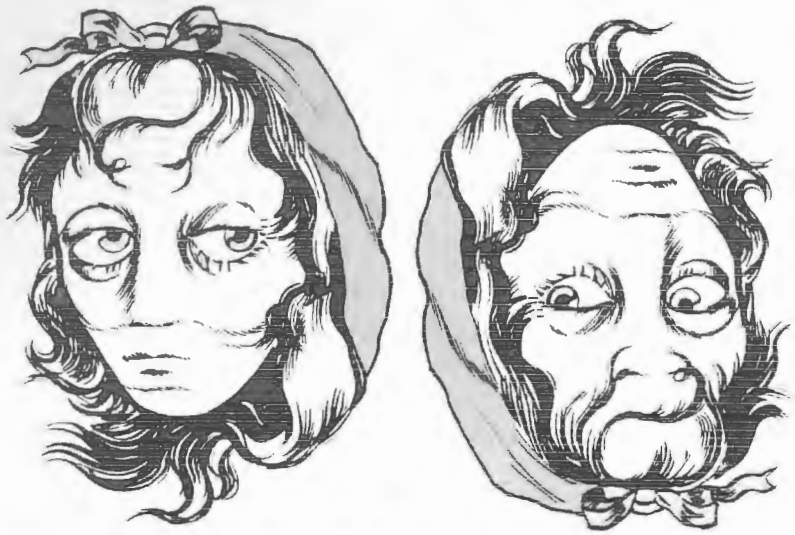
pendragon

XXXV No 4 *Guineveres*

Medieval narrative literature

News, views, previews and reviews



Vol XXXV No 4 Editorial *Guineveres*

Yes, you read that right, this issue's theme is indeed in the plural. There is no one **Guinevere**, just as there is no one spelling of her (or is it their?) name. From the earliest Welsh tradition, when she appears in a list of Arthur's "possessions", through the folklore motif of the Giant's Daughter in Shropshire, the appearance of her doppelgangers in triadic lore, the mention of Arthur's "second wife Guenevere" on the Glastonbury cross, her medieval role as Lancelot's lover and on to her modern reincarnations as feminist priestess or warrior princess, she refuses to be typecast. So in this issue we encounter, variously, Guinevere as "a woman who did", Guinevere as a "bewitching temptress" and Guinevere reincarnated in a Pre-Raphaelite Sister. The cover illustration is of Jane Morris in a photograph arranged by the artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the 1870s; Jane modelled for a number of Pre-Raphaelite portraits including several Guineveres.

A number of poems held over from last issue's Storybook theme find their way into print, along with the usual news, views and reviews. Also appearing in this issue is the final part of the late Bill Russell's last epic contribution to *Pendragon*. It is another reminder of his erudition, his humanity and his ever-stimulating take on whatever he turned his mind to; he will continue to be missed.

For those who are missing their fix of Holy Grail as metaphor for something incongruous, a summary of the state of play is scheduled for next issue as "The Final Quest for the Unholy Grail" (the projected theme is **King of the Castle**, for which a trickle of contributions has already begun); and Old News returns.

And finally, here is the bard news: "Last *Pendragon* even better than usual -- thanks so much!" write Robin and Bina Williamson. High praise indeed: Robin is best known for being a founder member of The Incredible String Band, but has since carved himself a new career as a solo artist and bard and as a storyteller in the vanguard of the storytelling revival in Europe and North America. Honorary Chief Bard of The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, he also performs regularly in a duo with his partner Bina:

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Contents

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Vol XXXV *No 4* Summer 2008 *Issue theme* Guineveres

CONTENTS

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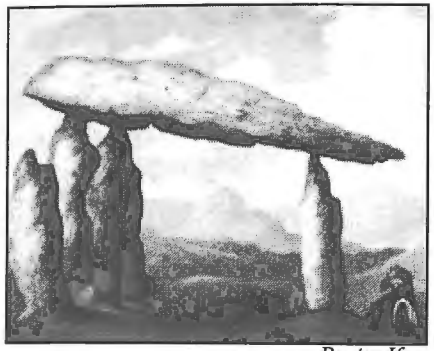


Pentre Ifan

ARTHUR'S STONES

Thanks for the copy of *Pendragon* with my bit regarding Ogham and Sir Bors [*XXXV No 2*] ... I note the comments on Stonehenge's and Pembrokeshire's bluestones [Old News, *XXXV No 1*, 27-8]. I simply can't understand the mania for transporting huge blocks of stone over great distances, or even how it was done. I would dearly like to pick the brains of an appropriate civil engineer on how the huge slab at Pentre Ifan chamber tomb was put in place: if it was done now, it would take about three years of seeking grants, need all the roads in the district blocked off by the police while moving the heavy plant into place, ditto while the stone was being transported, and about as much again in paperwork before and after. Multiply this by the number of bluestones taken to Stonehenge. The belief that it was performed by giants gets more credible the more you look at it.

I have problems with too precise an account of the arrangement of stones on the Pembrokeshire tors. It's difficult enough getting up there anyway: I imagine that apart from searching for lost sheep it hasn't been attempted too often ever. And when you're walking around on top, there's such a jumble of stones that you are hard put to it to identify what's the work of nature, what's quarrying, and what might have been placed there for a purpose. Given the physical difficulties in locating and moving stones of the requisite specifications, it would be a wonder if the different enclosures and stone circles did *not* resemble one another: the only way to overcome the impossible would be to use the same team of experts each time. It's rather like finding regional "schools" of church tower building: Shropshire people have no inborn instinct for rubble, or Warwickshire folk for right-angle buttresses; we have to conclude that the work was carried out over a generation or so by the same firm in each case. We can also cite the painfully uniform similarity of the churchyard crosses in Glamorgan and Gwent.

Which lead us onto the question as to how Bowen and Wogan, Bluestone Contractors By Appointment, managed to persuade the powers that were to pour such generous resources into their Neolithic bank account, and find so much strong young male labour to perform the work of giants. It's doubtful if you could find enough fit males in Fishguard and Newport and District to lift the cap off Pentre Ifan in these times, and feeding them would be a headache even now. As for having them away from home for months at a time, messing about in Wiltshire, who was expected to get in the harvest and service the beasts?

All of which implies that the "primitive" pre-industrial economy was not as marginal as it later became.

Joseph Biddulph, Pontypridd, Wales

• *For more on the continuing bluestones saga, see next issue's Old News.*
Joseph Biddulph reminds us that his booklets on Celtic countries heraldry are available free of charge from the author at 32 Stryd Ebeneser, Pontypridd CF37 5PB, Wales

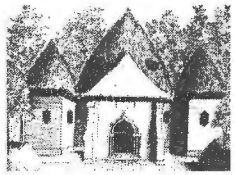
ARTHUR'S SHORTS

Great cover on the issue [*XXXV* No 3], and I enjoyed the subtle joke of captions on the two foliate heads starting the letters column. The issue as always was a good read.

Larry Mendelsberg ["King Arthur is *gay*?" last issue] has certainly taken on a Forth Bridge task trying to track down and list all Arthurian short fiction. A very short story, Angela Morkos' "The Vicar's Wife", in the August issue of Atlantean Publishing's *Awen 53*, certainly fits the bill of "every character could act in a completely new and surprising way" – Guinevere becomes Queen of the Fairies to name just one of the startling twists of the kaleidoscope.

I recently read a second-hand copy of a T H White book new to me, *The Age of Scandal* (Penguin 1962, Cape 1950), about the 18th century. The reason to mention it is that on page 47 he quotes Lord Hervey's account of a meeting with King George II and Queen Caroline: 'Turning to the Queen, he [George II] said, "I suppose I shall see a pair of these gates to Merlin's Cave, to complete your nonsense there!", then called it "childish silly stuff" and complained of the expense. White explains this Merlin's Cave was "a little building so christened, which the Queen had lately finished at Richmond"; sadly he doesn't say what it was used for or what happened to it.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, North Yorkshire



• *Two 'fancies', a hermitage and a cave, were designed by the Queen's architect, William Kent for the Royal Gardens at Richmond. The Hermitage, a semi-ruined grotto enclosing an octagonal room, with a miniature bell-topped tower, was started in November 1730 and cost £1,114. Merlin's Cave was built in 1735 with timber and plaster walls; it featured a Gothick arched entrance and a thatched beehive roof flanked by two smaller thatched building. The* Gentleman's Magazine *announced in June that it was to be "adorned with Astronomical figures and characters". For further details see http://www.richmond.gov.uk/local_history_merlins_cave.pdf*

"ARTHUR'S CASTLE"

I look forward, as always, to receiving my copies of *Pendragon*. Whilst I was on a recent holiday to Rhodes, I was staying near the infamous town of Faliraki. Assured that it was no longer a den of iniquity, my husband suggested we took a walk into the town one morning to see if it had indeed been made more family friendly. Well, it was a real shanty town and the most horrific thing of all was to see a bar done up like a castle and named after our beloved King Arthur! I was outraged!! All members should be warned to avoid it at all costs!

Nicola Stevenson, Broadstairs, Kent

CONCEPTS OF ARTHUR

I enjoyed the last journal immensely.

I have not seen a good review of Thomas Green's *Concepts of Arthur*, which I believe to be very good and points to future studies. I would certainly recommend it. Although perhaps nothing dazzlingly new in its thinking, as a guide to the revolutionary thinking within the study of the Arthurian corpus the student would gain by studying it.

Paul Parry, Prestatyn, N Wales

• *A review of Tom Green's book appears elsewhere in this issue.*

GOVAN OLD

Good news! The centre of Govan has now been passed as a Conservation Zone which would include the Church – which of course limits any despoiling of the site. No-one can understand what the Church of Scotland is about; it does make you wonder though: could there be a move to distance the Church from this Govan site?

Eileen Buchanan, Houston, Scotland

• *Eileen draws our attention to reports in the Pictish Arts Society Newsletter 48 (2008) which outlines a study to determine the future of the Dark Age site in which the later church of Govan Old sits. Three proposals are to be examined: a publicly-funded museum; a visitor centre plus performance venue; and a visitor centre linked to new business accommodation nearby. The local development agency's concern is that "the church and its early medieval sculpture should survive as an entity" and that any plans "should include dedicated space for the occasional worship, honouring the 1500-year tradition of Christian worship on the site." Eileen suggests that, before Catholics and Protestants, the site was sacred to Druids and Culdees too!*

Re-threading the tapestry of Guinevere, a 'woman who did'

Sonja Strode

Guinevere Howard Pyle

It was a male who in Victorian times wrote one of the most successful so-called 'new woman' novels of that era. *The Woman Who Did*, written in 1895 by Grant Allen, signalled the often cruel, constraining power and prejudices rife in the social, cultural mores and economic conditions of that époque. It signalled, too, how some women struggled against the prevailing dominant, idealised world-view of women where females were often seen as more divine than men. Such views were shaped not only by the patriarchal society in which they lived but, sometimes, by some females who colluded with such images of women. One such woman was Mrs Ellis, together with her book, *The Women of England*, who counselled unmarried mothers and wrote about etiquette, amongst other things, often imploring women to renounce their own needs and desires. Rather, she suggested, women should always remain dutiful to husbands, 'suffer and be still' if they felt unhappy in their wifely role.

The ideals of chivalry, stemming from previous centuries, filtered into the mind-set and consciousness of nineteenth-century England, particularly that of the nobility. Part of this mind-set included a protective attitude to women whose place was seen as primarily in the home. Historical evidence suggests this world-view even penetrated the attitudes of the more affluent members of the working-class who were beginning to swell the ranks of the new, dawning middle class. Thus they tended to elevate their status by aping the lifestyle and attitudes of those in the upper echelons. This included the idea that their women's place was in the home, with their male role perceived as one of provider and protector. Part of the afore-mentioned 'new woman' brigade's agenda was to counter such patriarchal notions, and, especially to advocate the rights of women to enter paid employment outside the home; to access education; and, later, to enter parliament. Economic conditions (in the private and public sphere) were such, however, that many women could only suffer in silence; the alternative for many was prostitution, a major social issue of the day.

At the time Queen Victoria represented the 'good woman', seen as self-sacrificing, giving, caring, good at nursing, house-keeping, dutiful in home and to the country. Women like her were seen as setting the standard for the moral fabric of society, guardians of the nation's future. Such qualities, of course, were admirable, but 'new woman' writers were suggesting these qualities could and should be applied equally to men. 'She', *ie* the female of the species, however, was seen as somehow different from her 'male' counter-part in reason, intelligence, strength and passion. To a large extent 'she' had become the one

who needed care, consideration, and protection, although initially, centuries earlier, such esteemed qualities had been key elements of the chivalric code directed towards both men and women, as seen in the fictional character and actions of Sir Gawain, for example. Lack of skills in so-called male attributes were seen as based on one's sex, in Victoria's day, rather than resulting from any difference based on different individual experience, position in the social structure, or desires, combined with a long history of patriarchal attitudes that had filtered into the consciousness of many generations.

In early Celtic times, though, women appeared to enjoy a similar position to men. Aneurin, the ancient Welsh bard, reveals this in his work. Queen Guinevere (also known as Gwenhwyvar / Gwenhwyfar in Welsh folklore) was no exception to this in Celtic lore, enjoying equal status (including the financial and sexual sphere) to her husband, the King, and able to manage her business affairs unhindered.

Although she is often depicted -- in art form and legend – in a somewhat passive role as doing embroidery (an enjoyable skill) and gazing wistfully through her window (*The Mabinogion* 1976: 193) she was, nonetheless, endowed with much economic power of her own, being the daughter of King Leodegrance (former owner of the Round Table, in its physical form), who, subsequently, brought, via her dowry, a large army and wealth to her marriage with Arthur.

Marriage, of course, was a questionable institution amongst some members of Victorian society. It was construed as both an economic and emotional strait-jacket for many women. Women who did not conform to the 'typical' woman and who would not accept such conditions uncritically were seen as 'unnatural' or hysterical 'sisters'. That many were seeking social justice, personal empowerment, and the removal of double standards where women often received the short straw, was often not recognised. Writers who battled against such world-views, like artists and writers linked to the movement espoused by the Pre-Raphaelites, Aesthetes, and Decadents, sought artistic and intellectual freedom to 'paint' the world as they saw it. Undoubtedly in doing so they brought to their work their own values, their own knowledge, their own perceptions of all surrounding them.

In the Middle Ages, too, at the time the widely acclaimed writer of the epic *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory, was writing, the institution of marriage was also under attack, certainly its ability to resolve social and political matters was questioned. Knights of the time seemingly shared the view that marriage and career success would not gel. Thus they sought mistresses. Readers of Arthurian legend will recognise that, according to Malory, Queen Guinevere was the Knight Lancelot's mistress for approximately twenty-five years.

Guinevere, a queen viewed as 'the gentle gold-torqued women of this island' or, indeed, its 'first lady' (*The Mabinogion* 1976: 148), 'the loveliest woman in all the island' (Malory), is a world-famous mistress. She can be construed, then, as a 'woman who did'. What she did, of course, has been the subject of centuries of conjecture and fictional writing, for, many suggest she and the courtly life in which she lived out her starring role was complete fiction.

Nonetheless historical criticism has alerted us to recognise that any full understanding of these works and their reception cannot be separated from a consideration of the times in which they were written, especially the cultural, political, social and material conditions affecting production and dissemination. Neither can such works be detached from the author him or herself who would have been steeped in the values – some at least, of the time – and/or had the capacity to operate a critical, creative mind.

So what did Guinevere do? How has her persona, her character been conveyed to readers throughout the ages? How has the historical period in which lived writers of her story, impacted on both the content and audience of that story? How has this affected that 'telling' of a love-triangle that has enthralled millions since its first inception? Did she, for instance, confirm idealised views of women; or did she

tear them asunder? If so why? If not, why not? So although we may never be able to delve fully into the minds of either past writers or past audiences of Arthurian literature, I will try to do so. This I will do writing from the heart (as Rossetti once stated was the best premise for one's work) but not without some recourse to a more rational path or critical thinking sense of being. This will help carve out a path, a critical journey where, en route, attention will be paid to some important authors in the generation of that wonderful body of literature that constitutes 'Arthuriana' and all its magic, mystery, and philosophy.

Scripting

At first I thought about writing this in the first person, *ie* from Guinevere's perspective, to give that queen her own voice. Then, of course, I was reminded that Rosalind Miles had already done that in her acclaimed trilogy. She, too, recognised the importance of the historical context, the signs of the times that affected all involved in Arthurian productions: the actors / agents in the 'scripts' or writers of these 'scripts' and the all-important audience.

The 'script' for Guinevere was often writ-large with notions of self-sacrifice, of long periods alone while Arthur did battle, of duty – or certainly it was widely expected of her. Notions appertaining to 'free will' or 'autonomy' or fulfilment of desire were absent or 'should have been' – such was the thinking of the day when many key books relating her story, or re-interpreting ancient sources, were written.

Images of her were exoticised as in *Sir Gawain* (Stone 1964: 26) where 'Turkestan tapestry toweringly canopied her … Fairest of form was his queen … no man could say he had seen / A lovelier, but with a lie.' Notwithstanding such imperiousness, women were expected to be subservient to their men-folk whether King or not (except in the Welsh ancient songs of the bards). Even though she possessed much material wealth it is questionable how much real power she had.

The fact that there are so many different versions of the Guinevere-Lancelot stories makes it difficult to unravel either her real 'self' or her real position in the scheme of things. Of course, since she is a creature of fiction we cannot forget that the author would have imbued her with certain qualities, frailties or faults s/he, the writer, wanted to explore or promulgate.

Certainly this is clear in the work of William Morris, another writer of the Victorian Era and one of the founding fathers of the celebrated Arts and Crafts Movement. In his publication *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* Morris uses the Queen's voice to justify her relationship with Lancelot and in so doing supports what he saw as 'the 'natural love' between the pair. Such a view must be considered alongside his abhorrence of the dramatically changing landscape of industrialising Britain. He thus idealises 'nature' and produces an assault on the social norms of the day.

As the Arthurian legend has evolved so has women's role in that. Even so, researchers have shown that females have occupied, for the most part, a marginalised, minor role or they have been excluded totally. Their role has often conformed to idealised views of women *eg* nursing the sick, especially warriors following their violent and frequent battles; as sexual 'trophies' picked up as recompense for success on the battlefield. Even Arthur himself has been viewed in this way as seen in his relationship with Lionors, daughter of the King Sannam. Queens like Guinevere have often been described as fine embroiderers, talented in tapestry work, or beautiful, enigmatic and 'prized possessions'. In many texts Arthur valued such qualities in her as seen in his very first observations of her beauty. (*pace* Malory).

French literature – particularly that appertaining to courtly love – tended to raise women's presence and importance on the Arthurian fictional stage. Such a spotlight was initiated by the patronage of empowered women such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter, Marie, whose legacy and influence pervaded much later writing of the legend throughout the twentieth century. Much earlier, of course, Chrétien de Troyes' writing vaunted courtly love and the role of queens like Guinevere as 'un modèle

courteois' (Minary and Moorman 1996). Malory later countered this portrayal of her by painting her as a vain, haughty creature, of dubious moral fibre, and potential disloyalty.

Origins

Origins of Arthurian legend lie with the Welsh Bardic Tradition begun with Nennius in the ninth century – a tradition which included Aneirin's *Y Gododdin*. Arthur's role was that of warrior king in songs that boasted about his physical prowess on the battlefield and helped boost the nation's morale. Women, as I have already stated, were equal to men in this tradition. Of course, not all could live up to such excellence; but then neither could all men.

From late sixth century to the fifteenth Arthurian legends, poems, and songs changed their emphasis in some respects. For the first three centuries Arthur's warrior-cum-morale building role was emphasised, influenced by the situational context of numerous battles in which he and his people found themselves. By the eleventh century Christian values had become key ingredients in texts, displayed in terms that revealed the particular contemporaneous understanding of that religion. Courtly love and Romance aspects, especially in France, figured widely in the twelfth century and beyond. Then Geoffrey de Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* surfaced, underlining in Britain Arthur's success in battle along with his legitimate claim to the throne via the patriarchal line of Uther. He also served as a powerful political antidote to the seemingly potentially poisonous exploits of Charlemagne, King of the Franks. Thus Geoffrey served up a fine plateau of cultural comforts and consciousness-raising in the hearts and minds of the then medieval populace. Of note is the omission of any reference to the Guinevere / Lancelot affair in his work. That emerged in later texts of writers of Arthurian legends, including *Sir Gawain* where Arthur unfolded as a young, restless spirit who loved jousting, tales of adventure, and history (Stone 1964: 26).

Throughout Europe Arthur's leadership skills (*cf* Battle of Badon, see Markale 2000: 311) and Christianity circulated far and wide. His status as supreme male hero with all its so-called masculine attributes was also firmly established. Such a view pervaded Britain; in France, though, the 'macho' warrior image was less defined, revealing a more romantic edge to Arthur and his court. Thus Arthur moved, over several centuries, from 'warrior' to 'woo-er', although his 'armour' still remained intact.

Much later, in the fifteenth century during the reign of Edward IV, it was the work of Sir Thomas Malory which formed the basis of much of what we understand as Arthurian legend nowadays.

Although contradictions appear in his writing he managed to produce a fine body of work (although one where some aspects can be criticised nowadays in the light of changed perceptions and knowledge) that garners together all the stories including Celtic myths. I shall refer to his work more fully later.

Roles in Malory

The study of Arthurian legend can aid our understanding of cultural, political, social and moral issues both of the past and present. Not only that, the legend offers an exciting, often moving 'read' or has been reproduced in excellent films. Research indicates, nevertheless, that inherited texts can be used ideologically – wittingly or not – by cultures or societies other than the one for which the original text was produced. In turn, such texts can help to transform those cultures. The Bible is one example; Arthurian legend has been similarly viewed. Cultural historical research indicates, though, that sometimes when such texts harbour what, for want of a better expression, remnants of the 'old world-view', a clash or critical clamour can be railed from 'new world-view' quarters. In some respects this happened when Malory's text, *Le Morte d'Arthur* was first received following publication by William Caxton. Certainly it was met with some ambivalence and divided opinion. Since, many have endeavoured to continue to unpack his oeuvre in the light of new ways of thinking or knowledge about the times in which he lived – bloody times when violence was threatening King and Crown.

In order to understand fully the roles, the characters of Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere, it is essential to disentangle, therefore, the historical, political and religious threads that make up the backdrop to their lives and the lives of various authors and, in which, they, too, were key players.

Part of this understanding will net in the knights' patronage, for example, of the Order of Cistercians (eleventh-twelfth centuries) and what became the increasing animosity occurring between these two groups whose initial relationship was essentially one construed, perhaps, as an economic exchange of vested interests. Thus for obedience to the Order the knights gained certainty vis-à-vis their social standing.

Malory, writing in the fifteenth century, lived in changed times, socially, politically and morally. Writing, then, against a backdrop of changing views of marriage he allegedly omitted aspects of ancient sources he used in his reworking of Arthurian legend. His reinterpretation of the legend was offered to counter the growing disbelief or uncertainty about the role marriage could play in resolving prominent social issues of the day. As already reported knights had decided that marriage and chivalric career did not mix and so mistresses were sought. Malory and others were also alarmed by the inheritance issues that might ensue from any rise in illegitimate births. Professor Cooper has signalled Malory's work as a 'model of order in chaotic times.'

It is with this backcloth in mind that we must consider his *Le Morte d'Arthur* and, the portrayal of Guinevere in that. The readers of his epic would have been aware of the issues of the day; he, too, like writers today, would have considered his audience, and perhaps, their needs – perceived or real. Like some writers today Malory would have written with his own world-view of the nation's ills and their remedy. For him it was a Christian one – but one based on what he understood that Christianity to be. For some, his brand of Christianity was puritanical and distorted somewhat. Some of this may have stemmed from his beliefs and attitudes to women, according to some researchers.

For Malory, some sources argue, societal problems lay with women. In this Guinevere was no exception. Like later writers of fiction in the Victorian Era Malory was as concerned with social issues as much as with artistic ones – perhaps more so. Unlike the writers of the nineteenth century 'new woman' genre, who voiced their opposition to contemporaneous and traditional notions of female sexuality and gender roles, Malory espoused what many have suggested to be misogynist attitudes to women, although Beverley Kennedy has disagreed, recognising, nonetheless, that he tends to marginalise Guinevere. Moreover, whereas later Victorian 'new woman' writers deplored some marriages that stifled and shackled women in an institution seen then as "an economically driven permanent contract no better than prostitution" (Caird in Moran 1996), Malory was intent on thwarting similar disquiet relating to marriage and other social issues at the time in fifteenth-century England. That knights preferred to opt for mistresses incensed him, even though it has been alleged, and despite his own professed Christianity, he was not averse to using prostitutes. Further, some researchers argue that his ten years in jail for various crimes (when he produced his expansive and interesting work) was partly for rape.

It is against this that we must examine his Guinevere. At the time of his writing there was widespread belief and writing about the supernatural, too. Some women were viewed as enchantresses or even as in service of 'faerie'. Such 'fees'– as they are called in French – were believed to have special powers, even capable of predicting the future (see Hauf-Lancner 2003: 16) or else capable of doing surprising things. Such mortals were often seen as sharing these gifts with witches or magicians.

Influenced, also, to some extent by these Middle Age conceptions of the supernatural and angst concerning what is 'unnatural', as well as his own readings and interpretation of what it is to be a Christian, Malory presented Lancelot and Guinevere in a negative light. Arthur, meanwhile, is presented as the angry, wronged husband, defender of the law of the land, and yet someone

who is saddened, nonetheless, by the loss of his best knight and dear friend.

That Guinevere should have been viewed as such an enchantress is questionable though, because it was Merlin, and not she, who predicted Arthur's downfall; her part in that seems to be more of an unwitting catalyst rather than active purveyor of 'magic'.

A she-devil image of women, along with the consequences of sin, nonetheless is a key theme in Malory's epic. The prime mover in his conception of a sin-filled world is, indirectly stated, a woman, namely Guinevere. Yet it was Arthur who, in earlier parts of Malory's work, flouted the laws of the day by fathering an illegitimate child with Earl Sannam's daughter; and secondly, by committing adultery himself with his half-sister, Morgause (some say Morgan/e; see Markale 2000: 862); the result of which was Mordred. Arthur then attempted murder of the latter. Yet another misdemeanour or breaking of the law, although, seemingly, he showed remorse for this. This was the series of events that led to the fall of Camelot yet culpability appears to have been placed squarely on the female Guinevere's shoulders. The trail of destruction had already been cemented before the Guinevere-Lancelot saga.

Malory's version of the legend helped shape the values of King, nobility and wider population. His portrayal of Arthur as a defender of the law, ready to charge with high treason and burn, at Carlisle, his own wife to uphold that, helped reinforce Arthur's position as ruler and legitimate heir to the throne.

During that époque there would have been much anxiety about legitimacy and the matter of heirs and inheritance, particularly since, as I have already indicated, the institution of marriage was under threat. As Lancelot himself realised there was always the potential inherent in such a state of social chaos (as Malory believed) for the eruption of civil war. The possibility of a child being born to Guinevere and Lancelot when the King and his Queen were, supposedly childless, provoked a sense of unease, therefore, even alarm. Little wonder, then, that Malory presented his version of the legend. Clearly his mind was not only on his key themes, or the production of a brilliant, dramatic, entertaining story, but on the response of his audience combined with no short measure of possible social engineering.

Moving now from the wider political and social level to the personal, we note that in his epic Malory presents Guinevere as a somewhat flippant, couldn't-care-less, party-loving individual who, to raise her spirits, arranges a feast with two dozen knights when Lancelot, fearing scandal might emerge following revelations of his dalliance with his King's wife, avoids the queen and, subsequently is banished by her from Camelot. Lancelot is painted as a peace-loving individual; Arthur as forgiving; even though Malory graphically describes the many deaths produced by Lancelot's sword. Yes, the backcloth to all their lives was bloody and cruel. We note, too, that it was the papal bull – the Pope's orders – which engendered Arthur's re-acceptance of Guinevere. This emphasises the religious and political pressures affecting Arthur's own behaviour. Elsewhere in the text, however, irrespective of the scant references to the queen, the reader is alerted to Arthur's deep love for his wife. We can only assume that he must have been in a dilemma. Nonetheless, in true knightly fashion, Lancelot rescues and protects his fair damsel three times. As Green (1964: 256) describes centuries after Malory, Guinevere never doubted

that he would come to her rescue. What is more in Green's version she is portrayed as sharing Lancelot's peace-loving stance and even seems to be the initiator of such feelings; her caring qualities are still present centuries later: "Then Guinevere took Lancelot by the hand and led him to her room, where she unarmed him and bathed the hurts he had received from the arrows which had been shot against him."

Since Caxton's publication of Malory's text many have lauded it or expressed dismay at the morality portrayed within it even though much of the alleged 'tarnish' of his earlier 'Tristram and Isolde' had been removed. Struggle between chivalric standards, personal desire and responsibilities are the hallmark of *Le Morte d'Arthur*; as such, being so embedded in the human condition, Malory's work has universal and lasting appeal.

Decreasing role

It has been suggested that British authors have tended to reproduce the type of heroine found in the original legends possibly due to the knowledge of earlier Celtic myths and legends circulating amongst Scottish, Cornish, and Welsh populations. Our reading of Malory does not quite square with that analysis, even though it may apply to some works.

Map's twelfth century work, however, is based on the German translation, *Lanzelot*, of an old French poem, said to be non-Christian with Celtic elements. Map unfortunately died before completion of his parts 3 and 4. What is interesting is that the first two parts differ from the later parts because, in the latter, the role of women diminishes considerably. In earlier parts, written entirely by Map, Guinevere even assumes command of the troops on Arthur's death (as per Celtic tradition). Here we are reminded that translators of works also bring aspects of their own world-view to bear on their own production of other people's work.

Differences occur too, in Marie de France's *Lay of Sir Lanval* (twelfth century) – 'lay' being equivalent to the Breton *lai* or lais being a song or story sung – and Chestre's *A Lay of Sir Launfal* (fourteenth century), where both 'Lanval' and 'Launfal' mean Lancelot. Chestre, of course, based his version on Marie de France's earlier lai, along with a Celtic legend. Guinevere is seen to proposition Lancelot and becomes angry when he refuses her attention. His response to her stems from his love for the Faery Queen, someone he maintains, in this version, is far more beautiful than Guinevere. This only serves to incur Guinevere's wrath further. In this version Arthur and Guinevere are seen to conspire to charge and have the knight committed for high treason because of attempted adultery. The knights are appalled at this injustice. Ultimately Lancelot is transported by the Faery Queen to the otherworld of Olyroun (possibly Oléron in Brittany) – a place called home for, apparently, knights and others who are considered too noble to remain living with mortals.

Tryamour, the Faery Queen, is none other than the Triple Goddess of the Celts who, before departure, admonishes Arthur and blinds Guinevere – seemingly symbolic as she is an unwitting agent in the fall of Camelot.

Chestre's work was written for a largely mercantile audience at the time of the Peasants Revolt. A patriarchal, somewhat 'macho' aristocratic world threads through the start of the poem, a satire on bourgeois mentality where Arthur is presented as inept, with a temper, but not lacking in authority. Guinevere is found to be a hard, revengeful, temptress of the court with little sense of justice.

In Chestre's work, as in Map's, Marie's and Malory's tome, women's importance decreases especially after the advent of courtly love. It would be erroneous to conceive of medieval women as all enjoying the 'proverbial pedestal' as sung by medieval French troubadours because some females clearly emulated or even were the precursors of the 'fighting femme, Lynet' found in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Women, then and since, have not, therefore, been part of a homogeneous group of passive females, even if some have tried to present them as such; or even wished to maintain their position as such, and, correspondingly, duly subordinated or subjugated them. Evidence of such a lack of passiveness in some females, though, appears in

Arthuriana throughout the ages. Nimue (Viviane) or Morgan(e) for instance, cannot, as far as I can see, be understood as passive players in the Arthurian world. Some authors have, nonetheless, felt obliged to present women's role as defined by the pervading philosophy or 'mood' of the era in which they wrote, something apparent in the secret life of the courtly love genre of the French Romantic era or 'enchantress' representations beloved of the Middle Ages. Authors using sources (to re-write Arthurian legend) pre-dating such an era, however, produced a more spirited or, at least, less passive view of women, possibly engendered by the realism of Welsh art and literature based on the exacting daily lives of such females.

Guinevere, whose name in Welsh means 'white shadow', was, according to Celtic beliefs, a Goddess of Sovereignty and as such her duty was to link the King's energy or spirit with the land's. Failure on the King's part to recognise the source of much of his power, *ie* from his Queen, would spell disaster for him. Apparently to remind him of her power she would dally with other men!

On the other hand, more recent works, such as Mary Stewart's, unveil a weaker Guinevere, fearful of life and people surrounding her, especially of Merlin. Others offer more sympathetic images of her, such as Sharan Newman's writing does.

Revisioning

Various modes of masculinity are located in all Arthurian fictional stories, ranging from the 'macho' warrior type to the more Christ-like, feminised type found in Lancelot's persona, as described by Hoffman (1996). Idealised notions of masculinity abound with knights assuming iconic status as both exemplary in bed and battle – the embodiment of the 'perfect gentleman.'

Courtly love and chivalry helped reshape Arthurian legend and helped start a 'new wave' of writing. Twentieth century writers have grappled increasingly with feminist issues and "revisioning the legend's traditional symbols of power, definition of heroism, and binary oppositions between good and evil" (Harvey). But like Marie-Louise Von Franz Tennyson posited the view that "only in relation to women and by sharing part of their nature could men hope to be real and true men, just as the inverse held for real and true women" (Hughes).

For Von Franz (1993: 297), "the struggle between the sexes no longer makes sense, since the principles of masculine and feminine are both present in each individual who first and foremost must work to harmonise them within himself or herself" (translated from original French by S. Strode).

Whether there is 'a masculine' nature or a 'feminine' one is another debate which I do not wish to pursue here. Rather it is to respect the underlying request for both sexes to work together in harmony, whilst still endeavouring to uphold the democratic ideals of chivalry, fair play, and justice as presented by Arthur's Round Table, that I have included the above. As recognised by the 'new woman' writers of Victorian times, there are many social, cultural and structural forces helping to shape both 'masculinity' and 'femininity' and which help to subjugate females or harm some males' sense of who they are or might become. Writers wishing to re-work the Guinevere/Lancelot/Arthur triangle today in the twenty-first century will surely heed such understanding and knowledge, as clearly some writers of the current BBC TV series of *Merlin* have reflected on racism and offered us a woman of colour to play the part of 'Gwen'.

Threads

According to Malory's reporting of the Guinevere/Lancelot relationship, for twenty-five years Guinevere was a 'woman who did'. She did what many men of her time were doing. Their behaviour was seen as 'normal', as 'natural' or even 'necessary.' To do as her male counter-parts did, was seen as somehow 'unnatural', at worse illegal, even treason. Her actions were ultimately construed as a threat to the security of the land. If she had not been the King's wife it is likely her story would have gone unnoticed since it was what many women did (and it is not my wish to make any value judgement here about the rights or wrongs of that. It is merely a sociological and historical

observation). The portrayal of her action and responses to those (within the texts themselves and elsewhere) reveal not only the underpinning social and political pressures and anxiety about changed morality of the times in which the authors wrote but also the very 'struggle between the sexes' that Von Franz refers to above. What the King could do, the Queen could not; the trouble was Guinevere was a 'woman who did' – like Lancelot, and Arthur – follow her heart's desire. Unlike Victorian writer Grant Allen's independent heroine, Guinevere was not an unmarried mother for she produced no child with Lancelot. The threat of that was sufficient, though; so, too, was her refusal to do her duty *ie* to 'suffer and be still' as an unhappily married woman whose husband's work involved long spells away from home.

The outcome for all three principal characters in this love-triangle is tragic; yet throughout their earthly performance and presentation runs the golden thread of love – something acknowledged by Malory and countless writers since. For Malory Guinevere was a 'true lover'; Lancelot, a life-long lover of his Queen, his country, and his King. Arthur loved all equally dearly regardless of the political, religious, social, and cultural pressure points that weighed heavily in his life and duties. Perhaps for his unique service to and love for his country he paid the price in his personal space. Nevertheless he is often portrayed as forgiving – something which Malory as a Christian, like Arthur, would wish, maybe, to find as his finest moral legacy, were he ever to return. ☙

© Dr Sonja Strode, October, 2008

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Guinevere and the Brotherhood:

Life imitating Art? Chris Lovegrove

Rossetti *Portrait of Miss Siddal* (1855)

Sylphlike figure, tumbling hair, striking features – our vision of Arthur's queen and the other ladies of his court is largely due to the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites. Before the mid-19th century Arthurian demoiselles were modelled on the images provided by medieval illuminated manuscripts – chaste of demeanour, hair modestly covered, they were often marginalised spectators of the chivalric cavalcade. Now our modern perceptions of Guinevere and her ilk, whether on TV, in films or in fiction, are still predetermined by a small group of artists and their models working a century and a half ago.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was born in 1828, and after going to art school at the age of 13 then became a student at the Royal Academy in 1845. Inspired by the Italian Quattrocento he and fellow artist Homan Hunt met with John Everett Millais in 1848 and founded the clandestinely anti-establishment Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In 1849 Rossetti signed his first Pre-Raphaelite work, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, with the mysterious initials PRB: these were said to be for 'Please Ring Bell' or even, rather aptly for Rossetti, 'Penis Rather Better' (Hilton 1970: 35)! Soon after this – in 1850 – he became involved with 'Guggums', as Lizzie Siddal became known, who was a favourite model of the PRB artists.

Lizzie Siddal

Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall [sic] was born in 1829; two years later the family moved from Hatton Garden to Southwark in south London. Aged 20 Lizzie began working at milliner Mrs Tozer's hat shop where she was discovered by Walter Deverell, subsequently modeling as Viola in Deverell's painting *Twelfth Night*, in 1852 as Ophelia in Millais' famous painting of the doomed Shakespearean heroine and in Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* for the hair of Jesus!

When we look at her portraits we see a handsome face, not beautiful by Victorian standards of the day, but serious, almost aloof, with an otherworldly look that must have greatly appealed to the Brotherhood, and especially to Rossetti, who soon insisted she sit only for him. Georgiana, the future wife of Edward Burne-Jones, described the "mass of her beautiful deep-red hair" which "fell in soft, heavy wings" when loosened, continuing: "Her complexion looked as if a rose tint lay beneath the white skin, producing a most soft and delicate pink for the darkest flesh-tone. Her eyes were of a kind of golden brown (agate colour is the only word I can think of to describe them) and wonderfully luminous: in all Gabriel's drawings of her and in the type she created in his mind this is to be seen. The eyelids were deep, but without any languor or drowsiness, and had the peculiarity of seeming scarcely to veil the light in her eyes when she was looking down."[1]

When Rossetti moved to Blackfriars in late 1852 he took Lizzie on as a pupil, and they were regarded as a couple. The state of Lizzie's health was first noted as

[1] http://lizziesiddal.com/portal/?p=3

a concern, but it is not until 1854 that she was persuaded to see a doctor, sojourning in Hastings for the sea air.

She continued her art studies with Rossetti, and was good enough to impress the art critic John Ruskin, who became her patron. Rossetti himself wrote: "Ruskin saw and bought on the spot every scrap of designs hitherto produced by Miss Siddal. He declared that they were far better than mine, or almost anyone's, and seemed quite wild with delight at getting them." A self-portrait depicts the familiar unsmiling face with its accentuated eye-sockets in a brutally honest fashion.

Self-portrait

In 1855 Ruskin provided finance for Lizzie to travel to France for the sake of her health. While she was abroad Rossetti met William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones for the first time, a momentous encounter; he also continued a relationship with Annie Miller, Holman Hunt's model. In November 1856 Rossetti decided against marrying Lizzie, leading to a furious row. Next year Lizzie was the only woman to exhibit at the Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition in Marylebone, and went on to attend the Sheffield School of Art in 1857.

Arthuriana

1857 was the year that Rossetti, Morris, Burne-Jones and others painted the ill-fated murals for the Oxford Union, a culmination of their fascination for all things Arthurian.[2] Rossetti had touched on Arthurian themes before: in 1855 he had painted *Paolo e Francesca da Rimini*, whose infidelity – after reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere – the poet Dante had described, using Lizzie as model for Francesca; *King Arthur's Tomb* (1855 and 1860) a watercolour showing Lancelot and Guinevere meeting over the grave of Arthur, is almost a companion piece to *Paolo e Francesca;*[3] linking Rossetti's baptismal name and the wider compass of the fated love-triangle, these themes anticipate the real-life tragedy to come. Rossetti's planned contribution to the Oxford murals – *Sir Launcelot's Vision of the Sanc Grail* and *Sir Galahad, Sir Bors and Sir Percival Receiving the Sanc Grael* – show a highly individual approach to the Arthurian legends; he continued to rely on Lizzie for his model, for example in his 1857 watercolour *The Damsel of the Sanct Grael.*

In the years leading up to 1860 Lizzie's health was a cause for anxiety, and she spent time in Derbyshire; Rossetti's frequent model, in Lizzie's absences after 1858, was Fanny Cornforth. When Lizzie appeared close to death in 1860, Rossetti married her in Hastings, honeymooning in France. A stillborn daughter was delivered in 1861 and postnatal depression compounded Lizzie's laudanum addiction. In early 1862, after dinner with Rossetti and Swinburne, Lizzie was left alone for a few hours. When Rossetti returned before midnight, he was unable to revive her, and despite medical help she did not recover from an overdose of laudanum. Rossetti was extremely distressed.

[2] Poulson 1999: 78ff

[3] Poulson 1999: 82

The first phase of the PRB had ended around 1853 as the individual artists went their own way (Hilton 1970: 106). Coincidentally, this was the year that William Morris met Edward Burne-Jones at Exeter College in Oxford, where shared interests included Tennyson and, soon, Malory, and with others they formed 'The Brotherhood' in complete ignorance of the PRB. In time they made the acquaintance of Rossetti, gave up any ambitions for the priesthood in favour of painting, and moved to London. In 1857 the opportunity came to decorate a new debating hall for the Oxford Union. With their total immersion in Arthuriana, the subject matter easily suggested itself to a reinvigorated PRB. And, perhaps inevitably, with such intensity of feeling Life began imitating Art.

William Morris

Jane Burden

Born in Oxford in 1839, the daughter of a stableman, Jane Burden's life was changed one night when, at the age of eighteen, she attended the theatre. Behind her were sitting Rossetti and Burne-Jones. They regarded her as a 'stunner': like Siddal she was no conventional beauty; unlike Siddal she had dark wavy hair and an intense look about her. Burden was persuaded to sit as Guinevere for the Arthurian murals. When Morris met her he was immediately smitten, so much so that in time he found he was unable to portray her: "I cannot paint you but I love you," he is reputed to have written on a canvas.

In the late 1850s a small number of PRB works featured Jane as Guinevere. Rossetti made a study (above) entitled *Jane Burden as Queen Guinevere* in 1858, which accentuated her long neck, full lips and lustrous hair. Morris painted *Queen Guinevere*, also in 1858, but this canvas in Tate Britain is universally agreed as unsuccessful, even "lifeless" according to Timothy Hilton, with more attention paid to surface decoration than portraiture; Morris' ambiguity about this painting may be reflected in its alternative, truer, title, *La Belle Iseult.*

As Morris increasingly moved towards his new passion, the decorative arts and crafts, he and Jane were married in 1859, moving to a house he had had built in Bexleyheath, southeast London. Socially this match between the wealthy dilettante and a working-class girl was seen as controversial but Morris, who had an independent income, chose to do as he pleased.

When Lizzie died in 1862 Fanny Cornforth became Rossetti's house-keeper and lover, but he began to suffer from insomnia and eye-trouble, and increasing erratic behaviours and paranoia were linked to his addictions.

Having made the grand gesture of burying his poems with Lizzie, he then exhumed the coffin in 1869 and published them the year after. He forsook most of his friends, spending time between 1871 and 1874 with the Morrises at Kelmscott Manor in Oxfordshire for which the two artists had taken a joint tenancy. Here, while Morris designed, Jane embroidered. She read widely, in French and Italian as well as English, and learnt to play the piano with more than passing competence; in short she became so refined that it is claimed that she and Morris supplied the models for Bernard Shaw's characters Eliza Dolittle and Professor Higgins in *Pygmalion* (produced in 1914, the year of her eventual death).[4]

While living at Kelmscott Manor Morris took many trips to Iceland to research medieval Icelandic sagas. There is no doubt that Jane and Rossetti were lovers – after all, Gabriel had known, indeed "discovered" Jane before Morris met her. Much speculation then rests on how much the three wittingly or unwittingly role-played the Arthurian love-triangle. Peter Whelan's 2005 play *Earthly Paradise* is based on just such a premise. One critic wrote:

'Morris consciously plays the role of Arthur to Rossetti and Janey's Lancelot and Guinevere. At other times, he seems King Mark to their Tristan and Isolde. But, as Rossetti points out, they are "grown people trying to live a fairy-story". And, while an ideological medievalism may have been an inspiration to the Pre-Raphaelites as artists, it palpably was not much use when it came to sorting out their complex private lives.'[5]

But Michael Billington was 'puzzled by the play's lack of wider resonance. Does anyone today,' he wrote, 'still model their love-life on myths? Do artists even seek some past paradise?' Insofar as we all have some role model to suggest how to ideally live our lives -- Cinderella's rags-to-riches story say, or hidden talents being revealed on the football field or on *X Factor* perhaps – the answer must surely be yes; gossip pages at least are full of such scripting for celebrities and wannabes, and we can't help taking some account of them. Sadly, the examples of Lizzie and Jane, Gabriel and William -- Lizzie's ill-health and possible suicide, Rossetti's self-destructive behaviours, and Morris' introspection -- all suggest that 'living the dream' may not always provide ultimate happiness. Morris' vision in his 1858 poem *The Defence of Guinevere* of the Queen -- "Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed / Of the roan charger drew all men to see, / The knight who came was Launcelot at good need" -- may well have masked the ugly reality of the *ménage à trois* lived at Kelmscott.

After Lizzie's death in 1862 Rossetti's life slid inexorably via attempted suicide in 1872 towards his own death in 1882. Morris died in 1896, but Jane survived until the eve of the Great War, when any lingering chivalry was finally dealt a mortal wound. ☙

Jane Morris in 1874

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Early Death

Oh grieve not with thy bitter tears
The life that passes fast;
The gates of heaven will open wide
And take me in at last.
Then sit down meekly at my side
And watch my young life flee;
Then solemn peace of holy death
Come quickly unto thee.
But true love, seek me in the throng
Of spirits floating past,
And I will take thee by the hands
And know thee mine at last.

Elizabeth Siddal[6]

Queen seen: present, future, past

Glitter of her eyes gems
Under hair fine-coiled
Into crowning structure
No horns nothing nasty
Even dragonshape ruler
Venom no sweet luring
Essence of birdsong is
Ritual rose dawnfresh
Eyes unwish all this

Gold brightness against
Wasting grey rusting
Emperor-in-his-dreams
No longer fanciable lord
Hero-as-was who owns her
Young still near-unmarked
Fresh as dew she almost
Awake to spiders webbing
Ruin ready hills too far

Great hall wattle patched
Up gaps in stone wind wore
At but scratched chest held
Most fray-fade holed cloak held
Had been dyed murex purple
Under peace of Rome granddad
Allowed dressing up in dance
Round his knees smiling years
Away selling her for peace

Steve Sneyd

[6] http://www.eighthsquare.com/esiddal.html

Reflected Dreams

In Avalon there lies a sword
that was flung there long ago,
Trapped in mist as we still seek
the key to the old lost worlds.

Every time a thought transpires
about the magik sword,
It shimmers and regains a little more
of its power within our world.

Kept alive by the dreams reflected
in the idealist's eye,
Pushing back the barriers
of where the old lands lie.

Maureen Braithwaite

The Hunt

Banners dancing in the breeze
King Arthur rode towards the front
Vassals drawn into the hunt

A sounding horn provoked the air
As knights fell to an even stride
And horses dance in solemn pride

Courtly chase moved gaily on
For noble parties' lush affair
With many a maiden so rich and fair

Echoed thud broke through the glade
Baying dogs pursued the deer
Company drawing ever near

Majestic was the white stag's rush
Quickening of the regal host
A target that a King may boast

Prancing along the woodland path
Passing flash of brilliant light
Magnificent, in motive flight

Finding tension in their wake
Long bows drawn, the arrows flew
Precious beast, the monarch slew

Claiming of the victor's prize
Her beauty now the winner's lure
A kiss bestowed on girl demure

Smiling shyly at her Lord
The damsel blushed from accolade
While King brushed lips on gentle maid

Ellena van Tebberen

What way did she really work her will?

Arthur Machen's reframing of Guinevere's methods

Steve Sneyd

Simon Rouse *Guinevere*

Innumerable writers down the centuries have explored the Arthur-Guinevere-Lancelot triangle. So, notable writer as he was, one who long since deservedly earned cult status from a fervent following, why should the Welsh writer Arthur Machen's account call for our particular attention?

His retelling of the adulterous relationship so central to the downfall of the Arthurian realm is short, just eight pages, but full of atmosphere. It covers its particular version of those well-known events in a series of vivid pictures, in a style that could be described as "third person archaic" though not excessively so, and certainly not at the cost of compelling readability.

However, for me the real interest of Machen's "Guinevere and Lancelot" (first published in Spurr & Swift, London's 1926 *Notes and Queries*) is his account of the method by which Guinevere obtains Lancelot's physical love.[1]

Machen has her employ what he describes as "wizardry", and later as "the art magic". The actual technique described, along with its long-term success and the reason for its final failure, certainly has parallels in the folklore of various countries, including these islands, but the general idea that Arthur's Queen used black magic to win the knight's illicit love, quite apart from the specifics of method employed, is not one which appears in the generality of accounts of the relationship, whether early or more contemporary.

That wording may sound like an evading of suggesting that Machen's account is unique, or wholly the work of his own imagination, but there are two reasons for such caution. One is the general point relative to Machen that he had a huge knowledge of Celtic folklore, including obscure sources and oral traditions of his own home area around Caerleon, and could well have taken a tale of doomed love obtained by such witchcraft having other, obscurer, or even unnamed protagonists, anonymous folktale figures, and simply changed the central personnel to incorporate two famed lovers. After all, the accretion of stories to famous figures is a constant factor in "folk history", as with the many minor Civil War skirmishes subsequently quite ahistorically retailed as having been given significance by Cromwell's non-existent presence at the scene.

[1] I have made use of the 1986 reprinting (as *Guinevere and Lancelot & Others*, edited by Michael T Shoemaker and Cuyler W Brooks Jr, with art by Stephen Fabian), along with a variety of other non-Arthurian short stories and essays by Machen, produced by The Purple Mouth Press of Newport, Virginia

There is also the possibility, as Michael T Shoemaker in his Introduction, "The Unknown Machen", to the Purple Mouth reprint says, that although "I cannot find any antecedent for the depiction of Guinevere as a bewitching temptress", nevertheless "it sounds like an authentic tradition. This leads me to wonder whether Machen based it on obscure Welsh legends" – after all, even more curious stories of Guinevere, as with the folktale that Arthur on discovering her adultery had her torn apart by wild horses, survived on a very local basis in odd corners of Britain, as that last did remotely did in former Pictland.

Regardless, however, of whether the story is Machen's creation from whole cloth, or has older roots, that it casts Guinevere as the guilty party is in itself by no means unique – Tennyson, for example, putting the blame so heavily on her that William Morris felt forced to write his notable verse 'Defence' in response.

What is, however, different is the additional load of guilt ascribed to her that, maddened by love, she uses forbidden, unchristian, methods to get her way – "bewitching" in the original sense of employing witchcraft and thus becoming one who deals with, to quote Machen here, "the devils of hell and the cursed gods and goddesses of heathen men ... the fires ... of Satan", in the process risking her soul and by association Lancelot's.

Moreover, Machen's story shows her as having already planned to use the "matter of wizardry" even before her marriage began, while Lancelot was escorting her to the court for the wedding, thus depicting her as false to Arthur at heart from the very beginning, from lust for Lancelot (and without the excuse of accidental imbibing of a love potion which so many writers have used to forgive Tristan and Yseult, where again the obsession began, "although in that case mutual, while she was being escorted to the capital of the land's ruler for her marriage to him).

Guinevere's first action in terms of spell setting, when she and Lancelot are a day's journey from Camelot, in the Forest of Dendreath, is to seek out a wych-elm, break off_a "little bough", break it in two, hide half about her person, and give the other half to Lancelot, making him swear to keep it all his life, on the deceptive basis that it is to be "a token of this wayfaring and my wedding to my lord, King Arthur." Lancelot swears by the holy rood, that is, cross. Later, by now married, she arranged to meet "one that dwelt in Camelot, being reputed a sorcerer", at night-time in a nearby wood. She entered the ring of fire he had created, enclosing round "puppets and images in wax and wood" marked with devilish signs, at its centre a bubbling cauldron. She stripped naked, and "dipped the elm wand into the bubbling" fluid. Shapes rose from the cauldron "to the mightiest did Guinevere there make offering of herself, and, this done", dipped the wych-bough three more times, saying the correct incantation, and thus summoning "flying in the air Sir Lancelot in his ghostly body." Thereafter the knight was at her beck and call, his one attempt to resist the power of the spell bringing on a period of coma, and thereafter unbroken obedience to her demands.

However, as years passed "the bough of wych-elm withered and shrank" and "the leaves that were on the bough fell off", as they fell each becoming "a great bird, black as a coal", the birds crying out the truth of the relationship", that is "Guinevere is the leman of Sir Lancelot." As Guinevere counted the leaves that remained, she was called away, "one of her damosels came in, and seeing it [the bough] casteth it on the fire". At once Lancelot was free from her control, and the sorcerer's assistant, also freed from the bond of silence, confessed what had happened in the wood to the king.[2]

The story has other colourful elements which it would be digressive to discuss at any length, but which demand brief mention as indicating some elements of the enlaced, almost tapestry-like, method of story construction used by Machen:

[2] The story then ends briskly: Lancelot kills the knights sent by Arthur to murder him, the King planned to burn Guinevere but then repented, she entered an abbey to repent, and Lancelot became, in a curious twist, Bishop of Canterbury

for example, on the initial journey to Camelot the sight of a castle burning and Guinevere's questions as to what has happened enables Lancelot to tell of the doomed lovers killed in its fall, and expound on the vital role of love in ordering and empowering all creation, in the process unintentionally, or at least without conscious intention, ensuring that she will act to ensnare him. Moreover, among songs and poems embedded in the text are included, as well as the successful incantation of the dark woodland ceremony, a contrasting earlier incantation, overheard during the first journey, uttered ineffectually, by one whose love is dead, against the brightness of the world persisting in his absence, and a lost love song used to rouse Lancelot from his coma and bring him back to acceptance of Guinevere's spell.

Arthur Machen

As said earlier, the natural object – in this case as in others a piece of wood from a tree of power, in other folk tales a stone or an egg or other material thing – which controls some essence of life or soul or love, so that its destruction destroys also who or what it guards – is a folklor1c trope with many parallels. But its specific application here enables the depiction by Machen of Guinevere as one willing to risk the employment of magical, un- or pre-Christian, forces, in most versions of Arthurian Matter the province, among female participants, only of those inimically Other to Arthur and his court, the most notable such of course the ever-malevolent Morgan Le Fay. This gives his story particular freshness as opening up to the reader a very different, if perhaps also somewhat disconcertingly defamiliarising, interpretation of such a central figure and her method of obtaining her desire. For him she is, not helpless pawn of irresistible bodily love, or often-abducted victim of statecraft and warlord rivalry, but an active and decisive agent of her own fate, as much so, albeit more secretively, and guiltily, as if she were the warrior queen asserting her right to respected selfhood in power, or the triple goddess priestess or even physical manifestation of such divinity implied by the triadic paradox of Arthur's three wives all named Gwenhwyvar, in other, today perhaps better known, revisionist interpretations of the nature of the unforgettably triangle-apexing queen. ☙

Old News ***What the Romans did for us?***

When the Romans abandoned Britain in the early 5th century they could hardly have imagined an unforeseen legacy left to those who remained, and to those in other parts of Europe which they had conquered.

According to researchers at the University of Provence in Marseilles, the descendants of those native populations who lived within the widest extent of the Roman Empire have a greater risk of **susceptibility to HIV**. This might help to explain why the frequency of an HIV-resistant gene varies so much across Europe.

Present-day people with this gene variant have some resistance to HIV infection and take longer to develop AIDS. They are more prevalent in northern Europe, in areas unconquered by the Romans (more than 15% in some samples), and less frequent in southern Europe, matching the bounds of the Empire (between 0 and 6%).

The researchers do not think the susceptibility is linked to interbreeding. Instead, they postulate that the Romans introduced a disease to which those with the gene variant were susceptible, a disease that may have been spread by pathogens carried by donkeys and cats introduced by the Romans. Another possible link is the mosquito-borne West Nile virus, to which moderns with the gene variant are more susceptible. ☙

• Matt Walker "Did Romans destroy Europe's HIV shield?" *New Scientist 199* No 2672 (September 6 2008) 10

Feature review

The Narrative Literature of Medieval Europe (3)

W M S Russell

In the first and second parts of this feature review I discussed Tony Davenport's *Medieval Narrative: an Introduction*. In this final part I turn to the other recent book in the field.

Erik Kooper *ed*
The Medieval Chronicle III
Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle
Doorn / Utrecht 12-17 July 2002
Rodopi BV, Amsterdam 2004 €46
90-420-1834-8 PB x + 218pp

This many-authored book deals primarily with only one of the many genres of narrative discussed by Davenport, but the fourteen well-annotated and well-documented essays are full of interest, and sometimes roam a little wider than the genre in the title. Most of them are based on papers presented at a conference held in Doorn, near Utrecht, in 2002. They are in English, French or German, but all have English abstracts. Three of them are of direct Arthurian interest, and I will discuss these first and then deal briefly with the other eleven.

Anglo-Norman and French Chronicles

Gillette Labory deals with vernacular chronicles of the 12th and 13th centuries. She notes, of course, that the earliest vernacular chronicles are in Anglo-Saxon, translations of Bede's Latin and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* itself. This was continued to 1154, at the monastery of Peterborough, *'situé dans une poche de résistance anglaise'* (page 3: 'situated in a pocket of English resistance'). But Labory is concerned with the Anglo-Norman and French chronicles of these two centuries.

The 12th-century vernacular chronicles were all in verse, though often based on Latin ones in prose. In her very thorough – and very interesting – account, she mentions a very few vernacular verse chronicles written as late as the early 13th century, but these are exceptional.

Most of the 12th-century ones were commissioned as propaganda for the Angevins or their supporters. This is no surprise to Arthurians, but Labory makes the good point that the Capetian kings of France had no need for such propaganda, their rule being supported by tradition and the religious backing of the great monasteries. For the Angevins, the starting-point is of course Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *Historia*. The first vernacular chronicle was the *Estoire des Engleis* of Geoffrey Gaimar (1135-40). This is based partly on Geoffrey and partly on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, so it is roughly half history and half fiction. But it was soon succeeded by pure fiction. There were no less than seven translations or adaptations of Geoffrey's *Historia*, all called *Brut*, but the only successful one was Wace's. As non-Arthurian propaganda, Wace was also commissioned to write a chronicle of the Norman Dukes, which he took to 1106. It was continued to 1135 by a Benoit, who may have been Benoit de Sainte-Maure, author of the *Roman de Troie*. These Norman chronicles were based on genuinely historical Latin sources and were largely factual.

The 12th-century verse chronicles included some contemporary ones,

which emphasised their truthfulness as being based on eye-witnesses. These included an account of the revolt of Henry II's eldest son and co-king Henry, and histories of the First Crusade and the conquest of Ireland.

With the few exceptions already mentioned, all the vernacular chronicles of the 13th centuries were in prose. The earliest one, translated from Latin, is pure fiction about Charlemagne's Spanish adventure, Church propaganda for crusades and pilgrimages in Spain, supposedly written by Archbishop Turpin, and so accepted as a factual eye-witness account. Labory gives a complete account of the 13th-century chronicles. She shows by quotation that all – including the Pseudo-Turpin! – make a point of their truthfulness. The choice of prose is sometimes defended by them because verse chroniclers have to pick words that rhyme, even if this results in falsehood. But Labory suggests another reason for the change to prose: with improved education people no longer needed the mnemonic and emphatic properties of verse.

The medieval concern with fact and fiction, also a recurrent theme in Davenport's book, is continued as the main subject of Julia Marvin's essay.

'When William of Malmesbury complains that Arthur "is the hero of many wild tales among the Bretons even in our own day, but assuredly deserves to be the subject of reliable history rather than of false and dreaming fable", ... exactly the frustration he faces in dealing with "Britonum nugae" is that some people take to be history what he considers to be fable' (page 116). Marvin is interested in whether medieval readers regarded as factual history or fiction what we moderns have classified in the genres of chronicle or romance. She has had the brilliant idea of investigating this by looking at the *manuscripts*, and her essay is illustrated by pictures of manuscript pages and of an illumination (the latter as the frontispiece to the whole book).

Marvin concentrates on the prose *Brut*, of which Anglo-Norman and Middle English versions were being produced after 1272. There are many surviving manuscripts and this popular work was still being printed as late as 1528. The prose *Brut* is based on Geoffrey, Gaimar, Wace, and a number of more obscure sources. It therefore certainly includes fiction, including Arthurian fiction.

Marvin shows that many of the *Brut* manuscripts have features, such as 'standardised chapter headings and numbers, which make the chronicle more closely resemble clerical histories like those of Matthew Paris and Ranulph Higden', and 'may well be meant to resemble respectable Latin history' (page 118). This impression is supported by the apparently historical nature of the illuminations. And that the readers, as well as the scribes (who were themselves readers) regarded the *Brut* as factual history appears, as Marvin shows, from the factual details in marginal annotations. Neither the chapter headings nor the annotations were found in a large number of manuscripts studied by Marvin of narratives fairly confidently labelled as romances, including Arthurian romances.

There were two exceptions to his last finding, 'the so-called prose romance *Fouke Fitz Waryn*' (page 123) and the late 12th-century Alexander romance. Both had chapter headings and also annotations, the latter copious annotations by more than one reader. Marvin reasonably infers that these two 'romances' were regarded as factual history in medieval times.

This is a most interesting and original essay.

Merlin in Italy

Merlin seems to have been very popular in Italy. The proper name Merlino was in use in North Italy before 1100,[1] and Merlin got connected to the legends of Virgil as a magician, which originated in 12th-century Naples.[2] Probably because of their relations with the Welsh and the Bretons, the Normans played an important part in the diffusion of the Arthurian legends, including Merlin, especially of course in Italy; in their

[1] Russell, W M S (1999-2000) "Dante and Arthur: a Postscript" *Pendragon 28* No 2: 5

[2] Russell, W M S (2000) "A Tale of Two Wizards: Merlin and Virgil" *Pendragon 28* No 4: 27

Southern Italian domains they were visited by Breton knights and minstrels. I have suggested that they may have promoted the Virgil legends too – they captured Naples in 1139;[3] if so, the connection of Merlin with Virgil would not be surprising.

In a very interesting essay Laura Lahdensuu surveys the references to Merlin in Italian *chronicles*, a further example of the interactions between the romance and chronicle genres. She notes the earliest documentary mention of Merlin in Italy in the *Pantheon*, a universal history written in 1185 by Gotfredo da Viterbo, 'a secretary at the court of Frederick Barbarossa' (page 93). From then on to the 17th century, she shows, Merlin is often mentioned or quoted in a variety of genres – narrative and lyrical poems, letters, universal histories and novelle. She then mentions the *Prophécies de Merlin*, written by a Venetian but oddly in French, and the two Italian Merlin romances related to it, Paolino Pieri's *La Storia de Merlino* and the *Historia* or *Vita di Merlino*, of unknown authorship. The latter is a perfectly enormous and complex narrative.[4]

Lahdensuu notes that medieval chroniclers were given to including prophecies. 'The political prophecies were presented in order to promote specific social interests and they were of course created *post eventum* or otherwise reinterpretations of obscure, purposely cryptic predictions'; and 'the use of prophecies might reflect a desire for affirmation, not, of course, of the event itself but the interpretation the writer intends to give it' (page 95).

She divides the references to Merlin in the chronicles into three groups: biographical details, *mirabilia* (curious sayings or doings of Merlin) and prophecies. The only extensive passage of biography she finds in Giovanni Villani's *Cronica* (early 14th century). The *mirabilia* are mostly about fulfilments of Merlin's prophecies, but there are other oddments. For instance, the story of Merlin as Virgil's apprentice disobediently opening his master's Black Book, and releasing a host of demons,[5] turns up in the *Cronaca di Mantova* by Buonamente Aliprando the real Virgil was born near Mantua, in a village called Andes[6]). Most of the prophecies 'have a clear political or propaganda purpose' (page 97), and many of them concern the Hohenstaufen-Welf conflict, [7] [8] being 'used by the guelph and the ghibelline parties alike' (page 97). The fact that the ghibellines had used them presumably explains why 'the Council of Trento condemned the prophecies of Merlin' (page 97)!

Though she amusingly quotes Boccaccio's sceptical comment on such sources as Geoffrey of Monmouth, Lahdensuu notes the well-known fact that the Matter o Britain was very well known in Italy; in spite of this, she finds, the chronicles hardly ever refer to Merlin's Arthurian connections, and 'all these narratives refer to events in Italy' (page 97). It does seem that Merlin had become a real European, and a perfectly independent figure. It's the same in the Rhineland, where he appears without any reference to Arthurian connections or even British origins.[9]

[3] Russell, W M S (2001) "Virgil the Magician" *Pendragon 29* No 2: 7

[4] Gardner, E G (1930) *The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature* (London:Dent) 191-212

[5] Russell (ref 2)

[6] Hadas, M (1961) *Ancilla to Classical Reading* (Morningside Heights, NY: Columbia University Press) 337

[7] Russell, W M S (1999) "Dante and Arthur" *Pendragon 28* No 1: 32-37, especially 34

[8] Russell, W M S (2004-5) "Excalibur in Sicily Again" *Pendragon 32* No 2: 6-7

[9] Russell, W M S (2004-5) "Dumas and Merlin in the Rhineland" *Pendragon 32* No 2: 27-30, especially 30

Bede to Commynes

The other eleven essays are not directly concerned with the Matter of Britain, but they are all interesting and worth reading. I will deal with them briefly in roughly chronological order.

The Venerable Bede (673-735) had first-hand knowledge of some classical authors, including Virgil and the Elder Pliny, and second-hand knowledge of many more through Macrobius and Isidore of Seville.[10] Arnaud Knaepen investigates the references to Greek and Roman history in Bede's two treatises on chronology, the first influenced by Isidore, the second by Jerome. He shows that Bede referred to quite a lot of events of Greek and Roman history. He used these events as chronological markers, but was interested in certain kinds of cultural event – *'fondations de cites, acmes d'artistes célèbres'* (I need hardly translate this!). Knaeper shows that Bede was thus more open-minded than other Christian writers such as Claudio of Turin.

In the 9th century both the Norwegians and the Danes invaded Ireland, and the Irish tried to play them off against each other, but the Norwegians drove out the Danes, and were themselves only decisively defeated by the Irish at the battle of Clontarf on the 23rd April 1014.[11] This is the background of Clare Downham's interesting essay on an 11th-century chronicle, *The Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*. This is a composite work, and part of it, probably commissioned by Donnchad, King of Osraige, deals with his ancestor Cerball, King of Osraige from 842 to 888. 'The pseudo-historical narratives in' this chronicle 'can be seen to belong to a genre of Irish literature which developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, celebrating the victories of earlier Irish kings over their viking-enemies' (page 28). Cerball had apparently allied himself on different occasions with both the Danes and the Norwegians. To justify this, Donnchad's chronicler distinguished three ethnic groups. These are the Dubgaill, Dark Foreigners (the Danes), the Finngaill, Fair Foreigners (the Norwegians) and the Gall-Goidil, Foreign Irish, renegade collaborators. In the chronicle the Danes are represented as not altogether bad, with glimmerings of Christianity, the Norwegians as pretty bad pagans, and the renegades as utterly abominable apostates. Cerball was thus always making alliances with dubious groups against groups who were *even worse*. So, reports in earlier chronicles 'were elaborated and reworked in order to enhance the image of Cerball of Osraige' (page 34). In an appendix Downham analyses in detail the composite structure of *The Fragmentary Annals*.

The Easter Annals were series of years entered in tables with, for each year, the date of Easter and the numbers and dates used in the very elaborate calculations to comput it. They are of historic value because every now and then an important *event* of a given year is entered in a final column. In the *Annales Cambriae*, compiled in the 10th century, there are two references to Arthur, named as such – the battle of Mount Badon under the year 518, and the battle of Camlann under the year 539. Since the annals were *cumulative*, Leslie Alcock has made out a very good case for these notices being contemporary.[12] If so, they are of course our very best evidences for the historical Arthur (though for various reasons the *dates* may have to be altered by a few years). Disappointingly for us, David Dumville's essay on the *Annales Cambriae* does not bear in any way on this. But of course that is no criticism of his very ingenious essay, which is on a quite different subject. His argument, though perfectly logical, is so complex that I despair of summarising it, so I will just quote his conclusion, after mentioning that it concerns the well-known dispute between Rome and the Celtic Churches about the date of Easter, finally settled in favour of Rome. Here then is Dumville's well established finding:

'The ... *Annales Cambriae* ... carries in it the vestiges of the Insular Easter-

[10] Reynolds, L D and Wilson, N G (1974) *Scribes and Scholars* (2nd edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press) 79

[11] Brøndsted, J (1965) *The Vikings* (*transl* Skov, K; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) 57, 108

[12] Alcock, L (1973) *Arthur's Britain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) 5-9, 45-55

controversy of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, as they were recorded and reflected in its ninth-century ... source' (page 40).

Armelle Leclercq writes about the *Dei Gesta per Francos* (Acts of God through the Franks), a history of the First Crusade written by Guibert de Nogent between 1104 and 1108. Leclercq notes a difference between the Latin chronicles and the Latin *histories* of the 11th and 12th centuries. The former were written in a very simple prose, the latter in a more ornate prose employing *clausulae*. These are presumably derived from the *clausulae* invented by Cicero, which I studied intensively at school when forming my own prose style. They are particular metres used at the end of sentences to ensure these endings are *never* in verse. Guibert wrote his history in ornate prose *and* verse, like a couple of other histories mentioned by Leclercq, but no other book on the First Crusade. The combination of prose and verse is inspired by Boethius and Martianus Capella (and *not*, of course, by the humorous essays of the 3rd-century BC Cynic philosopher Menippus, or the satires defined as Menippean by the Roman scholar Varro, the chief examples of prose and verse mixed[13]). Guibert criticises two earlier books on the First Crusade and clearly intends to improve on their style.

Leclercq looks at the way Guibert uses his verse passages. Set-backs are described in prose, victories and heroic actions in verse. Verse is used for crucial moments, such as the recruiting speech of Pope Urban II and the actual taking of Jerusalem, and also for direct speech by the Crusaders. Above all, verse is used for Guibert's value judgements, and for statements on the significance of the Crusade. In short, as Leclercq ends this interesting study, *'Guibert de Nogent fait un usage très réflechi du prosimètre'* (page 111 – Guibert makes a very well-considered use of the prose-verse combination).

By studying the prologues and dedications of 12th-century chroniclers and historians, Norbert Kersken shows that they were well aware of the pitfalls of contemporary historiography. A line of Terence had become proberbial: *Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit* (page 67 – Obsequiousness produces friends, the truth produces hatred). This is literally quoted by William of Tyre, and echoed by Matthew Paris and Cosmas of Prague. Helmod von Bosau observed that some historians were silent out of fear, others wrote flattering lies in the hope of reward. Of course it is the mighty they were all thinking about. But historians might be prejuediced themselves. Kersken mentions a Cistercian monk, writing a history of the Poles, who compains that *'viele Historiker mit der Absicht des Lobs des eigenen Volkes und der Verwünschung fremder Volker oder Länder schrieben'* (page 65 – many historians write with the purpose of praising their own people and cursing other peoples or countries).

Faced with such problems, some historians avoided mentioning contemporary princes, some avoided contemporary history altogether, and some rather optimistically but bravely determined to be as objective as possible in the hope of influencing the powerful for good. Kersken's interesting essay,

[13] Highet, G (1967) *The Classical Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press) 303

besides offering another example of the medieval preoccupation with the problem of fact versus fiction, shows the sophistication of 12th-century writers.

The perennial problem of fact and fiction turns up yet again in Scott Waugh's study of 12th- and early 13th-century historians. Quoting Richard Southern, he shows that their work must be judged 'not by the photographic accuracy of the details, but by the impression of truth in the total effect' (page 211). These historians sought to write literary history that would teach moral lessons. Thus for William of Malmesbury history 'adds flavour to moral instruction by imparting a pleasurable knowledge of past events' (page 202, Waugh's translation). 'The combination of edification and entertainment made historical writing a highly popular literary genre at court throughout the Middle Ages' (page 201). The historians based their work on previous histories, but 'freely changed the content or emphasis of their borrowings to suit their message' (page 202). Waugh illustrates all this admirably by taking a succession of lives of Edward the Confessor, showing a gradual change from statesmanlike Godwin and his family and feeble Edward, through ambivalence about both, to Godwin and his family as villains and a saintly Edward.

Peter Noble makes a careful study of four 13th-century French chroniclers / historians, to see how far they are influenced by the epic character of the *chansons de geste*. The four are Villehardouin and Clari, writing of the Fourth Crusade, Valenciennes, writing of the second Latin Emperor of Constantinople, Henri (brother of the first Emperor, Baldwin of Flanders), and Joinville, writing of St Louis's crusade. Noble characterises the typical French epic hero as brave, loyal, a skilled fighter, a devout Christian, and fanatically uncompromising. He finds that Villhardouin and Clari both single out some warriors for praise (not always the same ones!), but only one, Pierre de Brachet, and only by Clari, is given something like the full epic heroic treatment. The Emperor Henri comes nearest of all to full heroic stature as described by Valenciennes, but lacks the last quality listed by Noble. 'Henry is a brilliant warrior, he has a keen sense of honour, he is loyal to his vassals and takes their advice. It goes without saying that he is devout, and the only thing lacking is any element of fanaticism' (pp 141-2). This is very close to Gibbons description: 'He had deserved the fame of a valiant knight and a skilful commander, and his courage was tempered with a degree of prudence and mildness unknown to his impetuous brother.'[14] As for Joinville, Noble finds in him a very unepic matter-of-fact interest in military technique. He concludes: 'The four chroniclers under consideration thus owe relatively little to the traditions of the *chansons de geste* as far as the depiction of the heroes is concerned' (page 144).

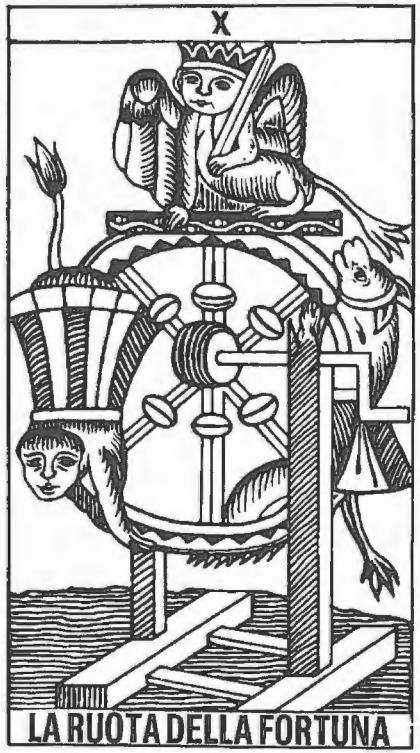
Libuše Hrabová has unearthed a most intriguing story, in the Latin chronicle of Jan Beka, a canon of Utrecht, written soon after 1343. Beka writes that *vulgus Slavorum seu Wiltorum urbem Antoninam ... expugnavit* (page 52 – a horde of Slavs or Wilts stormed the city of Antonina). Antonina was a Roman fort, *'welche ein Flüchtling von Rom in der Zeit von Kaiser Nero gegründet* (page 52 – which a refugee from Rome in the time of Nero built) and called after his own name. After destroying Antonina, the Slavs / Wilts built a new fort called Wiltenbury. Beka continues to tell that Valentinian overcame the horde and destroyed their fort; later the Merovingian king Doagobert built yet another fort there, which he called Trajectum.

Archaeologists have found, not on the fort site but on a civilian site nearby, an altar dedicated by one Antonius Priscus. And as late as the early 18th century local peasants still called a group of fields Wiltenbury. And as early as 732, Bede knew of an Uiltaburg fort called in French Trajectum.

The Wilts were real people, and real Slavs, living between the Elbe and the Oder. They were called Wilti by others, probably meaning wild men. They called themselves Wilci, meaning in Slav languages wolves.

But by Beka's time all these names had long disappeared, and the homeland of the Wilti / Wilci had been taken over by the Germans as the Mark of Brandenbury. Hrabová therefore infers that Beka must have found the Wilts either in old literature or in spoken tradition, and connected them with the name Wiltenburg near Utrecht.

Hrabová shows that later chroniclers elaborated from Beka's story a fantasy of the large-scale occupation of Holland by Slavs and of the Utrecht district by Wilts, Slavs and Wilts by then being thought two separate peoples. This fantasy of Slav ancestry caught on, because it enabled the Southern Dutch to distinguish themselves from both the Franks and the Friesians. This is a fascinating piece of research.



The chronicler John Hardyng (1378-*c* 1465) is an important figure in the history of Arthurian legend. The first version of his *Chronicle* (1457) was presented to Henry VI, the second (1463-4) was dedicated to Edward IV. This second version was one of the chief documents of Edward's Arthurian propaganda, even identifying the Lancastrians with the Anglo-Saxons Edward was to drive out, as Arthur's heir and avatar![15] Hardying made Winchester the site of the most important battle against Mordred, and indeed as Camelot itself. He is also 'our first recorded witness to the existence of the actual Round Table, made under Edward I, which still hangs in the surviving Great Hall of Winchester Castle. He wrote that the Round Table began at Winchester, and 'ther it hangeth yet'.[16] It is another disappointment for us that there is no mention of any of this in Sarah Peverley's essay on Hardyng. But of course, as with Dumville, this is no criticism of Peverley's essay, which is about another aspect of Hardying.

It might be supposed that the second version [of the *Chronicle*] would be simply a complete reversal of the first. But by careful study of both versions, Peverley shows that there is a surprising continuity and consistench between the two. Hardyng was mainly concerned in both with the blessings of a united kingdom and the evils of division and civil conflict. As examples for the king he is addressing, he divides the kings of England (*à la* Sellar and Yeatman) into Good Kings and Bad Kings. The former governed well and kept the kingdom united, the latter governed badly, permitted corruption, injustice and the rise of over mighty subjects, all factors leading to civil conflict. Though obviously the same kings are not good or bad in the two versions, the lesson is clear in both. 'At moments when one would expect the *Chronicle*' (second version) 'to adopt a partisan tone ... the text reveals little concern with the dynastic issue, often retaining the same viewpoint as the original version' (page 159). Using the medical metaphors then fashionable, the Good Kings are represented as the physicians of their

[14] Gibbon, E (1910) *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (6 vols, London: Dent) Vol 6, 191

[15] Russell, W M S (2005-6) "Alchemy, Arthur and this Sun of York – Part 2" *Pendragon 33* No 2: 39-46, especially 40

[16] Biddle, M *ed* (2000)*King Arthur's Round Table* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press) 21-2, 393

kingdoms. Peverley's observation of Hardyng's consistency, supported by a host of quotations, shows how a chronicler could show integrity and responsibility. She notes that, in the interests of unity, Hardying even advises Edward to amnesty the Lancastrian exiles and restore Henry to his Duchy of Lancaster.

László Veszprémy discusses the interesting fact that in Hungary historical material is found in the royal charters conferring land grants. 'On a massive scale from the 1220s, the section on the donation of an estate (*dispositio*) was preceded by the detailing – often at length – of the person's and his family's merits in the royal service, in what has been termed by Herwig Wolfram a "Heldentaten-*narratio*"' (page 184 – heroic-deeds-narration). 'The model for the form is undoubtedly to be found in the charters of South German, Bavarian and Austrian monasteries, which in the *narration* section relate the story of the foundation of the monastery' (page 185) as evidence of legal possession. This practice was copied by Hungarian monasteries. But there was a particularly good legal reason for it in the secular land grants. 'Due to the rapid dwindling of royal domains, the king of Hungary was from time to time ... forced to reclaim via legal process a certain number of royal donations' (page 185). However, the so-called Golden Bull of 1222 specified that 'No one shall at any time be deprived of possessions acquired by honourable service' (page 188). A narration of such services was therefore an essential protection. Veszprémy shows that the narrations were derived from both written and spoken accounts, and sometimes confirmed by military commanders or the king himself. He gives an example of a narration backfiring, in the case of a noble who acquired his estate by services to a pretender!

For a century after 1380 there were virtually no chronicles in Hungary, 'when historical memories survived only in thousands of charters' (page 192). When chroniclers appeared again, they naturally drew on the charters.

Veszprémy discusses further details of the charter narration phenomenon, and besides his notes and bibliography provides a table of example of the kind of events recorded in the charters.

Theo Venckeleer and Jesse Mortelmans discuss the question whether narratives were meant to be declaimed to audiences or read privately. They take verse epics and romances to be declaimed (or sung) because the narrator so often uses words such as *oïr, escouter* (hear, listen) and *dire, conter* (say, tell). They consider whether this is also true of prose historical works. They examine Villehardouin and Clari (13th century), Joinville and the *Chronicle of the Morea* (Peloponnese – 14th century), Froissart and Commynes (beginning and end of the 15th century, respectively). They find quite a lot of expressions such as *comme nous vous dirons après, comme je vous ai conté* (as we shall tell you afterwards, as I have told you) and *dessusdit* (above-said), especially at the beginning or end of chapters. They leave it open whether these expressions really indicate declamation, or *'ne constituent plus qu'une trace formelle d'un genre littéraire vieilli'* (pp 174-5 – constitute no more than a formal trace of a literary genre grown old). They make a quantitative study of other grammatical features, which gives an equally transitional impression. They suggest all this throws a light on the transition from spoken to literate culture. One point specially interested me. In the first part of this review I mentioned the evidence of Auerbach and Davenport for the medieval use of parataxis, in contrast to the ancient use of hypotaxis. Venckeleer and Mortelmans find in the later works a progression from parataxis to hypotaxis.

In conclusion, I may say that these essays provide very varied and always very interesting information. I learned a lot from the book, and much enjoyed it. I warmly recommend it to everyone with the slightest interest in medieval Europe.

• *Part I of* The Narrative Literature of Medieval Europe *appeared in* XIV *No* 2 *(Winter 2006-7): 35-41 and Part II in* XXXV *No* 2 *(Winter 2007-8): 35-42*
This final part was the last outstanding (in both senses of the word) contribution from the late Bill Russell

Reviews

Caitlin and John Matthews
King Arthur's Raid on the Underworld: the Oldest Grail Quest
Gothic Image Publications 2008 £25.00
978-0-906362-72-3 HB 176 pp

Caitlin Matthews has explored *Preiddeu Annwfyn* (The Spoils of Annwn) in two previous works – *Mabon and the Mysteries of Britain* and its revised edition *Mabon and the Guardians of Celtic Britain* – but as Sir Bertilak says 'third time throw best'. Here she has produced a new translation from the original 14th-century Welsh transcription in the *Book of Taliesin* that will please all explorers of the Celtic underworld.

Preiddeu Annwfyn deals with Arthur's voyage to the Underworld in order to steal or retrieve a magical cauldron. At least this is how the poem appears on the surface, although as with a great deal of Celtic literature there are many more levels than are apparent at first reading which Caitlin addresses with much clarity and erudition in this new book.

Probably most, if not all, of the sources in *King Arthur's Raid* will be familiar in some degree to Celtic enthusiasts, but it is also a perfect introduction to these materials for the novice. It's a very thoughtfully laid out work. The poem stands alone in Chapter 1 with nine wonderful original paintings by Meg Falconer that enhance the otherworldly feel of the poem without distracting from the tale itself. Chapter 2 then takes the reader through the poem segment by segment, explaining meanings and comparing similar tales from the Celtic world – *Culhwch and Olwen*, the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi, Bricriu's Feast, Death of Cu Roi mac Daire* etc to give an excellent overview of how these tales interweave and borrow from each other.

Chapter 3 provides us with some expanded themes on the ancient mysteries that form the background to the poem, ending with a prose reading of *Preiddeu Annwfyn*. There are two helpful appendices – the full text in its Welsh original opposite the new English translation, and another concerning the mythic roots of the raid – along with a glossary on the pronunciation of names found throughout the book (always good for those of us whose Welsh is limited and Irish non-existent) and a bibliography for further reading.

As with Caitlin Matthews' previous books the writing is clear and uncluttered by over-explanation or academic dryness, well researched as always and imbued with the obvious love of and familiarity with the materials concerned, attained through many years of rewarding study.

Bibliophiles will appreciate this book, too - from its cloth bound cover to the different coloured inks used in different chapters; along with Meg Falconer's exceptional paintings, even the size and weight of the book feel just right – Gothic Image have really pushed the boat out on this one (no pun intended). At £25.00 it's not cheap but, bearing in mind some of the nonsense published in the name of all things Celtic at more that half this price, *King Arthur's Raid* is worth every penny – highly recommended.[1]

Simon Rouse

Juliette Wood
Eternal Chalice: the enduring legend of the Holy Grail
I B Tauris 2008 £18.99
978-1-84511-360-5 HB 244pp illus

Juliette Wood has lined up an impressive roll-call of academics to preview her new Holy Grail book in its opening pages, and they are spot on in their summations: here is a thoughtful,

[1] http://www.hallowquest.org.uk/hallowquest-books-arthurian.html

detailed and thorough study of the Grail, whether as literary fabrication, sacred relic, historical secret or popular metaphor. As current Secretary of the Folklore Society she is well placed to have an overview of the popular thought processes that require such an object to exist, and as an associate lecturer in the School of Welsh at Cardiff University she has ready access to the extensive literature that exists on this subject, as testified by a good tenth of the text dedicated to notes and bibliographical resources.

It is all here: medieval romances and relics, localised traditions, secret histories and cherished modern beliefs – barely a metaphysical stone is left unturned. If much of the material is already familiar to the interested reader, say from Richard Barber's recent excellent study, then Dr Wood's own introduction is a magisterial and elegant summary of not just who, what, where and when but also some of the hows and whys that cluster round the grail, and almost alone worth the cost of the hardback edition.

It is difficult in one book, however well-researched, to cover the extensive literature that has grown up (particularly in the last century), and there are naturally a few absences – not unexpectedly in the field of fiction, but also in popular academia, such as Joseph Goering's *The Virgin and the Grail*. Nevertheless, this is a comprehensive introduction for anyone not bitten by the conspiracy bug. On a more parochial note, it is good to note Pendragon members and associates, past and present, who have been referenced here: at random, I note Bob Gilbert, Mark Valentine, Bill Russell and, of course, Paul Smith's priory-of-sion.com website.

Chris Lovegrove

Barbara Tepa Lupack, with Alan Lupack
Illustrating Camelot
D S Brewer 2008 £25.00
978 1 84384 183 8 HB 247pp illus

As befits a study on Arthurian book illustrations, *Illustrating Camelot* has a generous helping of examples of the genre – forty in monochrome and thirty-two in colour. If a picture is worth a thousand words then we have a text automatically augmented by 72,000 words!

And what a text it is. Using thirteen named illustrators as her framework, Barbara Tepa Lupack takes us through two centuries and more of imaging the court of Arthur, commenting on the politics, mores and personalities of the times and their inter-relationship with the depiction of the Arthurian ideal.

The casual reader may well be familiar with a number of the main illustrators who provide the chapter headings – Gustav Doré, Aubrey Beadsley, Walter Crane, Arthur Rackham and Howard Pyle – but may raise a quizzical eyebrow at others such as Dan Beard, Sir William Russell Flint and Hudson Talbott. For the record, Dan Beard is well known to North American readers for his illustrations to Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Flint's "theatrical" watercolours for Malory influenced many a lesser artist, and Talbott reveals an indebtedness to the visual arts of the late 20th century, especially comic books. The final chapter discusses Anna-Marie Ferguson, best-known as the first female illustrator of the *Morte* (and one-time Pendragon member to boot).

There is a lot of pleasure to be had in the reading of this, an obvious labour of

love for the author, whose enthusiasm for her subject is as infectious as her wide research is impressive. Every page has something to stimulate the imagination: at random I find that the publication of illustrated Arthurian books between 1890 and 1910 was three times that of the previous five decades (166), that Beardsley "discomforted viewers ... by defamiliarizing familiar objects" (80), and that Howard Pyle's illustrated Arthurian books not only a model for behaving but for "Americanizing, or at least democratizing, the medieval legends".

While disappointed that there is no mention of Lotte Reiniger, whose pseudo-woodcuts so graced the Penguin edition of Roger Lancelyn Green's *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*, this reader is grateful for the opportunity to delight in old favourites (like Rackham), be introduced to unfamiliar artists (like Lancelot Speed, who must be a prime example of what *New Scientist* calls "nominative determinism") and to place all the artists in their cultural and historical context.

Chris Lovegrove

C A Ralegh Radford, Michael J Swanton
Arthurian Sites in the West
University of Exeter Press 2002 £9.99
0 85989 676 5 PB 78pp

A revised and updated new edition of a book first published in 1975, this has as authors a former President of the Royal Archaeological Society and of the Society for Medieval Archaeology (Radford) and Emeritus Professor of Medieval Studies of the University of Exeter (Swanton).

Although in the fifteen page overview first chapter, "The Arthurian West", there is passing mention of a variety of other sites, all the remainder of the text is devoted to just four highest profile ones, Cadbury-Camelot, Tintagel, Glastonbury and Castle Dore and the Tristan Stone.

That first chapter brings together brief summaries of many intriguing possibilities and questions, none new but given some freshness of angle. Did villa owners depart their estates in an orderly manner, leaving bailiffs in charge while they themselves headed for the towns – or Mediterranean retirement! And were said bailiffs possible candidates among the text's all-bases-covered listing of possible social and ethnic sources for the new-fangled *tyranni* (with the added speculation that, in shadowy form, proto versions of such kinglets were already active a generation before official Roman withdrawal).

The South-west is seen as having a renaissance, financed, paradoxically, by knock-on benefits of the *Adventus Saxonum*, severing of the short trans-Channel trade route giving the area control of long sea route trade from the Mediterranean (which persisted right till the 8th century Islamic takeover of Spain blocked the way). This in turn led to a privileged monastic life, amusingly termed by the authors the equivalent of "champagne socialism", one clerical bequest even including pepper all the way from India. The Irish raids on the south-west are seen as bearable because, unlike the Saxons, they weren't land grabbers; though contradictorily, later, discussing Castle Dore, the authors suggest the Giant's Hedge was constructed to deter attack by an Irish statelet just to the north, along with the plausible theory that Iseult came, not from Ireland itself, but from that hostile Irish neighbour, the arranged marriage part of a (lovely term) "peaceweaving".[2]

The discussions of individual sites appear thorough as to more recent discoveries, as far as I could tell, save that there is no mention of finds appearing to indicate that Tintagel rock, contrary to earlier received opinion, supported a chieftainly fortress as well as the known monastic complex.[3]

The book's illustrations include general outline maps of the south-west indicating locations mentioned, and of import pottery distribution along both sides of the Irish Sea. There are also a

[2] One other particularly intriguing suggestion made, albeit of a well post-Arthurian time, is that the Wessex kings began taking direct steps to control Cornwall, culminating in Athelstan's early 10th-century complete takeover, because the Cornish Britons had become a menace by making common cause with Viking raiders.

[3] It also seems arguable to explain the name Tintagel as Anglo-Norman, when the Celtic term for fort - *dun* - seems so clearly present in the first syllable.

number of maps specific to the four sites. To mention a selection of the latter: for Castle Dore a map of the Golant Peninsula at whose heart it stands, along with one of Irish memorial stones throughout Cornwall to suggest areas of settlement by those invaders, plus ground plan and air view; for Cadbury-Camelot, likewise an air view, taken during the excavations (sadly a little grainy, and taken in summer, so foliage obscures much of the Iron Age outer defences), ground plan, detail plan of the Alcock excavation area, Dark Age hall and gatetower reconstructions, and reproductions of two 1719 engravings of *Camaleti* (picturesquely *un*informative!); and for Tintagel a very detailed site plan, reproduction of slate fragment graffiti, and, particularly striking, a 1584 John Norden engraving – an enlarged photocopy, framed, would make an excellent gift!

There's also an extensive (7-page) bibliography. Overall, I would say, given the limited number of well-known locations covered, at a relatively expensive price for the book's size, it is one to get if, and probably only if, you'd find it useful to have to hand for speedy reference, between one set of covers, reasonably comprehensive gists of this particular "Big Four", and more particularly, given its portability, to carry along when actually visiting them.

Steve Sneyd

Comics

Madame Xanadu
Matt Wagner, art by Amy Reeder Hadley
DC Comics
On-going series from August 2008

Madame Xanadu was a second division DC occult heroine who first appeared in *Doorway to Nightmare* number 1 in February 1978. This series lasted only five issues. She returned in a one-off comic of her own in 1981 and apart from some walk-ons in other titles that was about it for over twenty-five years.

The new series takes us back to the origin of the mysterious sorceress and, in the first two issues, that is Camelot. We find out that her name is Nimue on page 4 and shortly thereafter that her sisters include Morgana. This is the era of the fall of King Arthur, though this time his fate is foretold by the Phantom Stranger (another DC occult character). As DC readers might expect, Etrigan the Demon makes an appearance. Then out titular heroine imprisons Merlin.

Only these first two issues are so far of interest to fans of the Arthurian cycle. Her story then moves on to medieval China and the court of the Kublai Khan, her meeting Marco Polo and presumably gaining her name.

Matt Wagner has flirted with Arthurian themes since the mid-eighties when he wrote the fondly remembered *Mage*. Amy Hadley's art compliments the story well, if the size of her characters' eye sometimes strikes one as Manga-esque.

Cardinal Cox

bookworm

Fantasy author **Terry Pratchett** was interviewed in *The Guardian* in March 2008 about humour and *The Colour of Magic*. "There's humour in the darkest places. I mean, *The Lord of the Rings* is a dark book. There's an Arthurian

darkness – we can fight evil, but ultimately we die. Recalling Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset*, he said, "Her marvellous idea was that King Arthur and his warriors were effectively the last Romano-Britons fighting against the dark forces. And you're going to lose, but you have to go on fighting. Something like that you can add humour to. And that's what I've tried to do."[4]

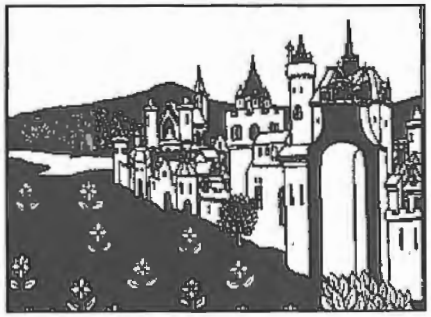
Margaret Atwood wrote about *Anne of Green Gables* and fairy-tale endings for orphans in the *Guardian* for March 25 2008. "In mythology and folklore, orphans were not merely downtrodden outsiders: they might be heroes-in-training, like King Arthur, or under the special protection of the gods or fairies."

Norris Lacy is the distinguished editor of ***The Grail, the Quest, and the World of Arthur***, another of Boydell's academic volumes covering the seemingly endless scholarly fascination of Arthur. Essays explore the theme of the quest in Arthurian literature, covering French, Dutch, Norse, German, and English texts. Several of the contributors examine "the comparative rarity of the Grail in certain literatures and define the elaboration of quest motifs severed from the Grail material", and a filmography includes all the cinematic treatments of the Grail, "either as central theme or minor motif". *The Grail* has just appeared in hardback (9781843841708) under the D S Brewer imprint for $95.00 / £50.00 in their Arthurian Studies series.

A Companion to Arthurian Literature, edited by Helen Fulton of the University of Wales, Swansea, is part of the Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture series.[5] To be published in Spring 2009, this illustrated *Companion* (£95.00 / $199.95 552pp 9781405157896) includes 35 academic essays ranging from discussions on a putative archaeological context for Arthur through Celtic origins, Continental and medieval English Arthurian material, followed by overviews of the transition "from medieval to medievalism" before looking at Arthur "in the modern age" and in films. If the list of contributors, largely from British, American and Australian universities (though an academic from the University of Puerto Rico has quietly slipped in), reads like a *Who's Who* of Arthurian Studies, that then is because it effectively is! Start saving up your pennies now...

Richard Reece's ***The Later Roman Empire: an archaeology AD 150-600*** (Tempus 2007 £17.99 192pp 978-0-7524-4205-1) is a new edition of a work previously published in 1999. It deals with what is sometimes called Late Antiquity in its European context, covering the material evidence in the arts particularly – sculpture, portraits, mosaics, illuminated manuscripts, sacred architecture and coinage. Reece's idiosyncratic text may help to place Arthur's Britain into a Continental picture during this transitional period.

Peter S Wells has written **Barbarians to Angels: the Dark Ages reconsidered** (WW Norton 2008 256pp 978-0-393-06075-1) Rather than random violence, mass migration, disease, and starvation Wells attempts to demonstrate that the Dark Ages were not dark at all, and that the Christian kingdoms that emerged from the 9th century onwards sprang from a robust, previously "little-known", European culture displaying great artistry, technology, craft production, commerce, and learning. Nick Higham in *British Archaeology* thought Wells over-stated the arguments and was unimpressed by the photographs on poor quality paper.



Osprey Publications publish a large range of titles on military history. Newly available is Orkney author Angus Konstam's ***British Forts in the Age of***

[4] Stuart Jeffries "There's humour in the darkest places" *Guardian G2* March 18 2008

[5] http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/book.asp?ref=9781405157896&site=1

Arthur (£11.99 64pp 978-1-84603-362-9). This features reconstructions of key Dark Age sites such as Tintagel, Cadbury, Wroxeter, Birdoswald and Dinas Emrys. The author, while not an archaeologist, is a former naval officer and museum professional, working as Curator of Weapons at the Tower of London and as the Chief Curator of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum in Key West, Florida. Many of his publications are on the subject of piracy.

The paperback of a new edition and translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth to replace Thorpe's Penguin paperback of the sixties will be out in February 2009. Edited by Michael D Reeve and with a parallel translation by Neil Wright, ***The History of the Kings of Britain*** (D S Brewer £25.00 392pp 978 1 84383 441 0) promises to be an authoritative version of the text which has survived in over 200 manuscripts as *De Gestis Britonum* or *Historia Regum Britanniae*.

Also due out in paperback, in April 2009, is Martin Biddle's definitive study of the Winchester Round Table. ***King Arthur's Round Table: an archaeological investigation*** (Boydell £9.99 574pp 978 0 85115 841 9) summarises both the various scientific analyses and historical deductions of this hitherto enigmatic piece of furniture. In contrast, Roger Simpson's ***Radio Camelot: Arthurian legends on the BBC 1922-2005*** (£50.00 189pp HB 978 1 84384 140 1), the seventieth volume in D S Brewer's Arthurian Studies series, pioneers study into the links between the legend and the new mass medium of the radio, reflecting changing social and cultural contexts. The lively text is supplemented by illustrations from past issues of the *Radio Times*.

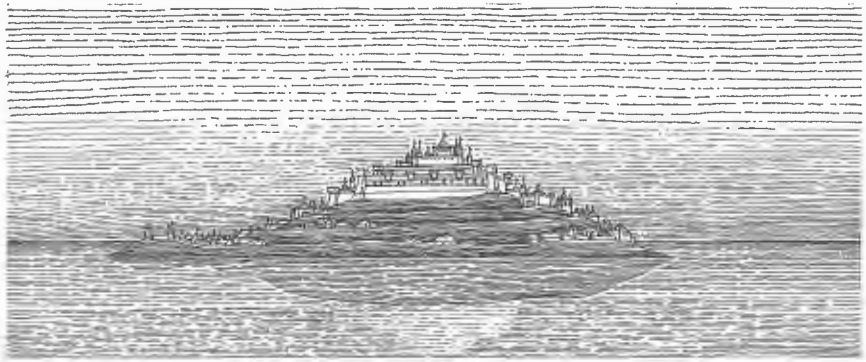
An abridged version of T H White's ***The Sword in the Stone*** read by Neville Jason is available on CD on the Naxos label for £13.99. Lasting four hours, this reading is ideal for holidaying families stuck in cars "full of children with low boredom thresholds," according to Sue Arnold in *The Guardian*. The most attractive of White's Arthurian series, the remaining four books (including his posthumous *The Book of Merlyn*) is also available from Naxos. Also on audiobook, Simon Armitage reads his own translation of ***Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*** for a Faber CD-audio (£12.99 for two hours, 9780571240647).

Regular *Pendragon* contributor Pamela Constantine has published a collection of her reflective Arthurian poems in ***Eternal Camelot*** (Wide Awake Press 32pp). Expect a review here soon!

Brian John has written ***The Bluestone Enigma*** (Greencroft Books £9.95 978-0-905559-89-6) to argue that recent beliefs about the bluestones of Stonehenge are "sentimental, unscientific and unnecessary". Subtitled "Stonehenge, Preseli and the Ice Age", this book promises to challenge all your suppositions about Merlin's stone circle.

Not at all Arthurian, of course, is Kimberley Morgan's ***2009 Magickal Diary & Almanac*** (Dvana Publishing 2008 £8.95), which claims it is full of information "relevant to pagans and heathens of all traditions". If the combination of astrology, tree calendars, pagan festivals and astronomical data appeals to you can obtain the *Magickal Diary* from Dvana Publishing, 14 King's Road, Colwyn Bay, Conwy LL29 7YG or get further information about the Annwn Project at www.annwn.org.uk (Annwn was of course the Otherworld in Welsh tradition).

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd



Call to Avalon

The seagull, fair of wing, is calling,
"Take me back to Avalon."
The surf upon the shingle whispers,
"Bring me home to Avalon."
So long alone,
Without the guide of stars,
My compass home,
The yearning bums within my heart.

So long, so long alone.

The tide is turning, wind is changing.
My heart yearns for Avalon.
When sunrise blushes, warm and welcome,
I'll set sail for Avalon.
So long adrift,
Lost amidst the maze of worlds unknown,
Alone, bereft, homeless, a stray.
So long, so long alone.

Soft breeze along the shoreline murmurs,
"Come home now to Avalon."
Sunlight upon the verdant woodland
Draws my thoughts to Avalon.
So long away,
A stranger lost far from beloved home,
The longing clenches in my breast.
So long, so long alone.

If storm clouds rage, engulf the sunset,
Still I'll sail to Avalon.
If tempests rend my ship asunder,
Then I'll swim to Avalon.
So long apart,
Without angelic light,
My comfort, home.
Memories ache within my soul.
So long, so long alone.

The Road to Avalon

The road to Avalon
lies through the mist
of a shimmering
Winter's morn,
Guarded by Knights
of oak and ash,
sycamore and hawthorn.

The road to Avalon
lies through the shining
on the lake.
Where the sword that was given
is taken back,
Strength used for
honour's sake.

The road to Avalon
lies in the balance
of a warmth given from the sun,
to be cooled by a moon
held in full bloom,
Calm tempered with
a sense of fun.

The road to Avalon
lies through the twist
of sharp word into a kind,
Relationships which strengthen
and forge,
rather than imprison
and bind.

The road to Avalon
lies in the heart
where love and
desire thrive,
where hope overturns adversity
and dreams are kept alive

Maureen Braithwaite

Should I live a thousand years,
I'll ever strive for Avalon.
And should I die in the attempt,
Then I'll come home to Avalon.
So long apart, without the light of hope,
Forlorn, alone.
My heart waits in Avalon.
I will come home.

Ian Brown

Rhiannon (The Vigil)

Beneath the mountain, by the lake the trees are bare.
There, by the cold water, I wait.
Late, and early,
And at noon,
Alone, but surely
Soon, someone will come.
Why am I waiting by the ice-cold lake
Under the ice-cold sun?
When the moment comes I shall know.

On a leafless branch, unseen, a bird
Begins to call;
Like water-drops, ice-bright, ice-cold,
The notes fall.
Bell-like and bold,
Among the bare twigs an answering song.
Wings flutter as the air fills,
Thrills to fluting music of a third.

And now at last is heard
The long-awaited sound among tile trees
Beneath each phrase
Of melody. The rhythm of the drums.
She comes. Her eyes
Ice-bright, ice-cold.
By the lake her white horse,
Delicately places its silver hoofs;
She laughs, and at once above my head
The barren boughs blossom with flame.
On the unbumt branches scarlet flamelets dance,
Melting the ice-blade coldness of her glance.
I waited, and she came.

Geoff Roberts[1]

[1] First published in *Ocular VI*, Summer 1993

the board

Arthuriana in Popular Culture

PEOPLE

Member Mark Valentine has informed us that **Peter Vansittart**, the historical novelist, died on 4 October 2008 aged 88. He was the author of two strikingly original and poetic novels with an Arthurian theme, *Lancelot* (1978) and *Parsifal* (1988), as well as an equally unusual novel on the other great British hero myth, *The Death of Robin Hood* (1981), and several novels of the Dark Ages. Mark, who wrote about him in *Pendragon XXXI* No 3 (2004), met Peter on several occasions: "he was a perfect gentleman of letters, modest to a fault, always more interested in other writers than himself, and with a trove of unusual and illuminating learning."

The Arthurian scholar **Elisabeth Brewer** died recently, followed by the medieval scholar **Derek Brewer** a few weeks later. Derek's health had been fragile for some time, noted Bonnie Wheeler, of the Department of English and Medieval Studies at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, adding that "both Brewers were scholars and lovers of Arthurian literature and will be much missed." Derek Brewer was founder of the Brewer Press, as well as Boydell and Brewer, publishers of much in the way of Arthurian texts, studies and criticism.

EVENTS

Though the deadline will be long past by the time you read this, Elizabeth Sklar, of the Department of English at Wayne State University, Detroit was seeking paper proposals for the Arthurian Legend section of the **Popular Culture Association's 39th Annual Meeting** in New Orleans on April 8-11, 2009. Papers on all popular treatments of Arthurian Legend, contemporary or historical, in any medium – print text, visual, musical or commercial – were welcome, with presentations on Arthurian representations in non-traditional media (film, TV, the Internet, comics, games) and in the visual arts of particular (but not exclusive) interest. General information, including registration forms for the conference, can be found at http://pcaaca or by writing to Elizabeth Sklar, Area Co-Chair, Arthurian Legend Section, Department of English, Wayne State University, Detroit MI 48202.

There was a call for papers for an international conference on "the *Morte Darthur*, its sources and reception" with the arresting title ***Blood, Sex, Malory***, to take place at the University of Leicester on the 24th and 25th April 2009, with keynote speakers Elizabeth Archibald and Catherine La Farge and Carolyne Larrington as – yes, you guessed it – Round Table chair.

"Recent Arthurian criticism has highlighted such topics as the gendered nature of wounding; the linking of sex and violence; the cultural and textual uses of blood to heal and revivify; the importance and complexity of transgressive kin and marital relationships. *Blood, Sex, Malory* aims to provide a forum in which researchers can explore the diverse associations of sex and blood in the Malorian tradition, encompassing sexuality and sexual activity (and its lack/erasure) and the significance of blood (and blood-shedding), but also the interconnections with gender (biological sex) and familial ('blood') relations in the *Morte* and its sources and later re-workings."

Specialists will be licking their lips (metaphorically speaking, of course), while the conference will in part be celebrating the 75th anniversary of the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript

of the *Morte*. The conference website, containing additional material, is at http://www.le.ac.uk/ee/malory.html[1]

Professor Charles Thomas is one of the senior figures in Dark Age archaeology, innovative and erudite in equal measure. **The Charles Thomas RIC Conference** took place on Saturday October 11th 2008 at the Royal Cornwall Museum. Speakers at this full day conference to celebrate the 80th birthday of Professor Charles Thomas and the 190th year of the Royal Institution of Cornwall included Jacqueline Nowakowski, Oliver Padel, Jeremy Le Grice, Nicholas Thomas, Professor Peter Fowler and Sharron Schwartz. Themes covered included The Cornish Overseas, The Gwithian archaeological digs, Cornish archaeology, Cornish art and the role of the Royal Institution of Cornwall.

With the unwieldy moniker of **Post Roman Early Medieval Archaeology Student Symposium** it's not surprising that the symposium has evolved into PREMASS (even though it's easy to confuse with the Professional Real Estate Marketing Association!). Their 2008 event took place in May 2008 in Exeter, with intriguing sessions entitled, for example "Thinking outside the Box: A Reconsideration of the Use of Chests as Burial Containers in Middle Anglo-Saxon England" and "A Bio-Cultural Analysis of the Health and Lifestyles of Early Medieval Communities from Western Britain and Ireland". There were contributions on post-Roman pottery from Cornwall along with comparisons between the stamped wheel-turned pottery of 4th-century Britain and stamped hand-made pottery in post-Roman Britain, a discussion on the imagery of the Gotlandic Picture Stones and ... the premiere of *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*!

Along with poster presentations, the second day's sessions focused on the early medieval landscape: in Wales Llyn Tegid by Bala was examined, and other sessions were entitled "East Saxon Landscapes of Desire: A Thoroughly Roman Possession", "The Reuse of Prehistoric Monuments in Anglo-Saxon Settlements of the English Midlands", and "Emerging from the Dark Ages: Continuity, Reuse and Movement of Settlement in Anglo-Saxon South-West England". A final session asked "What was Late Antiquity, and did it occur in Britain?"[2]

Alison Skinner reminds us of the *Current Archaeology* conference, the second **Archaeology Festival 2009**, which will be at the University of Wales in Cardiff and the National Museum of Wales during the weekend of February 6th-8th. "Some interesting stuff and very tempting," she writes; "there might potentially be enough of us for a little Pendragon sub group." Details are available from Current Publishing, Lamb House, Church Street, London W4 2PD and *Current Archaeology*'s website (www.archaeology.co.uk).[3]

Since 2005 twenty-eight festivals and similar events have commemorated **Carmarthen**'s Merlin connection and other themes, all thanks to a partnership of local organisations raising over half a million pounds. The "Carmarthen Festivals" project has now met all its objectives, with the third and final **Merlin Festival** in June 2008 being its very last event.[4]

MERLIN'S MART

In May 2008 **Merlin Entertainments Group** acquired the London Aquarium for an undisclosed sum. The group, which also runs the London Eye, Warwick Castle, Madame Tussauds and Legoland, declares itself "a leading name in location based, family entertainment. Its aim is to deliver unique, memorable and rewarding experiences to millions of visitors across its growing estate. Merlin's brands ... will never fail to be distinctive, challenging and innovative. They will, in short, have attitude!" Being a money-making concern (it is owned by a US private equity group and the Dubai Investment Corp) it aims to deliver "the best financial returns in the sector and demonstrate a record of growth in market share that will be unrivalled". The group, which by the end of 2008 will have 58 attractions and 6 hotels in 12 countries across three continents, seems not to trade on the wizardly associations of its name.

The ***Museum Selection*** catalogue for autumn 2008 included an **Arthurian Legend** tapestry in late medieval style for £150 from MuseumSelection.co.uk or by phoning 0870 168 8882. "Evoking tapestries of the 15th century" the "richly detailed" cotton tapestry measures 3 feet by 2 feet, with hanging tabs, and is inspired by Malory. Alternatively you can get the two halves of the illustration as two cushion covers for only £35.00 each from the English Heritage marketing website.[5]

SCREEN NEWS

The new ***Star Trek*** movie, a chronicle of the early days of James Kirk and the *USS Enterprise* crew members, is in post-production, and aficionados are anticipating what Arthurian references might make an appearance. In *Nemesis*, the last Star Trek movie to be released (in 2002) "an Arthurian show-down" between Shinzon and Picard, reminiscent of that between Mordred and Arthur, was noted by an Arthurnet contributor. Another Arthurnet contributor noted that at the start of the movie there's what he took to be a "parallel reference to the [Nennius'] *Historia Brittonum*'s battle-list and Arthur's victories in them all". After discovering that a certain Shinzon has completed a *coup-d'état* in the Romulan Empire Picard asks what anyone knows about him. Data replies, 'Not much. Except that we can infer he is fairly young, and a competent commander.' Riker then adds: 'During the Dominion War, he was involved in twelve major engagements – all successful.'

The Arthurnet contributor concludes that "the writers were setting the scene for that one last battle of '**Camlann**' in space, when Picard meets his 'son' (a younger clone of himself) in a man-to-man struggle to the death." But Picard survives, while it's Data who "dies". We're told that Picard's clone Shinzon reveals himself and his relationship with Picard very suddenly, allies himself with an enemy state, tries to destroy Picard "and, in his final, fatal attempt to do so, draws himself toward Picard along the post that has impaled him". ***Star Trek*** is scheduled to be released in May 2009 in both North America and the UK.

The synopsis for the vampire film ***Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Undead*** tells us that "Julian Marsh is an out of work ladies man who lands a job directing a bizarre adaptation of *Hamlet*. After casting his best friend and his ex-girlfriend in the show, Julian finds himself in the middle of a two thousand year old conspiracy that explains the connection between Shakespeare, the **Holy Grail** and some seriously sexy vampires. It turns out that the play was actually written by a master vampire named Theo Horace and it's up to Julian to recover the Grail in order to reverse the vampire's curse..." This 2008 US-made indie film from C Plus Pictures was written and directed by Jordan Galland.[6]

Fate/stay night (*Feito/sutei naito*) is a Japanese *eroge* visual novel game created by Type-Moon and originally released in 2004 as a PC game. It was adapted into an *anime* television series by Studio Deen broadcast in 2006 and adapted as a manga comic-book series.

Fate/stay night chronicles a two-week period in the life of Shirō, an amateur mechanic in Fuyuki City. Ten years previously Shirō had been caught in a massive fire that killed his parents. As he lay dying he was treated by Kiritsugu Emiya and later adopted. Shirō discovered that Kiritsugu was actually a mage who had failed in his life's ambition to become a "Hero of Justice", a guardian of mankind protecting the weak and innocent. Shirō persuaded a reluctant Kiritsugu to teach him sorcery but found he had no innate talent. Thus far, this is all a familiar trope in fantasy and fairytale.

Fuyuki City is the setting for a war among competing magi or Masters, with seven sorcerers risking their lives to obtain the "legendary wish-granting

[1] http://www.le.ac.uk/ee/news/malory

[2] http://sogaer.exeter.ac.uk/archaeology/conferences/present/premass2008.shtml

[3] http://www.archaeology.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=120&Itemid=98

[4] Ken Day "Merlin Festival Farewell" *Carmarthenshire Life Community 124* (Summer 2008) 12-13

[5] http://www.english-heritageshop.org.uk/ More Arthurian tapestries can be viewed at http://www.talariaenterprises.com/product_lists/tapestry_9.html

[6] http://undeadflick.com/

Holy Grail". Each Master is aided by a Servant; only Servants can retrieve the Holy Grail, which materializes only when there is one Servant left standing. One night Shirō finds himself being asked by a Servant "Are you my Master?" and is unwittingly drawn into the Holy Grail Wars. This sounds to be a unusual cross-cultural take on a Western motif.[7]

According to *Variety* online Showtime Networks and the BBC (who co-produced "The Tudors") are developing a contemporary series retelling of ***Camelot***, though it is not clear if this is based on the musical or is an entirely different concept. Scriptwriter Michael Hirst, who scripted the films *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, will also be co-executive producer on *Camelot*. "The pay cabler and the BBC are co-financing development of scripts for the hourlong project," the website declare, which is yet to get the go-ahead.[8]

John Thiel, editor of the US SF zine *Pablo Lennis*, gives a summary of the plot of an episode of Season 9 of ***Stargate SG-1*** called "Camelot": the team visit a seedy Camelot, seeking Arthur. They camp in a deserted village, and find Merlin's crude hut, also deserted, in a nearby wood (they're seeking "Merlin's Weapon" and "The Cloak"). The character Mitchell is then almost killed by a Black Knight. Mitchell's local lady friend pulls Excalibur out of a stone, and throws it to him so he can defend himself. A hologram Merlin appears, but another of the team, Daniel, disables the machine that enables him to appear, and the Black Knight also disappears. Talk, again, about perming elements! A list of all Series 9 episodes appears on *Wikipedia*; the specific Arthurian episodes are 1 and 2 "Avalon", No 18 "Arthur's Mantle", and No 20 "Camelot". [9]

[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fate/stay_night

[8] Daniel Frankel "Showtime visiting 'Camelot': Network teams with BBC on series" http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117995557.html?categoryid=1236&cs=1

[9] *Pablo Lennis* (June 2008); http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Stargate_SG-_episodes#Season_9

CASTING THE NET

The internet discussion group **Arthurnet** is well overdue a mention in *Pendragon*. Subscribers vary quite a bit, with tenured professors and people working on their doctoral theses in Arthurian literature (ancient or modern), an editor of a Sci-Fi journal and the editor of *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*, teachers, students, New Age enthusiasts and Society for Creative Anachronism folks. "There are people who firmly believe that one must look for a real historical Arthur in the 6th century, and others who care mostly about 12th-15th century French, German, and English Arthurian romances, and others still who are most interested in *The Mists of Avalon* or in the latest fantasy novels."[10]

As you might expect, discussions range widely: there are organized discussions, with a lot of scholarly input, on medieval literature, calls for papers or participation in academic conferences and alerts on the latest *Star Trek* spin-off episode with an Arthurian theme. Arthurnet's hi story began in October 1993 as can be seen by a visit to the archives.[11]

Incidentally, academic, author and member Dan Nastali has kindly publicised the Society in postings, describing it as "a friendly spot for Arthurian enthusiasts of every sort" and characterising the journal as a vehicle for "informed discussions of history, literature and popular culture while retaining a friendly, somewhat informal tone". Arthurnet too retains an enthusiastic tone, ably moderated by Judy Shoaf, and can be subscribed to via http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/jshoaf/Arthurnetfaq.htm

The **Camelot Project** is an authoritative Arthurian website hosted by the University of Rochester in New York (www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cphome.stm). So don't be confused when using a search engine to find not one but at least two references to **Project Camelot**, both guaranteed to increase one's paranoia. The first has as a mission statement, "Our focus includes but is not

[10] http://faculty.smu.edu/arthuriana/arthurnet.htm

[11] http://lists.mun.ca/archives/Arthurnet.html

limited to the following: extraterrestrial visitation and contact, time travel, mind control, classified advanced technology, free energy, possible coming earth changes, and revealing plans that exist to control the human race." Find them at http://www.projectcamelot.net/

The other **Project Camelot** (detailed on Wikipedia) describes "a social science research project" set up by the US Army in 1964. Its goal, we're told, was "to assess the causes of violent social rebellion and to identify the actions a government could take to prevent its own overthrow". The ensuing controversy among social scientists pointed to the belief that such research would "strengthen established government" in putting down revolution in Latin America and elsewhere, and Project Camelot was soon closed down.

Or was it?

PERIODICALS

Here's the place to mention ***Arthuriana***, the journal of the North American branch of the International Arthurian Society. Ever enthralling, the scholarly papers are often leavened by the unexpected, frequently related to popular culture. One such, from *Arthuriana 16.2* (2006: 54-57) is Michael N Salda's "The Worst Arthurian Cartoon Ever". He names and shames Filmation Associates *Daffy Duck & Porky Pig meet the Groovie Goolies* (1972) "in which Daffy produces, directs, and stars in his own 'film,' a cartoon-within-a-cartoon entitled *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*". Despite help from Sylvester, Tweetie Pie, Petunia Pig and Foghorn Leghorn, the film-within-a-film, according to Salda, is "painful to watch".[12]

Periodicals featuring legendary Arthurian sites recently include *The National Trust Magazine*. In its Autumn 2008 issue it mentioned the tenth anniversary of its stewardship of a large part of **Snowdon**. The Hafod y Llan estate has benefited from the re-introduction of a "keystone" species, Welsh black cattle or *gwartheg duon*, "symbolic" of Snowdonia as they not only helped create the landscape but were central to its economics in the 17th century. Watkin Path runs entirely through the estate and is one of the principal access routes up to the summit of Snowdon. On the Trust's website we're told that since 1998 the winter snowline on Y Wyddfa ("The Tomb", grave of a giant killed by Arthur) has retreated around 800ft or 243 metres, and the extent of the snow cover is only half of what it was a decade ago.

The same issue also features the "land of Avalon". After nearly two centuries of draining and intensive farming the Somerset levels are returning to a more sustainable environment. From **Glastonbury Tor** the viewer can not only survey the largest area of lowland grazing marsh in the UK but also, the appropriately named Stephen Moss claims, picture a landscape "where those two great English monarchs – the mythical **Arthur** and the more tangible Alfred – made their mark on English history".[13]

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has become the farming tenant on Ynys Enlli or **Bardsey Island**, the isle off the Lleyn Peninsula in Wales which some claim is the original **Avalon**. Its newletter tells us that the Countryside Council has designated the island as a National Nature Reserve, providing "vital habitat for key Welsh bird species such as the **chough** ... with around three-quarters of the UK's population living here". As we all know by now, the chough traditionally is one of Arthur's reincarnations. Another of the RSPB Cymru's nature reserves is **Carngafallt**, in mid Wales; in folklore from the 9th century this is where Arthur's hound **Cabal** left an imprint of his paw on a rock.[14]

Mention of Burne-Jones' *The Last Sleep of Arthur at Avalon* occurs in ***The Field*** (June 2008, 47), quoting him as writing before his death in 1898, "I need nothing but my hands and brain to fashion a world which nothing can disturb." His vision of the dying king may be his own: "In my own world I am king," he wrote

[12] http://faculty.smu.edu/arthuriana/

[13] Stephen Moss "On the level" *National Trust Magazine* (Autumn 2008) 78-80

[14] "Wildlife wins on Bardsey Island" *Y Barcud: RSPB News from Wales* (November 2008)

during this period.[15] Member Paul Parry draws our attention to the sale of thirty large stained glass panels by Burne-Jones with religious themes, "a remarkable bargain for owners of country houses" with between five and fifty grand to spare, according to *The Field*; they were originally produced for Cheadle Royal, a voluntary mental asylum outside Manchester.

The ***West Wales Dowsers Society Newsletter 97*** for April-May 2007 reminds us that Raymond Street of Meirion Mill, Dinas Mawddwy, erected a memorial stone to Arthur as a result of a dream he'd had in 1994. The stone has a plaque attached reading *Er cof am Arthur* ("In memory of Arthur") and is near Maes y Camlan which Laurence Main believes is the site of Arthur's last battle.

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

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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)

The Newsletter of the Society of Ley Hunters *Patterns within the landscape* £12.50 (£18.00 non-EU) Gerald Frawley, 17 Victoria Street, Cheltenham GL50 4HU *leyhunter@googlemail.com*

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50TH ANNIVERSARY

The Pendragon Society was founded in 1959, and 2009 marks its 50th anniversary. We have been planning ways to mark this jubilee, and Society members should receive details of these in due course.

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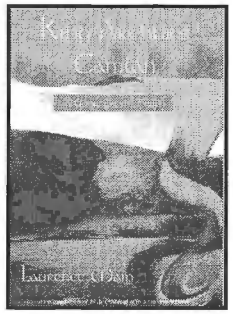

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West Wales Dowsers Society Newsletter

[15] See also Fiona MacCarthy's feature article on *The Sleep of Arthur* "'Secure me a famous wall'" *Guardian Review* May 17 2008 reminding us that the artist's identification with Arthur "became such that his letters from the studio were headed 'Avalon'. 'I am at Avalon – not yet in Avalon,' he wrote."

Review extra **Vivat Rex!** *New Arthurian titles Chris Lovegrove*

While excluding fiction, pamphlets and periodicals (and anything including the word "grail") I still recently noted in excess of forty non-fiction volumes with Arthur *or* Arthurian *in their titles lined up on my shelves, measuring (if you're interested) over four feet in length. And that's rather a modest number compared to the shelves of many enthusiasts and, of course, most academics. So, what is there about a clutch of recent books with* Arthur *or* Arthurian *on their covers that may possibly deliver what the previous ones may only promise? Whatever else they may collectively demonstrate these works are testament to the fact that, contrary to persistent obituaries, the King is not dead!*

Alan Lupack **The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend**
Oxford University Press 2007 £11.99 PB 496pp 978-0-19-921509-6

In the late sixties the Pendragon Society added a further clause to its original aims (of stimulating interest in Arthur and investigating the history and archaeology of the Matter of Britain), namely "to study the significance – past, present and future – of the Arthurian legends". This rather ponderous mission statement of a marginalised special interest group has in fact become surprisingly mainstream both in academic circles and in popular culture, spawning a library fit for a modern-day Tower of Babel. Alan Lupack's *Guide* is the kind of vademecum Pendragons yearned for in those early days.

This massive survey (nearly 500 pages in the 2007 paperback edition) aims to introduce the general reader to a study of the Arthurian legends. As well as a general bibliography of basic resources for such a study, each of its seven chapters concludes with its own more detailed bibliography. These seven chapters deal with historical approaches to Arthur from early literature through to historical novels, followed by the romance tradition inaugurated by Chrétien de Troyes and then specified chapters on Malory, the Holy Grail, Gawain, Merlin and, last but not least, Tristan and Isolt. As well as an indispensable index, the author includes a cross-referencing dictionary of Arthurian people, places and things, ranging from *Accolon* to *Yvain*.

Lupack's approach is typically North American in its thoroughness: wide-ranging research, spot-on synopses and punchy summaries. For all its encyclopaedic coverage I would still have liked a more personal response at times, the sort of response that indicates what drives an academic to root around in all those obscure corners of the Arthurian *mythos* and which occasionally surfaces, as in his Afterword: "The stories of Arthur and the knights and ladies of his court are so enduring because their themes are universal... In its great variety of tales and characters, the Arthurian legend seems a perfect medium for expressing concerns that are both personal and global, ideals as well as fears, aspirations as well as anxieties." Authoritative but also fascinating, and perfect for dipping into as well as for reference, the *Guide* surely is to the Arthurian enthusiast as Virgil was to Dante. (Whether this leads you to purgatory, hell or paradise is another matter however!) ☙

Derek Bryce **The Three Arthurs: history, legend and quest**
Llanerch Press 2006 £10.00 PB 160pp 1 86143 143 0

Derek Bryce was founder of the imprint Llanerch, publishing translations and facsimile editions of out-of-print works, many of broad Arthurian interest, for which we must be eternally grateful – I know I am! His long-time interest in mysticism and what is described as "the esoteric side of comparative religion" has contributed to this investigation of Arthur's significance. As his preface says, "There have been umpteen books published on Arthur during the past fifty years. I can think of no apology for writing this one, so here it is." What makes this approach different is in considering Arthur's three roles: the historical figure, the Arthur of medieval legend and lastly Arthur "as guru or spiritual head of an order of chivalry".

Bryce gallops through the usual sources for an historical figure, principally early Welsh poetry and Nennius, though much space is given to Gildas who doesn't actually mention Arthur. In his discussion of the medieval sources of the legend Bryce largely (but not blindly) follows Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd in arguing that the Welsh *Brut* histories, rather than merely building on Geoffrey of Monmouth,

preserve genuine Welsh traditions which reflect real events of relevance to a supposed Arthurian history. Much of his argument centres around battles attributed to Arthur: Badon was fought near Welshpool, other battles in Scotland and Camlan in North Wales, in the plain of the River Dovey. I find much of this very debateable and, at times, confusing, especially Bryce's habit of postponing further discussion to later in his text. There are occasional factual errors: for example, he is wrong to state that Tintagel "seems to have been a dark-age monastery" and that there is "no clear evidence of an early fortification" – ever since a ground fire in 1983 there has been evidence that Tintagel was a military site and that Radford's 1930s hypothesis of a monastery was mistaken.

In his consideration of Arthur as a guru or mentor of a group of young warriors, there is further inconclusiveness. We flit from Sinbad the Sailor to Sir Gawain, from Mithraism to the Templars, from Peredur to the Green Man. This is argument through the free association of ideas, and I remain unconvinced, much as I was unmoved by his earlier *The Mystical Way and the Arthurian Quest* (Samuel Weiser, 1996). Bryce's underlying intention – to present Arthur as an exemplar of spirituality – is laudable but, I regret to say, let down by presentation. ☙

Neil L Thomas **King Arthur & Britannia, AD 495**
Published by the author 2007 £8.00 / AUD$15.00 PB 36pp illus
enjaytom@jeack.com.au or 81 Hilton Street, Mount Waverley, Victoria 3149, Australia

The Dream of Rhonabwy in the Mabinogion collection is a wonderfully evocative story, composed in the style of the earlier Four Branches and *Culhwch and Olwen* but deliberately aiming to be more complex in its descriptive range. Neil Thomas, who has written for *Pendragon* before,[1] here presents his case for the *Dream*'s symbols and allegories to be clues for his reconstruction of Dark Age Britain.

Thomas first sets the historical scene, and here we immediately run into controversy: the author seems to accept the arguments of Phillips and Keatman's *King Arthur: the true story* (1992) that the "original" King Arthur was Owein Ddantgwyn, with all that implies for chronological red herrings. I won't rehearse the case against *The True Story* here, but suggest that those interested read Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews' comments on the Bad Archaeology website.[2] Thomas then goes on to suggest that plague played a major role in ensuring "no educated persons lived to record historical events" – a debateable non-sequitur, I think – but then goes on to quote the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, thereby apparently contradicting himself.

The next part reconstructs the first recounting of *The Dream of Rhonabwy* in the aftermath of the British victory at Badon, placed precisely in 495. He then explains the significance of the boardgame of *gwyddbwyll* which Arthur and Owein play in the story (the reasons why Arthur needs to play his alleged *alter ego* are unconvincing) by reference to the arrival of messengers, their symbols, colours and allegiances; critics might find his explanations unpersuasive as they postulate five anachronistic Roman-style legions emerging to fight the Saxons at Badon.

There is something to be said in favour of investigating the meaning behind the mysterious boardgame described in *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, and Thomas has elsewhere done us a service by looking at aspects of this in some detail. However, I feel that this self-published booklet is far too diffuse and poorly argued to sustain any credence, and its potential audience hard to define. ☙

August Hunt **Shadows in the Mist: the life and death of King Arthur**
Hayloft Publishing 2006 £17.00 PB 172pp 1 904524 38 9

Shadows is a book specifically written to try to reverse the academic trend of what we might call "Arthur denial", the apparently increasing tendency by scholars to question the historical existence of either Arthur or even an Arthur-type figure. Moreover, *Shadows* not only argues for Arthur's reality but also claims to identify areas of military activity and his final resting place.

[1] Neil L Thomas "Gwyddbwyll and Fox & Geese" *Pendragon XXVII* No 3 (Winter 1998-99) 15-19
[2] http://www.badarchaeology.net/controversial/arthur_archaeology.php

It is hard to fault the author's enthusiasm and erudition for Arthurian matters: graduating in 1985 with a degree in Celtic and Germanic Studies, he writes regularly for the Vortigern Studies website and is the author of a range of Arthurian fiction. He gets a thumbs-up of sorts from John Matthews' Foreword, which describes Hunt's "bold new interpretation" of Arthur's theatres of war in northern Britain and his stimulus for "radical rethinking" on Arthurian reality. On the whole I find I agree with the "bold" and "radical" descriptions but I certainly have a number of caveats regarding the interpretations and rethinking.

Hunt sets up the case against a West Country Arthur, based on Geoffrey of Monmouth, which anyway few students seriously support these days. He proposes instead an Arthur of Dalriada (in present-day western Scotland) that has had its adherents for a while, notably Richard Barber back in the 1970s. He places Arthur's centre of operations in Cumbria, in north-west England, where he then locates most of Arthur's traditional battles, including Camlann at Castlesteads (Badon is however at Buxton spa in the Peak District). He goes on to identify Avalon as Abalava Roman fort on the western end of Hadrian's Wall. Now not all of these identifications are novel (Buxton is new to me, however), but what is different is Hunt's melding of placename, linguistic, literary and mythological studies, together with re-interpretation of limited archaeological investigations. Much of it is fascinating, if not always convincing, but what I find less persuasive is Hunt's inclusion of anachronistic High Medieval material – Excalibur, the Sword in the Stone, Camelot – and mythological motifs and characters – Avalon, Morgan le Fay and Uther.

A couple of other distractions for me were the lack of index and the greyness of print and presentation, serious barriers to bringing things into focus. Hunt's ferreting of leads from obscure sources and questioning of academics is always stimulating, but in trying to explain everything he fails to convince. The present-day Arthur of legend has absorbed motifs from everywhere and every period; if you are trying to get to the root you have to ignore all grafts and secondary growths.[3] ☙

Thomas Green **Concepts of Arthur**
Tempus Publishing 2007 £18.99 PB 282pp 978-0-7524-4461-1

Tom Green's study follows a growing scholarly trend to treat the hypothesis of an historical Arthur seriously, even if it means ultimately demolishing the case for a genuine hero of the same name. Nick Higham, for example, showed how the 9th-century *Historia Brittonum* (attributed to Nennius) was put together with a particular political agenda in mind and so must not be relied on to reconstruct post-Roman British history. Unlike Higham (who accepted that there might possibly have been some Arthur-type warlord at the core of the Nennian construct) Green argues, I think persuasively, that there never was such a prototype historical figure but that the earliest sources (some contemporary with and others predating Nennius) make it clear, first, that Arthur was a mythological figure, defender of Britain from giants, monsters, witches and the like; and, secondly, that it is Nennius who first historicizes Arthur by pitting him against human adversaries – such as the Saxons – and attributing to him a selection of mythological and genuine battles. Those who instinctively felt that Arthur was more an archetypal hero than a flesh-and-blood warrior may now feel more vindicated.

If I have a criticism it's this: that Green's dense discussion frequently repeats itself, perhaps reflecting the fact that much of his material appeared as scholarly papers on the web. This is a shame as his message and arguments, while needing to be academically rigorous, also deserve to be more generally accessible. If potential readers can stick with it, *Concepts of Arthur* is an inspiring read which does not disappoint those who want a satisfying contextualising of disparate evidence. ☙

[3] Consult online articles by August Hunt at http://www.goecities.com/vortigernstudies/articles/articles.htm "The articles marked in red as 'updated' or 'rewritten' contain the most recent findings, a few of which differ from the material presented in my book," the author writes. "All will be brought into better focus in my next book, *The Secrets of Avalon*."

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