depleted', 'abused planet' since it is the basis of 'spirituality, religion, and all magic' (Stewart 2002: 14).

J R R Tolkien (Noel 1977) in *On Fairy Stories* spoke of 'magic, eucatastrophe and justice'. *Eucatastrophe* describes the 'anti-catastrophic "turn"' in fairy stories: good triumphs; joy is glimpsed. Denial of death (important in Christianity and pagan myth) was the key eucatastrophe. Eternal life, being a universal desire, also emerges in Celtic history, Christianity, and Druidry, as in the 'Otherworld' and 'the Celtic belief in a cycle of death and rebirth' (Green 1995: 472). Belief in an 'afterlife' or 'Otherworld' is found in Tolkien's work – a theme plucked from fairy stories and his own Christian beliefs. He also explores justice and mercy via a mix of Christian religion and pagan philosophies.

The Grail legend is a 'remarkable marriage' of faery and Christian legend containing themes still fascinating many

[1] Zodiac sign Aquarius: a human figure (a water bearer: the sign of humanity and intellectual challenge)

today. Indeed, the Holy Grail story bears the hallmarks of a fairy tale: a hunt for hidden treasure and release from a spell (Jung and Von Franz 1998: 11, 105).

It is also part of *Breton Fairy Tales (ibid*: 17). For Foral *Arthurian Legends* offer a sense of wonder, marvel, enigma, and the supernatural (*ibid*: 19). Links are also found with Celtic Druidry as in the form of Merlin, the personification of 'medicine–man' and 'priest' (*ibid*: 291). Further, it is widely known Druids of old studied the stars; that the heavens have been – 'the great prophets of destiny and the future' (*ibid*).

Wholeness and holism

Jung finally published his work proposing the symbol of wholeness – fourness / Quaternity – based on his notion of a 'state of consciousness' of 'opposites of masculine and feminine, dark and light'. It recognised, too, body (including loving sexuality) *and* spirit, thus reconciling the earthly, physical and spiritual. Some feminists have criticised Jung's equation of the 'spiritual' and 'masculine', and 'physical' and 'earthly' with the feminine. Many feminists now prefer to acknowledge the importance Jung gave to recognising the spirituality of the Goddess, the incorporation of the feminine into the Divine – something Christians affirm, in the light of Christ's identity in the New Testament.

Crowley (1998: 133) elaborates Jung's notion of *the Shadow*. Jung had maintained that the Divine is not absolutely good. He linked the Trinity to three of the four personality functions he had offered (thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition). The fourth also linked to the Shadow or hidden part of the Self. Via an incorporation of the Divine Feminine in the Godhead, the Divine evolves into 'greater wisdom and compassion'. The Godhead recognises its own negativity and, in symbolic language, 'dark and light twins' reunite *ie* Satan is reconciled with Christ, or Set with Osiris. Gawain and his 'double', Perceval, can be construed in a similar manner. Yet: "The Old Ones knew that the whole universe exists in a state of relationship between the masculine and feminine principles' (Worthington 2003: 151). This relationship permeates legends like Perceval's; it is also honoured by Druids: 'the creative dance of opposites'; their union and its fruit (Worthington 2003: 145).

The 'afternoon of life' is said to be significant, being no mere 'pitiful appendage to life's morning'. From age 50 there is an opportunity to 'turn inwards to realize the Self' (Crowley 1998: 135) prior to death, seen ultimately as a 'blessing' not a 'curse'. Jung envisages metempsychosis or transmigration of souls (Green 1995: 472), where the 'life force is undying, but that which we think of as 'I' may not survive'. This idea feeds druidic beliefs, too: the spirit is believed capable of passing from one species to another *eg* from human to tree (*ibid* 136).Jung unites human and Earth thus: "At times I feel as if I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and am myself living in every tree, in the splashing of the waves, in the clouds and the animals that come and go, in the process of the seasons" (Crowley 1998: 136).

Crowley summarises Jung's achievements and contribution to contemporary thought, including his hope that all might strive to be open-minded; that all would learn to accept not only themselves but others too. Especially, he gave us the courage, like Perceval, to keep moving on, to find our Self. Finally Jung expressed satisfaction with his journey – the negatives and the positives had given him a sense that: 'In spite of all uncertainties, I feel a solidity underlying all existence and a continuity in my mode of being. Life is – or has – meaning and meaninglessness. I cherish the anxious hope that meaning will preponderate and win the battle" (Crowley 1998: 145).

Conclusions

In seeking meaning and our Self (individual and collective), the boundaries of many traditions, many myths may need to be crossed or stitched together in new ways. The shaping of our Self, like Perceval's own journey is a 'dynamic force ... constantly changing and responding to the stimuli of new concepts and ideas' whilst guarding some of its traditional foundations (Green 1995 *op cit*: 486). Intellectual and spiritual thought follows a similar shaping path – or, at least, should be, if it is to retain that sense of open-mindedness, that quest after 'truth' and wisdom.

Transformation of each individual's Self into a Taliesinesque, Christian, Buddhist or other 'higher being' opens the prospect of a better world (Crowley 1998: 109), especially if that Self has due regard for others. The Perceval story embodies this 'becoming'; in 'new times' the vehicles for such transformation are being reworked. Thus holistic connections – practical, spiritual and philosophical – are currently being carved out by Druids, Christians, Buddhists or followers of other religions. In time, they may help shape a better world. They work in diverse fields, yet offer the prospect of a spiritual path leading to a new age in the history of human development and a more harmonious life on and with Earth. Such people 'live fully in the present, honour tradition and the ancestors; hear the voice of tomorrow' (Carr-Gomm 2003: 227). They have heeded the cry of the collective unconscious to unite knowledge and the sacred, like ancient Celts (Raoult 1992).

Contemporary Druids, Christians, and lovers of Arthurian legend share with Jung, then, the hope that, in life, *'meaning will preponderate and win the battle'*. They recognise the part all our 'selves' – all our being – helps play in that process of 'becoming' – at the individual and collective level – where we join with Merlin in that 'One World in unity with the origin of cosmic and psychic life' (Jung and Von Franz 1988: 291).

My own quest for and readings related to the Holy Grail sometimes led me into collision with various spiritual or religious traditions. This has, paradoxically, served as a springboard for critical engagement with 'others', always with the hope that something new, something good, something beneficial to humanity, will emerge – a sense of shared understanding. If we cease to think of 'others' in this way, maybe we should be asking why? Like Perceval, during our own quest for the Grail, then, we need to ask some key questions. So I ask: Have you joined the dance?

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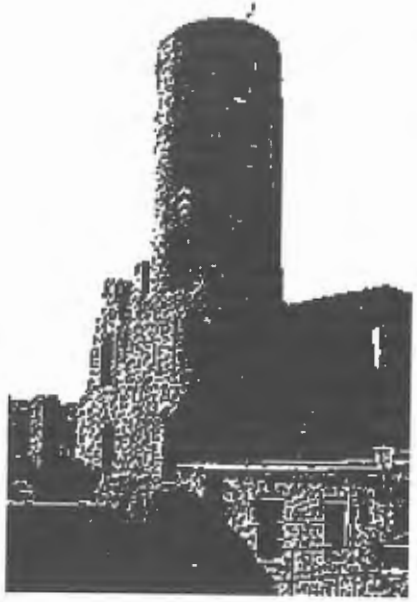


Dumas and Merlin in the Rhineland (2)

W M S Russell

Though Merlin only appears – as a prophet – on one page of Alexandre Dumas' 1844 novel ***Le Château d'Eppstein****, he is the most important character, for his prophecy is the mainspring of the whole plot. At the end of Part One of "Dumas and Merlin in the Rhineland" the German Count Elim was about to recount to a cosmopolitan house-party in Florence the story he had been told about the château.*

The story begins in 1789. The aged Count Rudolph and his Countess live in the Castle with their two sons. Conrad, the younger, is a quiet, studious and thoroughly decent young man, loved by all, whereas Maximilian, the elder, is a thoroughly mean and vicious character. He is devoured by the meanest and pettiest ambition, for titles, orders and places at the Imperial court, crawling to his superiors and bullying bourgeois and peasants, including seducing and abandoning their daughters – one poor girl has just committed suicide. Conrad falls in love with Noémi, the daughter of the game-keeper Gaspard, who lives in a cottage on the estate, and marries her. Count Rudolph is an honourable man, and has been a brave and distinguished general, but he has all the preposterous snobbery of the German minor aristocracy, which Voltaire makes such fun of in *Candide*. So, though disapproving of Maximilian, he cannot complain of him, whereas, though loving Conrad, he feels obliged to turn him out because he has married a commoner. Conrad goes to France, joins the revolutionary armies, and becomes a captain. When he has left, Maximilian asks his father to help him marry Albine, the daughter of an old friend of Rudolph, the Duke (*Herzog*) of Schwalbach, not of course because she is a beautiful and thoroughly nice sixteen-year-old girl, but because she will bring a fat dowry and her father has great influence at court. Rudolph cannot object to such a marriage, and writes to his old friend to ask for Albine for his son. Maximilian goes off to Vienna to woo the girl.

The Duke is suspicious of Maximilian, but wants to do a good turn to an old friend. The teen-age girl, with her head full of romantic past heroes, falls completely for her smooth-spoken suitor, who is powerfully built and quite good-looking. To please her romantic fancies, he tells her of the legend of the Castle of Eppstein.

The Castle was built by the first Count in the time of Charlemagne. Merlin, then (I reckon) well over 300 years old, made the following prophecy:

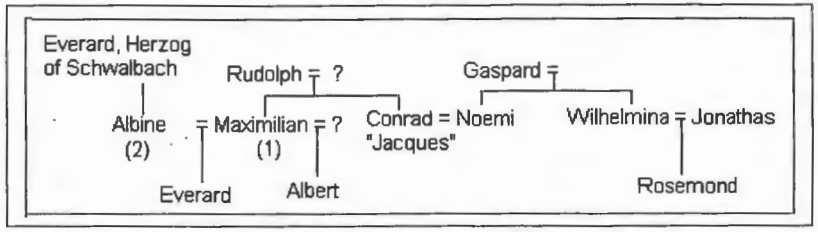
Every Countess of Eppstein who dies in the castle on Christmas Day will only half-die.

The prophecy is first fulfilled on Christmas Day 1342. The Empress has just died, and is laid out in state in Frankfurt. Count Sigismund of Eppstein is on guard at her door, letting in people one at a time to pay their last respects, when his Countess appears, pale and silent,

and he lets her into the chamber for a last sight of the Empress, whose dear friend she has been. When she has been rather a long time in the death room, Sigismund looks through the key-hole, and sees the two women upright and chatting. When his shift as guard ends, the Count rushes to the Emperor, who greets him with compassion. A messenger, finding the Count was on duty, had brought to the Emperor the news that the Countess had just died at Eppstein. Sigismund had witnessed a conversation between two ghosts.

Albine is fascinated by the thought of living in such a legend-rich Castle, and the wedding occurs a year after this. A fortnight later, her father dies of apoplexy, leaving her unprotected at Maximilian's mercy. It is near the end of 1791. Both Maximilian's parents have died during the year, and he is now Count, and she Countess, of Eppstein.

A year later, poor Albine has no more illusions about her mean, brutal and unfaithful husband. At this point in time, the French revolutionary troops are approaching Eppstein. The cowardly Maximilian flees to Vienna, disguised as a peasant, leaving his wife to the mercies of the French, calmly telling her (obviously quite falsely) that she has nothing to fear from them. Soon after this, the castle servants find a French officer, famous in the French armies as the very brave Captain Jacques, seriously wounded and left for dead after a skirmish with the Imperials. They carry him to the Castle, where Albine patiently nurses him back to health. While still barely able to walk, he drags himself to the Castle door to order away some French soldiers, thus saving Albine from rape and pillage. After his recovery, the two spend many hours together, laughing and chatting, obviously very fond of each other, though they never once so much as kiss, behaving with impeccable correctness. At last he tells her, after swearing her to secrecy, that he is her brother-in-law Conrad.



The principal characters of Le Château d'Eppstein

Soon after, he is recalled to his unit, the French are in retreat, and Maximilian returns from Vienna. On his way back, the servant sent to meet him with horses foolishly gossips about the close relationship between Albine and Captain Jacques. The Count, judging everyone by himself, returns to the Castle seething with jealousy, assuming, with little evidence in spite of the indiscreet servant, that Albine has been unfaithful with the French officer. As soon as he arrives, Albine throws her arms round his neck and tells him the wonderful news – she is pregnant. The poor woman fondly imagines this news will bring about a change of heart in her husband, and that in his joy he will be kinder to her.

At this suspenseful point, Dumas turns to the history of the family in the game-keeper's cottage. Gaspard is a widower, besides Noémi he has another daughter, Wilhelmina, whom he marries to the young hunter Jonathas, for whom he gets the post of his assistant, with reversion to his own post when he retires. He accepts Noémi's marriage to Conrad, but is very sad when she has to go away with her husband. The marriage of Jonathas and Wilhelmina is a happy one. When he becomes Count, Maximilian keeps on Gaspard and Jonathas, not out of any decent motive but in case, in other employment, they gossip about Conrad's marriage. Albine becomes very fond of Wilhelmina, who is devoted to her. When they realise they are both pregnant, Albine promises the children shall be brought up together, and Wilhelmina, being a strong and healthy country girl, offers to suckle them both.

When Albine, with such high hopes, announces her pregnancy to the Count, she is appalled by his reaction. Silent and expressionless, he brushes past her and disappears in the Castle. An hour later she receives a letter from him, ordering her not to leave the Castle

grounds, not to visit the cottage or see Wilhelmina, to whom he has forbidden access to the Castle, and not on any account to try to see him. After months of misery and complete bafflement at this extraordinary behaviour of the Count, on Christmas Eve 1793 she writes a letter to Wilhelmina, to be given her after Albine's death. She asks her to look after her, Albine's, child, and encloses letters of recommendation to a friendly officer, in case Wilhelmina herself has a son, and to the sister of the old Countess, Abbess of the convent where she had been educated, in case Wilhelmina has a daughter. Then she nerves herself to disobey the Count and interview him.

When she challenges him with his extraordinary behaviour to a loyal and innocent wife, his vicious answers soon show her the reason for his behaviour – his belief that she was unfaithful and that the baby will be the bastard child of Jacques. Provoked by this infamous suspicion, she shows herself so proudly innocent that, for from realising he was mistaken, he flies into a furious rage, and flings her to the floor, where she strikes her head on a piece of furniture and faints, bleeding profusely. Taken to bed after what the Count says is an accident, she dies next day and her son is cut out by a Caesarean operation. The letter is taken to the Count. In it she had also asked for the child, if a boy, to be called Everard, after her father. Maximilian orders this to be done. He does not care what happens to the supposed bastard, including what he is called. It is Christmas Day.

When Maximilian married Albine, he was a widower, with a son Albert by his first wife. He is now wholly devoted to this boy, and totally neglects Everard. Wilhelmina faithfully looks after the baby, who lives in the room above the Count's Red Room. But one night Jonathas has been wounded by a boar, and Wilhelmina has to tend him. The baby cries and cries, audibly to Maximilian, who is maddened by the noise. Finally he goes to the secret passage, known only to the Counts, which has staircases leading up to the nursery and down to the vault with the family tombs. He goes up to the nursery, and is amazed to find Albine cradling the baby, who quietens and falls asleep. She tells him Everard is his son (though this will not change his neglect of the boy) and warns him not to make her say '*au revoir*'. But Maximilian is soon calling the whole episode merely a nightmare.

Maximilian goes off to Vienna, taking Albert to give him the best of educations, leaving Everard at Eppstein without any education at all. Everard grows up mainly in the cottage, with Wilhelmina, Jonathas and his little foster-sister Rosemond, Wilhelmina's child. The chaplain teaches him to read and write, no more, and he spends all his time living wild in the forest, where he has a favourite grotto. He grows to believe firmly that his mother is with him as a guardian angel, and talks to her as if she were present: Dumas leaves it a little ambiguous whether the ghost really is at his side. When the children are ten years old Wilhelmina dies, leaving the father and grandfather to look after them. Everard is further saddened when his little playmate is sent off to be educated at the convent, with Albine's letter recommending her. The good Abbess welcomes her and treats her as if she is the Countess's daughter. The other girls, daughter of aristocrats, all love her for her character.

When the children are fourteen, old Gaspard realises he is dying. He has two last wishes before dying, to see Rosemond again, and to have news of his lost daughter Noémi, especially if she is dead whether she made a good death. Jonathas goes to Vienna and brings Rosemond back, and, to everyone's surprise, Gaspard's other wish is granted. Conrad is now a colonel in Napoleon's army, devoted to the Emperor, who has sent him to Vienna on a secret diplomatic mission. He meets Everard in the forest, goes with him to the cottage, and reveals himself to the family. His life after the time with Albine is left very vague, as is Noémi's death, but from odd sentences it appears Conrad was in prison under the Terror, Noémi was guillotined, and she gave her life for him, though obviously this was not the brave and devoted Conrad's fault. Anyway she died bravely and well, and Gaspard dies happy. Conrad goes back to France. He takes Everard with him as far as Worms, an amazing experience for the boy who has never been more than a few kilometres from the Castle.

On his return, Everard is too bashful to meet the teenage Rosemond, so much better educated than him, at once, and he wanders up to the Castle, where he meets a stranger, who asks him crossly where he has been. When Everard objects to being questioned about his movements, the stranger asks him to whom he thinks he is talking. Everard, who has

never seen him in his life, says he does not know. The stranger furiously announces his name – it was his father, Maximilian! Further pressed about his movements, Everard, now absolutely amazed, says he can be away for weeks without alarming anyone. Maximilian takes this as an allusion to his neglect of his son, and becomes more and more furious, finally calling him 'Miserable bastard!' At the same time, he strikes the boy savagely on the face. Everard, horrified by the insult to his mother, replies: 'Take care, monsieur, I shall tell my mother!'

Everard rushes back to his grotto, where he has a long conversation with his mother (of course we are not given any of her replies) and finally clams down and sleeps. Meanwhile, at the Castle, Maximilian is too terrified to spend the night alone, and gets his secretary to work through the night in the Red Room. But the secretary finally goes to sleep, and the Count wakes to see the candles go out. Albine emerges from the secret passage and comes to the bed, to give him a final warning. He may return to Vienna and abandon Everard, although the boy is certainly his son, but if he lays a finger on him, he is lost in this world and damned in the next. He saw her first in the nursery above, he now sees her in the Red Room, their next meeting will be in the vault. To prove this is not a dream, before leaving she places round his neck a chain that had been buried with her. In the morning the Count summons Jonathas to confirm the identity of the gold chain. Then he leaves for Vienna with Albert.

Everard, still too bashful to meet Rosemond, decides to leave and join Conrad, and is about to do so when Jonathas and Rosemond appear. Rosemond had been sad to leave he friends at the concert, but looked forward to meeting Everard. She is bitterly disappointed by his bashful timidity, thinking he doesn't like her. Now, when Jonathas leaves them together, at the last the ice breaks and they are friends again. But she discovers his amazing ignorance. She promises to educate him. When they return to the cottage, Jonathas shows Everard a letter from the Count. He gives the boy the Castle and a quarter of the revenues, and freedom to do whatever he likes, provided he never goes near Maximilian. Everard finally decides to stay.

Over the next three years, Rosemond teaches Everard history, geography, music, painting and French, English and of course German literature, with complete success, thanks to her diligence and his great intelligence, until in some fields he has gone further than her. A letter arrives from Conrad, now an aide-de-camp of the Emperor, who says he often thinks of them, and hopes to surprise them one morning. Jonathas innocently tells Everard and Rosemond how he knew Conrad and Noémi were in love: he noticed how often they met each other, apparently by accident. The boy and the girl look at each other: they have noticed the same thing about themselves. Suddenly they realise they too are in love. The next day, when Everard declares his love, Rosemond has scruples, apparently fearing his father's power over him. She finally agrees to a probationary period of two years, after which he can ask his father's permission. Everard reluctantly agrees; he thinks Maximilian may fear him as a rival for Albert, and will be delighted if he disqualifies himself from being a courtier. With this in mind he plans to write to the Count a letter designed to alarm him with apparent ambitious designs, to ensure his relief when the marriage is proposed. He sets off for the Chateau to write the letter, but is astonished to find the Count just inside the door, wearing mourning clothes.

There follows a flood of hypocrisy so transparent it would not take in a much more inexperienced person than Everard. The Count regrets cares of state have led him to neglect his dear son, but that is over now. He has brought a tutor to remedy the lack of education. A brief discussion with this tutor shows that Everard now knows far more than he does. Maximilian is delighted. He promises his son a glittering future at Court, and gives him a sword and a brevet of office, with much more to come. After a lot more of this, he finally comes out with the real reason for his sudden *volte-face*. It turns out that he is in danger of losing his high office because of an intrigue by his enemies. Albert was about to save him, but Albert has died (it is hinted, of syphilis). Everard must now take his place. He will explain at dinner that evening what Everard has to do.

Everard goes back to the cottage, very unhappy, and tells Rosemond what has happened. Rosemond, over-scrupulous as ever, insists he must obey his father and go with him to

Vienna. Everard asks her, in return, if his new career in the army ever leads to his freedom, to promise to marry him. Rosemond swears she will only be faithful to him *or* to God. Everard then swears he will never marry anyone else.

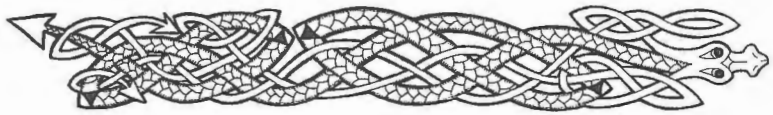
After dinner, the Count at last comes to the point. All Everard has to do is to marry the Duchess of B..., who is the Austrian Emperor's mistress, and needs a husband to observe the proprieties. When the horrified Everard flatly refuses, the Count, furious, warns him not to provoke his terrible rage, and gives him till next day to agree to the proposal.

Everard spends the night in the forest. In the morning, on the way to the cottage, he sees the Count on horseback, hunting, and just manages to hide from. At the cottage, Rosemond is alone – Jonathas had to join the hunt. On being told the latest news, even Rosemond agrees he can't obey his father in this matter. Everard is in despair because his mother would not speak to him in the night. He decides to leave and join Conrad, and asks for a farewell chaste kiss. Rosemond is kissing his brow, when Maximilian appears at the door, in hunting garb, with his whip and his hunting gun. After a conversation in which the Count becomes more and more insulting, he suggests Rosemond has the same profession, in a minor way, as the lady Everard has refused to marry. Rosemond faints, Everard seizes the sword, which he had put in a corner, but cannot kill his father. The Count then orders his servants to seize Rosemond and throw her out of the estate. Everard threatens to kill anyone who lays a hand on her. 'Even your father?' says the Count, 'Even the murderer of my mother,' says Everard. The Count fires, and Everard, falling, cries out: 'Mother, mother, have pity on him!'

Mercifully, Everard is not dead, only wounded in the shoulder, but that was no credit to the Count; Conrad, arriving in the nick of time, and thrust aside the weapon. Everard is put to bed, cared for by Rosemond, and the brothers talk. Conrad is now a general. Maximilian has seen a figure defending Everard with one hand, threatening the Count with the other. He knows he is doomed and damned. Finally Conrad reveals he was Captain Jacques, and that Albine was totally innocent. 'I am lost,' says the Count. It is Christmas Eve.

At first Maximilian wants all the servants to join him, then he proposes to leave the Château. But finally a Satanic *hubris* takes over, and he resolves to brave the Red Room alone. Rejecting Conrad's offer to stay with him, he enters the room and bolts the door behind him.

Next morning, Conrad and Everard, with some servants, knock on the door of the Red Room. When there is no answer, they break the door down. Nothing in the room has been disturbed, but the door of the secret passage is open. The uncle and nephew descend to the vault. The marble lid of Albine's tomb has been raised, and a skeletal hand is visible, holding the Count strangled by two loops of the gold chain.



Everything is now ready for the happy ending. But for some mysterious reason, on the last page, Dumas chooses to spoil his novel by arbitrarily suppressing it. This can't be in response to public opinion, which always veers the other way. In England Dickens was pressured by the public (successfully) to let Pip marry Estella, and (in vain) to spare Little Nell. So Dumas's motive remains a mystery.

Everard is now the Count, and no-one can prevent him marrying Rosemond. Conrad could join them on his leaves and when he retires. None of them has anything to fear from Albine, so they could live happily ever after in the Château. But what happens?

For no imaginable reason, Conrad decides to die for the Emperor, and is shot dead at Waterloo; Rosemond becomes a nun in her old convent; and Everard lives miserably ever after in the cottage.

This is a great pity, but if we forget this unfortunate last page, *Le Château d'Eppstein* is a very fine novel, and a worthy contribution to Arthurian literature.

the board

News, views and previews of Arthuriana

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Amazing Coincidence No 1: our **Reading** Correspondent, Mrs Jan Thumwood, points out that the Society's President lives by a bus route stage officially called **Pendragon Bath Road**. Is this a "delicate compliment to the Society *via* its President?" asks Professor Russell. "Well actually she finds it is named for a Nurses' Accommodation Home on the Bath Road" about a mile from his house, though the stage does indeed include the stretch past his road. "I must have passed this Nurses' Home hundreds of times without learning its name. It's remarkable enough that I live a mile from a Home called *Pendragon*" (he moved there about a score of years before becoming President).

The newly-appointed Education Secretary **Ruth Kelly** was asked by a House of Commons select committee in March about her membership of **Opus Dei**. This Catholic organisation has received notoriety because of its appearance in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. What we didn't know – until a BBC reporter reportedly told us – was that this "devout" group was seen by some as "a sinister sect seeking the **Holy Grail**". I'd not before entertained the idea of Ruth Kelly as some sort of grail maiden...

Catholic protests dog the filming of *The Da Vinci Code* (instanced by a report on BBC R4 news August 17 2005). Meanwhile, member Paul Smith points out that the Pendragon Society ("PS") is referenced under **Michael Baigent** (anagrammed as Teabing in *Da Vinci Code*) on a website dedicated to the Priory of Sion:

http://priory-of-sion.com/posd/baigent.html

(Note the recurrence of **PS** in this paragraph.)

Austin, Minnesota was the 1937 birthplace of a product made from tinned pork and ham by the Hormel Company. Best known as Spam, it featured in a Monty Python song of the same name, is prominent in the Arthurian Broadway musical ***Spamalot***, and is the focus of the annual SPAM Town Festival held every summer in Austin. UK fans may find more details of the Spam Festival weekend at Onlinetravel.com (2005 prices started from £731 per person).

Alex Wright, author of the recent *Meanings of Life* (Darton, Longman & Todd), believes that there are "forms of secular spirituality" offering alternatives both to institutional religion and to New Age religiosities ("the flip side of global capitalism"). These he terms *earth spiritualities* where the "apprehension of transcendent landscapes" – such as that of **Glastonbury**, bound up in Grail and Arthurian mythologies – "has profound implications for how we live" and exploit our environments.

For the start of the **Glastonbury Festival**, *The First Glastonbury Festival Summer 1914* was a programme on Radio 4 (presented by Ian McMillan on June 24 2005) about **Rutland Boughton** and his Glastonbury festivals up to 1926.

As so often with R4 programmes, it tried to do too much in half an hour, so though interesting it was very bitty. Though it mentioned his Arthurian operas, it didn't play any extracts (the only music played was one song from *The Immortal Hour*). One good quote, from an elderly Glastonbury local explaining why inhabitants fell out with the whole, said it wasn't just the scandal of Broughton's picturesque lovelife or his coming out as a communist at the time of General Strike, it was that trying to "live dreams of the Dark Ages was too much for a little market town".

Sixties "concert promoter and hippy activist" **Chet Atkins**, who died this summer, organised musical events at San Francisco's **Avalon Ballroom**. As well as featuring other seminal psychedelic acts of the 60s, Atkins launched Janis Joplin's short career from here after calling her over from Port Arthur, Texas.

The latest newsletter of the Castle Studies Group reports that **Caludon Castle** near Coventry, associated with the Warwickshire Malory's raid on the deer park which started his imprisonment, is now off English Heritage's Buildings at Risk register, following a £33,000 repair of the surviving Great Hall fragment's sandstone fabric, half-funded by the city council, half by English Heritage itself.

• Smallweed column *Guardian* March 5 2005; Denis Kilcommons "All that SPAM with everything" *Huddersfield Examiner* June 2 2005; Alex Wright "Face to Faith: Landscapes of the spirit" *Guardian* June 11 2005; Dave Laing "Chet Helms: promoter of Janis Joplin" *Guardian* June 27 2005; "People and places" *Pendragon 32* No 1 (2004) 46; *Castle Studies Group Newsletter Vol 7* #1 (Summer 2005); Steve Sneyd "Six does and £500 of damage" *Pendragon XXXII* No 3 (Spring 2005)

AUDIO-VISUAL

Late last year the **National Portrait Gallery** in London created a new display of paintings and sculpture from the Wilson and Thatcher years in their permanent collections. Fred Stedman-Jones spotted that the Balcony Gallery display (entitled *Britain 1960-1990*) included a newly acquired representation of T H **White**, author of *The Once and Future King*.

Ernest Chausson (d 1899)

A new CD set of Ernest Chausson's opera ***Le Roi Arthus*** (with the BBC Symphony conducted by Leon Botstein) was recently broadcast on BBC R3. The recording was *The Guardian*'s Classical CD of the Week in early June. Detractors have "dismissed it as a derivative rewrite of *Tristan und Isolde* ... The opera's admirers, meanwhile, consider it a unique masterpiece, comparable to Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which it overtly influenced". Guinevere is a "dominatrixy *femme fatale*", Lancelot dithers but Arthur "commands our sympathies" in a work which is "unbalanced, despite its intermittent beauties". This recording, "like the work, is uneven" and the reviewer douted whether it would restore *Le Roi Arthus* to the operatic repertoire.

In contrast, *prog rock* ("progressive" rock music) has been defined as a genre that grew out of psychedelia, with lyrics about "eastern religion, time travel and **Arthurian legend**". Despite having little appeal to women, bassist Greg Lake (of Emerson, Lake and Palmer) claims to have "an internet-based, all-women appreciation society" called **The Ladies of the Lake**.

The BBC Radio 4 series *In Our Time* featured **Merlin** in its June 30 edition, with Juliettte Wood, Stephen Knight and Peter Forshaw as contributors. A review appears next issue.

• National Portrait Gallery 🖳 www.npg.org.uk; Chausson: *Le Roi Arthus* (Telarc, three CDs £39.99); Tim Ashley "Sir Lancelot the Ditherer" *Guardian* June 10 2005; John Harris "On Music" *Guardian Review* July 29 2005

MERLIN'S MART

Collectors of movie memorabilia are reportedly desperate for the **Holy Grail** from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. According to one dealer, "There are several [grails] out there because different versions were designed for different uses in the film." This dealer reports that he sold a grail diary, which Indiana [Harrison Ford] uses to track down his father [Sean Connery], for around £15,000. "It had all the illustrations and the sketches and the inserts – a fantastic piece."

US equity firm Blackstone Capital Partners has just bought the four Legoland theme parks from Lego (which, after losing £185m in 2004, has a 30% stake in the enlarged group to protect its brand) to add to recently-acquired **Merlin** (which owns Sea Life aquariums and the London Dungeons). Blackstone have now formed a new European entertainment business called **Merlin Entertainments Group**, and with 12 million visitors it is now the "ninth largest themed attraction company in the world".

First prizes were won by cheesemakers from south-west Wales at the 2005 Royal Welsh Show, including Cheeses From Wales

member **Merlin Cheeses** with a cheese called, naturally, Merlin. Still in Wales, wood-carved statuary is very popular for forest trails in countryside parks. One such site is **Cwmcarn Forest Drive Visitor Centre**, north-east of Caerphilly and 7 miles along the A467 north of Junction 28 on the M4. The Giant's Court (at car park 1) features wood carvings from the Mabinogion, and includes a hollow life-size statue of **Myrddin** that children can actually shelter in!

Remaining with the sculpture theme, we now turn to artist **Kate Brakspear**, best known in Wales for her whimsical automatons but also increasingly for her figures made up from cement and *objets trouvés*. "Intellectual, often witty, sometimes mischievous and [an] intriguing mix of the influence of the religious paintings of Spain, of myth, fable, legend and a touch of Bollywood", her "flamboyant" sculptures include Norse goddess *Freya* (with a brass plant pot headdress), *Hippolyta* (the Queen of the Amazons sports a pewter teapot head-dress) and ***Morgan le Fay*** with a jewel-encrusted dress and an accompanying six-foot tall lily. Her *In the Florists of the Night* show ran during May at Pembrokeshire's Workshop Wales Gallery, Manorowen.

• Neil Armstrong "Loving the alien" *Guardian* April 30 2005; Cosima Marriner "US swoop takes Legoland under Merlin's wand" *Guardian* July 14 2005; "Cheesy grins!" *Western Telegraph* August 3 2005; Cwmcarn Forest Drive Visitor Centre and Campsite ☎01495 272001 🖳 cwmcarn-vc@caerphilly.gov.uk; Sybil Edwards "Automatic pilot" *Pembrokeshire Life* (May 2005) 33-4

THE BOARDS

On January 12 2005 Mark Radcliffe's Radio 2 programme featured guest Rick Wakeman on the 30th anniversary of his notorious ***King Arthur*** show at Wembley. Wakeman's anecdotes included the fact that the only reason the show was on ice was that the Wembley administrators wouldn't remove it – it was needed for the following Ice Follies Show. Also, the fuss with the RSPCA was simply staged to get publicity – Wakeman never intended to use live horses on ice (he had always planned to use hobbyhorses) but he let the RSPCA think they did so that the row would get into the papers and increase gate receipts.

Kneehigh Theatre's musical production of ***Tristan and Yseult*** has already been mentioned in these pages, and it re-appeared at London's Cottesloe Theatre between April and June 2005. "Thrillingly playful in every respect ... childlike but not childish ... like a great gulp of refreshing sea air" was one reviewer's response. Highlights included a chorus of "anorak-clad love twitchers who observe couples through binoculars" and Yseult and Tristan whose "lunatic hearts are fully exposed, like bleached driftwood washed upon the shore".

Spamalot got a lot of radio coverage, inevitably, with its nominations for and then winning Best Musical, Best Actress and Best Director in the US Tony awards for musicals, as announced on June 6 2005. Michael Ball (*Ball over Broadway* June 3) devoted a whole programme to it. As well as getting a daft grail mention in ("found my grail, musical theatre"), he noted that the show's geography and history were confused, clearly deliberately (the story is set in 962 AD *etc*). Elaine Paige featured it in her Radio 2 *Tony Awards Preview* on June 5, playing several of the songs.

On the occasion of the re-opening of Narberth Castle, Pembrokeshire, on June 25 "a play freely adapted from *The Mabinogion*"

was presented to the public. ***Culhwch and Olwen*** was devised, planned, written and directed by Derek Rees (*aka* Derek Webb) and performed by the children of the town with costumes and giant masks. **Narberth** of course features in its Welsh form Arberth in the opening of the first Mabinogion tale *Pwyll Prince of Dyfed.*

• "Treading the boards" *Pendragon* XXXI No 1 (2003) 47; Lyn Gardner *Tristan and Yseult* review *Guardian* April 14 2005; Peter Preece *ed* (2005) *Narberth Castle Opening* programme

JOURNALS AND SOCIETIES

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The Round Table *Occasional Arthurian poetry and fiction* Alan & Barbara Tepa Lupack, The Round Table, Box 18673, Rochester NY 14618, USA (enclose IRC)

Wiðowinde *Periodical of the English Companions: Anglo-Saxon literature, history and culture* £3.50 "Ða Engliscan Gesiðas (The English Companions)", BM Box 4336, London WC1 3XX *www.tha-engliscan-gesithas.org.uk*

old news

EARLY BRITISH CHRISTIANS

Glasgow's **Govan Old** parish church is well known for its collection of Viking Age sculpture from around the 10th-11th centuries. What is less clear is how old the Govan Old foundation actually is, due to lack of ancient documentary references. The recently-reported excavations of the mid-nineties by Stephen Driscoll of the University of Glasgow have now clarified the picture.

Close to and below the south-east corner of the Victorian replacement church was eventually revealed the probable corner of an earlier building composed of massive unbonded boulders, set into a trench cut into the subsoil, which may have supported the timber superstructure of an early church.

Two east-west burials, possibly from an **Early Christian cemetery**, lay under the walling and were radiocarbon-dated to the 5th to 6th centuries. They are therefore "among the earliest dated Christian burials in Strathclyde" and make Govan Old "one of the earliest known centres of Christianity in Scotland," according to Driscoll.

The site developed into a major ecclesiastical centre by the 8th century, as evidenced by Driscoll's radiocarbon dating of the *vallum* (bank and ditch) surrounding the churchyard. Nearby was Doomster Hill, a possible **moot mound** (like the Isle of Man's Tynwald) which may have given the area its British name Govan ("little hill") before the arrival of the Vikings in the 10th century. But there is still nothing to connect the church with Arthur, despite what commentators may say.

An unexpected explanation for the spectacular **success of Christianity** was retailed on a BBC Radio 2 programme, reports Steve Sneyd. In the late days of Empire, three or four Italy-based agribusinesses controlled agriculture in Britain and, to increase profits, stopped leaving land fallow. This apparently led to agricultural collapse, which gave Christianity an opening, as the disaster was interpreted by ordinary people as a failure by the gods.

A similar explanation – of widespread crop failure over a number of seasons – was given for the much earlier abandonment of Stonehenge. The programme did though oversimplify the totality of Christian success in Late Imperial Britain – it ignored, for example, the expansion at that very time of Lydney's Nodens temple.

• Neil Faulkner "Govan Old" *Current Archaeology 198* (2005) 276-282; "A Portrait of Arthur?" *Pendragon XXXII* No 1 (2004) 10-11; *Sacred Nation* programme 1 BBC Radio 2, February 20 2005

DARK AGE ENIGMAS

Two men found in a pit at the Roman fort of **Segedunum**, Wallsend were murdered in the 6th century, long after the end of the Roman occupation. According to a notice in a Newcastle paper, "They had been killed by blows to the backs of their heads with a sharp weapon."

Alex Croom (curator of an exhibition entitled *The Dead* at South Shields Roman fort) reported that "They had been probably kneeling down at the time. The evidence is that their bodies were left for some time to the attentions of animals until somebody buried them in the pit."

Also in the exhibition were the remains of infants, all aged up to six months, buried beneath the floor of the barracks at various times at **Arbeia** fort, South Shields, and of another child from a pit under a house wall at Segedunum. They may have been interred for ritual reasons, as legally Roman burials had to be extra-mural.

Two German scholars have questioned the traditional view of the Dark Ages being dismal for the native European populations. After applying statistical methodology to thousands of skeletons from the 1st to the 18th centuries, the University of Tübingen academics discovered that "**stature increased** dramatically in the fifth and sixth centuries". This was despite little alteration in stature during the Roman period and the stagnation of mean stature in the relatively affluent years after 1000. They attribute height changes to improved nutrition and living standards.

Three possible factors for this increased stature are identified by Köpke and Baten: "significant income inequality" between native and invader meant few benefited from Roman rule; the expanding Empire may have facilitated disease transmission; finally, high population density in urban areas may have precluded much cattle grazing and therefore a diet rich in milk and beef. Knowing more details of the researchers' sampling and analysis might help to judge how simplistic or not these conclusions are.

• Tony Henderson "Mystery of babies buried under fort" *The Journal* March 23 2005; Nikola Köpke and Jörg Baten "The Biological Standard of Living in Europe During the Last Two Millennia" *European Review of Economic History* Vol 9, No 1, quoted in Rob Attar "Back into the light" *BBC History Magazine* August 2005

NATIVE, OR MIGRANT PAGANS?

Five miles from the famous early 7th-century royal burial at Prittlewell, Southend in Essex is **Rayleigh**. Here, another Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been discovered, but the contrast could hardly be greater.

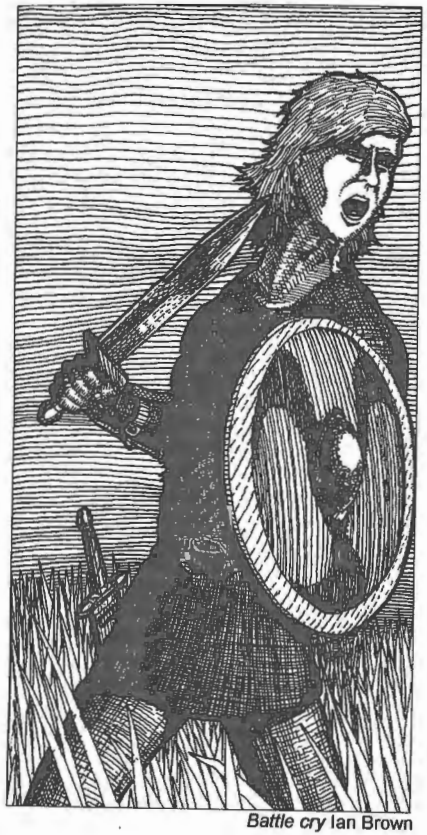
Unlike Prittlewell's richly regal inhumation, Rayleigh (bar a single female burial of 5th-6th century date) consisted of 145 cremated burials. These were simply burnt human remains, along with melted glass beads and some ironwork, placed in handmade urns of Germanic style – some decorated – and interred in small pits. The cemetery, dated between 450 and 600, seems to have served a farming community housed in dispersed settlements.

Were these people descended from native British farmers, but adapting to pagan Continental styles and fashions? Or were they wholly related to immigrants from Germany (where there seems to have been wholesale abandonment of settlements) whose elite contemporaries at Prittlewell were just starting to convert to Christian burial practices?

Further, are the two cemeteries merely evidence of differing social strata in a homogenous population, whether British or Anglo-Saxon? The controversy over the 'continuity of population' theory rumbles on in the letters pages of *Current Archaeology*.

• Neil Faulkner "The Prittlewell Prince and the Rayleigh Paupers" *Current Archaeology 198* (2005) 298-301; "East Saxon Royal Burial" *Pendragon XXXII* No 1 (2004) 11-12; letters *Current Archaeology 199* (September/October 2005) 362-3

Reviews



Battle cry Ian Brown

Thomas Love Peacock
The Misfortunes of Elphin
Wildside Press 2004 £11.95
<www.wildsidepress.com>
0-8095-9355-6 trade pb 131pp

Nineteenth-century author Thomas Love Peacock is best remembered for his novels satirising the Gothick and Romantic, such as *Nightmare Abbey*. He also, however, in 1829 published an Arthurian novel, *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, and that, after being out of print since the 1970s, is at last republished (in America, but readily available here – my copy, ordered through the local W H Smith, took only a couple of weeks to arrive).

Although there is here plenty of dry humour and indeed lightly veiled cynicism, reminiscent of the later treatments of fantasy themes by James Branch Cabell, Peacock, an Englishman but one who often visited Wales, also clearly both loved the original stories on which he drew and had great knowledge of their background in Welsh poetry and story (an instructive example to some at least of the current "Mexican Wave" of Arthurian novelists). If, in his retelling, he seamlessly merges doings and characters from different tales, he evidently does so knowing precisely what he does.

The novel begins with a dramatic account (vivid descriptions are a strength throughout) of a carousel that is devastated when the drunkard Seithenyn's neglect allows the inundation of the fat lands now Ceredigion Bay; a knock-on effect of that disaster, the discovery of the baby Taliesin in a coracle trapped by the salmon weir built to try to replace the food resources lost with the inundation, leads, via the bard-to-be's upbringing, into an account of how his foster-father Elphin is imprisoned by Maelgon of Gwynedd for defiantly averring his wife Angharad is more beautiful and chaste than the ruler's queen. (The reader also gets entertaining accounts of successive blundering attempts by Maelgon's cocksure son Rhun to find, identify, trap and seduce her.) Taliesin then travels to confront Maelgon and his bards, although in this version, while the bards are indeed defeated, the king is unshaken by the song of the wind, and still refuses to release Elphin, giving scope for many more adventures. At length, in an attempt to get Arthur to help, Taliesin attempts to free Gwenyvar from her kidnapper Melvas, leading to a comical encounter with a miraculously surviving, but still wine-sunk, Seithenyn, himself busy trying to instil Dutch courage into Glastonbury's cowardly abbot, hitherto haplessly under Melvas' thumb.

Eventually, "all's well that ends well," back in Caer Leon, as Arthur hands down judgements which disentangle all remaining plot strands and at last reunite all separated lovers!

As a bonus, Peacock includes throughout, as well as plenty of translated triads, numerous rhymed verses, ascribed to bards and others. These, his own

expressions of essences of mood and situation, taking fragmentary Welsh originals as starting points, include one rollicking piece, "The War Song of Dinas Vawr", which was an anthology staple in my childhood: as a result, its opening lines, "The mountain sheep are sweeter, but the valley sheep are fatter," still come into my head whenever I see sheep in the flat lands! Others, however, are undeservedly little known, so discovering them is another real pleasure here.

Peacock also provides plausible insights into his characters' personalities and motivations, plus a variety of "data dumps" on Dark Age life, rulership, culture, economy *etc*, never once neglecting the opportunities they give him for sly digs at the hypocrisies of his own time and its supposedly so much more civilised society.

To sum up, then, Peacock tells "a good tale" in a thoroughly entertaining manner. At the same time, he remains true enough in spirit to his material, freely handled as it often is in the interests of his story-arc, to be, I think, enjoyed by serious Arthurians.

Steve Sneyd

Colin Smith *transl ed*
Alvaro Cunqueiro: Merlin and Company
J M Dent 1996 £5.99
0 460 87731 3 pb xxxiii + 140pp

'Measured by the standards of excellence attained by its models and counterparts in French, English, German, Dutch and Italian, the Arthurian literature of the Spanish peninsula is unoriginal and of scant literary value.'[1] In the early Renaissance, Spain produced two great romances, *Tirant lo Blanc* (1460) and *Amadis de Gaula* (1508), and the French version of the latter, *Amadis de Gaule*, was one of the most successful and influential books ever written. Both were influenced by, and made references to, the Arthurian literature, but they used quite different casts of characters, and cannot themselves be considered Arthurian.[2]

But in 1955 there appeared in Spain a delightful Arthurian fantasy, whose translation I review. Specifically, it appeared in Galicia (Spanish, not Polish). In their north-west corner of Spain, the Galicians are keenly aware of the traditions of their Celtiberian ancestors, and feel an affinity with the modern Celts of Brittany and the British Isles, with who they hold cultural conferences. Their greatest writer, Alvaro Cunqueiro (1911-1981), was active in this connection, so we might have expected from him an Arthurian piece.

Cunqueiro wrote essays as an active journalist, poems, translations of Villon (showing his excellent taste in poetry) and a number of fantasies. We owe his choosing to write fantasy to his access to and enthusiasm for Dunsany. It is a pity he apparently did not know the later masters of fantasy – Bulgakov, Merritt, Charles Williams, De Camp (with and without Pratt), Kuttner and Moore, Boucher, Moorcock, Stableford and Diana Wynne Jones. But Dunsany was a fine enough model, and to judge from this first fantasy Cunqueiro belongs with the masters, and I hope his other fantasies will be translated soon. Cunqueiro wrote in both Galician and Castilian, but he chose Galician for his poetry and fantasies, which he clearly regarded as his finest work.

We owe a lot to Colin Smith, Emeritus Professor of Spanish at Cambridge. Besides translating the book into lively and entertaining English, he provides an excellent account of modern Galicia and the life and work of Cunqueiro. He has also found and translated some stories added by the author between 1955 and 1969 – they not only supplement the original text but include some of the best stories in the book.

Merlin and Company is not a novel but a series of short stories more or less loosely connected. The Dunsanian influence is obvious here, and it doesn't matter that the book is not a novel. We can enjoy it just as much as we enjoy, for instance, *The Gods of Pegana*.

Don Merlin has clearly lived a very long time when we find him in Paris studying lightning-conductors with Don Franklin. Here

[1] Lida de Malkiel, M R (1959) "Arthurian literature in Spain and Portugal" in Loomis, R S (*ed*) *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 406-418, quotation 412

[2] O'Connor, J J (1970) *Amadis de Gaule and its Influence on Elizabethan Literature* (New Brunswick, MJ: Rutgers University Press) *passim*

he hears he has inherited from an aunt a house in Galicia, where he settles down as a private problem-solver. The household contains two male and two female servants, and Don Merlin's guest, Lady Guinevere, who in her (*very*) old age has become totally respectable and dull, and just sits in her room embroidering.

The book is narrated by Don Merlin's page, Felipe. About half of it is a case-book, in the manner of Holmes or Thorndyke, of Don Merlin's problems. The first one is easy. The Bishop of Paris has a paradark, meant to spread light when opened at night, but this one spreads darkness when opened day or night. Merlin has only to adjust a rib or two. More elaborate methods, including an ingenious demon-trap, are needed to rescue a girl turned by a demon into a faun.

But eventually Felipe marries the girl servant and settles down as a ferryman by a nearby stream. The later stories have less and less to do with even Felipe's memories of Merlin. He tells of a magnificent Don Juan who records his conquests by carving crosses on a board hanging over his door, watched with excitement for new crosses by his admiring fellow-citizens. Finally, he turns into an equally magnificent cock. While being taken to Santiago to be restored to human form, he escapes and repeats his triumphs on the hen population, but without a board to record them. We are now so far from the case-book that Felipe concludes: 'My Don Merlin would have loved to be principal consultant in this strange case!'

An English lawyer, touring the Continent to find the scattered beneficiaries of a will, gives Felipe an account of Merlin's birth (to a bearded lady!) and early life to astound all Arthurians.

All these, and the many other stories, are enlivened by circumstantial details that are half the fun, and there are incidental irrelevant vignettes like Don Lopes Bonicon, Bishop of Mondonedo, who drove his *oaken tricycle* furiously round the episcopal garden, 'with an acolyte standing on the axle of the rear wheels blowing a whistle' to warn pedestrian relatives and servants to get out of the way.

In short, this delightful book is a most welcome addition to Arthurian literature. Viva Galicia!

W M S Russell

Allan Massie
Arthur the King
Phoenix (Orion Books) 2004 £6.99
0-75381-781-0 pb 292pp
(Hb 2003 Weidenfeld & Nicholson)

Of Arthurian novelisations there is, literally, no end. What, then, is different about this one to make it of interest to the all-too-possibly jaded reader?

First, Massie has chosen a framing device which is at once ingenious in the extreme, and in effect explains, indeed excuses, any authorial divergences from the usual sources, while simultaneously also liberating him from any need to try to create a convincing or consistent "real Dark Age" world. What is this wonder-working authorial device? Simply this, that he tells the story through the eyes of a medieval narrator – and not just any old jongleur or the like, but someone who is at once one of the great intellectual figures of his age, with an appropriately high opinion of his own capabilities which blinds him to any possibility of error, and also depicted as, at the time of telling, filling a role which gives him considerable incentive to slant, to spin in modern parlance, the story to make it fit his purposes and convey his view as to how the world wags and how it should be run.

Who is this uberchronicler? Massie has picked as his voice that famed wandering scholar of Scots Borders origin Michael Scott, astrologer and to some wizard, and the purported audience for his tale is his pupil at the court of Sicily, the young man who is to become the greatest of 13th-century rulers, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, known as Stupor Mundi to his contemporaries.

Scott, in Massie's telling, comes over as extremely human, blind to his own faults while sharp as an adder's tongue in detecting those of others. He shows his withering contempt for Geoffrey of Monmouth by deviating from Geoffrey's version of the Arthurian story wherever he can. His Borders patriotism causes him to set Camelot in the Eildon Hills, while his need to tactfully acknowledge his pupil's own Germanic origin[3] causes him to wherever possible excuse or explain away Saxon atrocities, and to put a positive gloss on their behaviour – for example, Guinevere in this telling is the daughter of a Saxon king, his gift to Arthur to reinforce peace. Scott's dislike of the Church which had accused him of heresy causes him to blame everything he can on its hierarchy – conspiracy theorists, for example, will revel in how the Pope's plotting is blamed for Arthur's final downfall – while his pride in his own superiority to the mountebankery of self-proclaimed magicians comes across clearly in his sneering (and startlingly convincing) revelation of how the Green Knight used sleight-of-hand to survive the supposed loss of his head.

Every twist and turn of the saga brings forth a life-lesson for his pupil in such matters of statecraft as the truths of human relationships, particularly those relevant to the getting and retention of power. Each is delivered plonkingly, without Scott ever recognising how often one lesson contradicts another, another joy for the reader.

As to the story itself, what is depicted is a world of constant violence thinly masked by chivalry – a mirror of Scott's own world, in fact. He tells the story sparely, the events and the lessons to be drawn from them what mattered, not landscape or emotional colour, albeit that he is also often unable to resist showing off his own learning by flourishes of fine phrasing, like the frequent intertextualities with Virgil's *Aeneid* – though these at least he explains to his pupil as being essential in that the Roman epic had been Arthur's own inspiration during his kingship as it, and the Arthurian story and its lessons as explained by Scott, should henceforward be Frederick's. Insofar as his telling betrays sympathy with any of the *dramatis personae*, it is probably with Morgan le Fay, and to a lesser extent with Arthur (here, incidentally, depicted as bisexual as Scott himself was accused of being). As for Merlin, although Scott often speaks of him unkindly, between the lines it is clear how much he envies gifts and power he has to admit even surpass him own.

To sum up, this book is an entertainingly different take on the Matter, post-modernist indeed, but in a way that gives the author freedom to reshake the pieces of the kaleidoscope to positive purpose, not just for the sake of jokey cleverness. It is also, incidentally, although fully self-contained, part, as so many books these days are, of a trilogy, of which the first, which I have not seen, tells of Arthur's Roman grandfather, and of how the supposed manuscript of Scott's retelling "survived to come into Massie's hands," while the third will tell of what became of Britain after Arthur's death (and, whoever takes over, it certainly won't be Constantine, since Scott has already briskly dismissed him as another of Geoffrey's inventions!).

Steve Sneyd

Robert Rouse & Cory Rushton
The Medieval Quest for Arthur
Tempus 2005 £9.99
0 7524 3343 1 pb 144pp

Nowadays, a book entitled *The Invention of King Arthur* would imply subterfuge and forgery. Several centuries ago, when "to invent" would simply mean "to chance upon",

[3] I was, incidentally, very intrigued by the statement that Frederick's dynasty, the Hohenstaufen, like so many Germanic kinglets in England, traced their supposed origins to Woden – I have no idea, though, if this is purely a Massie invention.

it would instead imply a re-discovery of what already existed. Nowadays we are wary of Arthurian relics such as Arthur's Tomb at Glastonbury, Arthur's Seal, Gawain's skull, Lancelot's sword and the Winchester Round Table. In Caxton's time, which fewer critical tools at their disposal, people were more inclined to accept such evidence at face value (though then as now there were always doubters and detractors).

This is an enthusiastic but informed catalogue of medieval Arthurian souvenirs which also puts the relics and attitudes into historical context. As well as the objects on Caxton's list noted above, we view both Excalibur and Tristan's sword, Arthur's Shield and Crown, Isolde's Robe and Caradoc's Mantle, and Arthur's Slate. Along the way we touch on universities, knightly orders, heraldry, hagiography, topography.

The book is not without its faults: for example, they still repeat the common misconception that Chrétien didn't "clearly" define the Grail as the cup of the Last Supper (Chrétien never even hints his *graal* has links with a*ny* Biblical object, let alone this one). Such assumptions aside, where else but this splendidly readable work do you have all these relics united in one place?

Chris Lovegrove

Mike Dixon-Kennedy
Arthurian Myth & Legend:
an A-Z of People and Places
Blandford 1995
0-7137-2561-3 298pp

Here's perhaps the ultimate Arthurian dipping-in book. There's hardly a page without an entry to amaze, amuse or cause an itch to dig further. Names that rang a faint bell come into meaningful focus, peculiar ones spring out of the page – like Goon Desert, in fact not a lost comrade of Eccles and Bluebottle, rather the Fisher King's murdered brother – and the long-familiar can gain added depth, as by being told that the horrific Morrig(h)an's name means "phantom queen". Unexpected connections appear, like the suggestion of Shakespeare's hand in that little-known play of 1662, *The Birth of Merlin*. Wonderfully vivid images emerge, as when the treasure-hunting youth's pickaxe struck the ground at Dinas Emrys and the whole fort "began to rock like a cradle". Little surprise that he fled! The entry for Guignier, wife of Caradoc Briefbras, is a miniature novel; a breast torn off by the serpent magicked onto her husband's arm, she replaced it with a gold shield boss made by Aalardin, who'd long loved her from afar. Puzzles intrigue long after the page is turned – how did the corpse of Bible character Nicodemus get, first to Camelot, then the Grail Castle, before Perceval sailed away with it? There's the pleasure, too, of the utterly bizarre, like how King Arthur's knights supposedly appear at Castle Eden, County Durham – as ghostly chickens! And, although a cow whales's bones sound impossibly difficult to get, how on earth did Merlin accumulate that other key ingredient to make the giantess Gargamelle, ten *pounds* of Guinevere's nail clippings?

How easy to use is this book? A big plus is that cross-referencing – including alternative spellings, such a characteristic of the Matter – is immensely thorough. (Although, on a handful of occasions, as for the Dolorous Tower, Eldol, or Y Sant Graal, the entry a cross-reference directs you to is missing.) Major figures get longish entries, but others are often inevitably telegraphically brief. Occasionally such minimalism can confuse – the entry for Sir Pinel, for example, appears to say either that he accidentally poisoned himself while trying to murder another, then fled the court after his death (a corpse as mobile as Nicodemus'?) or that murderer and victim shared a name.[4] Or it can mislead because there isn't space to define terms – yes, Wildenberg, property of a lord in whose household Wolfram von Eschenbach served for served for some time, could be seen as his temporary residence, but did that make it, rather than his hereditary estate, his "home"? Terseness, too, can oversimplify, as in defining Castle Hutton as the Green Knight's castle, not as just one candidate for it.

The odd misspelling – *eg*, to take two more castles as examples, Cavershall for Caverswall,[5] Rushden for Rushen – is to be

[4] This is Dixon-Kennedy miscopying his source for this entry. Ronan Coghlan's 1991 *Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends* clearly states "Sir *Patrise* of Ireland consumed the poison". *Ed*

[5] Again, this entry is plagiarised from Coghlan (1991), who also spells it *Cavershall. Ed*

expected in so complex a work; such minor missayings as that Alclud is a "Roman name", Wirt Von Grafenberg was "German, or Bavarian", or that the British king Owain "defeated the British in 593" cause little difficulty. Some more problematic errors do appear, as, still on the "geographically challenged": the Mote of Mark made Cornish rather than, as in reality, in Kirkcudbrightshire; placing the Cunomorus inscription actually *at* Castle Dore; or High Rochester, as a Mount Agned candidate, correctly located in one entry, but in another moved south to Rochester in Kent. Other dubious statements, again, range from the plain silly – like saying the name Nudd is a shortened version of Gwyn ap Nudd – via the intriguing – where Lludd's Silver Hand epithet is usually taken as referring to a metal replacement part, here it's explained as due to a generous nature – to the accidentally comic, like the 21st-century soaps-style love triangle created by reading in conjunction entries one of which refers to "Clauda' lover Pharion" while another says "His [Pharion's] wife became lover of King Claudas".

Don't get me wrong: in thus noting a sample of the book's dubieties, which seem few indeed relative to so many entries, I am certainly not trying to deter potential readers. I simply want to indicate that caution would be need in using it as a source authority. (As an aside to this, although the author provides a massive bibliography of his sources, individual entries, clearly for brevity, usually do little more in the way of sourcing than such vague formulas as "some say".)

Entertaining and enlightening, if offers a most useful first port of call for any Arthurian trying to get a quick fix on a name or topic – just keep the traditional grain of salt handy!

Steve Sneyd

Joseph Goering
The Virgin and the Grail:
origins of a legend
Yale University Press 2005 £25.00
0 300 10661 0 hb 188pp

South of the high peaks of the Pyrenees and bounded by Aragon to the west and Andorra to the east lies a corner of Catalonia that offers an unexpected but strangely satisfying explanation for the literary grail's medieval antecedents.

At least ten churches of 12th-century Romanesque date used to contain images – murals, plus an altar frontal and a statue of wood – that display highly unusual iconography unique to this area of Spain. These feature the Virgin Mary (often labelled *Sancta Maria*) making an open palm gesture with one hand and holding a vessel in her other, covered, hand. That this vessel is special is indicated by its luminosity or by rays emerging from its reddish contents. The earliest representation comes from the church of St Clement in Taüll, where Mary holds a shallow dish. In local dialect this would have been called a *gradal*, a "grail".

As all grailologists know, this was a term found only in this part of the world, so obscure that Wolfram imagined the grail as a stone, while Robert de Boron described the grail as a sacred chalice. But Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte del Graal* – the first Arthurian romance to popularise *the* Grail – specifically depicted the vessel as a dish capable of displaying a large river fish and thus not a stone or a chalice. But while Chrétien's romance was (probably) written in the 1180s, the sacred *gradal* held by St Mary in the church in Taüll can be closely dated *to 1123*, more than half century before.

In this fascinating study, Goering shows that these Virgin-with-grail images were part of a composition, developed in the Spanish Pyrenees, depicting the first Pentecost, where church apses displayed a Christ-in-Majesty icon above Mary and the apostles. Her radiant *gradal* bore polyvalent symbols such as blood, wine, chrism and the fire of the Holy Spirit, a concept which was in vogue particularly in 12th-century Catalonia and which seems to echo much of the sacred metaphors of the later literary grail. Was this then *the* Grail? Unlikely, for chronological reasons, Goering argues. Why didn't other parts of Europe adopt this imagery? Goering suggests that by the 13th century the Church will not have wanted to be associated with the extravagances of the Grail romances and that *gradal* iconography would have been discouraged.

There is much else of interest here (including discussion of a theory advanced by Swiss scholar André de Mandach[6] about

[6] Mandach, a Tristan enthusiast, contributed an article to *Pendragon* in the 1980s.

the origins of Perceval which provide a missing link between Catalonia and Chrétien de Troyes) but this account of a fascinating if little-known connection is worth its otherwise excessive price-tag. Incidentally, the place to view most of the relevant murals is now the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona.

Chris Lovegrove

bookworm

FACTUAL

Mike Ashley is best-known as a compiler of fiction anthologies for Robinson Publishing, including *The Pendragon Chronicles: heroic fantasy from the time of King Arthur* (1989), *Quest for the Holy Grail: the ultimate quest from the age of Arthurian legend* (1996) and other titles featuring fantasy, horror and whodunits. ***The Mammoth Book of King Arthur*** (Robinson pb 2005 £9.99 1-84119-249-X) is actually non-fiction, the fruit of many years solidly researching the subject. At first sight this is a very thorough work that trawls through the vast literature that already exists, though there may not necessarily be any new revelations or startling insights.

Mike Dixon-Kennedy has adroitly combined two of his very successful titles into ***A Companion to Arthurian & Celtic Myth & Legend*** (Blandford hb £25.00). This would be an impressive achievement if he had bothered to reference his Arthurian entries and if it was not so obvious from his paraphrases that he had shamelessly plundered Ronan Cochlan's (admirably referenced) *The Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends* in the first place. An overview by Steve Sneyd of his original *Arthurian Myth and Legend* appears elsewhere.

Co-authored by Fran & Geoff Doel with Terry Lloyd, ***Worlds of Arthur*** first appeared in 1998 as a carelessly edited hardback. It now re-appears as a paperback (Tempus £9.99), re-set and hopefully with fewer typos though, I suspect, it is the same cursory overview as before. Also out in paperback is Christopher Gidlow's ***The Reign of Arthur*** (Sutton Publishing £8.99 0 7509 3419 0) which we reviewed rather more favourably in *XXXII* No 2.

Caradoc Peters' new study of Cornish archaeology, not unnaturally called ***The Archaeology of Cornwall***, sets out to create a chronicle of the Cornish through artefacts and traces in the landscape. Working chronologically through from geological times to the present, it includes a chapter on "The Age of Saints and Traders" (AD 400-1500) and is available for £49.95 from Cornwall Editions Ltd, Freepost NATW364, Fowey, Cornwall PL23 1EQ.

Graham Phillips is well-known as the author of *The Search for the Grail* (1995) and as co-author of *King Arthur: the True Story* (1992). He now turns his attention to the wizard as was in ***Merlin, Avalon and the New World*** (Inner Traditions / Bear and Co). In the words of Andrew Collins, Phillips has uncovered "persuasive new evidence that Merlin was a British warrior and learned adviser to kings" and that "a 1500-year-old saga called 'The Voyage of Merlin' tells how Merlin finally left Britain on a boat bound for a mysterious island, far across the Atlantic" which he identifies with an island off the coast off Maine. Reading between the lines, this sounds like a re-interpretation of the Irish *Voyage of Maeldúin*, with the medieval hero standing in for Myrddin or Merlin.

Tangentially Arthurian is ***The Serpent Grail*** by Philip Gardiner and Gary Osborn (Watkins). This claims that the concept of the grail providing the Elixir of Life is derived from a cult involving "snake venom mixed with snake blood in a ceremonial vessel". On top of this, "Christ was a literary figure that sprang out of the concept of the perceived bloodline of the serpent cult," all of which, as Andrew Collins reports, is both "revolutionary" and "incredible".

On Mark Radcliffe's BBC R2 programme on June 15 2005, he interviewed ex-Damned singer Rat Scabies and his co-author Chris Dorrs about their new book ***Rat Scabies and the Holy Grail*** (from the sound of it Scabies did the "research", then Dorrs put it into shape). The gist seemed to be that Scabies tried to follow the Holy Blood & Holy Grail "trail", starting at Rennes-le-Château and ending at Rosslyn, where he found an odd-looking beat-up metal cup in the basement. He didn't claim it was necessarily the Grail, however ("If you think you've found it, you haven't").

En route he found the supposed surviving Templars and went to their initiation

ceremony, but didn't manage to contact the Priory of Sion (though various odd people claimed they would put him in touch), and went round wearing a T-shirt with the Priory's secret logo and the solution to Rennes' cryptic code on it, in the hopes it would cause them to surface and reveal themselves.

Scabies claimed the whole book was done very seriously, as a tribute to his father who was a great believer in the whole thing and had kept telling him about it in the seventies. Daft but fun, this book may be not one to buy new but to look out for second-hand.

Should one not judge a book by its cover? Giles Morgan's ***The Holy Grail*** (Pocket Essentials £9.99 hb 1 904048 34 X) is one of those little hardbacks aimed, one supposes, at the dilettante market, if its superior paper, select illustrations and slim feel are anything to go by. Something perhaps for the bibliophile searching for completeness, unless anyone thinks otherwise.

FICTION

We may as well start with Harry Potter. According to John Mullan,[7] a "weighty review of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* in the London Review of Books detected Arthurian romance, Lewis Carroll and Freud's case histories," and no doubt ***Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*** (Bloomsbury £16.99 607pp) will also remind readers of half-remembered bits of the Matter of Britain. Shereen Low[8] points out Six Things You Didn't Know About Harry, including the fact that "*The name Voldemort originated from Voldermortist, an evil wizard in medieval times.* Legend has it that he tried to destroy Merlin by bewitching good people and bribing those who were already evil." We are helpfully informed that Voldemort means "flight of death" in French.

Sarah Zettel, apparently a well-established romantic novelist, has just had her ***Camelot's Honour*** (HarperCollins 2005 £12.99 0 00 715869 6) published. Set in a familiar Malorian Dark Age dreamtime, this is her "first Arthurian novel" and so presumably we must expect more in a similar vein.

Simon Young, who took Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic studies at Cambridge, has authored ***AD 500*** (Weidenfeld & Nicolson £14.99), which he describes as "a mad-cap Bill Bryson-style wander around Britain and Ireland in the Dark Ages". Although written as fiction, this "practical survival guide for the use of civilised visitors to these barbaric islands" he avers is based on "the best research in archaeology and history".[9]

Patrick McCormack's ***The Last Companion*** (Robinson 2005) is the third in his Albion series and yet another Arthurian interpretation set in the Dark Ages. Robert Carter's ***The Language of Stones*** is now out in paperback (HarperCollins £6.99 572pp 0-00-716504-8). A review in *Vector 241* by Lynne Bispham reminds us that this fantasy is set in an alternative 15th century "in which the legends and myths of Britain – in this book known as the Realm – are real". Young Willand is assured by the wizard Gwydion that he is "actually the third incarnation of King Arthur" as the Realm descends into a civil war reminiscent of the real Wars of the Roses.

Lloyd Jones's ***Mr Vogel*** was one of three novels set in Wales that were on the shortlist of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for the best comic novel. It apparently draws on the *Mabinogion*, "an ancient cycle of legends in which pigs hold a magical status".[10] His second novel, ***Mr Morton,*** "centres on a magical wild boar" and is due to be published by Seren in 2006.

Bardhonyeth Kernow is, as its title proclaims, a periodical dedicated to poetry in Cornwall. Number 10 (ISSN 1476-7007; Vol 4 No 1, 2005) was a free celebratory issue featuring ten Cornish poets, past and present, including David Stringer (who wrote for *Pendragon* in the 70s), Paul Newman (who gave a talk on dragons to the Society in the 70s) and James Dryden Hosken (whose "Lyonesse" completes the selection). A three issue subscription costs £10.00 from editor Les Merton, Palores Publications, 1 Station Hill, Redruth, Cornwall TR15 2PP.

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

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[7] "Into the gloom" *Guardian* July 23 2005
[8] "Going Potter" *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* July 15 2005
[9] Andrew Jackson "Simon's suvival guide to ancient barbaric Britain..." *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* April 18 2005
[10] *Guardian Review* May 28 2005

The *Holy Cliché* Quest

Chris Lovegrove with Steve Sneyd

It's hard to credit how rapidly the phrase "the holy grail of ..." has become widespread in journalese. While no attempt is made here to quantify its appearance over any given timescale, the excuse of the recent *Pendragon* competition allows a snapshot survey of its uses and abuses. No doubt after over-exposure this mother of all clichés will soon pass its sell-by date and succumb to a rapid and unmourned death.[1]

The Holy Grail as contemporary metaphor seems to fall into two main categories: as *miracle panacea*; and as *unattainable goal* that, paradoxically, is sometimes achieved. In both cases its attainment could be ephemeral or even a complete chimæra. Before the winner of the competition is announced, you might like to sample some of the most ludicrous grails around (in English, at least).

Merchandising

The food trade is an apt place to start this survey of grail analogues. *Spamalot*, the Broadway-bound musical based on *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, is being celebrated by Hormel Foods with the introduction of a limited edition flavour, **Spam™ golden honey grail** in a *Spamalot collector's edition* tin. "Spam® is the holy grail of canned meats," Eric Idle is reported to have said, and continued, "We're thrilled to dine on SPAM™ golden honey grail at the round table of Spamalot." Surely Idle, who wrote the show's lyrics and book, could have composed something more original?[2]

"**Marmite**'s range of vitamins make[s] it the Holy Grail of foodstuffs," it is claimed[3] – unsurprising as *marmite* is French for cooking-pot. If you're thinking of buying this item in M&S, remember though that "Turning round the ailing **Marks & Spencers** is the Holy Grail of retailing..."[4]

Entertainment and leisure

Commentators on the leisure industry also indulge in metaphoric flights of fantasy. Did you know that TV film "***Das Boot*** is the Holy Grail of submarine movies"?[5] Or that the film *Mean Girls* "understands that **acceptance** is the holy grail of adolescence"?[6] A preview of the late 70s film *10* showing on Sky Cinema tells us that Dudley Moore's "Holy Grail turns out to be the pneumatic ... **Bo Derek**".[7] The annual National Readership Survey show that the readership of lads' magazines *Nuts* and *Zoo*, among the most popular weekly titles, is mainly made up of **men under the age of 45**, "the holy grail for advertisers looking for customers with a high disposable income".[8]

Staying upwind is "the holy grail of learning to kiteboard",[9] though "one of the most spectacular juggling manoeuvres known to man" – **underleg, side juggle + mill's mess** – is alleged to be "the holy grail of juggling".[10] If you're a golfer, "the **perfect putt** is the holy grail of performing under par" and if you're a boardgame geek then "the **Acquire** 97 edition is the HOLY GRAIL of the holy grails!"[11]

"It's not quite cricket's holy grail, but it's close." What is it? **W G Grace's collection of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanacks*** complete with signatures, annotations and corrections running from 1864 to 1915. This grail quietly sold for £150,000.[12] Meanwhile, collectors of movie memorabilia are chasing that **one elusive piece** to top out their collection. "Everyone has their own holy grail," says one dealer, citing Luke Skywalker's light sabre or Darth Vader's helmet from *Star Wars*.[13] Finally, the BBC "has unearthed the holy grail of Bob Dylan fanatics" – footage of the **moment he is branded a Judas** for plugging in an electric guitar.[14]

Medical and social

When he died half a century ago **Einstein's brain** was cut up by a pathologist into 240 pieces. When a grain specialist and a physicist go looking for it they "eventually find their holy grail at a tantalisingly secret laboratory location".[15]

Sometimes the grail does not provide what one seeks. An anonymous letter writer who suffered parental abuse concluded that "**forgiveness** is not necessarily the holy grail of healing, whereas building a protective wall might be."[16]

On the other hand, "**Protection against Parkinson's** is something of a holy grail" according to the director of policy of the Parkinson's Disease Society, and it may be provided by foods rich in vitamin E.[17] Meanwhile, a drug called Rapamycin (or *sirolimus*), isolated from a fungus found in an Easter Island soil sample from the 1970s, has been described by the research head of the Tuberous Sclerosis Association as a possible "Holy Grail of **an effective treatment**" for a genetic disease that makes tumours grow throughout the a sufferer's body.[18] Here the grails are regarded as panaceas, as is the view that "**raising self-esteem** has become the psychological Holy Grail of the last few decades".[19]

Rather flippantly, a **log detailing alleged sexual harassment**, which it was claimed the Football Association failed to return to a defendant, was described as "a holy grail in a discrimination case".[20] Less flippantly, Iain Duncan Smith, former leader of the Conservatives, will find it difficult to convince the party that "**social justice** is the holy grail" for the Tories' recovery. (Ironically, Margaret Thatcher tried to consign socialism to oblivion by declaring there was no such thing as Society.)[21]

Science and technology

Science is not averse to manhandling the mystical metaphor. "**Einstein's goal** of combining the physical laws of the universe in one theory that explains it all is the Holy Grail of modern physics," we discover,[22] while "the elusive **Higgs particle** is the holy grail of nuclear physics".[23] For mathematicians, of course, **the Riemann Hypothesis**, first published in 1859 but still unproved, is described as "the holy grail of prime number theory".[24]

Technology won't be outdone, however. It is reported that scientists have found a way to produce a **blue rose**. Not only could it

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[1] See Richard Barber (2004) *The Holy Grail: imagination and belief* (Penguin) epilogue and appendix 4

[2] http://www.dailyllama.com/news/2004/llama258.html

http://www.montypythonsspamalot.com/

[3] www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ tg/detail/-/0674013905?v=glance

[4] BBC One *6 o'clock news*, May 27 2004

[5] www.sick-boy.com

[6] www.kpla.com/kpla/events/archives/000364.php

[7] Film Choice *Metro* December 7 2004

[8] Claire Cozens "Read between the lies [*sic*]" *MediaGuardian* December 20 2004

[9] www.realkiteboarding.com/index.ihtml?page=inst-int

[10] www.maths.tcd.ie/~mathsoc/2003/juggling.html

[11] www.boardgamegeek.com

[12] "WG Grace's profitable margins" *Guardian* May 10 2005

[13] Neil Armstrong "Loving the alien" *Guardian* April 30 2005

[14] Owen Gibson "BBC to screen Dylan's electric shock" *guardian* July 22 2005

[15] Preview of Channel 4's *The Riddle of Einstein's Brain* in *Guardian G2* January 17 2005

[16] *Guardian Weekend* letters May 28 2005

[17] Sarah Boseley "Foods rich in Vitamin E ..." *Guardian* May 19 2005

[18] Roger Highfield "Island fungus may provide cure for disabling tumour" *Telegraph* September 18 2004

[19] Presenter, *Broadcasting House* programme, BBC R4 January 16 2005

[20] "Alam 'used sex claim to hold a gun to FA'" *Metro* June 23 2005

[21] Jackie Ashley interview with Duncan Smith *guardian* May 23 2005

[22] www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/elegant/program.html

[23] www.metapraxis.com/pdf/HiggsReview.pdf

[24] Karl Sabbagh's *Dr Riemann's Zeros* (Atlantic 2002) from *Postscript* February 2005 catalogue

soon make an unusual present for Mother's Day but, you won't be surprised to hear, it is also the "Holy Grail of horticulture".[25] "**True transparency** is the 'Holy Grail' of aerogel science,"[26] we are told, while the **orgasmatron** (a device implanted in the base of a woman's spine that generates spontaneous orgasms on demand) may be "the holy grail of female sexuality".[27]

Computing science is in a fantasy world of its own: "Quite literally **Ableton** is the holy grail of software" (this may be something to do with music technology),[28] "**virtualization** is the holy grail of storage"[29] and, most importantly, "**predictability** is the Holy Grail of Program Managers and bean counters"[30].

In a related development, international science and technology projects shamelessly purloin *grail*'s original form *graal*, as any internet search engine will easily disclose. Thus the 1998–2001 **GRAAL** project used a heliostat field for solar-energy production in Spain to collect flashes of Cherenkov light during the night,[31] while **GrAAL** is the acronym of the Grenoble Anneau Accelerateur Laser project, which aims to build a polarized and tagged intermediate energy photon beam.[32] **GRAAL**, or *Grammars which are Re-usable to Automatically Analyze Languages*, is a Eureka research project aiming to provide a linguistic toolbox of modules for Natural Language Processing,[33] but it also refers to *General Recursive Applicative and Algorithmic Language*, a functional programming system in computing.[34]

Other "-ologies" with their own grails include ornithology, archaeology, sociology and economics. "**Attu**, the outermost of Alaska's Aleutian Islands, is the Holy Grail of North American birding,"[35] but this pales into insignificance when up against **Atlantis** enthusiasts who know of "a discovery [which] is the holy grail of all archaeological discoveries – and the ramifications are due to be staggering".[36] For underwater archaeologists "**discovering a trireme** is one of the holy grails. Not one has ever been found".[37] For US sociologists, "**sending kids to college** is the 'holy grail' of parenting"[38] and "pushing for full **equality in marriage** is the 'holy grail' of gay civil rights goals".[39] Confirming the public perception of the glamour of economics, we are assured that "to **understand the Great Depression** is the Holy Grail of macro-economics".[40]

Achievement?

The entry which was adjudged to be the most ludicrous grail was this: "The scarce **Royal Blue Peanut** is the Holy Grail of Beanies."[41] (*Beanies* are collectible beanbag toys; the Royal Blue Peanut is an elephant.) The lucky winner is Geoff Sawers, whose prize is a copy of *Grail*, Atlantean Publishing's first grail anthology (reviewed a few issues ago). Thanks to him and all those who submitted, including a couple of anonymous entries, and to Steve Sneyd for more recent examples. As a *Guardian* preview of TV Channel Five's *Search for the Holy Grail* noted, "If the object is ever found, it would deprive scores of writers of a much-loved cliché". Best not to find it, then!

[25] www.surfingtheapocalypse.net/ cgi-bin/forum.cgi?read=3407
[26] reality.sculptors.com/~salsbury/House/panels.html
[27] "BodyShock" preview in Channel 4's Christmas 2004 magazine, 6
[28] www.9inchnails.net/remix-files/ableton.htm
[29] www.winnetmag.com
[30] discuss.fogcreek.com/joelonsoftware/
[31] http://rplaga.tripod.com/almeria/
[32] http://www.inf.infn.it/~levisand/graal/graal.html
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[35] www.theatlantic.com
[36] www.discoveryofatlantis.com/articles/cyprus_mail.htm
[37] *Guardian* report on search for the site of the battle of Salamis June 20 2005
[38] www.stamfordadvocate.com
[39] www.datalounge.com/datalounge/surveys/record.html?record=20809
[40] www.upjohninst.org/publications/ch1/wheelerch1.pdf
[41] www.english.udel.edu/rewa/CamelotCourier28.html

Burne-Jones and The Attainment

Ian Brown

Edward Burne-Jones

Forward

In 1855, two theological students, each with an interest in mediaeval history and customs, as well as a high regard for traditional arts and crafts, struck up a fortunate and long-lasting friendship. The one, born in Essex in 1834, forged a keen and quite exalted career in producing intricate and beautiful textiles. The other, born in Birmingham (although of Welsh descent), became a skilled and inspired artist and designer.

Influenced by, and eventually involved with, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Arts and Crafts Movement, each of which ideal upheld traditional values in art and rebelled against excessive industrialisation, modernism and sinking social values, these two men were William Morris and Edward Coley Burne-Jones.

This is a descriptive analysis of one of their works, concentrating on the design by Burne-Jones: the tapestry entitled, "The Attainment", created in 1895-6.

Design and form

"The Attainment: the vision of the Holy Grail to Sir Galahad, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel." Produced by William Morris and Company in 1895-6., following the design of Edward Coley Burne-Jones.

A full colour wool and silk tapestry on cotton warps, this panel is the sixth and final work of a series dealing with the subject of the Quest for the Holy Grail. The tapestry measures 244cm x 695cm.

The composition depicts nine figures (three knights and three angels) paying obeisance at the Grail Chapel amidst a forested wilderness. The chapel and angels are presented in warmer colours, which stand out from the deep, tertiary colours of the forest and focus attention on the sanctuary and sanctity of the subject.

The angels are composed in two groups of three which, it will be shown, is important in revealing the fundamental difference in the nature of the knights shown on the tapestry.

Three angels kneel within the chapel, adoring the Grail and perhaps welcoming Sir Galahad, the Best Knight of the World, who kneels outside the open chapel door, again adoring the Grail and perhaps beseeching the angels to admit him into the Grail's presence.

According to tradition, he is ultimately welcomed into the Grail Company and achieves a kind of apotheosis, being taken up to Heaven when the Grail is removed from this world. This fact is hinted at by the lilies which frame the figure of Sir Galahad: a flower which is usually illustrated alongside the archangel Gabriel, messenger of God.

Behind Sir Galahad stand three more angels; and it is notable that they are standing, for although they do have a welcoming nature, they also seem to be on guard: and they visually separate Sir Galahad from his fellows, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, who will remain on Earth and live out their mortal lives (Sir Bors returns to Arthur's

court, whilst Sir Lionel becomes a hermit).[1]

One of the angels – the one standing nearest to Sir Galahad – holds two of the Grail Hallows. The Lance of Longinus, which pierced the side of Christ as he hung on the Cross at Calvary, is held on the side of the two more earthly knights, but at an angle away from their reach: it is a weapon and effectively bars their way, albeit only in a psychological context, whilst its angle indicates that they will not be allowed to touch the Hallows, although they might be permitted to witness their wonders. In the other hand, nearest to Sir Galahad, the Platter (in some traditions, a manifestation of the Grail) is held in an open palm. In other words, Sir Galahad may be nourished by the Grail and although the other knights do in the traditions feed of the Grail until Galahad's departure, they are more distant from the Platter: they are not as worthy as he.

Again, there is a more subtle, visual difference between Sir Galahad and his fellow knights, and this is in the choice of colours used to depict them. Just as the colours used to depict the chapel and the angels are far warmer than those of the wilderness, so Galahad is shown in slightly warmer colours than his companions. He is closer to the angels, both physically and visually, whereas his friends are closer to the Earth. The angels' warmth and glory are reflected in Galahad's flesh and robes (and in the hint of the blood red cross upon his shield, which can only be worn by the worthy), whilst the coolness and mortality of the forest are echoed in the tones and hues of Lionel and Bors.

Note too the expressions and postures of the knights. Galahad's is one of expectancy and hope. Sir Lionel and Sir Bors are in yearning for the Grail. They have all achieved their Quest, the search is complete; but only one of their number is truly worthy and the remaining two knights obviously know this.

[1] It should be noted that the characters present are according to the story's source. In some versions, it is Perceval who accompanies Galahad and Bors; and in this case, he remains to guard the Grail Castle, whilst Galahad is taken up to Heaven and Bors returns to Arthur's court.

Inspiration

Both William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones were strongly involved with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who were basically fed up with the loss of traditional crafts and values, along with what they saw as the gradual decline in morals and society in general, as industrialisation grew and swept across the country and much of the world (and don't forget that, in the Victorian era, the British Empire was, to many, seen as most of the world).

Perhaps Burne-Jones' Welsh ancestry inspired an interest in Arthurian legends, but this is conjectural. It can be safely said, though, that the works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate, did inspire much of the nation with his *Idylls of the King* and related Arthurian works, which dressed the whole ethos of nobility and chivalry in a richly embroidered coat of Victorian respectability, reminding the people that they did perhaps come from a proud and gentle line.

Although Tennyson may have provided the initial impetus, Burne-Jones' design reveals a good knowledge of other, older Arthurian sources. His imagery, as well as his choice of the final Grail company, is straight from Malory's fifteenth-century epic, which in turn is taken predominantly from what has come to be known as the Vulgate Cycle; a huge corpus of Arthurian works perhaps compiled with agreement with the Church in the thirteenth century.

Burne-Jones' theological background and mediaeval studies would undoubtedly have acquainted him with such works. In fact, it would have been rather difficult to have missed them, given the nature of his studies at Oxford; and his studies also coincided with those of William Morris: no wonder their work is so inspired.

The composition is warm. It is friendly. It is reassuring, hopeful. Even though it depicts the highest possible ideals of humanity (especially in a time which the artists saw as sinking into neglect and immorality), there is nothing unattainable in the nature of the picture. It is a peaceful work which welcomes every viewer. Even the wilderness is neat, organised: safe. There is no harshness. There are no sharp edges. The whole work is calm, tranquil. It is relaxing, inspiring: the stuff of dreams. And

the Arts and Crafts movement, as well as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, were all about rediscovering past hopes and values, recapturing lost dreams.

Edward Burne-Jones and his fellow artists, especially his lifelong friend William Morris, had a quest of their own, to lift society from the impending gutter; and, in this work, he shows them an image of their highest hope.

Just as the Grail appeared originally in a collective vision to the Knights of the Round Table, so Edward Burne-Jones reveals the dream of the Grail to the Victorian public; and to the people of the present day. He believed that all people had a real chance to do far better. And he showed us that the Quest for the Holy Grail is not forgotten.

Below: engraving of Tassilo Chalice in Kremsmünster Convent, Austria

• Burne-Jones' 1890 study of a chalice, in his 'Holy Grail' sketchbook, is based on the eighth-century Tassilo Chalice housed in the Austrian convent of Kremsmünster (Helen Proctor *The Holy Grail Tapestries* Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery 1997: 32, 36). Philip Dixon (*Barbarian Europe* Phaidon Press 1976: 99) suggests that the figure drawing and interlace seem English and that the chalice, dedicated by Tassilo III, Duke of Bavaria (748-88), may even be a product of Northumbria. *Ed*

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