

MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

Vol. 38 No. 4

April 2001

Whole No. 229



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Special Arthurian Issue

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Cover: "Merlin's First Try" by Kevin Farrell © 2000

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publication, letters,
comments, etc.)

Eleanor M. Farrell, Editor



Subscriptions & Back Order Information:

See inside back cover

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Edith Crowe, Corresponding Secretary



DEADLINES for receiving material for each issue of *Mythprint* are the 1st of the preceding month (eg, May 1st for the June issue).

Interview with Stephen R. Lawhead

by Donovan Mattole

Stephen R. Lawhead is the best-selling author of the 5-book Arthurian series, *The Pendragon Cycle*, which includes *Taliesin*, *Merlin*, *Arthur*, *Pendragon*, and *Grail*. Lawhead has also published a stand-alone novel telling the story of the return of King Arthur to modern day Britain, titled *Avalon*. (All are available as mass-market paperbacks from Avon.) Below is an exclusive interview I conducted with Stephen for *Mythprint* about his Arthurian series. Stephen's official web site can be found at www.stephenlawhead.com. For farther discussion, please join the Lawhead mailing list at www.aracnet.com/~petercj/srll.

Q. Initially, what led you to research and write about Celtic and Arthurian legend?

I honestly cannot say where or when the first Arthurian inkling appeared. But I know I toyed with the idea for several years before seriously considering it, and then I waited several more years for my writing skills, and/or confidence, to develop to the point where I felt I might be able to do justice to the material.

Then, it was a matter of finding a way into the story—by that I mean finding an interesting, if not unique, perspective from which to begin. This I found one day by accident. I was looking up something in an old reference book I have—called a reader's encyclopedia—and came across an entry for Lyonesse which linked Atlantis with the Arthurian legend. I had never heard of this connection before, and began wondering where and how this had come about.

And then I got hold of a copy of Professor John Rhys' book on Celtic folklore where I read his musings on Lyonesse and the Fair Folk, who were imagined to be a remnant of a once-great race who vanished in the West. This gave me a way into the Arthurian tradition which was fresh, yet wholly consistent with Celtic Britain.

Q. Although classified in fantasy and dealing with legend, your series doesn't include magic or fantastical beasts such as dragons. Your latest series, The

Celtic Crusades, seems more historical fiction than fantasy. Do you object to being labeled a fantasy writer, when in reality most of your books might not be considered fantasy by modern standards?

Labeling is a problem, but it is not something I've been able to do much about one way or another. Most days, I'm happy just to be on the shelves in the bookstore. Other times, I chafe against it, and feel the genre pigeonhole is a little too confining.

Through my website, I hear from many people who tell me they never read fantasy, but they read my books and appreciate the amount of historical research that goes into them. This is gratifying, certainly, and I cannot help but feel there are a lot more people who would like the books, but the genre label 'Fantasy' gets in the way. Generally speaking, readers of fantasy are not so picky. They seem perfectly happy to follow wherever I go, so long as there is a rattling good story involved.

Q. You originally moved your family to Oxford while researching this series. What is it about England that has kept you there?

Britain has proven to be an inexhaustible mine of historical interest for me—every historical period is represented here: from the Stone Age to the Space Age. Everywhere you turn you are confronted by some fascinating historical fact or event. This little island is a very special place, and I'm not the only one who thinks so. I suppose I will stay until they throw me out.

Q. Based on your research in Celtic legend and medieval history, how much of the legend of Arthur and Merlin do you think is factual?

Like many people, I believe there is a kernel of fact at the heart of the Arthurian legend. Personally, I think there was a war leader by roughly that name who lived and did, in the main, what the old tales record.

But what makes the legends important, what makes them live is not the factuality—the ability to say ‘Arthur really existed.’ What makes the legends live is their mythic power. The East has many well-known mythic strands; Arthur represents the West’s prime myth, and as such it exerts a very powerful influence, even today.

Q. I especially love the prayers, songs and the poetry in the cycle. I always feel inspired and encouraged by these passages. How much of your faith do you feel is imparted to these sections and how has your faith shaped the stories?

I do not approach writing as a way of expounding my personal faith. But I think that being a Christian has made me more sensitive to areas of research which other writers usually avoid. It has also given me another avenue to explore in storytelling which is not only authentic to the time, but also to the material itself. This not only lends a much deeper resonance to the story, it gives the legends a wider context. I like to think that it is not a matter of adding in something extra, but of restoring what others so often leave out.

Q. Would you elaborate on the chronological order of the series?

This has become a source of great interest—not to say confusion—for a great many readers. It is a tedious explanation, though not terribly difficult. First a little background: *The Pendragon Cycle* was conceived as a tale in four volumes. Unfortunately, by the time the second volume was completed the original publisher’s interest had waned somewhat in the publishing of fiction; in short, they were no longer interested in a four-book series, so I concluded the set in three. Then went on to the *Song of Albion*, which I wrote for another publisher.

In the meantime, *The Pendragon Cycle* was picked up by a mass market publisher who not only brought the books out in paperback, but commissioned the remaining volume, *Pendragon*, as a way of refreshing the series. With me so far? Okay. It goes like this: *Taliesin* is first, fol-

lowed by *Merlin*, and the first two sections of *Arthur*. Then, and this is where the confusion comes in, the entire book *Pendragon* is next, and the series concludes with the final section of *Arthur*. Inevitably, a few tiny anomalies crept in because of the way in which I was forced to collapse the original design of the series.

I would like to say at this point, however, that it is not necessary to know any of this to enjoy the stories. The books can be read on their own, independent of one another. One way to think of it is that in the first three books you have the story of Arthur and his world, and in the fourth volume, you have an illuminating incident from his life not covered in the other books. The same could be said for *Grail*, which concerns the story of the Holy Grail—much a part of the Arthurian mythos, but a part only lightly touched on in the other books.

Q. I love the pronunciation guide you have on your web site. Did you make up these names yourself or are they all from ancient sources?

They are all actual names culled from various ancient sources. One of the rules I’ve developed for writing is: Never make up something when you can steal. It is much easier to lift a name from an ancient text than go to all the trouble of making up something that probably wouldn’t be as good anyway. Also, the names all have meanings, and the meanings are usually pertinent to the story. Often, I do not say what the meanings are; but those who care to delve into it a little will find their efforts rewarded.

Q. Unlike the majority of modern Arthurian series in print, Christianity is portrayed as force for good in the Pendragon Cycle. What is your opinion on the popular interpretations of Arthur as a defender of the ancient pagan religions?

They’re just wrong. And that’s not my opinion, either. Indeed, it is not a matter of opinion at all. Here, let me read you this quote from the book, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, by Dr. W. Davies, which is part of the *Studies in Early History of*

Britain series published by the University of Leicester Press. 'The religious culture of early medieval Wales is overwhelmingly Christian . . . Early in the sixth century, Gildas [who was born in the year of Arthur's greatest victory] was already referring to pre-Christian times and practices as to the distant past.' Pagan Britain had ceased to exist by Arthur's time, and what is now Wales, where Arthur spent most of his early life, had long been Christianized. Dr. Davies goes on to point out that in such sources as the *Historia Brittonum*, the only references to paganism occur in mentions of non-British areas of the country—the Saxon Shore or Pictish lands, for example—and observes that, 'In the face of a total absence of references to British who were not Christian and the absence of any tradition of [late] conversion or of pagan practices or practitioners, we must conclude that Wales was an essentially Christian country.'

Now that's just one book, of course. One example. And there are many more. Indeed, check out what historian John Morris has to say about the Celtic church in his landmark book, *The Age of Arthur*. Any number of genuine resource materials tell the same story. Britain in the time of Arthur was predominately Christian, and anyone who fails to take that into account for whatever reason is leaving out a very important part of the story. In other words, you have only to read what was going on in Britain with the Celtic church at that time to realize there is no way the real Arthur could have been anything other than what the legends claim: that he was a Christian king, if not the first Christian King of Britain.

Whew! Having got all that off my chest, I realize neo-pagans need heroes just like everybody else, and it is no surprise that they should try to press the Arthurian legends into their own mold—perhaps because it lends paganism the aura of validity it so obviously lacks.

Q: On the Stephen Lawhead website, your wonderful descriptions of feasts and food has been

brought up on more than one occasion by readers begging for recipes. How authentic are these feasts?

As authentic as I can make them within the confines of the story. I scour various sources for records of what people ate and the part food played in celebrations of the past. Believe it or not, I often tone down the menu, so to speak, because modern readers would have difficulty crediting all the things people used to eat, and apparently, enjoy.

Q: You begin the series with the destruction of Atlantis and at the end of the book Avalon, which takes place in the near future, Atlantis is found again. Although not officially a part of the cycle, is Avalon the final conclusion to the cycle?

As a wise man once said: 'Never say never.' And I know a lot of readers would like to see the series continue; however, I have no plans at present to extend the cycle any further.

Q: Many of your fans for years now have been clamoring for another fantasy novel. Can you share with us what you are currently working on and what else might be coming out in the next couple of years?

The next book to be published is the last volume of *The Celtic Crusades*, which is entitled *The Mystic Rose*. For those who have been following the series, the discovery and acquisition of a valuable relic forms part of the story. The first book, *The Iron Lance*, concerned the lance of the crucifixion which the Crusaders found in Antioch; in book two, *The Black Rood*, it was the cross of the crucifixion discovered in Jerusalem after the Crusaders regained the city; in book three, it is the Grail. For this tale, I depart from the Arthurian tradition concerning the Holy Grail and instead follow the Spanish legends in which the cup of the Last Supper surfaced in Spain during the crusades against the Moors in the reconquest.

Beyond that? I am already hard at work on the new project. And I never, hardly ever, talk about work in progress.

Arthur in Canada: The *Cornish Trilogy* of Robertson Davies

The trilogy of novels by Canadian writer Robertson Davies, so called after its central character Francis Cornish, is of modern treatments of the Arthurian story the most oblique. Where other Arthurians address the story directly, albeit from a modern point of view—feminist, historical post-Roman Britain, minor character—Davies's three novels are as much comment on the story as re-telling of it, while his major Arthur figure, Francis Cornish, is semi-concealed behind a screen of more prominent characters with Arthurian references.

Volume I, The Rebel Angels begins with Francis Cornish's death, and tells little about him except that (like the mythic Arthur) he is an elusive figure, a central vacancy outlined by other characters' response to him. Much of this book focuses on the cataloguing and bestowal of his immense art collection. *Volume II, What's Bred in the Bone* flashes back to Francis's birth in Canadian Blairlogie, his Oxford education, his experience as an art-restorer (read *faker*) in Germany just before World War II, and post-war career as an art collector and expert. *Vol. III, The Lyre of Orpheus* is last in internal as well as external chronology. It recounts the efforts of Francis's younger brother Arthur to finance (with his brother's money, now in trust) the writing and production of a modern opera, *Arthur of Britain, or The Magnanimous Cuckold*, making the intent of the entire trilogy at last explicit.

The magnanimous cuckold—Arthur in the medieval story, Arthur Cornish in the last volume—is in actuality Francis Cornish, whose love for his faithless cousin and wife Ismay is a continuous *leit-motif* throughout the story. Not Arthur's military greatness or his kingship, but his generosity in love, typified by his forgiveness of Guinevere, is for Davies the central theme of the story. *What's Bred in the Bone* reveals the essential Arthurian allusion in Francis's seduc-

tion by Ismay, pregnant with another man's child, at Tintagel in Cornwall, long associated with the birth of Arthur. The episode recalls both the deception/seduction of Arthur's mother Igraine by his father Uther, who comes to her at Tintagel disguised as her husband, and the later equally important deception/seduction of Lancelot by Galahad's mother Elaine.

In Davies's ironic version the equally innocent, equally sexually deceived Francis replaces both Igraine and Lancelot. All three are used without their knowledge to legitimate a child, but in Davies's version the child is neither Arthur nor Galahad, but a vapid lady pony-breeder who has little to do with the action. Although the parallel is clear, Davies' intention in constructing it is to explore the character of the cuckold rather than to celebrate the consequent child.

There is also a Merlin reference in Francis's art-apprenticeship to Tancred Saraceni, a mysterious "art-expert" reputed to have the evil eye. Saraceni's tutelage encourages Francis to explore and allegorize his life by painting a medieval-style triptych of *The Marriage at Cana* with visual allusions to his own failed marriage and through it to Arthur's. *The Lyre of Orpheus*, Davies's most explicit reference to the Arthurian legend, uses parallels to comment on the mythic importance of the story. The opera within the book is itself the central character, and, as its subtitle makes clear, focuses on the love-triangle of Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot, with direct comparisons to the modern triangle of Arthur Cornish, his wife Maria, and the opera's director, the flamboyant Welshman Geraint Powell. Great myths, Davies seems to be saying, have a life of their own, and because they mythologize the always-repeated and critical crises in human life, have relevance to every reader in every age.

Essay by Verlyn Flieger

Art: Michel Delving Mathom-house

MIKE W. BARR AND BRIAN BOLLAND, *Camelot 3000*. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1988. ISBN 0-930289-30-7, tp, \$14.95.

T. H. White titled his massive Arthurian work *The Once and Future King*. This “graphic novel” addresses the question of Arthur as “future king.” During the period 1982 through 1985, DC Comics published Barr & Bolland’s tale in serial fashion. The story has been available in a trade paperback compilation since 1988.

In the year 3000, Earth—and England in particular—suffers from an alien invasion. A young man, Tom Prentice, who had been working on an archeological dig at Glastonbury, accidentally opens Arthur’s tomb. In England’s hour of need, Arthur awakens, ready to fight whatever threat endangers his land.

The story has its elements of straight-out adventure. And certainly, the reincarnated triangle of Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere provides romance. What is unusual about the tale is its mix of fantasy and science fiction. Yet, the creators have concocted a reasonable premise for this mix. In some ways, the story is very much “of its day” in the way it addresses questions of sexual identity (especially since it was intended for “a mature audience”). The fate of Sir Tristan, reincarnated in a woman’s body, in particular provides that “dating”. When published, the Tristan subplot was probably considered daringly bold. Now it is just another twist in the story. However, as the characters are given sufficient depth, Tristan’s dilemma works as a story and not just a polemic. Another strength in the characterization in this tale is the presentation of Arthur himself. Too often Arthur gets short-changed in stories, as if storytellers don’t quite know what to make of him. Here, and perhaps

because of the comic book background of the creators, he is treated as a hero, one born and raised.

Perhaps that is one of the values in the comic book medium. In that realm of storytelling, a writer does not have to apologize for (or explain away, or downplay) a Hero.

I mean a Hero who lives to serve others, who knows how to lead, who doesn’t feel uncomfortable with leadership and dealing with problems and conflict head on. Too often have I read of heroes who agonize over their growth into “Heroic Stature.” Here was a hero who was already there, and whose agony centered on the more poignant matter of emotional betrayal from those he loved most.

In any case, the playing out of Arthurian themes against the backdrop of futuristic science fiction worked well in this tale. After reading *Camelot 3000*, I realized it had satisfied me much more than several other Arthurian redactions have.

Reviewed by Sarah Beach



I see from the climbing pathway
the Severn’s flood below,
and make, to ease my habit,
one last song ere I go;

that if by Thames and Severn
new cities come to be
they shall hear a far sweet echo
of the great king’s chivalry.

Charles Williams
Taliessin’s Song of Lancelot’s Mass

Activity Calendar

Matthew Winslow, Discussion Group Secretary

Chartered Groups

CALIFORNIA

Greater Los Angeles: NIGGLE'S PARISH

Gracia Fay Ellwood,

Los Angeles/Pasadena: MYDGARD

Lee Speth,

San Francisco Bay Area: KHAZAD-DUM

Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe,

April: *The Avram Davidson Treasury*

May: Mervyn Peake short stories (in *Peake's Progress*)

June: *The Hashish Man and Other Stories* by Lord

Dunsany

July: *The Rhinoceros Who Quoted Nietzsche* by Peter S. Beagle

COLORADO

Denver area: FANUIDHOL ("CLOUDY HEAD")

Patricia Yarrow,

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washinn & Suburbs: KNOSSOS

Mimi Stevens,

April: *The Gumshoe, the Witch and the Virtual Corpse* by Keith Hartman

May: *The Wild Road* and *The Golden Cat* by Gabriel King

HAWAII

Oahu: SAMMATH NAUR

Steve Brown,

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge: ROKE

Sally Budd,

MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor-Flint: GALADHREMMIN-ENNORATH

Dave & Grace Lovelace,

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis-St. Paul: RIVENDELL

David Lenander,

NEVADA

Reno: CRICKHOLLOW

Joanne Burnett-Bowen,

April: *The Bloody Sun* by Marion Zimmer Bradley

OREGON

Mid-Willamette Valley Area

Donovan Mattole,

PENNSYLVANIA

Lancaster Area: C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS

Neil Gussman,

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia: THE COLUMBIA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY

Nina Fowler,

WASHINGTON

Seattle: MITHLOND

John James,



32nd Annual Mythopoeic Conference

August 3-6, 2001

Clark Kerr Campus, Berkeley, CA

Theme:

"Many Dimensions: Modern Supernatural Fiction"

Author Guest of Honor: Peter S. Beagle

Scholar Guest of Honor: David Llewellyn Dodds

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee: *THE BURRAHOBBITS*

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]

April: *Children of Green Knowe* by L.M. Boston

May: *The Merlin of St. Gille's Well* by Ann Chamberlin

June: *Crescent City Rhapsody* by Kathleen Ann Goonan,
& summer picnic

July: *World Without End* by Sean Russell

Special Interest Group

THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP

Carl Hostetter, [REDACTED]

www.elvish.org. Newsletter, *Vinyar Tengwar*. Journal,

Parma Eldalamberon: Christopher Gilson, [REDACTED]

Correspondence Groups

BUTTERBUR'S WOODSHED (general fantasy)

Diane Joy Baker, [REDACTED]

May: 2001 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award nominees

July: *Stately Homes: Bigger on the Inside*

ONCE UPON A TIME (children's fantasy)

Laura Krentz, [REDACTED]

Online Discussion Groups

MYTHSOC E-LIST

Society activities and general book-related discussion.

COINHERENCE

Online discussion of Charles Williams

David Davis: [REDACTED]

Our 2001 conference celebrates the role of Charles Williams as one of the founders of this currently popular genre. Our Scholar Guest of Honor, David Llewellyn Dodds, edited *Charles Williams (Arthurian Poets)*, a collection of Arthurian poetry published by Boydell & Brewer in 1991. Our Author Guest of Honor will be Peter S. Beagle, among the finest of modern fantasists and two-time Mythopoeic Fantasy Award winner.

Paper Call

Papers dealing with the general conference theme are encouraged, as are those examining Charles Williams' role and influence in this genre. We also invite papers focusing on the work and interests of our Guests of Honor, or on the other Inklings (especially Tolkien and Lewis). Papers on other fantasy authors and themes are also welcome. We are interested in papers from a variety of perspectives and disciplines.

Papers should be suitable for oral presentation within a time period of 20 to 45 minutes, leaving 10-15 minutes for questions. They should conform to the *MLA Style Manual*. Papers chosen for presentation at the conference will be considered for publication in *Mythlore*, the refereed journal of the Mythopoeic Society. **Deadline: April 30, 2001.** Abstracts to: Edith L. Crowe, [REDACTED]

Registration \$45 for Mythopoeic Society members/\$55 for non-members. More information:

Bonnie Rauscher, Registrar

Book Review

ALAN LUPACK AND BARBARA TEPA LUPACK, *King Arthur in America*. Arthurian Studies XLI. Cambridge; Rochester, N.Y.: D. S. Brewer, 1999. ISBN 0-85991-543-3, hb, xiv, 382 pp. \$75.00.

Much has been written discussing the pervasive influence that the Matter of Britain has had upon both producers and consumers of creative works. Entire books have been devoted to its verbal and visual interpretation the last two centuries. Retelling the mythos in a modern fantasy novel has become practically a cottage industry (or in the case of *The Mists of Avalon*, something more on the scale of a multinational conglomerate). More than one critical eyebrow might be raised at the prospect of yet another examination of Arthurian influence. What could it possibly say that hasn't been said? In the case of *King Arthur in America* (a Mythopoeic Scholarship Award finalist last year) the answer is "quite a bit."

The authors have wisely chosen to wade into the vast sea of Arthurian material with the life-line a specific theme, and not simply to look generally at its influence on American literature and popular culture. Their more focused intention is, as they indicate in the preface, "... to resolve a paradox: the tremendous appeal of the Arthurian legends in America, where they are even more popular than in Britain." The paradox, of course, that at first glance the Arthurian mythos is based on values that are antithetical to those of the USA—a monarchy and an aristocracy based on inheritance. Although their theme is fairly specific, they cast a wide net—chronologically from as early as 1807 through fantasy novels of the 1990s; and from such canonically blessed authors as Faulkner and Fitzgerald to popular literature and culture of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Along the way, they identify a number of techniques used by American authors to "democratize" the Matter of Britain.

One of the most pervasive is to relegate Arthur himself to the background in favor of secondary or peripheral characters, or of original characters placed into an Arthurian setting. The idea of Camelot as ideal society is more important than the figure of the King, and more in keeping with the "American Dream." The Knights of the Round Table, who had to earn their place by doing perilous deeds and protecting the weak, can be turned into a meritocracy with little effort. The figure of Galahad was particularly attractive to Americans because his position was due less to his birth than to his innate moral qualities. The Grail Quest was also a popular theme, particularly in the nineteenth century; it is easy to see the attractiveness of this motif in a nation built by immigrants and pioneers. The more cynical twentieth century found the themes of the Fisher King and the Waste Land more to the point.

Three of the book's eight chapters are devoted to Arthurian themes in the work of authors prominent in the canon of mainstream literature. Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Faulkner share a chapter, while Steinbeck has a chapter all to himself. King Arthur and John Steinbeck might not have been an obvious combination to many readers before the posthumous publication of his *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*. The Tupacks state that this unfinished retelling of Malory had the "potential" of ranking with Tennyson and White as "High-points of Arthurian literature" had Steinbeck finished it. Steinbeck's letters make it clear that the Matter of Britain, particularly as presented by Malory, seized hold of his imagination at an early age. They discuss Steinbeck's lesser-known first novel, *Cup of Gold*, with its Grail Quest theme, and Arthurian themes in his better-known novels. Another chapter, "Contemporary Novelists," is actually devoted to nine *mainstream* novelists

exclusively. Thomas Berger's *Arthur Rex* is included; in the others the Arthurian symbolism is less obvious, but usually convincing.

The last chapter, "The Arthurian Tradition in American Popular Culture," includes fantasy-ghetto novelists. Their works are not analyzed as novels, however. A single chapter is hardly the place for such analysis, which has been done at length elsewhere. Instead, they are used as examples of the pervasiveness of Arthurian material in American popular culture, along with a plethora of other cultural products. In addition to the more obvious and well-known books and films (including numerous versions of *A Connecticut Yankee*), the authors discuss television (up to the recent *Merlin* mini-series), comic books, advertising, Deepak Chopra, and even art, such as the stained-glass windows at Princeton University's Chapel and murals for the Boston Public Library.

Ending the book this way frames the material nicely, because the first three chapters (the most interesting to this reviewer) do the same for the culture of nineteenth-century America. Here the authors perform a great service by bringing to light, and discussing at some length, many early novels, poems and plays which were popular in their day but now obscure—in some cases deservedly so, in others a casualty of changing tastes or other factors. The earliest example mentioned is a pamphlet of 1807 (using the figure of Merlin as prophet to make a political point). Some of the works discussed are by literary lights such as Hawthorne and Twain (a *Connecticut Yankee* is treated extensively), but the more obscure are among the most intriguing. They include J. Dunbar Hylton's 1887 poem *Arteloise*, which features a sword-wielding "maiden knight" named Griselda; Sallie Bridges, a proponent of women's rights and social reform who translated Arthurian themes into contemporary settings in a way that seems remarkably modern; and *Cian of the Chariots* (1898) by William S.

Babcock, "the first American historical novel to deal with the Arthurian legends."

Two chapters deal with the impact of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* in America, each covering a different reaction. "On both sides of the Atlantic, there were those who found the British laureate's poems too pompous and his moralizing too tempting a target." Not surprisingly, one reaction was parody, exemplified by Twain but by no means limited to him. Max Adeler's novelette-length story, "The Fortunate Island," for example, predated *A Connecticut Yankee* and has many similarities to it; it may well have given Twain a number of ideas for his own novel. Nor do the Tupacks limit themselves to literature. The opposite pole was occupied by those who took Tennyson's moral values to heart, and even translated them into everyday life. Chapter Three is largely an account of a nineteenth-century movement, spearheaded by Protestant ministers and child welfare workers, which saw the formation of a number of clubs based on Americanized versions of Arthurian ideals of chivalry and morality. They were largely an attempt to deal with what was dubbed by the minister William Byron Forbush "the boy problem." This was defined as the tendency of adolescent males, whose "passions and independence" outran their judgment, to devote themselves to "crazy plans and harmful deeds." At the height of the movement, hundreds of thousands of young people belonged to Forbush's Knights of King Arthur (and its eventual girls' equivalent, the Queens of Avalon), as well as such other groups as Perry Edwards Powell's Knights of the Holy Grail, and the Knighthood of Youth clubs founded by the National Child Welfare Association. The same chapter notes the impact of the rather bowdlerized versions of the Arthurian legends written specifically for youth by such authors as Sidney Lanier and Howard Pyle.

Throughout this journey through the high-

ways and byways of American literary and popular culture, the authors never lose sight of their purpose, presenting many persuasive examples of how the Matter of Britain was molded to fit the ideals and sensibilities of a new democracy—born in rebellion against the very monarchy the Arthurian legends celebrate. Readers will find much of value, from a new look at familiar works

to the unearthing of many now-obscure but intriguing older examples worth further study. The writing achieves the supremely difficult feat of combining rigor and readability. An extensive (thirty pages) bibliography, footnotes, and index add to its scholarly value.

Reviewed by Edith L. Crowe

Film: Strider's Screening Room

The ARTEFA Awards

Not to be ignored during this film award season, the Arthurian Round Table Film Association (ARTEFA) presents its first annual awards (“the Pendragons”) in the following categories:

Film Treatments

Most Mythic: *Excalibur* (1981)

Best Grasp of Source Material: *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975)

Most Intriguing Interpretations of Arthuriana: (tie) *Knightriders* (1981) and *The Fisher King* (1991)

Most Subtle Incorporation of Arthurian Myth: *The Sixth Sense* (1999)

Most Gratuitous Use of Arthurian Legend in a B Film: (tie) *October 32nd* aka *Merlin* (1992) and *Merlin's Shop of Mystical Wonders* (1996)

Most Egregious Removal of Arthurian Elements in a Major Studio Film: *First Knight* (1995)

Unnecessary Addition of Non-Arthurian Elements, or “Where Did These Villains Come From?”: Queen Mab (*Merlin*, 1999), Wolvencroft (*Lancelot: Guardian of Time*, 1997), Lord Belasco (*A Kid in King Arthur's Court*, 1995), Sir Brack (*Prince Valiant*, 1954)

Casting/Acting

Attesting to the popularity of the Arthurian material among filmmakers, the legendary king has been portrayed by more than five dozen actors in film releases from 1917 through the present day, from Sir John Gielgud to Mel Blanc (well, okay, Mel Blanc voicing Daffy Duck). The list of actors portraying Merlin is even longer (again including both Gielgud and Blanc—coincidence? I think not ...).

Most Unlikely King Arthur: Michael Gross, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1989)

Best Portrayal of King Arthur: Richard Burton, *Camelot* (1964) [OK, it's the stage version, but I saw it performed and can testify he's the best]

Most Feminist Kick-Ass Guinevere: Sheryl Lee, *Guinevere* (1994)

Most (Unintentionally?) Sympathetic Villain: Richard Burton as King Mark (*Lovespell*, 1979)

Worst Acting in a Lead Role: Marc Singer as Lancelot (*Lancelot: Guardian of Time*)

Worst Overacting by a Villain: John Saxon as Wolvencroft (*Lancelot: Guardian of Time*)

Reported by Eleanor M. Farrell

More Reviews: Arthurian Fiction

A. A. ATTANASIO, *The Dragon and the Unicorn* (1997), *The Eagle and the Sword* (1998), *The Wolf and the Crown* (1999), *The Serpent and the Grail* (2000). New York: HarperPrism. Ongoing series, pb, price varies.

If you're looking for something new and interesting in Arthurian literature, then you don't need to look beyond A.A. Attanasio's ongoing Arthurian series, beginning with the 1997 publication of *The Dragon and the Unicorn*. In this series of (so far) four books, Attanasio combines Arthurian legend, quantum physics, and Norse legend to create a truly . . . different look at Arthur.

The underlying premise of the series is that the gods of Norse legend are actually cosmic quantum beings. The chief of these beings, Odin the Furor, is moving to destroy his enemies, but in the process will most likely destroy the human race also. Against this, Ygrane, the embodiment of the eternal queen, decides the only way to save the world is to bear a child who will unite the two powers of the Celtic and Christian ways. That child is, of course, Arthur (or Arthor, as he is called in this series, which we are told means 'hammer of Thor').

In one of his fits of destruction, the Furor releases the Fire Lord demons. One, however, is lost and turns up on earth as Merlin. Merlin—or Lailoken, as he is also known—moves to bring Arthor to power, while also combating the Furor's demons to keep the young prince alive.

To say the series is unconventional is to make a vast understatement. Attanasio creates his own world instead of relying on a romantic Arthurian mythos (*a la* White), or an historical Arthur (*a la* Whyte). Attanasio includes many elements from the Matter of Britain, but none of them appears as one would expect: Attanasio keeps the stories rooted just enough in the Matter to keep you from feeling totally dislocated. Overall, this is an incredibly unique series.

Reviewed by Matthew Scott Winslow

JAMES LOWDER, EDITOR, *The Doom of Camelot*. Oakland: Green Knight Publishing, 2000. ISBN 1-928999-09-3, 320 pp., tp, \$14.95.

This new collection features sixteen original short stories and poems, each focusing on an individual aspect of the downfall of King Arthur's realm. The contributors include some authors familiar to readers of recent Arthurian short fiction—such as Mike Ashley, Phyllis Ann Karr, and Darrell Schweitzer—but also some writers making their initial forays into this field.

The death of Arthur and end of the Round Table is approached from different character viewpoints, as well as a wide variety of episodes from the Arthurian mythos. My favorites include "Three Queens Weeping" by C.A. Gardner, in which the dying Arthur is given a choice after his last battle, and "The Shadow of a Sword" by Ed Greenwood, which explores the legacy inherited by Constantine, Arthur's successor. India Edghill's "Grail Wisdom" creates a new—and very Shakespearean—interpretation of Galahad's grail quest. The closing piece, and highlight of the collection, is Verlyn Flieger's "Avilion," a collection of short, mostly first-person, musings by over a dozen Arthurian characters—from Lancelot and Merlion to King Pelles—on their roles in the legend.

As with all multi-author collections, the styles, approaches, and quality of the stories vary. The book is best dipped into rather than read straight through, to let the reader better appreciate the variety of ideas generated by this single theme.

Reviewed by Eleanor M. Farrell

Mythprint is the monthly bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society, a nonprofit educational organization devoted to the study, discussion and enjoyment of myth and fantasy literature, especially the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. To promote these interests, the Society publishes three magazines, maintains a World Wide Web site, and sponsors the annual Mythopoeic Conference and awards for fiction and scholarship, as well as local and written discussion groups.

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Eleanor M. Farrell, Editor



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