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THE VICTORY OF ARTHUR: KING ARTHUR'S CONQUEST OF MODERN LITERATURE

by

LISA VICTORIA PADOL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York

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Abstract

THE VICTORY OF ARTHUR: KING ARTHUR'S CONQUEST OF MODERN LITERATURE

by

Lisa Padol

Adviser: Professor Edmund Epstein

This dissertation considers the question: Why are stories about King Arthur still popular today? This is a complex question, for there is not one answer, but many. Furthermore, some of the answers seem, at first glance, to be contradictory.

The first chapter is a brief overview of the dissertation, listing the major reasons for the popularity of Arthur's story, along with a consideration of the value of popular literature. The second chapter considers the historical background of the story of Arthur, mentioning the major modern and medieval texts, and considering what the former have borrowed from the latter. This chapter also looks at Arthurian scholarship and examines the relationship between the scholarship and the fiction.

The third chapter discusses the flexibility of Arthur's story, while the fourth discusses the concept of psychomachia, maintaining that one reason for the popularity of Arthur's story is that it functions as

a psychomachia, a means by which internal drives are externalized and personified by the various characters who sit at Arthur's Round Table.

The fifth chapter explains that the historical weight of Arthur's story contributes to its current popularity, while the sixth chapter points out that Arthur's story has an air of grandeur which is used to make our own lives seem noble and grand. The seventh chapter considers the heroes and ideals of the Round Table. The ideals espoused in many versions of the legend are attractive because they present a clear vision of right and wrong, while the heroes show the ideals in action. Despite the clarity of the Arthurian code, many authors of Arthurian novels recognize that situations are seldom clear-cut.

The eighth chapter discusses the paradox of religion in Arthur's story. Although not bound to any one religion, the story often gains popularity by drawing on the ideals of a religion, whether Christianity or Neo-Paganism. Furthermore, the magic embodied by characters such as Merlin and Morgan Le Fay attracts many readers.

Chapter nine discusses the treatment of Arthur's story in other media, while chapter ten concludes the text portion of the dissertation. The text is followed by an extensive Catalogue Raisonné, as well as a Works Cited list.

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A Note on the Catalogue Raisonné

This is far from a complete listing of all Arthurian works. While a few nineteenth century works are listed, the bulk of my material is from the last forty years. There are over two hundred novels and short stories listed, but more are being written all the time. I have not been able to read every item in the catalogue raisonné; indeed, I have not been able to locate every item, even if I had time to read them and still graduate before the turn of the century.

The list of novels and short stories is followed by a list of selected comic books. The poetry section of the catalogue raisonné contains those works most relevant to modern authors, as well as a few more recent poems. Similarly, the entertainment section is limited to the most influential works and the ones I have seen. For a more complete list of movies, consult *Cinema Arthuriana*, edited by Kevin J. Harty. Neither the list of songs nor the list of games is intended to be exhaustive either. The section of miscellaneous works contains a few selected items that do not fit into any of the other categories of fiction.

The second section of the catalogue raisonné includes selected works on Arthurian material which are published as non-fiction, but are not works of criticism. They may be found in the New Age section of most large bookstores. Again, this selection is not exhaustive. The third and final section of the catalogue raisonné lists selected web sites, describing their contents as of October 12, 1996. These sites are constantly changing, and they all have links to other sites of potential interest.

The catalogue raisonné does not list medieval or Renaissance works; those which are cited in the paper may be found in the Works Cited list. The interested reader is referred to *The Arthurian Bibliography* (volume one edited by Cedric E. Pickford and Rex Last, volume two edited by Pickford and C. R. Barker) and *Arthurian Legend and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography. I: The Middle Ages* (edited by Edmund Reiss, et alia.).

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Chapter One: The Arthurian Conquest

I have found over two hundred individual books, short stories, plays, movies, television shows, comic books, and games dealing with King Arthur. Most of these items date from the last forty years, although a few date from the nineteenth century. The story of Arthur is popular, astonishingly so, and there is every indication that it will continue to be popular. The challenge of explaining the popularity of Arthur's story is that there is no single reason for it, but a web of reasons, supporting -- and even contradicting -- each other. Any explanation begs for modification, expansion, or qualification. This section, then, is a short look at the most important reasons for Arthur's popularity, intended to introduce the topics which will be examined later.

Arthur's story remains relevant to modern audiences because it considers issues which are important to them. The problem with considering such issues, particularly the psychological issues in human beings, is that, while they are most important, they are also hidden, often stubbornly so. Writers, therefore, have developed certain techniques for defining the depths of the human psyche and revealing them more clearly than one might expect them to be revealed in the world outside of novels.

What these techniques have in common is the externalization and dramatization of internal drives, motives, and psychological patterns. This strategy of externalization and dramatization can be called the

strategy of the psychomachia, the expressionistic projection of a psyche with each of the drives transformed into a human figure and with entire internal conflicts represented as an external battle. The term "psychomachia" comes from Prudentius' poem of the same name in which the internal conflict between the forces of the human psyche is dramatized as an external battle.

Arthur's story, then, reveals the internal conflicts of individuals and societies. The story can do this because it can function as a psychomachia, turning the internal into the external, and because of its flexibility, which lets the story change to meet the changing needs of different audiences. These two qualities, flexibility and the ability to function as a psychomachia, allow the story to consider the question of heroes and ideals, and the main question of how to create an ideal society here on Earth.

In addition, the story of Arthur has an historical weight that lends an aura of grandeur to everything it touches. This weight creates a feedback loop or snowball effect; that is, the story's popularity ensures that it will be told, and because it is told, it becomes more popular. At the same time, one of the paradoxes of the story's popularity is that, although it draws on the weight of history, it is not bound by the constraints of historical accuracy.

Another paradox which contributes to the story's popularity concerns religion: Arthur's story is an excellent vehicle for considerations of religion, but it is not firmly attached to the baggage of any one religion. Finally, the story has elements of magic, and many readers love stories with magic and fantasy.

The story of Arthur is the story of the attempt to construct an ideal society where all are treated justly. The problems involved in constructing such a society are problems modern audiences are familiar with. There are many considerations of these problems in non-fictional contexts, but such considerations will not destroy the lure of fictional contexts, where an author can set up any kind of society desired and show the results.

Why should Arthur's be the society so often chosen? One of the keys to the story's popularity is the fact that the story of Arthur is the story of his subjects, and vice versa. The macrocosm of society is mirrored in the microcosm of Arthur.

Perhaps the stories about Arthur continue to be popular because in these stories, the myth of Arthur takes the form of a *psychomachia*, an externalization of mental conflicts and drives, which help to clarify our own conflicts and drives. The virtue of a *psychomachia* is that it makes clear the shadowy and tangled motives of human beings. An external fight is easier to describe than an internal fight; hence, the warriors and heroes of *psychomachia* act out conflicts in a way which works to clarify to readers their own shadowy depths.

Of course, most literature provides a *psychomachia* of this sort, so one is left with the question of why the story of Arthur is used so often in this way. One reason is that Arthur's story is extremely flexible. I am tempted to assure the reader that there are some constants, but this is not the case. Arthur is presented as hero, villain, and everything in between in both the modern and the medieval literature. While modern authors have made some surprising changes in

what might be considered "the basic story," this is something which medieval authors have done as well. Compare, for example, the different versions of the Grail story, or the family trees of Malory's Arthur and Wolfram von Eschenbach's Arthur.

The variety of material in the medieval stories contributes to the variety in the modern sources, both because modern authors have a variety of versions to draw upon, and because this variety gives them a precedent for introducing their own changes. This flexibility is important to the continued success of Arthurian novels, for it means that the Arthurian tradition is a living, growing tradition. It does not become stagnant or outmoded, for every age and every author can reinterpret Arthur's story in a way that will prove meaningful to its audience. Geoffrey of Monmouth, Chretien de Troyes, and Malory each present a different picture of Arthur and his society, one which is most meaningful to their own, and they dress Arthur and his court in the garb of their own time. Tennyson in the nineteenth century and T. H. White in the twentieth both reinterpreted the story of Arthur. Although they do not actually show an Arthur in modern dress, they do create characters who embody the internal conflicts important to the authors' time.

Another important factor is the large cast of characters in Arthur's story. This cast is both a cause of and a result of the flexibility and popularity of the story. A psychomachia needs a large cast of characters, the better to express any of the facets of the human mind. As one modern author says,

if you want a smashing good story filled with archetypical characters going off on quests, following noble causes, espousing the need for honor and courtesy, and developing into a fine Fellowship -- as well as engaging in duplicity,

chicanery, villainy, incest, matricide, and terrible betrayals, both personal and political...[sic] you'll find the tales of Arthur's Round Table have been providing all this and more for hundreds of years. I know of no other single story cycle which offers a broader range of characters and endeavors or a deeper look into the troubled heart of humanity. (Woolley 1991, 15 - 16)

A similar statement can be found in Caxton's introduction to *Malory Le Morte D'Arthur*:

For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown. (I, Caxton's Preface, 6)

Arthur's story works as a psychomachia in large part because it has enough characters and events to reflect the variety found within the mind of any individual.

Nevertheless, if all that were wanted was a canvas on which to project the facets of the human personality, any story with a sufficiently large cast and range of events would suffice. However, something more is needed. We do not want nothing more than an accurate reflection. In fact, too much accuracy is disconcerting. If a real-world situation were found which paralleled the literary situation of Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere, it would seem tawdry, not mythic.

It is natural to rebel against the accusation that one's situation is pathetic, not noble, as the pawnbroker Jurgen does. Jurgen, Cabell's hero from the novel of the same name, refuses to accept that he does not signify, and chooses to forget what he has learned of the truth, and instead "believe implicitly in [his] own importance." (281) Real life often shows human beings to be tawdry, fearful, and second rate. Literature adds significance to the second rate.

But, unlike Jorgen, we want it both ways. We want the truth, but we want the truth to be glorious. We need our dignity, our sense of worth. This is what Arthur's story provides, better than many other forms of psychomachia. We can project the contents of our mind outward, to examine and analyze, learning the truth about ourselves, and we can still keep our sense of grandeur.

Everyday tawdry events can be elevated by associating them with the story of Arthur. This is the effect of such novels as Walker Percy's *Lancelot* and Davies' Cornish trilogy, which draw on Arthurian themes deliberately, taking care to use them as Arthurian themes, rather than merely as sordid events which could happen to anyone under the right circumstances. What sets Percy's protagonist above the ordinary, tawdry, disgusting homicidal maniac who kills his wife and her lover? It is his association with Lancelot which lends him grandeur. Similarly, in Davies' trilogy, the adultery of Maria Cornish and Geraint Powell becomes glorious and somehow ennobled by the parallel which is deliberately drawn between the modern lovers and their Arthurian counterparts. The connection to Arthur's story lends characters and events a grandeur they which had not previously possessed.

This combination of grandeur and truth is one of the greatest strengths of the Arthur story. At one and the same time, Arthur's story is a myth, elevating the events and characters it chronicles, and a realistic portrayal of human characters caught up in events which are often beyond their control. Some versions of the story stress the mythic, glorious element; others stress the realistic element. Many versions attempt to balance the two.

Arthur's story makes it possible to blend the truthfulness of psychomachia with the elevated grandeur of myth because of its flexibility and its large cast of characters. Both of these elements exist because of a third reason for the blending to be possible: the historical weight of Arthur's story.

Historical fiction is popular, for it provides an entertaining way to learn the "truth" about history without doing advanced research. Many novels about Arthur are popular, in part, for just that reason, but it would be foolish to believe that any of them give the "true" story of King Arthur and his people. Indeed, another reason for the popularity of Arthur's story among authors is that very little is known for certain about Arthur, making it difficult to prove that any given interpretation is wrong. An author who writes a novel set during the American Civil War or the French Revolution is limited by the facts in a way in which the author of an Arthurian novel is not.

Most stories about Arthur, then, rely on the psychological truth, not the historical truth, adhered to by the author. The historical weight of the story is only weakly supported by actual events. It is more strongly related to the sheer amount of time the story has been around: Arthur's story has existed for fourteen centuries.

If sheer age were the only criterion, every ancient scrap of writing would be equally valuable, but this is not the case. Arthur's story has not merely existed for fourteen centuries, it has been *told* for fourteen centuries. More: it has been popular for fourteen

centuries. A snowball effect occurs: A story is popular, so it is told more often, attracting talented authors who make the story even more popular and famous. Chretien de Troyes, Malory, Tennyson, White, and Bradley were all "snowball" authors, attracted to the story because of its popularity. Their contributions, in turn, attracted others. To a certain extent, Arthur's story continues to be popular today because it was popular yesterday, last week, last year, last decade, and last century.

It is the accumulation of the various tellings of Arthur's story, gathered over centuries, which gives that story the historical weight which causes authors to choose Arthur's story, rather than another. The story of Arthur is respectable, noble, and glorious, and it lends grandeur to what it touches. Arthur's knights become more than murdering thugs; they become symbols of the ideal kingdom. Guinevere is more than a faithless wife, Arthur more than a wilfully blind cuckold. By comparing our lives with the lives of the people of Camelot, we claim the grandeur of the latter, elevating our triumphs and disappointments.

However, I do not mean to imply that the story of Arthur is no more than a gilded frame. That is only one half of the equation. The stories of Arthur grapple with problems which are relevant to us today, and the cast of characters functions as an externalization of the internal drives and confusions of our minds.

This is not to claim that the all characters are fleshed out, or that Arthur is always the same kind of character in every novel. However, the stories address such issues as gender relations, the proper treatment of the marginalized and the underclass, the proper use of power, relations within the family, religion, and morality. Arthur's

story is concerned with the proper way to live -- more, Arthur is attempting to build the perfect society, a society able to live out its ideals right here on earth.

The fact that Arthur's is an earthly society, rather than a purely spiritual society, contributes to the popularity of the story (Jacobowitz, Personal Discussion 1994). A popular attitude about religion is that it promises "pie in the sky by and by": the rewards of living well are not attainable in this lifetime, but are received in the next. The story of Arthur, with its clear ideals, its clear identification of right and wrong actions, suggests that it may be possible, at least for a time, to create an ideal society, on earth. One need not wait until after death to achieve the rewards of living well.

To summarize: authors continue to write about Arthur because his story works as a psychomachia. It simultaneously assists us in the quest to learn more about ourselves, and helps to soften the truth by lending it an air of grandeur, and it also assures us that the quest is noble, whatever we may find. The story can do both of these things because of its flexibility and the historical weight it has accumulated over fourteen centuries of popularity.

As a psychomachia, it is capable of changing to meet the needs of new ages and new audiences, dealing with the issues important to each generation. These include questions of responsibility and power, gender relations, the treatment of the marginalized, family relations, religion, and morality.

However, there are other reasons for the story's popularity than the fact that it is a psychomachia. It presents us with an ideal that may be achieved on earth, rather than in heaven, and which is relatively free of doctrinal baggage. The ideal held out to us, claims the story, may be achieved by adherence to a code which identifies right and wrong for us. The clarity of such a code, even when it is impossible to abide by it, is appealing to people of any century who are weary of moral ambiguity and want a clear definition of right and wrong, however strict.

In addition to all of this, Arthurian fiction is popular because of its connection with fantasy. The magical elements of the story fascinate many readers; Merlin and Morgan Le Fay have always been popular characters because of their association with magic. Similarly, despite the story's freedom from actual religious tenets, it can draw on the religious power associated with the Grail. Finally, despite the lack of historical evidence for the nature and even existence of Arthur's kingdom, the story can draw on the popularity of historical novels.

My first encounter with King Arthur came when I was in high school: I read the script of the stage version of *Camelot*. This sent me to T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*.

From that moment, I was hooked. White's novel was didactic, but not condescending, and it touched a nerve. *The Once and Future King* inspired me to read *A Boy's King Arthur*, which, in turn, sent me to Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*.

White set the stage for today's novels, creating for many the definitive versions of Arthur, Merlin, Guinevere, Lancelot, Morgause, and Mordred. I was lucky to begin my encounter with Arthur with White, for he omitted the parts of Malory most likely to bore a modern audience, and gently explained, without condescending to the reader, about his characters and their society. He was sympathetic to Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinever (Guinevere). He was honest in portraying the tragedy of Arthur's reign, but somehow, not bleak. White's novel also convinced me to read more of the modern retellings of Arthur's story, many of which drew on his novel.

Two of these were most important to me in high school. Inevitably, one was Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon*. The other, published the same year, was Phyllis Ann Karr's *Idylls of the Queen*.

Idylls of the Queen delighted me, even though, when I first read it, I failed to notice that Karr was playing with detective cliches in her retelling of the incident of the poisoned apple from Malory. The story was told from Sir Kay's point of view, which was refreshingly scathing and cynical, yet, most important, neither totally grim nor derogatory. Embedded within Kay's narrative were the narratives of other characters, relating various events from the French Vulgate and Post-Vulgate cycles, as well as from Malory, giving me a sense of how many people had written about Arthur, and of how a skillful use of narrative point of view can cause radical changes in a seemingly familiar story. Karr also illustrated the importance of a careful selection and arrangement of material, and she gave me my first glimpse of a sympathetic Morgan Le Fay.

Several of the elements important to Karr's *Idylls* are also present in Bradley's *Mists of Avalon*, notably the sympathetic portrayal of Morgan and the careful use of narrative point of view. However, Bradley's novel is on a different plane than Karr's, and it had a more profound impact on its readers, including me.

Even when I first read *Mists of Avalon*, I was not blind to its faults, and I was often irritated by the novel. Nevertheless, I could not deny its importance to my life. At that time, I was also discovering the influence of the Neo-Pagan movement through books such as *The Spiral Dance* and *Drawing Down the Moon*. These books provided the theory; *Mists* showed the practice. Bradley's community of women practicing magic on the island of Avalon, living self-sufficiently and in harmony with nature, was the embodiment of the ideals of the Neo-Pagan community. It was not that Bradley had said anything new. What Bradley had done was to provide a new myth to articulate those ideals, the ideals of her Avalon and of the present day Pagan community, in a way that I could not. The literal truth of the events of Arthur's reign mattered far less to me than the mythic truth *Mists* presented. Reading *Mists* for the first time, as a teenager, right after it came out, was a special experience.

Shortly after reading *Mists*, I stopped reading about Arthur. I rediscovered him then in college, when I finally read Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. I was reminded why I loved the stories of Arthur and his people, and why I had stopped reading them -- because there were too many! I came down with a case of Grail fever while writing a paper on Malory's treatment of the Grail legend. Around that time, I read Matthews' and Green's book on the Grail, which, like *Mists*, joined New

Age magic and Arthur together, albeit in a nonfiction setting, involving guided meditations.

Many of the Arthurian novels, and nearly all of the films, comic books, songs, tarot decks, games, and New Age books, are generally classified as popular culture. In my naivete, it never occurred to me that one had to justify an interest in popular literature. College did nothing to cure me of my innocence; indeed, in the library of Hunter College, I found books analyzing *Lord of the Rings*, and books discussing my favorite leisure reading material, science fiction and fantasy. Literary criticism was clearly a tool meant to be applied to all literature, high and low.

If we devalue popular culture, why should we study literature at all? After all, many works considered to be part of high culture were originally written as popular works. Shakespeare could be seen as a skillful presenter of conventions. Malory has as much chaff as wheat.

Literary criticism is meant to be applied to all forms and grades of literature. C. S. Lewis, for example, expresses impatience with the division of literature into "highbrow" and "lowbrow":

A man ought not to be ashamed of reading a good book because it is simple and popular, and he ought not to condone the faults of a bad book because it is simple and popular. He should be able to say (altering the names to suit his own judgement), 'I read Buchan and Eliot for the same reason, because I think them good; I leave Edgar Wallace and Ezra Pound unread for the same reason, because I think them bad.' ("High and Low Brows" 278)

However, many critics either are unaware of Lewis' advice, or choose to disregard it. Schechter points out that such critics go to absurd lengths to prove that their guilty pleasures are works of high art, attempting to "rationalize their tastes in the highly sophisticated (and often ludicrously inappropriate) terms of their favorite methodologies." (4) As an alternative, Schechter suggests looking at elements of popular culture as folklore, noting what popular culture says about our hopes and fears (x, 4 ff.).

Studying popular literature allows us to see into the psyche, or subconscious, of a culture; as Schechter says, it reveals what we feel we need. It also allows the release of repressed emotions, with a minimum of danger (123 - 146). If we study popular literature, we can learn what we are made of. What subconscious or even quite conscious hopes and desires and fears are revealed? What forms do they take? Why? What does this show us about ourselves? What can we learn?

For example, Fiedler discusses American stories in which a white man runs from civilization to a place where he can attempt to befriend a man from an alien culture, preferably in the absence of women. The alien may be a Native American, an African-American, as in *Huckleberry Finn*, or a Vulcan, as in *Star Trek*. What links hundreds of works of dissimilar genre, mode, media, and quality is a theme, or a myth, which is important to the people of this country. All works dealing with this theme are important precisely because they deal with it (See Fiedler, esp. 124 - 125, 236 - 245). Similarly, all works dealing with Arthur's story are linked by their subject matter, and are important because of it.

Such works vary greatly in terms of quality. Many who would agree that the division between high art and popular art is artificial would maintain that books should be categorized by quality. Critics should focus their attention on the best works, and they should ignore second rate works.

This attitude would justify a consideration of a handful of modern Arthurian novels, but it would necessitate rejecting the majority as ephemeral works for idle minds. After all, why should one spend time analyzing second-rate literature? As Fiedler says, "[T]o be inept, whether unwittingly or on purpose, is the single unforgivable sin....for this, time and the critics grant no pardon." (37)

Then, however, Fiedler himself, referring to his own words as "insufferably arrogant," (37) begins the examination of popular literature. The second half of his book *What Was Literature?* examines works often ignored by academia, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Clansman*, *Gone With the Wind*, and *Roots*. Whatever one's opinion of the literary quality of these books, they were read by numerous Americans, and they illustrate themes and issues which continue to be important today (Fiedler 144 ff.).

The same is true of modern Arthuriana. Even though it must be conceded that the modern tales of King Arthur are of varying quality -- some are impressive; many more are flawed, second rate, or just plain bad -- this is also true of medieval Arthurian fiction. Even Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* is not of uniformly high quality. Nevertheless, the sheer quantity of modern Arthurian novels shows that the story of Arthur is important to modern audiences, and it should come as no surprise to

learn that these novels, regardless of quality, reveal at least as much, and frequently far more, about our own time than about Arthur's.

It is important to realize that Arthur's story has been popular for at least twelve centuries, and possibly fourteen. The sixth century historian Gildas, while he does not mention Arthur in his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, does mention the battle of Mount Badon. The ninth century author of *Historia Britonum* credits the British victory over the Saxons at this battle to Arthur. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (hereinafter referred to as *HRB*), written in the twelfth century, is the "first full 'biography' of Arthur." (Lacy xxxiv) Since it was written, there has never been a time when Arthur's story has been completely unknown. Even when its popularity was at its lowest, someone was sure to be writing a variant of the story. It has been told in countries as far apart as Iceland and Japan, and in languages as different as Yiddish and French.

Any story which influences so many people for so many centuries, in so many languages and forms, and which continues to produce such a bulk of material is surely worthy of scholarly attention. Ignoring this material is indeed narrow-minded, just as it is narrow-minded to ignore *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *Gone With the Wind*. As Fiedler points out:

It is an odd enough notion...to "teach," say, the plays of Shakespeare or the novels of Dickens and Twain, works written to move and titillate the free mass audience: to require, in effect, a pleasurable response from a captive student audience....But it is even stranger to insist that while it is proper, indeed incumbent on us, to find such pleasure in Shakespeare, Dickens or Twain, it is shameful or regressive to respond similarly to Zane Grey, Edgar Rice Burroughs or Margaret Mitchell; and strangest of all to try to work out critical "standards" for explaining why. (13 - 14)

Twain and Dickens were popular writers of the nineteenth century, as Zane Grey, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Margaret Mitchell were popular writers of the twentieth. Those authors who turn to Arthur's story, medieval or modern, are writing popular literature. T. H. White, no less than Peter David, is writing to entertain and to make money.

All Arthurian novels, then, are worthy of critical attention because they are evidence of the importance of Arthur's story in our culture today. When studying the best Arthurian novels, one asks: What makes this novel work? Why is it not only a good novel, but also a good Arthurian novel? When studying second rate (or worse) novels, the important questions are: What are the authors of these works trying to do? If, occasionally, they succeed, where and how do they succeed? How do they fail? If they are popular, despite their flaws, why are they popular? These are the questions considered in this dissertation.

Chapter Two: Historical Background

Later authors of Arthurian works draw on the works of earlier authors. This is true of medieval Arthurian authors; it is especially true of modern authors who have so much more history to draw on. Therefore, before discussing what modern writers have done with Arthur's story, it would be useful to give a brief overview of the history of Arthurian literature, pointing out some of the sources upon which the authors draw. This overview focuses on the most important works, mostly written in Britain and France. The Grail story will be discussed later.

Gildas, Historia Britonum, and Other Early Sources

Gildas is the earliest source, having lived early enough to have been a contemporary of Arthur. Even though he does not mention Arthur by name, he is considered part of the Arthurian tradition because he mentions the Battle of Mount Badon (28, ¶ 26), providing scholars with a clue to its date, and, by extension, Arthur's (Fletcher 3 - 8). A few modern authors use Gildas as a character in their novels, speculating about why he does not mention Arthur (Turton, Stewart, Newman). Another draws on him for names of the kings whose armies Arthur leads (Treece 1956).

Arthur is first mentioned, in passing, in the poem *Y Goddodin*, probably written at the beginning of the seventh century. *Historia Britonum*, written in the ninth century, tells the story of Vortigern and of Merlin, here called Ambrosius. In *Historia Britonum*, Arthur is a *dux bellorum*, a leader in battles, not a king. He won twelve battles,

including the one at Mount Badon (Gildas and Nennius, Nennius 2.40 - 50, pp. 21 - 30). Even though Nennius, who used to be considered the author of *Historia Britonum* (only one recension actually has his name attached to it (See McKenna)), lived three centuries after Arthur, one modern author makes Nennius a character in Arthur's story (Sutcliff, *The Lantern Bearers* and *Sword at Sunset*).

The *Annales Cambriae*, written in the tenth century, state that the Battle of Mount Badon was fought in 516, and that the Battle of Camlann, in which Arthur and Medraut fell, was fought in 537. There is no indication that Arthur and Medraut were either related or on separate sides (Fletcher 32). Nevertheless, I have yet to see a retelling of the story where Arthur and Medraut fought on the same side. Stewart comments that if she had been aware of the reference in the *Annales* earlier, she would have changed the ending of *The Wicked Day*, but she did not.

From Gildas, *Historia Britonum*, and the *Annales* comes a list of Arthur's battles. The most important of these are the Battle of Mount Badon, where Arthur won his greatest victory, and the battle of Camlann, where Arthur and Medraut fell.

Gildas and *Historia Britonum* also mention Maximus, also called Maximianus and Macsen Wledig, who took British troops to the continent in his bid to become the emperor of Rome (Gildas 2.13 - 14, Nennius 2.27). Maximus is a link to Rome. Rome and what it stands for was important to many of the medieval authors. Rome stands for order. The Romans made laws and roads. Arthur is seen by many authors as attempting to bring back the peace of the Roman years, and to build a new empire in Britain (Bradshaw, Newman, Bradley, et al.). Those modern authors who choose to go back to earlier sources than Malory often give

consideration to Rome, and what the idea of Rome means. Some use Maximus as a link between Rome and Britain, often pointing out, as Gildas does (¶ 14), that the ambitious Maximus depleted Britain of her warriors (Lawhead). In Stewart's *The Hollow Hills*, Merlin explains that Arthur's sword Caliburn (Excalibur)

is the sword which Macsen Wledig took to Rome, and which was brought back to Britain by his people and hidden until it should please the gods to lead a King's son to find it.
(419)

Stewart explains in the "Author's Note" of *The Hollow Hills* that she invented the sword of Maximus as part of her strategy to link "the facts of Arthur's great precursor and his imperial dream to the sword episodes of the Arthurian legend." (443)

Geoffrey of Monmouth

The Roman theme was developed further by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who wrote *Historia Regnum Britanniae* in the twelfth century. It describes the founding of Britain by Brutus, and gives the history of Vortigern, Aurelius, Uther, and Arthur. Merlin, originally called Myrddin, appears under the name of Merlin first in the works of Geoffrey. In *HRB*, the story of Ambrosius' prophesying for Vortigern is assigned to Merlin (also called Ambrosius. See *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (ed. Loomis, hereinafter referred to as *ALMA*) 83). Geoffrey also wrote *Vita Merlini*, in which another character named Merlin makes prophecies (See *ALMA* 91).

HRB describes Arthur's battles with the Saxons and his marriage to Guinevere. It also describes Arthur's conquest of many different

countries. The culmination of Arthur's career is his attempt to conquer Rome. He nearly succeeds, but must return to Britain before his work is complete because his nephew Mordred has usurped the throne and married Guinevere.

As Arthur's first "biographer," Geoffrey is important to the Arthurian tradition. Medieval authors drew on *HRB* and expanded it. These authors include the French author Wace, whose *Roman de Brut*, written in 1155, contains the first mention of the Round Table, and the English author Layamon, whose *Brut*, appearing in approximately 1190, was the first Arthurian work written in English (Lacy, xxxiv). Geoffrey's Arthurian material is retold in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, in the alliterative *Morte Arthur*.

Morris suggests that Arthur's European war with Rome is "Geoffrey's principal contribution to Arthur's success" as far as medieval authors are concerned (66). Ironically, this war is almost never incorporated into modern Arthurian novels, perhaps because it violates the twentieth century reader's sense of historical accuracy. Nevertheless, despite my expectations that most modern authors looked no earlier than Malory for source material, several modern authors draw on Geoffrey and his predecessors in other matters. These authors do not allow Arthur to conquer Rome, but they do allow him to aid his allies, the Britons living in Gaul, as Geoffrey does (Newman, Lawhead, Gold, Stewart). Some authors even include Guinevere's marriage to Mordred, usually portraying Guinevere as a willing bride (See Treece, Stewart, and Wolf. However, in Newman, Guinevere is forced into this marriage.). Moreover, even though Arthur fights no war with Rome, the importance of Rome and what it stands for is never forgotten. One author even hints at

a rivalry between Rome and Britain, introducing a new character who is an ambassador and a spy for Rome (Godwin).

Romance Strand

While it would be hard to overstate the importance of Geoffrey's *HRB*, that work alone does not account for the continuing popularity of Arthur's story today. Geoffrey popularized the epic strand of Arthur's story. The romance strand is usually traced back to the Welsh material, which includes the Welsh Triads (*Tryioedd Ynys Prydein*) which tantalize and inspire scholars and authors alike, and stories such as *The Dream of Rhonabwy* (*Breudwyt Rhonabwy*), a surreal tale which a couple of modern authors draw upon (Chant, Sampson), *Gereint*, *Peredur*, *Owain*, and *Culhwch and Olwen*. The earliest surviving manuscripts containing these stories date back to the fourteenth century, but *Culhwch and Olwen*, at least, is believed to date back to at least the eleventh century (Lacy 289).

The French author Chretien de Troyes wrote the earliest surviving versions of the other three stories, *Erec* (*Gereint*), *Yvain* (*Owain*), and *Perceval* (*Peredur*). His poems appear in the twelfth century, and he is the one who first mentions the French knight Sir Lancelot, who replaces Mordred as Guinevere's lover. Chretien is also the first author to mention the Holy Grail (Lacy 90).

In the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, Robert de Boron expanded the story of the Grail. He also expanded the story of Merlin, establishing that the magician had been fathered by an incubus. Like Geoffrey of Monmouth, Robert de Boron makes Merlin responsible for the conception of Arthur. Robert de Boron adds the story of Arthur's

fosterage and the sword in the stone. Previous versions of the story maintained that everyone knew that Arthur was Uther Pendragon's son, and that he did not have any trouble succeeding his father as king. Some modern authors use the older versions (Newman); some use de Boron's version (White). Others combine the two (Godwin).

Modern authors who use Robert de Boron's variations do not usually draw directly on his material. His stories of Merlin and the Grail were combined with Chretien's tales of the Grail and of wandering knights who had strange adventures and fought for the love of fair ladies. These tales were gradually expanded and added to the story of the death of Arthur, to form the thirteenth century Vulgate and Post-Vulgate cycles. The French *Mort Artu* of the Vulgate cycle is the source of the fifteenth century English stanzaic *Le Morte Arthur*. However, the English author who was the most successful in using the French material was Sir Thomas Malory.

Sir Thomas Malory

Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, written in the fifteenth century, is perhaps the single most important Arthurian work from the medieval period. Merriman says, "There is no exaggeration even in saying that interest in Arthurian matter closely parallels interest in Malory." (21) Morris says, "[I]t is to Malory more than to any other writer that we owe the survival of the legend over the succeeding centuries." (6) Discussing the Arthurian revival of the nineteenth century, Brewer and Taylor say:

There would have been no Arthurian revival at all...no widespread and continued interest in the Arthurian themes without Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. For Malory provided, as he may still provide, not only a very comprehensive and well-structured source of Arthurian material for the later writer, but a version that unlike its counterparts in other languages, was and is readily accessible. (1)

Malory did not limit himself to the Vulgate and post-Vulgate material. He drew upon many sources, English and French, epic and romance. These include the English alliterative *Morte Arthur* and the French Prose *Tristan*. Malory gave the matter of Arthur the shape we know today. It is from him that most modern authors get the stories of the Sword and the Stone, Arthur's incest with his sister which resulted in the birth of Mordred, the imprisonment of Merlin by Nimue, and many other stories which are associated with Arthur. With the exception of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the creation of an unknown British author, writing in approximately 1400, most of the famous exploits of Arthur's knights can be traced to Malory. His work was the major source of Tennyson in the nineteenth century, and White in the twentieth.

The Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries

During the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, there were fewer treatments of Arthur's story. This does not mean that no one was interested in Arthur. Henry VII used the Arthurian legends to justify his claim to the throne:

Tracing their ancestry in a direct line back to King Arthur, the Tudors held that the correct interpretation of Merlin's prophecy concerning the return of King Arthur was to be found not in the actual restoration of the long-awaited Arthur, but in the return of his line. (Brinkley 1)

There was a well-known legend in which the last of the native British kings, Cadwallader, laid down his crown in obedience to a vision which told him that British rule "should not be restored until after the successive periods of dominion by the Saxons and the Normans." (Brinkley 2) Henry VII traced his lineage to Cadwallader, and from Cadwallader to Arthur. Henry VII claimed that Cadwallader's prophecy of the return of British rule was destined to be achieved by Henry VII. He marched through Wales, associating himself with "King Arthur country" and with Arthur. He flew Cadwallader's red-dragon banner, and named his son Arthur, attempting to emphasize the connection between the sixth century monarch and his fifteenth century descendent (Brinkley 2). One twentieth century author acknowledges this political use of the story in a fantasy novel set in an alternate history where Richard III is the hero (Ford).

Henry VIII was born in Mona, and used this fact to emphasize his connection with Arthur. According to Arthurian prophecy, a "spark of fire" would be kindled at Mona; Henry VIII claimed to be this spark (Merriman 35, Brinkley 2 - 3). He used the prophecy to justify not only his claim to the throne, but also a claim to "the Continental empire that Arthur had conquered." (Merriman 35)

Spenser made Prince Arthur the hero of *The Faerie Queene*. At least three twentieth century authors have drawn on Spenser's work (Pratt and de Camp, Berman). Milton considered writing an epic poem about this sixth-century man. However, he never did this. In his *History of Britain*, he is doubtful whether Arthur existed, and scornful of Nennius and Geoffrey. (Brinkley 130 - 131)

One reason for Milton's change in attitude is probably the political connotations of the Arthurian legend. From the moment Henry

VII deliberately associated himself with Arthur, Arthur's story and very existence became a political tool, at once important and dangerous

(Merriman 35). An author

who attempted to make use of the Arthurian theme would find himself in immediate difficulty....If he made use of the fictional matter, he would offend the historians by seeming to discredit Arthur as a historical figure....If, on the other hand, he tried to make a story out of the authenticated parts of Arthur's history, he would find his material not only impossibly circumscribed but also subject to constant change of status. (Merriman 35 - 36, quoting Josephine Bennett)

Historians themselves were on dangerous ground. Polydore Vergil's *Anglicae Historiae*, which appeared during the reign of Henry VIII, displayed great skepticism toward Geoffrey of Monmouth's story of Arthur (Merriman 36). He considered factual only that "Arthur ruled after Uther and would have perhaps reunited Britain for a time if he had lived longer." (Lacy 488) These conclusions were not popular, especially since *Anglicae Historiae* appeared "in the very year that Henry VIII was using Arthur's empire to support his independence from Rome." (Merriman 36)

During the seventeenth century struggles between King James I and Parliament, supporters of the King turned to Arthur's story, and this may be one reason Milton decided not to write about him after all (Brinkley 26 - 27, 126 - 141). It was politically important to mention Arthur, and many authors used him; however, the details and incidents of what Merriman calls the "core story" were not used (21 - 27). The sources of the story were neglected.

To the best of my knowledge, none of the seventeenth or eighteenth century retellings of the Arthurian story have been used by modern authors. Scholars tend to agree that the eighteenth century marked the nadir of interest in and quality of Arthurian stories. Merriman says:

"The Age of Reason had all but finished the work begun at the battle of Camlann." (83) He explains that the appeal of Arthur's story is not its historical truth or rationality, but its mythic qualities (25). Brewer and Taylor concur:

the political controversies of the seventeenth century increasingly narrowed the usefulness of a legend long associated with royalist sentiments, and the rationalism of the eighteenth century nearly extinguished the appeal of Arthurian matter. By this time, most works which used Arthurian matter were either subliterate or totally unconnected with the traditional story except by proper names. (34)

Nevertheless, Merriman explains that even at the height of the Age of Reason,

there were signs about of the coming shift of sensibility and sympathy, of aesthetic and philosophical theory, that we now call Romanticism. As time passed, the oddly assorted and variously motivated interests that indicate a romantic revival...would coalesce into a set of wholly new attitudes toward earlier literature and the times that had produced it, particularly the Middle Ages. (83)

The Nineteenth Century

Indeed, the nineteenth century saw a revival of interest in both the Middle Ages and King Arthur, whose story "was virtually rediscovered" by the Victorians (Brewer and Taylor 1). While many authors wrote about Arthur and his people, the two most important ones are Twain and Tennyson.

Tennyson used Malory for ten of the idylls. For the remaining two, which tell the story of Gereint and Enid, he used the *Mabinogion* (Taylor and Brewer 89). It is worth noting the availability of these sources. Between the time of Caxton's first publication of *Le Morte D'Arthur* and

the time Spenser's *Faerie Queene* appeared in 1634, there were six editions of Malory. From 1634 until 1815, no new editions were published. However, from 1816 to 1817, three separate editions appeared (Merriman 21). Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of Welsh stories, which she called the *Mabinogion*, appeared from 1838 to 1849. Tennyson's earliest Arthurian poems appeared in 1833. The idylls based on the *Mabinogion* first appeared in 1859 (Taylor and Brewer 322 - 323). Tennyson made popular the stories about Arthur's court, but he could not have done so if the interest in these stories did not already exist and if scholarship had not made his source material available. It is also worth noting that translations of other materials, including *Historia Britonum*, were published between 1800 and 1850 (Taylor and Brewer 322 - 323).

Tennyson is often credited with singlehandedly reviving interest in the story of Arthur. While Tennyson was not universally praised in his own time, even before he wrote *Idylls*, his earlier Arthurian poems "created a taste for Arthurian poetry unprecedented since the Middle Ages." (Taylor and Brewer 69) Taylor and Brewer explain:

Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that even if no other nineteenth-century poet besides Tennyson had read Malory's *Morte Darthur*, the *Idylls* would have generated a significant Arthurian revival, as other writers imitated, parodied, and reacted against the work....*Idylls of the King* has great artistic appeal apart from any consideration of its significance as a restatement of myth. But as a reshaping of Arthurian material, it is especially important....Although over the years critics have castigated the work's artificiality, inept story-telling, remoteness from the Middle Ages, and conversely, remoteness from its own age, it endures as one of the major long poems in English largely because it achieves a meaningful mythic dimension. It creates the history of a society that is at once psychologically realistic and mythic, simultaneously old, timeless, and distinctly modern. By raising Arthur from the level of the national hero of the chronicles and the often

ambiguous figurehead of romance to make him exemplify man's highest hopes and possibilities, Tennyson redefined the King and the meaning of his story, giving the western world a new myth artfully forged from the old. (Taylor and Brewer 128)

I know of only one twentieth century author who draws directly on Tennyson's *Idylls* (Cherryh). Nevertheless, his influence is undeniable, and T. H. White often mentions him by name in *The Once and Future King*. White's portrayal of Arthur as the blameless, yet somehow naive, king has influenced many authors, some of whom may not even realize that Tennyson is the source of this interpretation of Arthur's character (Twain, White, Stewart, Kane and Jakes, Turton, Newman).

Tennyson's influence in the nineteenth century was not limited to Britain. American authors, including Mark Twain, were also influenced by him (Taylor and Brewer 168, 171). Twain's notebooks reveal that he "planned an episode showing Hank in bardic competition with contestants reciting poems by Tennyson" in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Taylor and Brewer 171).

Certainly, there have been ironic and satiric examples of Arthurian fiction before Twain's, and one must not overlook Cervantes' satire of knightly adventure. Nevertheless, for twentieth century authors, the ironic strain of Arthurian fiction can be traced back to Twain.

Twain makes use of a first-person narrator from our time. This ties into issues of narratology, particularly since his protagonist, Hank Morgan, is not a perfect man; he is not intended to be above criticism. Social issues are also considered in this novel. Twain uses his narrator to comment not only on the distant past of the sixth century, but also on the more recent past, which includes the Terror of the French Revolution in response to the terror inflicted by the

aristocracy, and on Twain's present time, the world of the nineteenth century. Twain's novel is intended to "condemn economic and social servitude and the repression of rigid caste systems" (Taylor and Brewer 171) as well as

organised religion, and the superstition and conformity it fosters....Other topics for satire include contemporary issues ranging from protective tariffs to the spoils system in political appointments. Thus, though the work burlesques romanticised views of the Middle Ages and exposes medieval barbarism, the principal targets are the dark aspects of human nature which are limited to no particular age or culture - greed, hypocrisy, sham, superstition, brutality....it becomes increasingly apparent that contemporary culture - American perhaps more than British - is the primary subject. Referring frequently to the social injustices of pre-Revolutionary France, Twain overtly attacks not only slavery but the no less real servitude of workers in modern factories. (One of Beard's illustrations pointedly juxtaposes three pictures: a medieval king with a chained serf, a modern slave owner with a bound Black, and a wealthy capitalist with a factory worker.) (Taylor and Brewer 172)

As White will do in the twentieth century, Twain uses his Arthurian novel to consider the problems of his society which most trouble him.

For Arthur himself, Twain employs a peculiar kind of humor that mocks something, while at the same time taking it seriously. Even as Twain reveals Arthur's childlike qualities, he treats the king with a surprising amount of respect:

the novel actually reveals the king's essential nobility. In contrast to Hank, who merely speaks humanely, Arthur without any consciousness of caste or personal danger tenderly carries a peasant child dying of smallpox. (Taylor and Brewer 173)

Twain's blend of humor, satire, and respect is used by authors such as White and Berger. All three authors focus on the gap between the desirable ideals of Arthur's world and the reality that humans can never achieve these ideals. Nevertheless, there is something praiseworthy in

the attempt to reach these goals, even if the result is humiliating. It should not be surprising that the humorous strain reappeared in the nineteenth century, since the gap between the real and the ideal, which is a perfect vehicle for humor, is built into the story of Arthur (Thompson 1985, 139, 160-161). Twain's novel also makes use of time travel, another idea borrowed by later authors (ab Hugh, Anderson, Scarborough).

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court is not without faults. Its main fault is that it tries to do too much. Hank Morgan's voice often gives way to Twain's voice, exposing the flaws in his society, trying to urge his audience into creating something better. Yet this very fault demonstrates why Twain chose the story of Arthur as his subject matter, for Arthur, too, tried to create something better.

Other American authors of the nineteenth century referred to or used the Arthurian legend. Some were inspired by the novels of Sir Walter Scott, who admired the story of Arthur, even though he never completed his plan to publish a new edition of Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. In the South, the legend was viewed differently before and after the Civil War. Before, Southern novelists viewed the legend and the concepts of chivalry with amusement, sometimes satirizing attempts to put these concepts into practice in nineteenth century America (Taylor and Brewer 163). After the war, Arthur's story was taken far more seriously:

knighthood came to epitomize spiritual and religious ideals associated with the defeated Confederacy. [Southern novelists] alluded to medieval legend to glorify their fallen leaders and vanished way of life. (Taylor and Brewer 163)

The change in attitude affected twentieth century treatments of the story as well.

The Early Twentieth Century

Nevertheless, not all Southern treatments of the story were in deadly earnest. James Branch Cabell, a Virginian author who lived from 1879 until 1958, was raised on the stories of the Civil War. His grandfather knew General Robert E. Lee. Cabell was also told the stories of Arthur, as well as stories from Classical and Biblical literature (Davis 23 - 24). For Cabell,

the worlds of the remote legendary past and the recent actual past became strangely confused in his mind....General Lee on his horse Traveller was King Arthur riding back from Avalon. Other Confederate generals were Launcelot or Tristram or Gareth or Galahad. Jefferson Davis became Merlin. The Yankees were the legions of the evil Mordred....[But] while young James was enthralled by the myth his elders were fashioning to compensate for the South's defeat -- even as the Arthuriad grew from the lost cause of the ancient Britons -- his sharp senses were daily recording impressions of a modern Richmond that in no way resembled Camelot or Caerleon upon Usk. Furthermore, he was quick to note that his elders did not always discourse of their heroes in the same vein.

When these elders climbed on public platforms or rose from ancestral writing desks, solemnity and orotundity possessed them. The past assumed the grandeur of Memorial Day oratory...But when these same elders were relaxing in the drugstore or the dining room or at the whist table, their anecdotage was more candid and down-to-earth, with occasional touches of malice and scandal, so that the bright armor of this or that member of the Confederate Round Table looked slightly tarnished. (Davis 24 - 35)

Cabell's eighteen volume *Biography of the Life of Manuel* (1904 - 1928) considers the chivalric code, "satirically contrasting chivalric ideals with human actualities." (Taylor and Brewer 195) *The Silver Stallion* (1926) describes what happens to the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion,

an order of knights founded by Manuel, a swineherd who became the Count of the imaginary country of Poictesme. The members of the Fellowship were supposed to live up to the same ideals as the knights of the Round Table. Like those knights, and like the Confederate heroes, the reality fell far short of the ideal. The people of Poictesme believed that Count Manuel, like King Arthur, would someday return, despite his apparent, but unwitnessed, death.

Jurgen (1919), which became the subject of a trial for obscenity, ensuring its popularity, has characters from Arthur's story. These include the Lady of the Lake and Guinevere, both of whom have affairs with Jurgen, a middle-aged pawnbroker miraculously restored to youth. Jurgen even carries Excalibur for a time. Merlin appears in both *Jurgen* and *Something About Eve* (1927), where he explains that he created chivalry for Arthur's knights, but they forgot about it.

In the *Biography of the Life of Manuel*, Cabell does not draw on any particular Arthurian work so much as on "the general tradition that had become part of English and American consciousness." (Taylor and Brewer 197) Even in the books without specific references to Arthurian characters, Cabell comments on the chivalrous attitude, which he considers one of "the three attitudes possible to man" (Taylor and Brewer 196), the other two being the attitudes of gallantry and poetry (Davis 43; Taylor and Brewer 196 - 197). Cabell's *Biography* "remains one of the most unusual and sophisticated satiric uses of Arthurian material." (Taylor and Brewer 194)

Cabell draws on both Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* and Tennyson's poem "Sir Galahad" in a letter "To Sir Galahad of the Siege Perilous," one of many letters addressed to historical and fictitious people in

Ladies and Gentlemen: A Parcel of Reconsiderations, published in 1934. Cabell acknowledges the gap between the ideals of Arthur's knights and the reality of their actions, but prefers them to the perfection of Galahad, which, he claims, is what really destroyed the Round Table.

T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* was published in 1922. It gave a new direction to Arthurian literature, a movement away from the dominant themes of the nineteenth century, romantic love and, to a lesser extent, patriotic feeling. (Taylor and Brewer 235)

As Eliot was the first to point out, he was influenced by Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, published two years before his poem. Nevertheless, he did not model the poem slavishly on her interpretation of the Grail myth (Taylor and Brewer 236). Nor did Eliot draw only upon the Grail myth; he also drew upon Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, as well as upon Classical and Biblical stories, Webster's plays, and other sources.

Taylor and Brewer explain Eliot's influence upon later authors as follows:

In taking as much of the legend as he needed and using it allusively, Eliot made it easier for later writers such as David Jones to use Arthurian material in a similarly free manner. From the Grail legend he took only two major images, the Waste Land and the Fisher King. Though the Grail chapel appears in the last section, there is no quest, no hero, no Grail city or castle, no lance or cup. (237 - 238)

Eliot's careful selection of symbols which are freed from their traditional context in medieval Arthurian legend allowed authors such as Walker Percy, Peter Vansittart, and Robertson Davies to exercise a similar discretion in selecting particular symbols and transplanting them to a new context (Taylor and Brewer 236). Tim Powers draws directly on Eliot's poem in his novel *Last Call*, even quoting it.

Other prominent authors include Edwin Arlington Robinson, whose Arthurian poems "realistically probed the psychological complexities inherent in the legendary characters' situation" (Taylor and Brewer 180); and Charles Williams, who wrote the novel *War in Heaven*, about the discovery of the Holy Grail in the Britain of his present day. Williams also wrote essays about medieval Arthurian stories, as well as *Taliesin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, poetry cycles which took advantage of the translations of Welsh material by Lady Charlotte Guest and others. Williams' poetry influenced the third volume of C. S. Lewis' space trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* (Tobin, 1994 a).

Sutcliff and White

However, the two most important authors, in terms of influence on later authors, are T. H. White and Rosemary Sutcliff. Between them, they cover all the issues dealt with by modern authors and have influenced most of the writers who post-date them, directly or indirectly.

T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* is the book that got me interested in the story of Arthur. It is, perhaps, the one that introduced my generation to the story. It has achieved a measure of respectability, and it inspired the play *Camelot*, which was revived in the summer of 1993.

It is nearly impossible to overemphasize the importance of *The Once and Future King*. Its source is Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, but it has essentially replaced Malory for our time. Even authors who choose not to follow White must be aware of what he has achieved. White brings to life the idea of trying to create an ideal kingdom, where Might is in

the service of Right. His treatment of characters and issues sets the tone for many of the works which follow. His characterizations of Arthur, Morgause, Mordred, Lancelot, Guinever (Guinevere), and the rest have left a permanent impression on our psyche. Authors such as Stewart use White's characterizations as a starting point for their own. Peter Hanratty has taken a scene from *The Once and Future King* and rewritten it to suit the characters of Galahad and Mordred in his novel, *The Book of Mordred* (63). He must intend for authors familiar with White to recognize this scene.

Everybody has heard of T. H. White. Rosemary Sutcliff is not as well known, although she does have a following. Why, then, is her work important?

Among the few who have heard of her are many of the authors who have written Arthurian fiction recently. She influences the authors who are read. In particular, Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset* is responsible for the idea that Bedivere, not Lancelot, is Guenevere's lover. This idea was picked up by other writers, including Mary Stewart, whose works have made the bestseller lists.

White and Sutcliff consider many of the issues which become important to later authors. The place of women in the Arthurian story is considered more explicitly by Sutcliff, who chooses to tell her story from Arthur's point of view. Nevertheless, White's Guenever (Guinevere) is an admirable and sympathetic character (despite claims that Stewart's Guenevere is the first sympathetic portrayal of the character. See Gordon-Wise, Spivak).

White, of course, based his Guenever on Malory's Guinevere; *Le Morte D'Arthur* is his source. Sutcliff turns to older material, such as

Historia Britonum, and to the archaeological discoveries of her days. This is the ultimate difference between the two authors on the issue of history.

White makes Malory comprehensible to the modern audience, as Steinbeck was later to attempt to do. Like Steinbeck, he speaks directly to the reader in an authorial voice. Unlike Steinbeck, he knows from the first that he will take liberties with his material. Nevertheless, he makes a deliberate choice to use Malory, fully aware that he will be recreating a fifteenth century Arthur (Warner 151).

Sutcliff is interested in the sixth century Arthur, as he might have been, and her preface has references to recent archaeological discoveries. In this respect, she is followed (and preceded) by many authors who feel the need to justify, or explain, the connection between their work of fiction and the historical truth, as it might or might not have been. This may be equivalent to the medieval authors who claimed that they, and they alone, knew the truth of the matter, and that all other authors were mistaken. They too cited authorities, albeit this used to be a signal that they were making the story up themselves.

However, Sutcliff also plays with history, as medieval authors were unable to do, since they had to maintain the fiction that they were writing a true account of historical events. When Arthur weaves a daisy into his shoulder strap as a symbol of both the Virgin Mary and the Pagan White Goddess (Sutcliff 1987, 383 - 384), Bedwyr (Bedivere) says:

Give it fifty years, and the harpers who sing tomorrow's
battle after us will tell how Artos the Bear rode into Badon
Fight with a picture of the Virgin on his shoulder.
(Sutcliff 1987, 384 - 385)

Indeed, *Historia Britonum* makes this claim, although not about the Battle of Mount Badon (Fletcher 18). Sutcliff is playing with the reader, indulging in a joke that would have been impossible for medieval authors to make because they did not have the benefit of hindsight and archaeological expeditions and because they had to uphold the pretence that they and their sources were writing history, not fiction.

White follows Malory in the issue of religion, as in all else. While neither White nor Malory is trying to convert his reader to Christianity, it is assumed that Arthur and his people (with the exception of Palomedes) are at least nominally Christian. Indeed, White takes the consequences of this into account more carefully than Malory does, perhaps because his audience is less likely than Malory's to be familiar with these consequences.

Sutcliff considers three religions: the Christianity of the sixth century, the Mithraism of the Romans, and the Celtic religion of the native British. She does not go into as much detail as about these religions as later authors do, especially Stewart and Bradley. Nor does she make as bold speculations as authors such as Bradley will. Nor is Sutcliff the first to examine other religions in the story of Arthur (See Edison Marshall's *The Pagan King*, where the author apparently believes that Tyr is a British god.). Nevertheless, it is Sutcliff that the later authors will draw on.

War and its consequences are also considered by White and Sutcliff. Sutcliff has more battle scenes than White, but both consider the reasons for war, and ponder possible remedies. Both authors select carefully from the wealth of material on Arthur. White does not recap the Tristan story -- luckily for the reader -- as Malory used the Prose

Tristan, which is not one of the best versions of the story. Sutcliff is extremely choosy, leaving out the character of Merlin, the magical seduction of Arthur's mother, the love of Tristan and Isolde, and the Holy Grail, among other things.

In White's *The Once and Future King* and Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset*, we have an early expression of themes which later authors will consider. However, this does not mean that the novels of White and Sutcliff are primitive! On the contrary, they are excellent examples of the best novels Arthurian literature has to offer. They remain readable. They are not dated. They still give the modern Arthurian novel a high standard indeed to measure up to.

Later Authors: Stewart, Bradley, and the Rest

Two later authors generally recognized as having influenced authors who are writing Arthurian novels today are Mary Stewart and Marion Zimmer Bradley. Stewart wrote a trilogy of books about Merlin, focusing on the historical aspects of the legend and downplaying the magic. She herself was influenced by Rosemary Sutcliff. Bradley was not the first author to make Morgan Le Fay a sympathetic character, nor the first to use an unusual narrative point of view, nor the first to deal with Paganism in a favorable light in her novels. However, her timing was excellent, and she already had a following thanks to her science fiction series, the Darkover novels. Many authors who deal with gender issues in their Arthurian novels owe a debt to Bradley.

It is too early to know for certain what the long-term effects of *The Mists of Avalon* will be on future authors. Bradley's work is certainly part of the Arthurian "canon," but it is not yet possible to trace a direct line of influence. Mary Stewart's novels have certainly influenced Persia Woolley, as have the novels of Parke Godwin.

However, while these authors' novels are probably the most influential of recent Arthurian novels, as well as the most recent novels to have achieved a degree of respectability, they are not the only recent novels to influence other authors. Parke Godwin and Phyllis Ann Karr have written novels which, while they have not received the recognition given to Bradley's or Stewart's novels, have, nevertheless, influenced the portrayal of characters in novels which follow them.

As a modern novel takes its place in the Arthurian "canon," it influences works which come after it. Modern authors are often eager to acknowledge their debts to their predecessors. Woolley says:

Each new teller of the tale is indebted in some ways to past versions, and I wish to acknowledge my own debt to Mary Stewart, whose *Merlin* books continue to be my standard of excellence. Not only have I consciously looked to her for style and approach, but I have also built on her concept of *Merlin* and *Nimue* in lifting their relationship out of the typical "gold digger" dynamic it had lingered in so long.

My specific thanks go also to Geoffrey Ashe, whose help and guidance through both the literary and physical landscape verged on the miraculous; to Marion Zimmer Bradley for insights into *Morgan le Fay*; and to Parke Godwin, who not only allowed me to use the *Prydn* -- a people he created in *Firelord*, but also helped me develop the character of *Ragnell*. (1990, Preface 15)

Godwin's "*Prydn*" are almost certainly borrowed by Stephen Lawhead as well, although he does not have an author's note acknowledging this in *Merlin*. Godwin and Bradley wrote in the 80s, but Woolley also drew on Mary Stewart, who wrote in the 70s. The scenes in *Child of the Northern*

Spring where Arthur meets his father Uther and leads the old king's army to victory are drawn directly from Stewart's *The Hollow Hills*.

In the third book of her trilogy, Woolley again stresses her debt to Ashe and to Stewart, whose Merlin books "were my original inspiration and have been my model during the eleven years I've been working on this project." Further, she acknowledges a debt to

Phyllis Ann Karr, who so graphically portrayed Mordred's heartache and Cei's stoicism in her wonderful novel, *Idylls of the Queen*. I also found *The King Arthur Companion*, which she compiled with such wit and erudition, to be invaluable. (1991, Preface 19)

Karr is far from the most famous of authors; nevertheless, she has influenced others with her modest Arthurian novel, and her supplement for the Arthurian role-playing game *Pendragon* is praised by authors and scholars alike.

The most important modern authors are Mark Twain, T. H. White, Rosemary Sutcliff, Mary Stewart, and Marion Zimmer Bradley. The modern strain of irony in Arthurian novels can be traced back to Twain, while the focus on female characters and feminist issues can be traced to Bradley. Stewart's novels brought new readers to accept the idea of basing novels on current archaeological theory, and began the redemption of Nimue for the modern reader. Sutcliff introduced the idea of making Bedivere the lover of Guinevere.

All of these authors changed the way modern Arthurian novels are written; nevertheless, T. H. White remains one of the most powerful influences on authors. White, unlike Sutcliff and Stewart, was not

interested in setting his novel in the Dark Ages. He deliberately chose to use details from Malory's time, and even introduced Thomas Malory as a character in *The Once and Future King*. This does not mean that White was a careless researcher; on the contrary, he took great pains to make sure that the fifteenth-century details were correct in the novel. The only anachronisms come from Merlyn, who lives backwards in time, or from the narrator, who is trying to explain life in the fifteenth century to a reader from the twentieth.

However, White's influence lies not in his fifteenth century details, but in his interpretation of the characters of the story. His portrayals of Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, Mordred, Morgause, Kay, Merlin, Gawain, Agravain, Gareth, and the rest continue to influence authors today. Bradshaw acknowledges that her Morgause is largely influenced by White's (Thompson 1993, 9), while Stewart's Arthur, though often offstage, is clearly influenced by White's, as is her villainous Morgause.

Even Marion Zimmer Bradley, who has written perhaps the most important Arthurian novel since T. H. White, bases her well-meaning, if wrong-headed, Arthur on White's kindly king, and her Morgause on his devouring mother. Because of this, White's characterizations are preserved, and their hold on the modern mind strengthened, for Bradley is one of the "snowball" authors. Woolley's Guinevere trilogy and Sampson's five book series about Morgan Le Fay are just two examples of material that was inspired by the existence of *Mists of Avalon*.

Obviously, Sampson and Woolley do not follow Bradley slavishly; Woolley is writing of a heroic Guinevere and a villainous Morgan Le Fay, a traditional polarity which is partially reversed by Bradley, while

Sampson turns to older sources left unused by the other women. This is inevitable, for each person who tells the story of Arthur must find a way to make it new; nevertheless, all authors of modern Arthurian novels are drawing on the weight of history, the history pieced together by archaeologists and the literary history created by medieval and modern authors. This history creates a golden frame to give even the poorest specimen among Arthurian novels a place in a tradition that is over a millennium old.

Arthurian Criticism and Scholarship

There are many modern studies of Arthur, both critical and scholarly. This criticism and scholarship provides many of the modern authors of Arthurian novels with ideas and place names. James Douglas Bruce's two volume study *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance* was published in 1922. While somewhat dated now, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages (ALMA)*, edited by Roger Loomis and published in 1959, was another landmark study. According to *Approaches to Teaching the Arthurian Tradition*, *ALMA* will be replaced by *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, *The Arthurian Handbook*, and the two-volume study, *King Arthur Through the Ages*. The Eugene Vinaver Trust has planned its own series of volumes to update *ALMA*; *The Arthur of the Welsh*, the first in the series, has already been published (McKenna). Also valuable is Phyllis Ann Karr's *The King Arthur Companion*, which was written for people who play the Pendragon role-playing game. Useful too are Loomis' *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, and Cavendish's *King Arthur and*

the Grail: The Arthurian Legends and Their Meanings (Fries and Watson 19 - 20). Recent anthologies include *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition* and *The Arthurian Tradition: Essays in Convergence*, both of which were published in 1988 (Lacy 402).

Specific to the twentieth century are Starr's *King Arthur Today: The Arthurian Legend in English and American Literature, 1901 - 1953* and Raymond Thompson's *Return from Avalon: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in Modern Fiction*. Taylor and Brewer's *Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1900* (a misprint for "1800") gives an overview of many twentieth century novels.

The works in the preceding paragraph are more surveys than criticism. However, books such as Gordon-Wise's *The Reclamation of a Queen: Guinevere in Modern Fantasy*, Slocum's collection of essays, *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, specific essays in general anthologies about Arthurian works, and certain essays in works of fantasy criticism, such as Spisak's *Merlin's Daughters*, contribute a critical understanding of modern works. There is even a volume of essays about film treatments of the legend, *Cinema Arthuriana*, and a second volume is planned.

There are also several bibliographies covering Arthurian literature in general or particular authors within the Arthurian tradition (Lacy 402 - 403). There is an annual *Bibliographical Bulletin* of scholarly work and reviews, published by the International Arthurian Society, which was founded in 1949, by Eugene Vinaver. Vinaver's work on the Winchester manuscript of Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, discovered in 1934 (Lacy 295), was a landmark of Arthurian scholarship. Even today, Arthurian scholars dedicate their books to him. The Modern Language Association has a chapter dedicated to Arthurian studies, and has

published a collection of essays called *Approaches to Teaching the Arthurian Tradition*. This collection also gives a valuable overview of the resources available to scholars. Nor are scholars slow to take advantage of modern technology, for there are already electronic mailing lists and web sites dedicated to the study of the story of the once and future king.

*Brief Overview of How Criticism and Other Non-Fiction Materials
Influence Authors*

As for those works which influenced the authors, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* influenced Eliot, and, through him, several others, including Powers. Loomis indirectly influenced many authors by raising the "Celtic question," the question of whether there was a Celtic source for the Arthur stories. While the scholarly consensus is that there was no original written source, there may have been an oral source (McKenna). Nevertheless, the "true" answer to the question is not as important as the answers which caught the fancies of individual authors. Archaeological works, such as those by Ashe and Alcock, influenced the historically based novels, suggesting possible locations for Camelot, Mount Badon, and Camlann. The availability of Welsh materials caught the fancy of others.

This body of work is treated in different ways by different authors. Some authors choose to ignore the scholarship. Others choose to ignore the literature, so that they will not be influenced by recent

retellings. Karr ("Kay and Morgan and Me" 1989, 49) and Gold (Personal Discussion 1993) have both chosen not to read Bradley's novel until their own novels about Morgan Le Fay are finished. Nevertheless, all authors of Arthurian works know the stories from somewhere. Karr uses Malory and the French Vulgate and Post-Vulgate cycles. Gold uses the older, Welsh material, including the Triads. No author exists in a vacuum. All are part of the Arthurian tradition. Both Arthurian scholarship and the writing of Arthurian fiction continue today. The former provides useful information and inspiration for the latter, while the latter expands the boundaries of the former.

Chapter Three: The Flexibility of the Story

Flexibility is an important element of Arthur's story, for it allows each author to make the story his or her own psychomachia. The story is made relevant to each generation of readers. While other stories are flexible, and are made more so over time, flexibility is built into Arthurian fiction, for there is no definitive text of the story of Arthur. Many will protest this statement, pointing to Geoffrey's *HRB*, Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, or T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* as definitive. These are all important texts and should be considered part of the Arthurian canon. However, modern authors do not feel the need to limit themselves to these versions of the story. Although almost everyone is familiar with the names of Arthur, Guinevere, Merlin, and Lancelot, and with Excalibur, the Round Table, and the Holy Grail, this does not mean that they know how any version of the story goes. Ask the average non-reader how Camelot fell or what happened on the quest for the Holy Grail. In the case of the latter, you might get a reference to *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

As for those who read many novels, they will have favorite versions of the story, but these will vary tremendously. T. H. White's influence can be seen in the novels of Stewart, Bradshaw, Bradley, Berger, David, Hanratty, Kane and Jakes, Kay, Newman, and Wolf, among others, but these novels are very different in terms of plot, characterization, and relationships between the characters. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* is the primary influence on C. J. Cherryh's *Port Eternity*, but the two works are radically different. Some modern authors

(such as Yolen, Hanratty, Sutcliff, and Treece) will even write two or more versions of the story, feeling no need to make their different versions compatible.

Nor do modern authors feel the need to keep Arthur in a Medieval or Dark Ages setting. There are stories set in the twentieth century which use Arthurian themes. Fantasy novels for children and young adults (which are enjoyed by older adults as well) often involve Arthur, his sleeping knights, his evil sister, or some combination of elements from his story. There are even science fiction novels dealing with the return of Arthur in the far future (Barr and Bolland, Martine-Barnes). However, even novels set in the Dark or Middle Ages show great variety.

The variety of material in modern novels may be found in medieval versions of the story as well. Indeed, several modern authors use the medieval versions to provide justification for their own twists, and the reader surprised by the difference between Sutcliff's and White's novels will be equally surprised by the difference between Geoffrey's *HRB* and Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. While modern authors have made some surprising changes in what might be considered "the basic story," or what Merriman calls "the core story," this is something which medieval authors have done as well.

Types of Variety

I am tempted to assure the reader that there are some constants, but this is not the case. Not even the king remains constant: Arthur is presented as hero, villain, and everything in between in both the modern and the medieval literature. Not only does the interpretation of Arthur

vary from one novel to the next; the interpretations of all characters vary. Guinevere may be a proud, powerful ruler (Godwin), an overgrown child (Newman), a religious fanatic (Bradley), or a shy woman, afraid of life (Stewart). As in the medieval literature, Gawain may be presented as an arrogant, lecherous man, with few or no redeeming characteristics (Tennyson, Monaco), a courteous, noble man, embodying the best virtues of the Round Table (Berger), or a man torn between his better and worse impulses (Bradshaw, Karr). Even the traditional villains change: Mordred and Morgan Le Fay have been presented as sympathetic, even good people in the modern literature (Bradley, Hanratty, Karr, Sampson, and others).

As in the medieval literature, family relationships between the characters vary. Morgan Le Fay and Morgause, traditionally Arthur's sisters, occasionally become his aunts (Wolf, Bradley), while in one novel, Mordred is Arthur's half-brother (Marshall). Igraine is the name usually given to Arthur's mother, but in *Sword at Sunset*, Ygernia is the sister who seduces Arthur into fathering Medraut upon her. Gawain, traditionally Arthur's favored nephew, the powerful eldest son of Morgause and Lot, becomes the awkward middle child in one version (Bradshaw). In another, he is a younger, clubfooted son, attached to the Church. He plays no part in the downfall of everything Arthur has worked to achieve, nor is Arthur even his uncle. His parentage is unimportant and never revealed to the reader (Sutcliff).

Nor is this the only variation. The precise number of Gawain's siblings varies from book to book, as does the number of Arthur's sisters. Morgan and Morgause are so often conflated that Mitchison names her conglomerate character Queen Morgan-Morgause. Most modern versions leave out Arthur's middle sister, Elaine, no doubt because there are no

medieval stories about her; however, there are a handful of authors who have restored her to her place in the legend, one of whom conflated her with the other Elaines abounding in Malory (See Gold, Laubenthal, Sampson, Chapman). This variation is not limited to modern novels, as anyone who has compared the family trees of Malory's Arthur and Wolfram von Eschenbach's Arthur can confirm.

The changing relationships between the characters are not limited to those between the members of Arthur's family, for Lancelot's relatives and Pellinore's vary as well, as do the relatives of other characters, such as Guinevere. Most people are unaware that Arthur's queen is sometimes given a twin sister; yet, there are a few modern authors who have reintroduced the character of Gwenhwyfach (See Karr, Gold, Sampson).

Moreover, not all of the characters associated with Arthur and the Round Table appear in all of the novels. The most obvious example of this is the absence of Lancelot from several modern novels. Sutcliff was the first to remove him from the modern version of the story, assigning his role as Guinevere's lover and Arthur's closest friend to Bedwyr (Bedivere), because he "is there both at the beginning and the end," whereas Lancelot "is a later French importation." (1987, [vii]) Sutcliff has been followed by several other authors (see Stewart, Bradshaw, Wolf), and at least one scholar is convinced that Sutcliff's interpretation is the correct one, the one which reflects what "really" happened (Hussey 1990).

Perceval is omitted from many novels; there are novels which deal with Perceval but omit Arthur (See Monaco, Vansittart, Hunter)! Perceval, of course, is one of the Grail Knights, and the story of the

Grail is not told by all authors, despite Merriman's insistence that it is part of the Arthurian "core story."

Merriman discusses the existence of a "core story," but his definition of it is not accepted by all of even the major authors of either modern or medieval literature. Rosemary Sutcliff describes her version of the story differently, as does Matt Wagner, author of the graphic novel *Mage*. Sutcliff says:

I have kept the original framework, or rather two interwrought frameworks: the Sin which carries with it its own retribution; the Brotherhood broken by the love between the leader's woman and his closest friend. These have the inevitability and pitiless purity of outline that one finds in classical tragedy, and that belong to the ancient and innermost places of man. I have kept the theme, which seems to me to be implicit in the story, of the Sacred King, the Leader whose divine right, ultimately, is to die for the life of the people. (1987, [vii])

Matt Wagner's core story is different from both Merriman's and Sutcliff's, for he set his story in the present day, where Arthur is reincarnated as a man named Kevin Matchstick, and Merlin is called Mirth. Wagner explains his storytelling strategy as follows:

I am retelling the Arthurian myth insofar as bringing back Arthur and Merlin and their relationship, which I've always thought was wonderful....I chose not to include Lancelot and Guinevere in *Mage* because the archetype of the tragic love triangle would have taken away from the heroic Kevin/Mirth [Arthur/Merlin] discovery, and that's really what the stor[y]'s about. (Gomez and Ramos, 28)

It is possible for so many authors to have different definitions of the very core of Arthur's story because the story is not a unified whole, but a conglomeration of elements which developed over the course of centuries, and is continuing to develop even now. Arthur's story

contains many stories within it. The stories attached to Arthur's knights, and indeed some of the knights themselves, were not originally associated with Arthur.

The Grail is not found in all versions of the story, nor is the tale of the Sword in the Stone. Both were introduced after Geoffrey of Monmouth's *HRB*, yet both have become so closely associated with the story that modern readers will recognize them at once, and may well protest if they are absent from a particular version. Merlin, a character almost as popular as Arthur, was originally involved almost exclusively with Vortigern, Ambrosius, and Uther, and appeared in Arthur's story only to arrange his conception. Nevertheless, the stories associated with Merlin in Arthur's reign, his position as Arthur's most knowledgeable advisor, and his ultimate betrayal and imprisonment by Nimue, have become familiar parts of the legend, just as Merlin has become a central figure in Arthur's story.

An author can slant the material by choosing which stories to tell. This can fulfill political agendas, but it can also determine whether the author is writing for children or adults, and whether a tragic, comic, or heroic tone prevails. For example, telling only the story of Sir Gareth's first adventure, which culminated in his marriage to Lynesse, results in a lighthearted, upbeat tale, quite suitable for children. Telling the story of the discovery of Guinevere's affair with Lancelot, which leads to the final battle at Camlann, results in a tragic story of waste. Of course, the tales which are the building blocks of the story can be assembled in a variety of combinations, and many of the tales which make up the larger story of Arthur are as

flexible as the larger tale, just as many of the characters of the story are as complex as Arthur.

In addition to the variety of material, there is a variety of tone. While most people are familiar with the romance form of the story and with the idea that Arthur and his knights use their strength to further the cause of chivalry, a concept which White referred to as "Might for Right," not all modern authors use the romance form, nor do all modern authors portray Arthur and his knights as morally upright. Some return to the epic roots of the story, showing Arthur as a great war leader, rather than as a law maker, a great man, but not a good one, and others present an Arthur and a group of knights (with or without Round Table) who exemplify all the flaws of their counterparts in Geoffrey and Malory, but none of the virtues.

Medieval literature is as varied in tone as modern literature, presenting Arthur and his knights sometimes as merely the greatest fighters of their time, sometimes as morally and physically great, and sometimes as neither morally nor physically great. While the epic Arthur and the less positive portrayal of Arthur and his knights are less familiar to modern audiences than the Arthur of the romances, made popular by Chretien and Malory, all versions of Arthur and his knights can be discovered in the medieval material.

Why Such Variety?

The variety of material in the medieval stories contributes to the variety in the modern sources. The story grew and changed from the moment Geoffrey wrote it. His Arthur was an epic hero who intended to

conquer the world. This Arthur is a hero because he is a great fighter. He also exists in the context of the stories Geoffrey tells in *HRB* about the usurper Vortigern, and the true heir to the throne, Arthur's uncle, Ambrosius.

Although Malory ignored or was unaware of Vortigern and Ambrosius, several modern authors rediscovered them. Someone who has read T. H. White's book, convinced that he knows the story, will be surprised by Sutcliff's or Stewart's version of the story. All three authors draw on original sources, but they choose different sources.

A modern author has a choice of all the Arthurs that ever were. New Arthurs are sanctified by the variety that has come before. Perhaps the variety of material seems greater now because it is more apparent in the modern world with its global community. Authors and readers have far more access to materials, contemporary and historical, than did their medieval counterparts. Malory only had a handful of books available to him; however, an author writing an Arthurian novel today can track down the most important medieval and modern versions of the story, as well as studies of the historical period, without ever leaving his home city. Telephones and electronic mail make communication easier as well. There is at least one electronic mailing list devoted to discussing Arthuriana, and several texts exist in electronic form, and can be accessed via the Internet and the World Wide Web. Where necessary, travel is infinitely easier than in the Middle Ages. An American author can visit possible sites of Camelot in a matter of days, rather than of weeks and months, and one author, boasting of her research, says, "I've made five trips to Britain." (Woolley, 1991, 18) How many medieval

authors could or would have made five trips from as far away as America to Britain, solely for the purpose of doing research for their books?

Nevertheless, there are other reasons for the variety of modern Arthurian fiction. One is what some scholars have referred to as a post-modern de-centralization, a lack of common ground or center (Herman 1992). We no longer have the common assumptions that held a large part of the medieval world together (Moe). As a result, modern authors may introduce variations to Arthur's story which could not have been introduced earlier.

For example, in medieval Europe, people "knew" that Arthur was the greatest of the Christian worthies. Speculation to the contrary might be hazardous to one's health. Even in Victorian times, everyone "knew" that Arthur was a Christian king. Even the Jewish author of *Melech Artus* did not question this. Modern authors have portrayed Arthur as Christian (Lawhead, Bradshaw), Pagan (Marshall), or neutral (Sutcliff, Godwin). Some authors even dare to question whether Christianity is the ideal religion, portraying Arthur's era as a time when benevolent Celtic paganism was crushed under the unrelenting heel of tyrannical Christianity (Bradley). Such speculation would have been decidedly unhealthy for a medieval author.

Also, medieval authors were not encouraged to boast of originality. While this did not prevent them from adding to a story or creating new variations, they would often at least pretend to be drawing directly on a predecessor's work or correcting the "errors" of previous tellers. Modern authors are pressured to tell old stories in new ways, especially since a reader of one Arthurian novel will often read several more. Modern authors are not obligated to stick to any kind of an

outline, to build on each other, to refute each other, or even to acknowledge each other, although many do.

Another reason for the variety is that Arthur's story is a unique combination of the historical and ahistorical. While the idea that there was a "real" Arthur allows the novels to draw on the weight of history, the lack of known facts about Arthur's time allows different authors to have different Arthurs, simultaneously exploiting and contributing to the flexibility of the story. In historical fiction, one expects a certain inevitability about the outcome of at least the historical events which are the backdrop of the story, if not the whole point of the story. In the case of Arthur's story, however, our ignorance frees us and allows the story to be mutated without violating our sense of the core story.

What Is the Significance of the Flexibility of the Story?

What does this flexibility mean? Why is it relevant? It is relevant to the use of Arthur's story as a psychomachia, for it means that individual authors can use what they want from the story to reflect their own times, without doing harm to the story.

The flexibility gives the modern author of an Arthurian novel great freedom in choosing his or her subject matter. The different knights of Arthur's court all have their own stories. Some, like Gawain, have many stories associated with them. Two authors can vary greatly in their treatment of the material merely by choosing a different knight to write about. Feminist authors can concentrate on Guinevere's story.

The variety also allows authors to concentrate on different themes and issues, according to their interest. As mentioned above, Arthur's story can be used to explore feminist issues. It can also be used to focus on issues of class, historical accuracy, religion, politics, narratology, psychology, and morality. It can consider the initiation of young men and women into their community. It can consider troubling problems, such as the proper use of force, the justification for war, and what to do with soldiers in times of peace. Arthur's story is so flexible that authors with widely varying agendas and politics can use it to deliver contradictory messages. Even an author whose only goal is to entertain will take a position on at least one of these issues. Arthur and his people function as archetypes, or signs; however, what they signify varies depending on the individual author.

Is Flexibility Liability?

Nevertheless, I have been asked: If Arthur's story is so flexible that there are no constants, why use it at all? Why don't authors of Arthurian fiction make up stories with their own characters? (Tobin, Letter to the author, 1994) This is a good question, for it would seem logical that an author would be better off using original characters which might better reflect his or her inner conflicts. And, of course, most authors do create their own characters; nevertheless, there are advantages to using Arthur's story.

In addition to providing historical weight, Arthur's story provides a convenient outline, a skeleton which authors can flesh out according to their desire. It is difficult to make up an entire story

from scratch, and many authors would rather not make the effort. The Arthur story lets us fill in what we like, change what we like, and rely on tradition when we do not feel like making the effort to be inventive. The story provides names for places and characters. Personalities can be used when an author draws a blank, but may be discarded otherwise. An author who wishes to write a novel, but has no idea where to begin, could do far worse than turning to Arthur's story.

Also, Arthur's story is familiar to readers. Therefore, authors may spend less time on explanations. The reader of multiple Arthurian novels does not always know what role Arthur or Mordred will play, but does recognize the characters.

That there is such a reader is an important factor to authors and publishers. Writing an Arthurian novel allows authors to take advantage of the popularity of the story. Publishers are aware of the popularity of the story as well, and they aim to please an audience which they presume wants more of the same (Rosenzweig). Nor are they necessarily wrong. There are many people who read multiple versions of the story and are not sick of it yet. These people are not all English majors, so their interest in the novels is more likely to be personal than professional. Variety is important to readers of multiple Arthurian novels, for, while they are looking for the same characters, they do not want to read exactly the same version of the story every time.

But are all versions equally valid? Merriman claims that, although parodies such as Fielding's do no harm to the story, versions which trivialize the material do hurt it. I must confess that some versions of the story, such as Kane and Jake's *Excalibur* or Barr and Bolland's *Camelot 3000*, make me wince; nevertheless, they have not done any harm

to the popularity of the story, nor can one ignore the fact that such versions do find an appreciative audience.

Chapter Four: Psychomachia and Allegory

There is an Arthur, a Guinevere, and a Lancelot in everyone,
and that's why the legend speaks to us.

--Julia Ormond, *First Look* (a television program about the
making of *First Knight*)

One of the reasons Arthurian novels appeal to readers is that they form a psychomachia, an externalization and dramatization of internal drives and motives. Works of fiction are generally expected to reveal more about the inner depths of their characters than people ever reveal about themselves to others. Indeed, it may be easier to understand the hidden motives of a character in a novel than to understand one's own hidden motives, and the former may illuminate the latter. This is because authors are not constrained by reality even when writing works which are considered realistic, and they can use the techniques of externalization and dramatization which make up the strategy of psychomachia.

In many Arthurian novels, then, readers see their own internal drives externalized as characters, and that simplifies their psychological conflicts. However, the word "simplifies" is misleading, for a psychomachia need not be simplistic. A psychomachia clarifies, or illuminates, inner conflicts, and, while it may do so by simplifying, by screening out anything which is not directly related to a given psychological or moral conflict, this does not mean that a psychomachia provides a simple -- or even a happy -- resolution of the conflict.

The original *Psychomachia* was written by Prudentius in the fourth century. In the poem, the virtues and vices of humanity are personified,

and take to the battlefield, as if they were warriors from the *Aeneid*. The vices attempt to conquer the soul of man by tempting him. The virtues ward off their attacks. The literary descendants of Prudentius include the authors of *Roman de la Rose*, the author of *Castle of Perseverence*, where the soul of man is compared to a castle besieged by the vices and defended by the virtues, and John Bunyan, whose *Holy War* describes the soul as a besieged city called Mansoul.

The virtue of a psychomachia is that it makes clear the shadowy and tangled motives of human beings. An external fight is easier to describe than an internal fight; hence, the warriors and heroes of psychomachia act out conflicts in a way which works to clarify to readers their own shadowy depths. "Ah," says the enlightened reader of Prudentius' poem, "I am behaving as one under the sway of lust and gluttony. I must cultivate the virtues of continence and temperance."

The characters in Arthur's story, however, are not merely personifications of the virtues and vices nor of the other drives which move us. They are often well rounded, and a given character does not always personify the same traits. Arthur's nephew Gawain, for example, is a cad in some stories, and the most courteous of knights in others. But this does not change the fact that Arthur's story works as a psychomachia, with its broad range of characters serving to act out the conflicts of the human mind and to examine the complicated moral issues which lie at the heart of the story.

The use of Arthur's story as a psychomachia occurs in medieval material. The external landscape often mirrors the internal landscape, particularly during the Grail quest, where everything that happens has both a literal and an allegorical meaning. When Lancelot aids a small

party of knights in black armor against a larger party of knights in white armor in Malory, on the literal level, he is chivalrously helping the weaker party. However, he later learns that the black knights represent sinfulness, while the white knights represent virtue. Lancelot aided the black knights because he himself is sinful.

T. H. White

T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* is a personal psychomachia, as well as one of the definitive versions of the story of Arthur and his knights. It illustrates the issues which most concerned its author, whose personality shows through many different characters. White is both Arthur and Merlyn (Merlin), the unhappy boy who cures his pain by learning, and the wise old teacher. He is also the bitter Agravaine, who had a terrible and troubled relationship with his mother, and the self-hating Lancelot, who fought his own impulses and became the kindest and bravest of knights because he believed himself to be cruel and cowardly (Warner, Epstein).

Many of White's experiences provide material for his novel. In a letter to L. J. Potts, he wrote of his diving experiences, saying:

it is good for one's soul to put one's life *in other people's hands*...The diver whom they are dressing and whose life depends on their efficiency is always addressed by his title -- "Diver."

"Sit here, Diver." "Now your left foot, Diver." "Stand up, Diver."

I love being a titled, important person -- like being called "Master" or "President" at a college -- a sort of

knight in armour with his attendant, faithful squires.
(White 1984, 242)

If this passage sounds familiar, it is because White used much of the same language in *The Once and Future King*, where he compares Lancelot's training to that of a diver:

Knights-in-armor were like divers in more ways than one.
Apart from their helmets and encumbrances and the difficulty of breathing, they had to be dressed in their suits by kind and careful assistants. They had to rely on these assistants to do it properly. A diver puts his life in the hands of the ratings who are dressing him. These young men, like pages or squires, mother him with great tenderness and concentration and with a sort of protective respect. They always address him by his title, not by his name. They say, "Sit down, diver," or "Now the left foot, diver," or "Diver Two, can you hear me on the inter-com?"

It is good to put your life in other people's hands.
(322)

White takes a personal experience, one more familiar to modern readers than riding in full armor, and uses his knowledge (and his command of the English language) to draw a parallel between the two, making his personal experiences relevant to his material. Similarly, he drew on his experiences with hawks, and, in "The Sword in the Stone," the birds Balin and Balan are named after two merlins White kept, naming them after the ill-fated twins who served Arthur (Warner 104 - 107).

However, *The Once and Future King* is not just a catalogue of White's experiences and their medieval analogues. It is a psychomachia where different characters embody different aspects of White. In a letter to White, L. J. Potts wrote, "the one character you can dramatise perfectly is yourself." (White 1984, 197) While he was referring to White's self-characterization in *The Elephant and the Kangaroo*, his words apply to *The Once and Future King*, for White put himself into many characters, not just the major ones. For example, he wrote, "Bors was a

misogynist like myself, so Guenever irritated him particularly." (White 1984, 115)

Of course, it is true that authors cannot help putting something of themselves into every character they create. Nevertheless, White's novel has a self-consciousness which is not always present, and White is deliberately using the characters to consider themes of universal interest.

Characters

White's narrator says:

There was a feature about the great families which centered round the doom of Arthur. All three had a resident genius of the family, half-way between a tutor and a confidant, who affected the characters of the children in each. At Sir Ector's castle there had been Merlyn, who was the main influence in Arthur's life. In lonely and distant Lothian there had been St. Toirdealbhach, whose warlike philosophy must have had something to do with the clannishness of Gawaine and his brothers. In King Ban's castle, there was an uncle of Lancelot's, whose name was Gwenbors. actually, he was the old man we have met, known to everybody as Uncle Dap. (323)

Everyone is somehow a product of their parentage and environment, nature and nurture. This is why White stresses the importance of the Arthurian family tree, which he calls a pedigree, saying that it "is a vital part of the tragedy of King Arthur." (312) We are our ancestors. This idea shows up in Newman's trilogy, where Morgause tells Morgan, the mother of Mordred, that Mordred "is not your son, or Arthur's, but Uther's own grandson, and as like him as any man could ever be." (1985, 27) Mordred is as terrible and lecherous as his grandfather, and even though Mordred never met Uther, Cador, a contemporary of the old king, recognizes the

similarity in both looks and attitude (1985, 58). Similarly, in Woolley's trilogy, Guinevere worries about her husband's dark side, which she associates with Uther (1990, 49).

In White's novel, then, the tragedy of Arthur can be seen as the tragedy of a single mind or a society divided against itself. The various facets of the mind, or of society, are represented by the characters from the three major families of the novel. At the same time, the characters are themselves the center of their own psychomachiae, and the aspects of their minds may be seen in the people around them. However, it must be remembered that *The Once and Future King* is White's psychomachia more than it is the psychomachia of any character in the novel.

Arthur and Merlyn

The first two characters which must be examined are Arthur and Merlyn. There would be no Round Table, no Camelot, without Arthur, and there would be no Arthur without Merlyn. They are at the heart of the plot, and they are at the heart of White's philosophy.

White himself is both Arthur and Merlyn. Sylvia Townsend Warner, the author of White's biography, wrote:

The Sword in the Stone had allowed [White] two wish-fulfilments. He gave himself a dauntless, motherless boyhood; he also gave himself an ideal old age, free from care and the contradiction of circumstances, practising an enlightened system of education on a chosen pupil....There was also the pleasure of discovering a Kingdom of Grammarie where there was room and redress for anything he liked to put into it:...for the friend's spaniel who had impeded their walks by winding her lead round their legs and became King Pellinore's brachet,...for his own remarkable memory

which enabled Merlyn to remember all the things that hadn't yet happened. With this went the satisfaction of serving under Malory -- a master whose service imposed Freedom. Except in the *Midnight Folk* pastiche of Madame Mim -- later cut out -- White showed his veneration for Malory by writing like himself. (99 - 100)

Warner points out the paradox of White's novel: it works on the universal level because it is so personal. White gives himself two ideal lives in "The Sword in the Stone," and in his actual life, he played the roles of both Arthur and Merlyn.

L. J. Potts, White's tutor at Cambridge, filled the role of Merlyn to White's Arthur, and both men were conscious of this (White 1984, 14, 159 ff.). At the same time, White played the role of Merlyn to his readers, and to children such as Potts' son William (Potts 154), as well as to the children he entertained while living at Alderney (Warner 266 ff.). François Gallix says of White:

He felt so strongly the ambiguity of the sportsman who kills for pleasure animals about whom he cares that he projected these feelings onto Merlyn in *The Once and Future King*, choosing the wild geese as his symbol for freedom and peace. (White 1984, 81)

White's attitude towards learning was Merlyn's as well. The magician says:

The best thing for being sad...is to learn something. That is the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and tremble in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then -- to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. (183)

White lived by this philosophy. He listed several of his achievements in a lecture: although originally afraid of flying, he "won a prize for

flying aeroplanes." (Warner 23) He learned how to dive and how to be a falconer, as well as how to shoot and fish. He learned painting and carpentry, and he learned enough medieval Latin to translate a bestiary (Warner 24).

In the same lecture, White said that he was driven to learn to compensate "for my sense of inferiority." (Warner 23) He explained:

My parents loathed each other and were separated; divorced, when I was about fourteen or so. This meant that my home and education collapsed about my ears; and ever since I have been arming myself against disaster. This is why I learn. (Warner 23)

Warner comments on the juxtaposition of White's boasts of his achievements with his description of his unhappy childhood:

It is a fine brag, and a respectable one -- since...the formidability of this accumulation of achievements depended on the boy whose home and education collapsed about his ears. If those applauding it remembered that earlier in the lecture White had quoted from *The Sword in the Stone* the passage beginning "The best thing for being sad", replied Merlyn, "is to learn something", it may have occurred to them that so much learning presupposed a good deal of sadness. (24)

This is the connection between Arthur and Merlyn: The boy Wart becomes the magician because he learns, and he learns because his childhood is not a happy one.

However, as Warner noted, the Wart has a happier childhood than White did. White bestowed the pains of his childhood upon Arthur's nephews, the sons of Morgause. Morgause is Arthur's half-sister, a fact of which Arthur is unaware because he has a motherless childhood, and the one piece of information which Merlyn, his wise alter ego, neglects to give him is his mother's name. This lack of knowledge will destroy him when his sister seduces him to bear Mordred, his worst foe.

Morgause and her Sons

Writing to Garnett about *The Witch in the Wood*, White says:

"Morgause is the villain of the piece. (I may mention that she is my mother.)" (Garnett 87) He says of his mother, "Every time I have to write to her even, it is like being mildly crucified." (Garnett 85)

White's aunt said of his mother:

my sister-in-law was of an extremely jealous nature and if the little boy showed affection for his father...she at once tried to provide some counter-attraction. She dismissed the ayah of whom he was extremely fond simply (she admitted this) because children 'must not prefer to go out with the ayah to staying with their parents.' The same insane jealousy prompted her to reprimand Terence when he wanted to play with Chota, a little native boy attendant, instead of listening to some music which she was playing. (Warner 27 - 28)

White himself had this to say:

You never knew who she was being -- Joan of Arc on Monday, Cleopatra on Tuesday, Florence Nightingale on Wednesday. I adored her passionately...I didn't get much security out of her. Either there were the dreadful parental quarrels and spankings of me when I was tiny or there were excessive scenes of affection during which she wooed me to love her -- not her to love me. It was my love that she extracted, not hers that she gave....she managed to bitch up my loving women. She made me dote on her when I was at school. (Warner 28)

His mother's jealousy and role-playing can be seen most clearly in *The Witch in the Wood*. White modified *The Witch in the Wood*, changing it greatly when he incorporated it into *The Once and Future King* as "The Queen of Air and Darkness," cutting many scenes with Morgause, making Morgause more of a sinister witch, and less of a caricature of his mother.

White's changes improved the novel, as Garnett noted: "It is always a mistake when one feels an author is venting a personal grudge on a character. I felt that about you & Morgause." (Garnett 95) Some scholars feel that even the re-written version has too much of White's spleen against his mother, that "The Queen of Air and Darkness" is too much a personal psychomachia and has too little of universal interest.

Even after White re-wrote *The Witch in the Wood* as "The Queen of Air and Darkness," the similarities between Constance White and Queen Morgause were unmistakable. At one point, Morgause ignores her sons, for she is playing the role of a virginal seductress, to the dismay of three visiting knights whom she takes to hunt for unicorns. Then, after she realizes that her sons have killed a unicorn for her, "she had them whipped for it, for she had spent an unsuccessful day with the English knights." (263)

Later still, she undergoes another change, realizing that she will not be able to seduce any of the knights:

With a sudden turn of feeling, she discovered that she hated them. They were imbeciles, as well as being the Sassenach, and she herself was a saint. She was, she discovered with a change of posture, interested in nothing but her darling boys. She was the best mother to them in the world! Her heart ached for them, her maternal bosom swelled. When Gareth nervously brought white heather to her bedroom as an apology for being whipped, she covered him with kisses, glancing in the mirror....The heather which he had brought was set up dramatically in a cup with no water -- she was every inch the homebody. (272)

Morgause, like White's mother role-playing mother, is far more interested in herself than in anyone else, as her glances in the mirror show. Her narcissism is also shown earlier in "The Queen of Air and Darkness"; she is shown boiling a cat alive, supposedly to look for the

bone which will allow her to turn invisible, but actually to give her an excuse to pose in front of the mirror. She loses interest in the cat long before finding the correct bone (218 - 219).

Despite Morgause's narcissism, or perhaps because of it, her children adore her. The narrator says, surely talking about White as much as about his characters: "Perhaps we give the best of our hearts uncritically -- to those who hardly think about us in return." (219)

The four sons of Morgause and Lot represent four different types of people. This is demonstrated by their attitudes toward the rape of Igraine by Uther, achieved with Merlyn's connivance:

It was the unfairness of the rape of their Cornish grandmother which was hurting Gareth -- the picture of weak and innocent people victimized by a resistless tyranny -- the old tyranny of the Gall -- which was felt like a personal wrong by every crofter of the Islands. Gareth was a generous boy. He hated the idea of strength against weakness. Gawaine, on the other hand, was angry because it had been against his family. He did not think it was wrong for strength to have its way, but only that it was intensely wrong for anything to succeed against his own clan. He was neither clever nor sensitive, but he was loyal -- stubbornly sometimes, and even annoyingly and stupidly so in later life. For him it was then as it was always to be: Up Orkney, Right or Wrong. The third brother, Agravaine, was moved because it was a matter which concerned his mother. He had curious feelings about her, which he kept to himself. As for Gaheris, he did and felt what the others did. (218)

The brothers are both individuals and types. They function as characters in the story of Arthur, as groups in society, and as facets of the psyche.

This combination gives the story the weight of tragedy, as the brothers find themselves trapped into repeating the same roles, again

and again. Because they are individuals, we empathize with them as individuals; because they are types and aspects of the psyche, we recognize an essential truth: The conflicts among the Orkney brothers are the same conflicts everyone feels within his own psyche, and the same conflicts which exist between groups of people. These conflicts play themselves out over and over, when the Orkney brothers are children, and when they are mature men.

The Unicorn

Learning that Morgause wants to hunt a unicorn with the visiting knights, her sons decide that they will find her one. They tie a kitchen girl, whom Agravaine decides is to fill the role of Morgause (256), to a heather root to attract the unicorn, yet when it comes, Agravaine kills it (259).

The boys react according to type: Gareth is hurt that Agravaine's brute strength and tyranny destroy the weak, innocent unicorn. Gawaine is angry because the beast was not threatening his clan, and would have conferred more prestige on the clan if it had been brought home alive. Gaheris goes along with the majority. Agravaine has killed the unicorn because it had its head in the lap of the peasant girl he equated with his mother: he killed the beast out of sexual jealousy (259 - 260).

When they discuss Morgause's advances toward the three knights, the brothers set a pattern which will be repeated when they discuss the infidelity of Guenever. Gawaine refuses to discuss the situation, while Agravaine goads Gawaine into attacking him, and then draws a knife on his older brother. Gareth tries to keep the peace, and when that fails,

he and Gaheris keep Gawaine and Agravaine from killing each other (274 - 275).

This sequence is repeated almost exactly, years later. The brothers are grown men, but little has changed. One thing has been added: a fifth brother, Mordred. Agravaine and Mordred plan to tell the king of Guenever's infidelity, Agravaine because he is jealous of her lover, as he was jealous of Morgause's lovers, while Mordred hates the father who tried to destroy him. Gawaine refuses to countenance their plan, and is goaded into attacking, while Agravaine pulls out a sword, as once he drew a knife. This time, Mordred has the knife, and he attacks from behind, as he attacked Sir Lammorak:

The situation passed out of control: they began acting like puppets, as if it had happened before -- which it had. Gawaine, at the sight of steel, went into one of his blind rages. He swung away from Mordred, burst into a torrent of words, drew the hunting knife which he carried, and advanced on Agravaine -- these things simultaneously. The fat man, as if thrown back on the defensive by the impact of his brother's fury, retreated before him, holding the sword in front with shaking hand....Mordred was slipping behind [Gawaine's] back, with a hand on his own dagger. In a second the glint of steel flashed in the shadows, lit by owl's eyes, and at the same moment Gareth jumped to the defense. He caught Mordred by the wrist...But Agravaine made a feeble thrust at the head of the family, which Gawaine turned contemptuously with his knife. Now the towering old fellow, with the ferret-coloured temples, had rushed in and pinned him round the wrist. The sword clattered to the floor as Agravaine went backwards over the hippocras table, with Gawaine on top of him. The dagger rose in venom to complete the work -- but Gaheris caught it from behind. There was a tableau of perfect silence, all motionless. Gareth held Mordred. Agravaine, hiding his eyes with his free hand, flinched from the knife. And Gaheris held the avenging arm suspended. (527 - 528)

This pattern is broken when Agravaine, Gareth, and Gaheris are slain. Suddenly, there is no one to hold back Gawaine's fury or Mordred's treachery. If the five brothers make up one psyche, barely

held in check by Arthur, who appears in the scene above as soon as the tableau is reached, that psyche is shattered and out of control. Arthur is no longer able to keep control of the kingdom, and follows Gawaine's lead helplessly, while allowing Mordred the opportunity for his treachery. The king cannot rule the country; the ego cannot rule the psyche.

Morgause's deficiencies as a mother shape her sons, and through them, the fate of Arthur and his court. Indeed, the narrator speculates that one reason Morgause was able to seduce Arthur is because "the role of mother love, as she stood with her children behind her, took him between wind and water." (311) However, her effect is even greater than that.

Constance White shaped her son's life, and he created Morgause in her image. How important is a mother's influence? Consider this: even today, authors of Arthurian novels are influenced by T. H. White, and use his characterizations. All the novels showing Morgause as the devouring mother owe a debt to White and are influenced by the specter of his mother.

Lancelot

White introduces the final strand of the tragedy of Arthur in the person of Lancelot. Lancelot is always good and kind because, although he wants to be a good person, he believes that he is wicked and cruel. White aspired to be a Merlyn and feared he was an Agravaine. Yet, as

John Moore recognized, White, "a self-tormented person," probably "saw himself very much as Lancelot in *The Ill-Made Knight*." (Warner 93)

Garnett tells White of one unusual criticism of an early draft of the book *The Ill-Made Knight*:

The Ill Made Knight...has too much Malory & not enough of your solidity. You have not visualised it, or built it up out of your own experiences to the same extent. (88)

Yet, though he said he agreed with this criticism, Garnett wrote an earlier letter about *The Ill-Made Knight*, saying:

It is the most *profound* of your books: the only one which touches serious things & reveals you yourself except for passages in *England Has My Bones*. (*sic*, 83)

Indeed, although White does not explicitly compare himself to Lancelot, he describes himself in language similar to that which he uses to describe Arthur's greatest knight.

In a letter to Potts, White writes:

My trouble is that being a sadist makes me far too gentle with women, and though I have no Conscience, which is merely a sense of Wrong or Guilt, I do have an Honour, which is a sense of Right. (White 1984, 226)

Describing Lancelot in an earlier letter, he tells Potts:

You are quite wrong about Lancelot. He was an intensely *ugly* man, quite startling to look at, and he was distressed about this. When he took a *nomme de guerre*, he called himself Le Chevalier Mal Fait. He was also a sadist and very much muddled up psychologically. This was why he always had to be merciful etc. He was a romantic, and wanted to "do miracles." His Guenever trouble was not Arthur, but the miracles. (White 1984, 114)

In *The Once and Future King*, White's narrator explains that Lancelot has "a Word", which he considers "the most valuable of possessions." (339)

The narrator continues:

His Word was valuable to him not only because he was good, but also because he was bad. It is the bad people who need to have principles to restrain them. For one thing, he liked to hurt people. It was for the strange reason that he was cruel, that the poor fellow never killed a man who asked for mercy, or committed a cruel action which he could have prevented. One reason why he fell in love with Guenever was because the first thing he had done was to hurt her. He might never have noticed her as a person, if he had not seen the pain in her eyes.

People have odd reasons for ending up as saints. A man who was not afflicted by ambitions of decency in his mind might simply have run away with his hero's wife, and then perhaps the tragedy of Arthur would never have happened. An ordinary fellow, who did not spend half his life torturing himself by trying to discover what was right so as to conquer his inclination towards what was wrong, might have cut the knot which brought their ruin. (339)

White and Lancelot both act against their own inclinations, taking care to compensate for their flaws. Gallix says of White that his "abiding sense of charity was matched only by his natural inclination to intolerance." (White 1984, 243) White says of Lancelot that he is "Probably sadistic or he would not have taken such frightful care to be gentle." (Warner 149)

White shows Lancelot's internal conflict in an incident which happens during a quest. When a knight kills a woman who was under Lancelot's protection, Lancelot is ready to kill the knight in return, until he begs for mercy. Then,

Lancelot began to shudder, not at the knight but at the cruelty in himself....Lancelot put up his sword and went back from the knight, as if he were going back from his own soul. He felt in his heart cruelty and cowardice, the things which made him brave and kind. (360 - 361)

Lancelot is horrified at himself. This sets him apart from White's other characters. Arthur tries to be good, and when he fails, he changes methods, rather than flagellating himself immoderately. Morgause's sons fall into patterns which, except for Gawaine, they do not seem to regret. Even Gawaine regrets only his actions; he does not assume that there is anything deeply wrong with him.

White's narrator says of Lancelot:

The boy thought that there was something wrong with him. All through his life -- even when he was a great man with the world at his feet -- he was to feel this gap: something at the bottom of his heart of which he was aware, and ashamed, but which he did not understand. (315)

Lancelot is convinced that his external ugliness must mirror some internal ugliness (317). He becomes the greatest knight for the same reason White learns as much as he can: to compensate for his sense of inferiority (Warner 23). In a way, the fights with the sadistic knights Carados and Turquine are Lancelot's fights against his own evil inclination.

White attempted to fight against his own inclinations in another way. He was a homosexual, as well as a sadist, and attempted to fight both inclinations (Warner 310, de Camp 257). He told Potts about a psychiatrist in whom he placed great faith, saying,

the man who gave me his address was a sadistic homosexual, and now is married and has a baby. Also H....was a total wreck at Stowe, masturbated at least once a day, couldn't shit, thought he was done for: now look at him. He has gained stones merely in weight. (White 1984, 73)

Perhaps as part of his treatment, White attempted to woo a barmaid, but he was ultimately unsuccessful (White 1984, 55 ff.; Warner 82 - 83).

Is Lancelot, then, homosexual? White does speculate about Lancelot's sexuality, wondering if he might be homosexual or "ambisexual", but concludes:

I do so want not to have to write a 'modern' novel about him. I could only bring myself to mention this trait, if it is a trait, in the most oblique way. (Warner 149)

Indeed, if there is any indication, it is extremely "oblique," existing, if at all, in passages like the following, from *The Once and Future King*:

Out of a lifetime which at Lancelot's age must have seemed to stretch little more than a week ahead, he gave thirty-six months to another man's idea because he was in love with it....He wanted to be the best knight in the world, so that Arthur would love him in return. (322 - 323)

In any case, regardless of his sexual preferences, Lancelot shares White's trait of doing the opposite of his natural inclination for moral reasons.

Weaving the Strands Together

Describing plan of the book, White says:

The first three volumes will be written in prose, in order, as it were, to fix the background of the three main sets of characters, and then the fourth volume will be in the form of a straightforward play or tragedy, showing how they finally clash together. (White 1984, 111)

The elements of the psyche detailed in the first three parts of the novel are not reconciled, and Camelot falls in the fourth.

Yet, one might object to the description of *The Once and Future King* as a psychomachia, on the grounds that White is describing three-

dimensional characters, not allegorical personifications. The characters are not two-dimensional, as White realizes. Explaining Malory's achievement to Potts, he writes:

the characters were real people with recognisable reactions which could be forecast. Mordred was hateful; Kay a decent chap with an inferiority complex; Gawaine that rarest of literary productions, a swine with a streak of solid decency. He was a sterling fellow to his own clan. (White 1984, 93)

The characters are "real people," yet their reactions "could be forecast." They are rounded characters, yet they are simplified to show specific qualities. What is one to make of this?

The characters are "real people," and that is why the psychomachia works. Both levels support each other. For modern readers, an allegory or a psychomachia works only if its characters are real people first, and allegorical personifications second (See Meyer). In other words, readers accept the psychomachia as a psychomachia because the characters are real.

At the same time, a psychomachia allows, even demands, a certain simplification. Therefore, White combines the two Elaines who love Lancelot into one, even though he recognizes that "Malory's *psychology* is better than my plot." (White 1984, 117) He simplifies the psychology of his characters for psychomachia purposes. Ironically, this makes the plot feel more realistic to the reader, for the real world is often more convoluted than any fiction a reader will accept as realistic.

Themes

White considers several themes in his novel, three of which are particularly relevant to psychomachia. He considers the various stages all men go through as they become adults, mature, and die. He also considers man as a composite of all the animals, but at the same time, he is aware that man is one of very few species which wage war. The two ways of looking at a man, as a being which ages and as a composite of several animals, serve as tools to consider the question of how to avoid war, a question of great importance to White.

Ages of Man

In a letter to David Garnett, White refers to "The Sword in the Stone" as "boyhood and animals" (Garnett 85) and "The Ill-Made Knight" as "Lancelot & the middle years," while "The Candle in the Wind" ends with "the aged Arthur weeping and smashed to pieces." (Garnett 86) The child Wart, who lives in a world of wonder, grows into the mature Arthur, who tries to create a decent society, only to see the ruin of all his aspirations. Yet, "The Candle in the Wind" ends with a renewal of the earlier idealism and wonder, for White introduces Tom Malory, a young page whom Arthur sends away from the battle not only to save his life, but also so that the ideals of the Round Table may take root in the minds of a new generation.

Arthur's experiences are also the experiences of his society. White describes the four stages of Arthur's court:

There had been the first feeling, a companionship of youth under which Arthur had launched his grand crusade -- the second, of chivalrous rivalry growing staler every year...until it had nearly turned to feud and empty competition. Then the enthusiasm of the Grail had burned the bad gasses of the air into a short-lived beauty. Now the maturest or saddest phase had come, in which enthusiasms had been used up for good...The court had achieved "knowledge of the world" now. (477)

There is a parallel, albeit not an exact one, to the stages Arthur goes through. Both Arthur and his court have a period of springtime growth and beauty, of summer maturity, of fading autumn aging, and of winter despair.

There is a promise of a renewal of springtime; however, for Lancelot is allowed to do one final miracle, while Arthur finds a boy who has learned to love the ideals of the Round Table. The link between miracles and childhood can be seen in Lancelot, as White quotes Malory: When Lancelot heals Sir Urre, he "wept as he had been a child that had been beaten." (514)

Childhood is the root of Arthur's ideals and dreams, and it is by returning to childhood, by introducing young Tom Malory, that White can show a renewal of those ideals even on the eve of the disastrous battle between Arthur's forces and Lancelot's. David Garnett understood the importance of childhood in White's scheme, for one of his letters to White says:

Sword in the Stone is like Wood Magic. It is poetry: it is for children & we are all children & happiest when anyone can make [us] believe we are. (*sic*, 83)

Everyone goes through the same stages of growth and decay, and White's recognition of this fact creates one of the themes of the novel. Another theme can be recognized by examining what happens in Arthur's childhood,

that period where he is only beginning to learn to cherish the ideals on which he will base his Round Table.

Animals

As Garnett recognizes, we have all been children, and there is a magic about childhood, however painful it may have been. But while there are universal elements in Arthur's childhood, he has the unique advantage of having a magician for a tutor. Merlyn educates Arthur by turning him into a variety of animals.

Turning into the animals is a psychomachiac experience for Arthur, and this is what lends him extra strength when he attempts to budge the sword in the stone. On one level, the animals have come because they love the boy Wart who spent time among them (204). On another level, each animal represents a different aspect of Arthur, and all must combine in the task of drawing the sword from the stone to prove that Arthur is a complete man, capable of transforming from Wart the squire to Arthur the king:

"Put your back into it," said a Luce (or pike) off one of the heraldic banners, "as you once did when I was going to snap you up. Remember that power springs from the nape of the neck."

"What about those forearms," asked a Badger gravely, "that are held together by a chest? Come along, my dear embryo, and find your tool."

A Merlin sitting at the top of the yew tree cried out, "Now then, Captain Wart, what is the first law of the foot? I thought I once heard something about never letting go?"

"Don't work like a stalling woodpecker," urged a Tawny Owl affectionately. "Keep up a steady effort, my duck, and you will have it yet."

A white-front said, "Now, Wart, if you were once able to fly the great North Sea, surely you can co-ordinate a few little wing-muscles here and there? Fold your powers

together, with the spirit of your mind, and it will come out like butter. Come along, Homo sapiens, for we all humble friends of yours are waiting here to cheer."

The Wart walked up to the great sword for the third time. He put out his right hand softly and drew it out as gently as from a scabbard. (204 - 205)

Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny: a human fetus has been many different animals before it achieves humanity. Wart's experiences with the animals is an initiation into humanity, as well as a means of achieving physical and mental wholeness. The animals' advice on how to use the muscles of the body to pull the sword out of the stone shows that the Wart has achieved a mental, as well as a physical, maturity which transforms him into Arthur the King. The entire body acting together mirrors the mind working as a whole, not divided against itself.

But the animals do more than show Arthur's development from child to man, from nameless bastard to King. They also allow White to discuss human society while appearing to comment on animal society. The ants whom the Wart visits have a society too close to human society for comfort, where everything is either forbidden or compulsory (122 ff.). The geese have an idealized society, with no war. Wart discusses both societies in his visit to the badger who tells him how Man is one of only seven species that wage war on its own kind. Wart points out that war brings out many good qualities in people, allowing them to "do great deeds, and be brave, and conquer [their] own fears." He asks, "Don't you have courage in warfare, Badger, and endurance, and comrades whom you love?" (194)

The badger does not answer directly. Instead, he asks, "Which did you like best...the ants or the wild geese?" (194) The problem of war is linked to the Wart's experiences with different animals. White is aware that Wart's transformations and his own researches on the behavior of

animals is an examination of the human race, a psychomachia of humanity as a whole. White writes:

The thing which I am now trying to do is to find out *why* the territorial claim is made in the first place. (If I can do this, I can say That's War -- that was.) J. Huxley says it is made on account of natural stringency i.e. deserts make ants fight for their few seeds. This is not true....If man is serious about wanting to stop wars he ought to finance immense Columbia-University-Field-Expeditions to study the eight at present known other belligerents. (Garnett 118 - 119)

War

Both the consideration of the animals and the discussion of the stages a man goes through in his life are used to consider the problem of war. White did not want to fight in World War II, but he believed that Hitler had to be stopped, and he knew that young men he had taught were dying in the war to stop Hitler.

As he wrote *The Book of Merlyn*, which would only be published fifteen years after his death, he came to the conclusion that he had to find a job which would contribute to the war effort. He wrote:

I still think that I can help civilisation better by making it than by defending it, but I want to shew that I am prepared to be blitzed for it next winter, on account of certain conclusions in my epic: in order to stop the mouth of vulgar criticism. (Garnett 94)

His efforts to get a job seem haphazard, at best, and he admitted "My only reason for 'wanting' a job is for the book, not for England, Home or Beauty." (Garnett 104) Pressed by Garnett, he wrote:

You ask me to make up my mind whether I really want a job. Well, of course I don't....But unfortunately I have written

an epic about war, one of whose morals is that Hitler is the kind of chap one has to stop. I believe in my book, and, in order to give it a fair start in life, I must show that I am ready to practice what I preach. (185)

White did not get a job to help in the war effort. Perhaps, like Arthur, he thought

that it might have been better for all his dead soldiers to be alive -- even if they had lived under tyranny and madness -- rather than be quite dead. (364)

White was no doubt sincere in believing that Hitler must be stopped, but he himself was more concerned with ending all wars than with enlisting in any, however much he might feel he should. He wrote to Garnett:

I am hoping desperately that when you have read my last two books you will think that I have helped in the war effort almost as much as you have with the Air War. Or at any rate in the next peace effort. (Garnett 100)

These books were "The Candle in the Wind" and *The Book of Merlyn*.

White explained his handling of war in a *The Once and Future King* as follows:

The last book, number five, is, I hope, the crown of the whole. The epic theme is War and how to stop it...and number five solves the problem. You see, the Round Table was an anti-Hitler measure. It began by trying to control Might-as-Right in individuals, by harnessing it to worldly ends; then, in the Grail, it tried to harness it to spiritual ends; then, in Book 4, *The Candle in the Wind*, it recognises that Might-as-Right must be quashed altogether, instead of harnessed, and Arthur turns over to abstract justice -- he invents 'Law'...and is prepared to sacrifice both Lancelot & Guenever to the ideal. This works, so far as Might in the individual is concerned, but, no sooner has he got it settled like that, than Might in the congeries, collective Might, War, pops up behind him. All his life he was trying to dam a flood which broke out in new places. This book brings him face to face with the final theme and ends with him broken.

Now we come to Book 5, a frightfully tricky bit of writing because *it goes back to the animals* of Book 1. The trouble is not to let it be puerile. I have resisted the temptation to turn him back into a boy by magic, but he has

got to visit two more kinds of animal...which he does, and I have tried to keep him on the level of the great king he has become. Merlyn and all the animals of Book 1 are in the badger's sett of Book 1 (which turns out to be the hole into which Nimue put him) and they explain about War from the biological point of view. At the end, having discovered to my own satisfaction all about Might by glancing at the 250,000 other species beside man which have had to face the problem, Arthur goes back to his battle and comes to his end. I insinuate in the last paragraph that he was not taken to Avalon or buried at Glastonbury, but that he is back in the badger's sett, waiting to come out and help us with Merlin and all of them, if we ever let the time come. (Garnett 86)

Readers of *The Once and Future King* may be baffled by White's explanation that Arthur has two kinds of animals to visit, for the episodes of the ants and the geese were transplanted to "The Sword in the Stone" when it became clear that *The Book of Merlyn* was not going to be published. These are the episodes which consider the question of war through the utopian society of the geese, which one might like humanity to create, and the dystopian society of the ants, which one might fear humanity will create, if, in fact, it has not already done so.

While *The Book of Merlyn* is considered flawed by most scholars, White says that, at the end, he -- or Arthur; the sentence is ambiguous -- "discovered to my own satisfaction all about might." (Garnett 86) However much critics may feel that *The Book of Merlyn* is a failure, White has succeeded in creating a personal psychomachia in which he considers the questions troubling him during World War II.

Even without *The Book of Merlyn*, White's psychomachia is easy to see. "The Sword in the Stone," re-written to include the ants and the geese, introduces the theme of war. "The Queen of Air and Darkness" considers it in great detail, with Kay and Merlyn serving to voice opposing points of view, to be resolved by Arthur. Here, there is a

direct reference to Hitler, made by Merlyn, who lives backwards in time, and, therefore, remembers World War II.

Kay claims to have found a good reason for starting a war:

"A good reason for starting a war is simply to have a good reason! For instance, there might be a king who had discovered a new way of life for human beings -- you know, something which would be good for them. It might even be the only way of saving them from destruction. Well, if the human beings were too wicked or too stupid to accept his way, he might have to force it on them, in their own interests, by the sword."

The magician clenched his fists, twisted his gown into screws, and began to shake all over.

"Very interesting," he said in a trembling voice. "Very interesting. There was just such a man when I was young -- an Austrian who invented a new way of life and convinced himself that he was the chap to make it work. He tried to impose his reformation by the sword, and plunged the civilized world into misery and chaos. But the thing which this fellow had overlooked, my friend, was that he had a predecessor in the reformation business, called Jesus Christ. Perhaps we may assume that Jesus knew as much as the Austrian did about saving people. But the odd thing is that Jesus did not turn the disciples into storm troopers, burn down the Temple at Jerusalem, and fix the blame on Pontius Pilate. On the contrary, he made it clear that the business of the philosopher was to make ideas *available*, and *not* to impose them on people."

Kay looked pale but obstinate.

"Arthur is fighting the present war," he said, "to impose his ideas on King Lot." (266 - 267)

Here is the paradox of the novel, the problem that is never entirely resolved. Despite Merlyn's knowledge, despite Arthur's ideals, it is pragmatic Kay who has the last word, and what he says cannot be discounted.

Arthur never entirely solves the problem of war. In "The Ill-Made Knight," he uses tournaments, the Grail quest, and eventually, a legal code to prevent the strong from trampling the weak. But the tournaments turn into rivalries, which threaten to become wars; the Grail quest deprives Arthur of the best knights, while leaving the worst freer to

cause trouble, and, in "The Candle in the Wind," the legal code becomes a weapon in the hands of Agravaine and Mordred to destroy the ideal civilization which Arthur worked so hard to create.

While White was considering a problem of personal importance, this problem is also of universal interest. White was writing during World War II, and one could say that *The Once and Future King* is an allegorization of the war, but it is more than just that. The personal psychomachia considers the universal problems of war and of how to create an ideal civilization when humanity is flawed.

White's novel, then, tells Arthur's story, but it also tells the story of our civilization. White is considering the issues of his time which bothered him. These issues concerned not only himself, but all of the people in all of the countries affected by World War II. These issues are of concern to readers today, just as they are of concern to White's Arthur, and for the same reason: They are of concern to everyone in any society where war is an issue, and White's novel will continue to be relevant until war ceases to be a problem, and the strong stop oppressing the weak. When that happens, if it ever does, Camelot will exist again, and the ideals of Arthur's Round Table will become reality.

Marion Zimmer Bradley: The Face of the Goddess on the Water

One could argue that White and others have created a male-centered psychomachia. This may be true, but there are plenty of authors who have created a female-centered psychomachia, most notably Marion Zimmer Bradley.

The women in Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* are all facets of the Goddess worshipped by the Pagans in the novel. The Goddess, who has more in common with the Goddess worshipped by today's Neo-Pagans than with any British goddess, is Everywoman. By definition, then, all women reflect some facet of the Goddess.

Bradley avoids making her psychomachia too diffuse, however, by drawing on the traditions of the Neo-Pagan movement. According to the sources upon which she draws, there are three traditional forms which the Goddess takes, reflecting the Ages of Woman, much as White's psychomachia reflects the Ages of Man. These three forms are those of Maiden (which does not necessarily mean Virgin), Mother, and Crone (or wise-woman).

The relationship between the aspects, or faces, of the Goddess and the individual women in *Mists* is made clear early in the novel. Viviane, the Lady of Avalon, looks at her sister Igraine, and Igraine's child, Morgaine. She says: "[Morgaine] is not yet a maiden, and I not yet a wise-woman...but we are the Three, Igraine. Together, we make up the Goddess." (23) A diagram could not be clearer.

Yet, many Neo-Pagans believe that the Goddess has another primary aspect. Igraine wonders why Viviane has not mentioned their sister, Morgause, and Viviane says, "The Goddess has a fourth face, which is

secret, and you should pray to her, as I do...that Morgause will never wear that face." (23)

While some claim that the fourth face of the Goddess is that of the Warrior, this is not true in *Mists*. Here, the fourth face, never named, is the face of the destroyer, of a Kali figure who pulls down what others have worked so hard to build. This is Morgause's role in *Mists*, for while Morgaine gives birth to Medraut, it is Morgause who raises him, ensuring that he will become Arthur's bitterest foe. Indeed, Morgause tries to kill Arthur before he can become king, and it is she who guides Medraut (Mordred) in his plan to expose the affair of Gwenhwyfar (Guinevere) and Lancelet (Lancelot).

Of course, Morgause, Morgaine, Igraine, and Viviane are not the only women in the novel to reflect the face of the Goddess. All women reflect Her, most notably, Gwenhwyfar, Nimue, Niniane, and the unnamed queen of the land of Fairy. Nor are the women of *Mists* limited to one role. They change and grow over time, and, just as they are facets of the Goddess, in some way, they are facets of each other as well.

Morgaine, the protagonist of Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*, says: "In my time I have been called many things: sister, lover, priestess, wise-woman, queen." (ix) Morgaine, like the Goddess, like all women, is Everywoman. She plays many roles during her life, all in relation to other people. Some roles are personal, such as those of sister and lover; others are societal, as priestess, wise-woman, and especially queen. Also, though she does not mention it in her list, Morgaine plays the role of wife for fifteen years, and while she is a poor mother to her own son, she raises her husband's youngest child as if she were his biological mother.

Morgause, too, is more complicated than she seems. She is the wanton Maiden who tries to seduce Igraine's husband Gorlois. She is the mother of Lot's children, and she prides herself on her own type of fidelity, for she has borne no other man's children, however many men she had sex with. She plays the role of mother to her own children and to Medraut, the child of Morgaine and Arthur, and treats her niece Morgaine as a younger sister. Morgause is also a crone, or wise-woman, for she is Lot's co-ruler, and her knowledge covers areas as diverse as politics, herblore, and midwifery. One might claim that Morgause is the dark side of all these figures, for her Maiden is calculating, not a champion of freedom. She is the devouring mother, not the nurturing mother, destroying both Medraut and Gareth with her schemes. And, her wisdom is cunning and poisonous.

Yet this is also true of Morgaine, the novel's central figure. She does not exercise the freedom which is one of the primary attributes of the Goddess as Maiden, for she cannot bring herself to break Viviane's rules, even though she wants to have sex with Lancelet, and she is filled with guilt, horror, and outrage when she discovers that she has slept with her brother. Morgaine is a devouring mother, for she plots the death of one of her husband's children, while neglecting her own son. Her marriage is not one based on love, but on misunderstandings and palace politics, and as wise-woman, she tries to kill Arthur and destroy Camelot. Her convoluted schemes come to naught, yet ironically, she does destroy Camelot in her role as Grail Maiden, for the Grail Quest deprives Arthur of his knights and allows Medraut room for his schemes to come to fruition. Morgaine represents that hidden fourth face of the Goddess as much as Morgause does.

Gwenhwyfar, Morgaine's alter ego may be said to manifest all these roles as well, in potential, at least. She had the potential to be the free Maiden, until her father taught her to love being enclosed by walls. She tries hard to bear a child, and in some sense, Arthur and Lancelet are her children. As an aging queen, her wisdom is respected by her ladies, and she becomes the wise-woman, or crone, a role she could also be said to fulfill when she becomes a nun, much as Morgaine is a priestess. And finally, she is the destroyer who, however inadvertently, pulls down the walls of Camelot.

Still, the central character of *Mists* is Morgaine, and the story is more her psychomachia than any other's. Morgaine, ultimately, becomes the Goddess: She becomes a complete, integrated, adult woman. This is not an easy step; it takes her years to achieve. Nor is it achieved without pain. Morgaine realizes:

I have called on the Goddess and found her within myself.

And Morgaine knew that never again would she have the ability to seek beyond herself for comfort or counsel; she could only look within. No priestess, no prophetess, no Druid or councillor, no Goddess now to turn to; none but her unguided self. (803)

Becoming an adult means realizing that one cannot rely on another, that one is, in some sense, always, truly alone. Yet, in another sense, one is never alone, for integration means that all facets of the personality are there.

Morgaine, seeing herself again in [Lancelet's] eyes, thought, *I too am old...*

And now she knew why she had never again caught sight of the queen within the land of Fairy.

I am the queen now.

There is no Goddess but this, and I am she...

And yet beyond this, she is, as she is in Igraine and Viviane and Morgause and Nimue and the queen. And they live

in me too, and she...

And within Avalon they live forever. (sic, 815)

Morgaine incorporates within herself the wisdom of all of the women who guided her, all of the women who represented the Goddess to her:

Now and again, when, as the habit of a lifetime bade her, she sought to call up the image of the Goddess to guide her, she saw nothing, or sometimes the face of Igraine -- not the elderly, priest-ridden wife and widow of Uther, but the young and beautiful mother who had first laid these burdens on her, who had bidden her care for Arthur and given her into the hands of Viviane. And now and again she would see the face of Viviane, who had sent her to the bed of the Horned One, or Raven, who had stood at her side during the great moment of invocation.

They are the Goddess. And I am the Goddess. And there is no other. (803)

All women go through the stages Morgaine goes through: They grow from Maiden to Mother (whether or not they have biological children) to Wise Woman, and there is a dark side to every woman, just as there is to the Goddess. Integration and adulthood are achieved when a woman realizes that she can no longer externalize the Goddess, but must find Her within.

Bradley's novel inspired other authors to look at the women in Arthur's story, particularly Morgan Le Fay. One of the most ambitious works drawing on Bradley is Fay Sampson's *Daughter of Tintagel* series, which chronicles the life of Morgan Le Fay from five different points of view, including Morgan's. Morgan and her sisters Elaine and Margawse form a trio, much as Bradley's Morgaine, Igraine, and Viviane did, and just as Morgause represented the dark face of the Goddess in *Mists*, Nimue seems to represent Her dark face in *Daughter of Tintagel*.

The psychomachia of *Daughter of Tintagel* may be more than merely a metaphor. Morgan wonders whether she is responsible for the actions of her sister, and when she learns that Elaine tried to poison Arthur, she muses:

Should I have suspected? We are three and we are nine and we are one. Each of us sisters holds within herself a triune being, Maiden, Mother, Crone. We cannot be separated. What is done, even by a part of one of us, belongs to the pattern. Did Elaine bring death? Or was it the malevolent hag within myself that could not forgive Arthur, even yet?
(691 - 692)

Perhaps, concedes Morgan, it is not the woman Elaine who tried to poison Arthur, but the Elaine part of herself.

The distinction between rounded characters and allegorical personifications are blurred in Sampson's works: The three sisters might be no more than three facets of one woman. Sampson is expanding on Bradley's work, for where Bradley tried to provide a female counterpart to the male psychomachia of Arthur, Sampson is trying to find a means of resolving the two. She says in the "Author's Note" to the series:

In physics, Dark matter forms an unseen world that is the inverse of the matter we observe. The two were created to exist in equal proportions. Together, they hold the universe in balance. But when they come into contact, the result is mutual destruction. Morgan's story is the Dark Matter of Britain.

The idea of a necessary balance between male and female forces is repeated several times in the series: Morgan and her sisters give up their enmity with Merlyn (Merlin), realizing that his maleness is a necessary counterpoint to their femaleness (430, 658). Arthur's sword represents the male powers of war, while his scabbard represents the female powers of healing (682). Two versions of Morgan's story are

narrated by men, one of whom is cursed by Morgan when he fails to understand that it is necessary to master the arts of healing as well as those of killing (313), while the other flees her because he cannot understand that those who heal must also have the power to kill (584). While Arthur is fighting a war, Gwenhyvar usurps his power, reminding the ladies of the realm that she and Arthur were crowned in "Two separate coronations, in different churches, one for Arthur before the men, one to crown Gwenhyvar before the women." (553)

Yet, the idea of the mutual destruction which occurs when dark matter comes into contact with regular matter is never abandoned. Arthur and Gwenhyvar have separate coronations, and Morgan's dealings with men are more destructive than healing. Her final reconciliation with Arthur comes only when he is dying, and it seems that she can only claim her power as he renounces his (See Burling). Sampson's psychomachia builds on Bradley's explorations of gender issues, but does not resolve them.

Parke Godwin may not draw on Bradley for much in his novels, yet he too uses the technique of psychomachia. In *Firelord*, Godwin's Arthur must learn about the marginal and about his mother's people, the Prydn, when he is captured by them. They give him a new personality, one which continues to influence him even after he has become king. In addition, while he knows that the Merlin who served Vortigern must be long dead, he creates his own Merlin, a figure who appears to him in visions, aging as he does, and he finally comes to recognize that "Merlin" is himself (95). Like Bradley's Morgaine, Godwin's Arthur integrates the facets of his personality. These include his Merlin persona and the Druith persona created by the Prydn.

Firelord is centered around Arthur; however, the sequel, *Beloved Exile*, begins after Arthur's death, and is centered around Guenevere. Godwin's Guenevere is no sensitive priestess like Bradley's Morgaine, nor is she like Sampson's Morgan Le Fay. She is a dynamic woman, claiming the right to rule as Arthur's heir. Nevertheless, *Beloved Exile* is very much a woman's story and a female psychomachia.

All of the women in *Beloved Exile* are versions of Guenevere. Raifa, or Rat, a slave and former prostitute, appears to the queen in visions, just as Merlin appeared to Arthur, and in these visions, Rat explicitly states that she is Guenevere's Merlin, adding that Merlin was no more than "the best of Arthur, a kind of twin." (252) Rat may not be "the best" of Guenevere, but she reminds the queen that they are both survivors. Elfgifu, the Saxon woman who buys Guenevere as a slave, and Elaine, the mad wife of Lancelot, are both reflections of the darker side of the queen.

Men, too, reflect aspects of Guenevere. The rivals for the throne of Britain, Emrys, whom she taught, and Constantine, who tried to execute her, both embody her desire for power. But Guenevere has grown beyond them both, becoming an integrated person after ten years as a slave, learning compassion, as Arthur did after his experiences with the Prydn.

Godwin's novels raise interesting questions about gender issues, but this is not his primary intent. His psychomachia is more concerned with examining the qualities which make a person, whether male or female, a good ruler. Arthur and Guenevere stand above other candidates for the throne of Britain because of their experiences which force them to integrate the various aspects of their personalities.

Not all psychomachias are as personal as White's, as or political as Bradley's. For example, Edison Marshall's *The Pagan King* is more concerned with Arthur's identity than with his qualifications as a ruler. Arthur slowly comes to learn the truth about his family from the people around him, most of whom turn out to be related to him. Yet, each fact he learns from another person is relayed to him only when he has achieved enough knowledge to figure it out on his own. The other characters function as external projections of Arthur, for it is almost as if they do not have the knowledge he seeks until he gains it himself.

Elizabeth Wein

Elizabeth Wein's novel *The Winter Prince* is Medraut's (Mordred's) psychomachia. In this unusual version of the story, Medraut must come to terms with his feelings for his father, Artos (Arthur), his mother, Morgause, who is also his lover and Artos's enemy, and his half-brother Lleu, Artos's legitimate heir.

Morgause poisons Lleu several times, for what she perceives as a slight. Each time, Medraut saves Lleu, realizing that Morgause does not truly mean to kill him; yet, neither he, Lleu, or Goewin, Lleu's sister, inform Arthur about Morgause's attempts for over a week. Medraut has a reason for this odd silence: He is afraid that Arthur will blame him for not recognizing the initial attempt. But it may make more sense to view the nocturnal poisonings as a struggle within Medraut. Lleu is everything he wants to be: popular, legitimate, and accepted without

question. Morgause is his dark side, just as she is the dark face of the Goddess in Bradley's *Mists*. Medraut is fighting that part of himself which wishes to destroy his brother, and he is fighting to preserve that part of himself which he considers the best of himself.

Eventually, Medraut tells Artos everything, and Morgause is banished. However, the battle has not been resolved. Morgause calls Medraut's "defense" of Lleu "wretched," (141) and Artos inadvertently hurts Medraut by claiming that Medraut's existence is all the proof he needs of Morgause's treachery (100). The side of Medraut which Morgause represents has only been driven off temporarily.

This part returns when Morgause returns. The Queen of the Orcades arrives during the Christmas holidays, and Artos cannot turn her away, although he treats her as a prisoner. On the narrative level, Morgause is a real, frightened woman who almost died of the cold, and who has no assurance that her brother will take her in. On the psychomachic level, her appearance is a warning that the struggle within Medraut is about to come to a head, even though Medraut does not intend to visit her during her stay (122 - 124).

Almost immediately after Morgause and her servants have been settled, Lleu unthinkingly insults Medraut. As Medraut teases him about his height, the prince tells his brother: "Well I thank God I am not a bastard born of incest." (126) Although Lleu assumed that they already knew this, Morgause's other sons are shocked to learn that Medraut is their brother, for they know, as Lleu does not, that Medraut had intercourse with her. Medraut, understandably, requests that the subject be changed, but Lleu replies: "As I am prince of Britain you dare not contest anything of which I wish to speak." (127)

Furious, Medraut seeks out Morgause, despite his intent to shun her. And she is there for him to find. On the narrative level, she is present because her journey to the Orcades was delayed by the weather and she had to seek shelter at Camlan (Camelot).

But there is more to *The Winter Prince* than the narrative level. While Morgause is more than merely an extension of Medraut or a part of his psyche, she also, nevertheless, represents that part of him which is ambitious, which wants to rule Camlan after Artos, which resents Llew bitterly and wants to cause him pain. Medraut is full of resentment and bitter pride when he goes to see Morgause; he is psychologically prepared to accept her. From the moment Llew insults Medraut and reveals his secret, Medraut lets Morgause into his mind. He accepts the desires of that part of his mind which is Morgause; this is externalized by his physical journey to her room.

The question of cause and effect is an interesting one: Did Medraut summon Morgause out of the snow, before Llew ever insulted him? On the narrative level, this is absurd; yet, something similar has happened and will happen: Llew fights all of Medraut's sleeping potions in the early part of the novel for no rational or logical reason, somehow sensing danger. Medraut means Llew no harm at this point, but he will later give Llew a sleeping potion when he means to betray him. Perhaps the usual sequence of cause and effect does not apply in a psychomachia, or, perhaps, Morgause arrives because Medraut feels resentment, however deeply suppressed, and when Llew's action breaks the dam, he turns to her as the embodiment of his feelings.

Certainly, Morgause's words mirror Medraut's thoughts. She says, "You are the true prince of this land." Medraut has just been telling

himself "I am the high king's eldest son," (128) trying to salve his hurt pride by telling himself that he is more worthy than Lleu of ruling the land, a sentiment not altogether unjustified. And there is also the matter of a mysterious poisoning: Somehow, despite all precautions, Morgause manages to slip a poison, albeit not a lethal one, into Lleu's food during the Midwinter pageant. How Morgause does this is never adequately explained. Perhaps she is acting as the embodiment of Medraut's desires.

Morgause is not permitted to attend the pageant; she comforts Medraut immediately before it begins, and instructs him to visit her after it ends. As he approaches her room a second time, Medraut passes Lleu, who is feeling the effects of Morgause's poison, but this time, Medraut refuses to help his brother.

Morgause instructs Medraut to work with Agravain to take Lleu prisoner and deliver him to her. She explains that she does not trust Medraut, and Agravain adores her. Agravain is the part of Medraut that wants to be Morgause's lover and ally, forgoing all honor for one of her smiles. Morgause tempts Medraut not only with his ambition to be king, but also with herself, kissing her son (143).

It is significant that Lleu passes Morgause's room at that moment. Although Medraut pushes Morgause away, presumably rejecting both her offer and her plan, Lleu addresses his brother with contempt, saying, "You disgust me." (144) Lleu's reaction is certainly understandable on the narrative level, for Medraut is embracing the woman who has just poisoned Lleu, and he has rejected Lleu's attempts to apologize for insulting him, much as Morgause rejected Lleu's apology for the slight to herself.

On the allegorical level, Medraut is caught, literally, between the representatives of his better and worse halves. Morgause's embrace is the externalization of the darker part of Medraut's mind reaching out to enfold him just as Lleu arrives. But this externalization of Medraut's better qualities rejects him. Lleu's disgust is the final straw for Medraut, who agrees at this point to serve Morgause and the darker side of himself which she represents.

The Winter Prince works on both literal and allegorical levels, showing Medraut's external struggle to reject Morgause which is mirrored by his internal struggle. Ultimately, Medraut is successful. On the external level, Lleu drives off Agravain and outmaneuvers Medraut's attempts to use him as a hostage against Artos even after he has decided not to follow Agravain to Morgause. On the internal level, Medraut rejects that part of himself which wants to follow Morgause, and rejects that part of himself which Morgause represents. It is interesting to note that Agravain, too, rejects Morgause, choosing to throw himself on Artos' mercy. Medraut acknowledges his love for his brother Lleu, and he also comes to realize that Artos and the people of Camlan do not despise him, and that he has the love which he resented Lleu for usurping. In other words, Lleu is not only his bright, legitimate half-brother; Lleu is also those qualities which Medraut dares not believe he possesses, yet discovers he does possess.

The Midwinter Pageant

The psychomachia of *The Winter Prince* is enriched by several incidents which occur in the novel. These are games which are not merely

games, but which mirror and foreshadow reality. For example, Lleu agrees to let Morgause's sons hunt him for a day. This is a non-fatal game, but one with unexpected consequences: Medraut becomes a player when Lleu interrupts his stag hunting (71 - 72), while Morgause torments Lleu because of his treatment of Gareth, her youngest son, during the hunt (73). The events of the hunt foreshadow Medraut's later attempt to bring Lleu to Morgause. Similarly, the mock duel which Morgause insists Lleu fight against Medraut, Agravain, and Gaheris is played out in deadly earnest, and also foreshadows Lleu's eventual triumph over Medraut and Agravain (62 - 63).

However, the most elaborate game which functions as foreshadowing and as psychomachia is the Midwinter pageant, where the New Year, played by Bedwyr (Bedivere), kills the Winter Prince, who is the son of the Old Year. The Winter Prince is resurrected by the Magician.

Lleu mocks the fighting skill of the man who plays the Winter Prince, and is prevailed upon by the audience to take his place. The role of the Magician is played by Medraut, who has used his skill as a doctor to keep Lleu alive and in good health for nearly two years. Medraut is perceived as a magician by the people of Camlan, who treat him with mingled respect and fear, as the Magician of the pageant is treated. His healing of the Winter Prince is both an acknowledgement of his role as Lleu's healer and a foreshadowing of his role as Lleu's poisoner, for he will later drug Lleu and attempt to bring him to Morgause as a prisoner.

Medraut is aware of the connection between the pageant and later events. As the Magician cures the Winter Prince, he says:

Into your wounds the golden drops
 I pour from ou[t] the healing cup....
 As death came to the Winter Prince,
 So may the Lord of Spring rise up. (136)

These lines echo in Medraut's mind when he drugs Lleu, but now they are different:

Into your wine the golden drops
 I pour from out the poisoned cup
 As death comes to the Winter Prince. (147)

Medraut is aware that he has perverted the role of the Magician, and he foresees no resurrection of the Winter Prince, for he omits the last line of the verse. Yet, that last line foreshadows the happy resolution of the novel, and as Medraut and Lleu return to Camlan with Artos, the new year begins. Medraut's personal psychomachia -- which, from another point of view, could also be considered Lleu's psychomachia -- is also an allegory for the cycle of the year, just as White's psychomachia is also an allegory for the Ages of Man, and Bradley's for the Ages of Woman.

The pageant in *The Winter Prince*, then, is as blatant a psychomachia as one could hope for. Like the other games in the novel, it mirrors and foreshadows reality, and like them, it establish the roles of the principal characters, acting on many levels. Although the use of such games in this way might be considered obvious or corny, the fact remains that this tactic works.

Psychomachias are particularly suited to morality plays, and the story of Arthur is a morality play. Moral dilemmas are often murky, and

a psychomachia can make the issues clearer, as in Gillian Bradshaw's *Kingdom of Summer*, where good and evil are personified by Gwalchmai (Gawain) and Medraut (Mordred), and Gwalchmai's servant, Rhys, must choose whom to believe. By polarizing good and evil so obviously, Bradshaw is able to comment on the differences between the two.

This kind of polarity is often used in movies, such as George Romero's *Knightriders*, which tells the story of a group of people who attempt to recreate medieval tournaments and to live honorably. One reviewer explains that the movie

is a rediscovery of middle America's values as reflected through the codes of the knights of the Round Table. Romero's knights are attacked by everything which is evil in our society: payola cops, instant fame, drugs, and insensitivity. The allegory continues as the devil lays more temptations out before them; cheap sex, easy money, glittering costumes, fame a[n]d power can all be theirs. All they have to do is turn their backs on their code and their dream. Some do, some don't. (John, 21 - 22)

William, or King Billy, as his followers call him, is the embodiment of the moral code, while Morgan, a man who wants to take Billy's place, represents the desire for wealth and fame. Yet, a psychomachia does not have to be simplistic, and the final conflict between Billy's followers and Morgan's is neither clear cut, nor as tragic as the battle of Camlan. Morgan's forces win, and he receives Billy's crown, but he chooses to remain true to the former king's values. Or, as the reviewer explains, Romero uses the movie to say:

This is life; this is the good and this is the bad.
Sometimes the good guys win, sometimes the bad guys win.
Sometimes they both win. Which one are you? (John, 22+)

First Knight

One of the more recent movie versions of Arthur's story, *First Knight* is mediocre, with flashes of both brilliance and awfulness. It is the kind of movie that does more harm to the story's popularity than an *Excalibur* by Boorman, because it is tepid, rather than dazzling, if mystifying. However, *First Knight* does work well as a psychomachia.

In this version of the legend, Arthur is opposed by the evil Malagant, a man who was formerly one of his greatest knights. Arthur espouses using Might for Right, just as White's Arthur does, while Malagant insists that Might makes Right. The two men are two sides of the same coin: Arthur is the Good Ruler, while Malagant is a tyrant.

Both men focus on Guinevere, Arthur wooing her for her beauty and intelligence, while Malagant threatens her for her land. Arthur remains the good ruler, assuring his lady that, even if she rejects his suit, he will still protect her people. Yet, when Arthur discovers Lancelot kissing Guinevere, he becomes a tyrant.

Arthur had the potential to be a tyrant all along, and this is foreshadowed when he makes Lancelot a knight of the Round Table, refusing to allow any discussion among the other knights, even though he said earlier that all men were equal at the Round Table, and even he had no more privilege than any other. He refuses to listen to the knights again, deciding to hold a public trial for Lancelot and Guinevere, even though the members of the Round Table urge him to settle matters quietly and privately.

Arthur's actions are not completely surprising on the narrative level, for he is a king, and he is not really advocating democracy. However, the members of the Round Table can also be seen as external

representatives embodying the various parts of his mind, while Arthur himself is the ego, the part which overrules all, as is necessary if a person is ever to get anything done. Malagant is his bad side, the dark face, in rebellion against the rest of the mind.

As Arthur prepares to pronounce judgement on Lancelot and Guinevere, Malagant invades Camelot for at least the second time. Apparently, all of Arthur's guards are too busy watching the trial to guard the castle. Malagant somehow manages to place a man with a torch on every roof in Camelot with no one noticing.

On the literal level, this defies belief. However, it is entirely appropriate on the psychomachian level. Arthur has become a tyrant; he has let the Malagant part of his nature take control. It is said that certain monsters must be invited into one's home; Arthur has invited Malagant in. Malagant's torch-holding thugs are merely the external embodiment of the threat Arthur himself poses. He is the danger to Camelot, for his tyranny threatens to destroy the order and the equality he claims to hold dear.

The story of Arthur and his kingdom lends itself to the form of a psychomachia because it is a story which is concerned with moral issues. A psychomachia sharpens moral issues by externalizing internal problems. While this may result in the simplification of both issues and characterizations, this does not have to be the case. The most effective psychomachiae are those where the characters and issues are both fully developed, and where the plot works on both the literal and allegorical levels.

Chapter Five: The Weight of History

In medieval times, many kings and powerful nobles influenced by Virgil wanted to trace their ancestry back to Troy, by way of Rome. Even the Elder Edda of Snorri Sturlsson does this, explaining that the Norse are really descended from Aeneas. Most powerful families in Europe had a vested interest in proving that their people were descended from the heroes of legend.

Geoffrey of Monmouth used the familiar story of Brutus, descendent of Aeneas, legendary founder of Britain. Brutus was the link between Britain and the glory that was Rome, and Arthur was Brutus' descendant. The historical weight of Arthur's story, then, came in part from his link to Rome, Troy, and Aeneas.

However, gradually, the historical weight associated with Troy and Rome became more attached to Arthur. This is not to deny the importance of Arthur's ancestry, but far more authors write about Arthur than about Ancient Greece and Rome. Just as the Trojan connection was used to justify political maneuvers, in Britain, Henry VII claimed descent from Arthur as a justification of his claim to the throne. Later, James I used the figure of Arthur to justify his rights as a monarch.

Frantzen discusses the concept of Origin, and it is clear that for many British, Arthur is an Origin. At the same time, Arthur has a history of his own: he uses Rome as an Origin.

The Historical Weight of Mother Rome

The parallels between Rome and Camelot are at once ennobling and disturbing, for the younger city inherits the flaws of the older as well as the virtues. The actual Roman conquest and the mythical British conquest have both disturbing and glorious elements. It is true that not all modern authors consider Rome important to the Matter of Britain, but those who do use Rome place Arthur in a wider context, and adding to his historical weight, and giving us bigger dreams.

As Arthur's story is to modern audiences, so was Rome's story to Arthur and his people. For them, it had the weight of several centuries of history behind it. The true Rome is less important than the dignity that the Rome of tradition lends to Arthur and his reign. For modern readers, the Roman story is less flexible than Arthur's story, and in many ways, it is more alien to them than Arthur's story. This explains why modern authors retell the matter of Britain more often than the matter of Rome.

However, for the medieval writer and his audience, the problem of remoteness does not exist. Medieval writers view the matter of Rome much as we view the matter of Britain, rewriting it to suit their needs, because the story of Arthur was part of the story of Rome. However, for us the story of Rome is important because it is part of the story of Arthur. Camelot is Rome reborn, but also a greater city than Rome ever was.

To some modern authors, Rome is not important to Arthur's story; for example, White mentions Rome only briefly, to explain that Arthur's

conquest of Rome is much the same as his conquest of Britain, but on a larger scale.

White is following Malory, as usual, and Malory treats Rome briefly (though not so briefly as White), but this is not because Malory sees Rome as unimportant. Rather, he is presuming that his readers know what Rome is, and why it is important. Similarly, Malory does not deal with the stories of Ambrosius and Vortigern, and White, following suit, omits them as well.

Indeed, many of White's readers may be utterly unaware of Ambrosius, Vortigern, or the role of Rome in the Arthur stories. But if these readers do not stop with White's novel, choosing to read other novels about Arthur -- a surprisingly common phenomenon -- they will soon learn what Rome means to Arthur.

Perhaps the most eloquent expression of the idea of Rome is expressed in the work of Gillian Bradshaw. Bradshaw's Arthur wants to recreate Roman civilization in Britain, holding it as a light against the darkness of the Saxon invaders.

Arthur wins a knight, Bedwyr (Bedivere), to his cause, when the latter planned to be a churchman. He tells Bedwyr of the plight of the British and the horrors of the Saxon invasion, and Bedwyr says:

These are evils, but they have come about because Rome has fallen and the empire has gone from the West. What can we do but ourselves abstain from evil in such times? (1980, 201)

Arthur replies: "We can restore the empire," and Bedwyr pledges himself to help Arthur.

Another knight, Gwalchmai (Gawain), catches this dream -- one of the few books he has access to contains the first six books of the

Aeneid (1980, 71) -- and when asked if he wishes to join Arthur, replies:

if someone should offer you Britain, with the empire restored, and all Erin and Caledon and Less Britain besides, and the roads open to Rome -- would you accept it? (1980, 311)

Gwalchmai's rhetorical answer neatly summarizes the vision of Arthurian power.

However, Gwalchmai, although sympathetic towards Arthur's cause, is skeptical about the desirability of recreating the empire. He tells Bedwyr:

No British king had some miserable slave tortured to death to see whether his master threw stones at a royal statue, or had three thousand people massacred at a theatre because they had rioted, as did Theodosius, the high king of Rome....And I never heard of any king in Britain or in Erin having hundreds of innocent noblemen put to death, solely because their names began with 'Theod-', as Valentinianus did because of an oracle he had received, though he missed Theodosius. Moreover, the Romans took Britain by force of arms, just as the Saxons are attempting to do now, and no doubt the people here then liked the Romans as little as we now like the Saxons. (1980, 202)

Here, Gwalchmai raises a valid objection, by pointing out the differences and similarities between Rome and Camelot. Traditionally, Camelot is a place where justice is done, and many versions of the story show Arthur as a just ruler, curbing the excesses of others. However, one familiar with Arthur's story will note that Arthur is responsible for the death of the May Babies, because of a prophecy, although he is no more successful than Valentinianus at killing the one person from whom he has most to fear. Bradshaw omits the slaughter of the May Babies from her trilogy, but most readers will be familiar with other versions that do not omit it. In any case, the parallel between Rome and Camelot

is appropriate, for there are many who question the worth of Camelot, given the shortcomings of its inhabitants.

Bedwyr's response to Gwalchmai is worth considering:

It is true, the empire caused much evil and misery. But no British lordling ever created as much of good and beauty, ever gave to the world so much knowledge, art, and splendor as did the Romans. And no British king ever founded hospitals, or endowed monasteries to care for the sick, the poor, and the orphaned; or again, relieved his domains when there was famine and restored them after fire or war, which the Christian emperors did. The empire is worth fighting to preserve. That I could never question. (1980, 202 - 203)

Bedwyr makes two claims for the Roman empire: that it did more good than anything else, and that it is more glorious and beautiful than anything else. This is the image of Rome in the hearts of many of Arthur's people, and of Arthur himself. It is also the image of Camelot in the hearts of many people today, for they are likely to remember two things about it: it was glorious, and it brought more good to the country than had existed before. However, Camelot is not perfect.

Gwynhwyfar (Guinevere), too, shares the dream of Rome, even before she meets Arthur, having grown up among Roman ruins, near a Roman wall, admiring a fragmented Roman mural. From her father, she learned what the Roman empire meant, and she explains:

The idea of Rome struck me like a vision. I could not look at the wall, or the tiles round the fire pit, or my collection of bits from the ruins, without that vast empire leaping up before my mind like the world revealed by a lightning bolt. (1982 b, 15)

This idea of Rome is something she shares with Arthur, and it is one of many things that makes her an ideal consort.

The idea of Rome is not, of course, the same thing as Rome itself. Nor is it the same idea for all authors. Rome is not always perceived

positively, for she deserted Britain in Britain's time of need. Promising British generals died leading armies on Rome, leaving Britain defenseless, as several authors point out (especially Bradley and Lawhead). Attitudes toward Rome by the modern writer affect attitudes toward Arthur and portrayals of Arthur and what he is trying to do. He may be trying to revive the empire, as in Bradshaw's trilogy. He may be trying to free Britain of the need to cling to all things Roman, as in Woolley's trilogy, where he explains that he will borrow ideas from all cultures. If he adopts Roman ways, he may be praised for this, or he may be seen as a traitor by his subjects who are not eager for Rome's yoke (See Treece). If he proclaims independence from Rome, he may seem either heroic or arrogant. Roman or not, Arthur must consider how to deal with the peoples considered enemies by the Romans, such as rebellious Celts, mysterious Picts, and the invading Saxons.

The Roman presence in Britain is seen by some authors as an oppressive one, for the Romans came as conquerors and colonizers. This is a potentially touchy issue, as many previously praised civilizations are now pilloried for suppressing the civilizations they conquered. This situation is familiar to many in academia, as they try to decide whether Columbus is an explorer to be praised or an exploiter to be derided. The truth is, of course, far more complicated, both for Columbus and for the Romans.

One of the more thoughtful authors to consider the relationship between the Romans and the native British is Rosemary Sutcliff. She has written a series of historical novels set in Britain, stretching in time from before the Roman conquest to at least the time of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Sutcliff's Arthur is part Roman and part Celtic, and he tries,

not always successfully, to bind the two halves of his heritage together. He tells his half-sister, Ygern, "Do not deny me a place in my mother's world because I have a place in my father's." (1963, 24) The theme of trying to build a bridge between the Roman and the Celtic worlds runs through *The Lantern Bearers*, Sutcliff's prequel to *Sword at Sunset*, in which Ambrosius attempts to unite the two cultures against the Saxon invaders, and also in *The Eagle of the Ninth*, set much earlier. Stephen Lawhead's *Taliesin* also considers the relationship between the two cultures, noting that "each passing year increased the distance between the Cymry and their Roman protectors." (1990 a, 330)

Parke Godwin takes a different view of Rome. Arthur is not interested in uniting Roman and Celtic cultures, but in creating a Britain strong enough to stand against all foes. He is politically astute enough to realize that Rome may be one of those foes, although his council does not realize this. Arthur describes the letters he has received from Rome as:

love letters to Britain that made the older princes remember imperial times, dress nostalgically in the last of their faded senatorial stripes...Masterly letters with just enough promise and veiled hint of power to see how the wind blew over Britain. To test our strength or the lack of it. (1980, 208)

The idea of Rome is shared by the princes of Britain, but the aura of Rome is Arthur's enemy, for it blinds his council to the threat concealed in the offer of aid to Britain. Arthur warns the council that Rome wants Britain as "a tributary province," and that a "legion in Britain meant a hand on our rein." (1980, 209)

Nevertheless, one of the princes says:

My grandfather used to tell me of the old days. The law, the peace, the security. Finest schools in the empire. Seventy years ago we were begging them to come back. For Christ's sake, Arthur, at least listen to their offer. (1980, 209)

This is the same rhetoric used in Bradshaw's trilogy, but in Godwin's novel, the rhetoric, the vision, and the idea of Rome are deadly illusions which threaten to sap the strength of Britain. Godwin's Arthur says of the princes of Britain:

Deep in their hearts, they knew the Rome they remembered or had heard about was gone. But they could still conjure with the magic of that name. They saw the villas restored, peacocks strutting through manicured gardens, the sculpted fountains and ponds: Cupid peeing to the replenishment of languid goldfish. The last remnant of old empire still intact, ready to become a center of the new. Luxury, riches, power. A dream like the Grail, and dreams die hard....Rome was like a parent that turned her child out to fend for itself. Then, old and feeble, she begged our love once more. No, the sun rises on tomorrow, not yesterday. We couldn't go back. (1980, 209 - 210)

The dream of Rome is part of the past; Arthur is creating the future.

In Godwin, this future was shaped by Arthur's mentor, Ambrosius, who realizes the truth:

The man called the Roman citizen hardly existed anymore, nor the elaborate system for protecting his rights or channeling his taxes to central government. More and more, Vortigern and Ambrosius after him had to rely on nobles like Kay...to operate as separate powers, and the men levied for service rode for their own lord and spoke little or no Latin. (1980, 39 - 40)

Rome was the old civilization; Britain is the new.

The relationship between Rome and Britain is complex, and often troubled. Rome is the ideal of civilization, but also a presumptuous aging, despotic, decadent empire, with plans to conquer Britain and steal the younger country's glory and resources. Sometimes, Rome is

overrun by barbarians, leaving Britain as the only light burning in the darkness.

Questions of Historical Verisimilitude

The truth about the early Middle Ages as revealed by recent archaeology colors modern concepts of Arthur, but does not absolutely control them. Arthur's dream of Rome and our dreams of Camelot are more powerful than the reality. From a literary point of view, the facts about Arthur are unimportant. In judging the merits of an Arthurian novel, one should not penalize it for inaccuracy. (Anachronism and inconsistency are different matters.) We know that Arthur did not live in the fifteenth century, but that does not detract from the quality of either White's *The Once and Future King* or his source, Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. We have no way of knowing how many siblings or nephews Arthur had, if any; nor how many children, legitimate or otherwise, he had. White and Stewart give him illegitimate sons; Bradley, Bradshaw, Godwin, and Sutcliff give him only one illegitimate son; Chapman, Wein, and Sampson give him legitimate offspring, as well as illegitimate. None of these authors are "telling the story wrong"; all are free to make whatever choice they please.

Nevertheless, this does not prevent authors from discussing the motivations behind the choices they make, either to inform the reader or to justify themselves, as medieval authors often did, in their own way.

One factor contributing to modern interest in Arthur, as well as in the Middle Ages may well have been the growth of interest in archaeology. This is a relatively recent factor:

It was not until the nineteenth century, and the birth of prehistory as a scientific discipline, that the archaeologist found at last his own sphere of research: the study and historical interpretation of *all* the material remains that vanished civilizations have left in the ground. (Daniel 3, quoting DeLaet)

Indeed, interest both in archaeology and in the Middle Ages is traceable to the nineteenth century (Daniel 3; Taylor and Brewer 1). However, it was not until the second half of this century that archaeologists wrote about discoveries made about the Dark Ages, the period in which the historical Arthur would have lived. Brewer and Taylor say:

The new interest in the 'historical' Arthur [*sic*], fostered by the work of historians of the Dark Ages such as John Morris and Leslie Alcock, and of archaeologists and writers such as Geoffrey Ashe, has given us a very different national hero. (290)

The archaeological books about Arthur and his time were published from the late 1960s through the 1980s. Even these few dates are helpful in explaining the timing of the publication of Mary Stewart's Merlin trilogy and even the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, which adds a new chapter to the history of the Grail.

Perhaps the archaeological discoveries, more than any other individual reason, explain the many carefully researched historical Arthurian novels and stories where Arthur is set into his time as accurately as possible. Medieval authors pull Arthur into their own time. Only recently do we attempt to return him to his own, for only since last century have we had the knowledge to enable us to attempt to

do so. The historical novel is "in," for only now is it practical to write such a novel, and Arthurian novels fall into the "historical" niche as easily as into the "fantasy" niche.

History and fantasy are both important to the success of Arthurian novels. Many authors boast of their careful research, but, at the same time, authors are not so eager to cut themselves off from the roots of fantasy. One author explains:

One of the great delights of Arthurian study is the interweaving of the verifiable and the mythical, for each contributes a kind of magic far more lasting than simple spell-casting. (Woolley 1988, Author's Note xii)

Gillian Bradshaw is particularly adept at combining a sense of historical verisimilitude with fantastic occurrences. She tries to get little medieval details correct: one character compares the stars to rivets in a shield, and another claims to have "felt my heart settle like a wineskin with a puncture." (1982 a, 49) She is careful to be accurate about other details as well; for example, nearly half of Arthur's warriors sleep in his great hall, for they do not have houses of their own. Gwalchmai can name each of the few books making up his mother's impressive library, and he knows how much each one cost her. Her copy of the first half of the Aeneid, for instance, cost "the value of ten cows in gold." (1980, 71) Details like this make the world seem realer, and this makes it easier to accept the fantastic elements.

Not all authors are as careful as Bradshaw; Lawhead, for example, has sixth century characters eating an Irish stew with potatoes, even though the potato would not reach Ireland until a thousand years later (Kondravtiev). Nevertheless, most authors make some attempt to get the

details right. Sharan Newman introduces Anglo-Saxon phrases; Rosemary Sutcliff uses a deliberately archaic syntax. There is usually some attempt made to account for how a sixth century warlord was able to create a frighteningly efficient cavalry force; many authors describe Arthur's attempts to buy and breed tall horses, while others find some way of justifying the presence of stirrups in sixth century Britain (Godwin, Sutcliff, Woolley, *et al.*).

Much of the justification for individual decisions is present in the novel; however, many authors have a preface or an afterword explaining what choices they have made and why, where they have followed historical and literary sources, and where they have deviated from them. Gillian Bradshaw's preface to *Hawk of May* begins: "The historical background of this novel is partially but by no means entirely accurate." She continues:

My worst offense is in the Orkneys, where I have antedated the Irish conquest, invented places as well as persons, and described a situation completely unlike anything that actually existed there. But it is barely possible, if improbable, that some of the Britons whom the Emperor Honorius instructed to organize their defenses viewed these organizations as continuing the late third-early fourth century "Empire of the Britains," and could have maintained an increasingly Celtic Roman empire into the sixth century. (1980, Notes 9)

Bradshaw admits to taking liberties, but she is careful to maintain that something like the story she tells might have happened. She then lists her "legendary background" source material, emphasizing, like Woolley, the two wells of Arthuriana, historical fact and fantastical event.

Both elements are important here, and the careful historical research often makes the reader more likely to accept the fantastic

element. But there is another element which must be taken into account as well. Persia Woolley explains:

The historical novelist always faces the problem of anachronism and must make the choice between contemporary readability and historical accuracy....I've opted for readability, or occasionally for tradition. Therefore all the invading Germanic tribes are referred to as Saxons, though the northern settlers were predominantly Angles, and those in the south included Jutes and Franks as well. Since the Britons themselves called them all Saxons, I note it here strictly for academic accuracy. And while the game of chess probably had not reached Britain by 500 A.D., the tradition of Guinevere playing chess with her abductor is so strong, I chose that game rather than the more prosaic draughts, in part because there is so much symbolism connected to the royal pieces of the chess set. (1990, Preface 15)

Too much historical accuracy may make for a novel which is too difficult for most readers, such as Nikolai Tolstoy's *The Coming of the King*. In addition, there are certain features of Arthur's story, such as Guinevere's chess game and Arthur's Round Table, which readers expect to see in a retelling of the legend, regardless of how historically unlikely the details may be.

Nevertheless, Woolley is careful to emphasize the historical element of her trilogy as well:

I have also incorporated actual historical figures -- Agricola, Geraint, Mark, and Tristan are all considered by scholars to have been real people. And occasionally I've played with archaeological finds, such as the Anastasius Bowl, which was part of the treasure retrieved from the Sutton Hoo ship burial. Although the grave itself dates from the seventh century, it contained a silver bowl clearly marked by a smith during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius (491 to 518 A.D.). More than one archaeologist has puzzled over how that elegant bowl came into the possession of the barbaric Swedes who had settled on the edge of East Anglia -- and I couldn't resist working backward through the genealogies in order to have Arthur give it to the first king of that East Anglian dynasty. [sic.] (1990, Preface 14)

Woolley is both justifying her story on historical grounds and taking advantage of historical facts and mysteries, such as the silver bowl, to add an episode to Arthur's story.

Rosemary Sutcliff, like Woolley, explains the historical justification of her story, and describes mysteries which she has "explained" with the story. However, she does not limit herself to the "facts" any more than does any other author. She says:

But of late years historians and anthropologists have come more and more to the belief that the Matter of Britain is indeed "matter and not moonshine."...*Sword at Sunset* is an attempt to re-create from fragments of known facts, from likelihoods and deductions and guesswork pure and simple, the kind of man this war leader may have been, and the story of his long struggle (1987, Author's Note [vii]).

This sounds like a historical justification for a recreation of what probably happened but then, she adds:

Certain features I have retained from the traditional Arthurian fabric, because they have the atmosphere of truth....these have the inevitable and pitiless purity of outline that one finds in classical tragedy, and that belong to the ancient and innermost places of man (Sutcliff 1987, Author's Note [vii]).

This is not a historical justification, but a justification on the grounds that what Sutcliff is doing makes for a good story.

Nevertheless, she quickly returns to historical weight as a justification of including materials which make a good story:

Bedwyr, Cei and Gwalchmai are the earliest of all Arthur's companions to be noted by name, and so I have retained them, giving the friend-and-lover's part to Bedwyr, who is there both at the beginning and at the end, instead of to Lancelot, who is a later French importation. Arthur's hound and his white horse I have kept also...When the Roman fort of Trimontium was excavated, the bones of a "perfectly formed dwarf girl" were found lying in a pit under those of nine horses. An unexplained find, to which, in Artos's

capture of the fortress in the incident of "The People of the Hills," I have attempted an explanation.[sic]...Almost every part of the story, even to the unlikely linkup between Medraut and that mysterious Saxon with a British name, Cerdic, the half-legendary founder of Wessex, has some kind of basis outside the author's imagination (Sutcliff 1987, Author's Note [vii - viii]).

Sutcliff specializes in blending history with imagination. For example, in *The Eagle of the Ninth*, she takes two known facts, the disappearance of the Ninth Legion into the north of Britain, and the discovery of a "wingless Roman Eagle" far to the south, in Silchester, "nearly eighteen hundred years later." (Sutcliff 1993, 3) The facts justify the story, but the story enlarges on the facts, turning them into a foundation for enchantment.

Parke Godwin's introduction to *Firelord* provides an interesting blend of historical justification and praise of his own deviation from history. He says, "*Firelord* is a fantasy, though I've attempted to stretch an elastic legend over the bone of historical fact."

(Acknowledgments) He lists as his sources John Morris's *The Age of Arthur* and Jean Markale's "unorthodox *King Arthur, King of Kings*," listing the publisher and date of publication of both, and identifying the translator of the latter. He uses Margaret Murray's books on witchcraft to create the Picts, explaining that Murray's books "retrieved the fairy folk from moonlit legend and restored them to history where they belonged." (Acknowledgements)

Therefore, despite his insistence that he is writing a work of fantasy, Godwin is attempting to justify his story, and he is certainly attempting to anchor it to sources which will be recognized and respected by some of his readers. (Other readers may simply be impressed that he cites sources at all.) Does he need to do this? If he does not

believe that he needs to do it, why insist "Arthur is as historical as Lincoln or Julius Caesar, merely less documented"? This is unnecessary for a work of fantasy, but Godwin seems to want to draw on the weight attached to works of historical fiction. Moreover, he wants to draw on the weight attached to important historical figures, as his examples show. He does not choose everyday figures, but a president and an emperor.

Godwin lists a few facts about Arthur and his contemporaries -- or at least, Godwin seems convinced that they are facts. But he is not too worried about getting the details right, as his final paragraph makes clear:

That they didn't all live at the same time is beside the point. Very likely some of them did. Assembled on one stage in one drama, they make a magnificent cast. It should have happened this way, it could have, and perhaps it did.
(Acknowledgments)

This is an interesting statement, reminiscent of Churchill's claim that the stories about Arthur were true, and even if they were not, they should be (Price 118). First Godwin says that the historical truth of his tale is "beside the point," which is certainly true if he is only concerned with telling a good story. His next statement continues in this vein, pointing out that the anachronism of "the magnificent cast" makes for a better tale. "It should have happened this way," he continues, maintaining that his fiction is superior to what really happened; this is not an unusual claim for a fantasist to make. But he adds: "[I]t could have, and perhaps it did." Now, by his own admission, it could *not* have happened this way, for the characters in the story did not live at the same time, so to say "perhaps it did" is obviously

absurd. Godwin is trying to have it both ways: On the one hand, even though it did not happen as he wrote it, his version is superior to reality; on the other hand, because his version is superior, maybe it really did happen that way, although it could not possibly have done so.

Mary Stewart begins like Godwin. She calls her trilogy a "work of pure imagination," saying:

It is not a work of scholarship, and can obviously make no claim to be a serious history. Serious historians will not, I imagine, have got this far anyway, since they will have discovered that the main source of my story-line is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*. (1971, Author's Note 382)

Despite this disclaimer, Stewart has done much research, and is careful to inform her readers about what she has learned. Still, unlike Godwin, she does not claim that the events she chronicled could have occurred, although she does occasionally claim that her version makes more sense than that of her sources. For example, her Nimue never betrays Merlin. She explains:

The "betrayal" theme of this legend springs from the need to explain the death or disappearance of an all-powerful enchanter. My version of Merlin's end is based on a tradition which obtains still in parts of the "Summer Country." It was sent me many years ago by a Wiltshire correspondent. This version of the tale is that Merlin, with age drawing on, desired to hand on his magic powers to someone who could be Arthur's adviser after his death. For this he chose his pupil Nimue, who showed herself adept. This tale not only allows the great enchanter his dignity, and a measure of common sense, but also explains Nimue's subsequent influence over Arthur. The King would hardly otherwise have kept her near him, or accepted her help against his enemies. (1984 a, Author's Note 479)

Stewart does two things in the paragraph above: She justifies her deviation from what is written in *Le Morte D'Arthur*, and she justifies the use of Malory's text with modern modifications. For Stewart, and for

other authors as well, works such as Malory's are just as important as historical and archaeological treatises.

Each of Stewart's novels has an author's note at the end, discussing her use of sources. These sources shaped her Merlin trilogy and determined the shape of *The Wicked Day*, a sequel to the trilogy which tells Mordred's story. She explains:

For none of the "Mordred story," then, is there any evidence at all. It is to be noticed that the *Annales Cambriae* does not even state that he and Arthur fought on opposite sides. It would have been possible -- and very tempting -- to have rewritten the story completely, and set Arthur, with Mordred at his side, against the Saxons...But the temptations had to be resisted. Until I came to study in detail the fragments that make up Mordred's story, I had accepted him without question as the villain of the piece, an evil man who brought about the tragedy of Arthur's final downfall. Hence, in my earlier books, I had made Merlin foresee that doom, and warn against it. So I could not rewrite the Camlann battle. Instead I tried to iron out the absurdities in the old story, and add some saving greys to the portrait of a black villain. I have not made a "hero" out of Mordred, but in my tale he is at least a man who is consistent in his faults and virtues, and has some kind of reason for the actions with which legend has credited him. (1984 a, Author's Note 367)

Stewart is saying that her story may go beyond the facts -- or at least is not upheld by them; even though she would rather tell a different story, she is obligated to stick to her plan. Her previous novels have the power, or the historical weight, to shape *The Wicked Day*; she is powerless to deviate from the path they have laid down. However, she adds, even though she is trapped by the weight of the version of the story she drew on, she intends to provide motives for shadowy historical characters, an intention she shares with many authors.

Stewart actually puts summaries of events and stories she takes from Malory and elsewhere in her author's notes at the end of her

novels. The including of texts within a text culminates in Fay Sampson's *Herself*, the fifth and final book in her series about Morgan Le Fay. The chapters alternate between the story Sampson tells and the stories Morgan tells about the stories previous authors have told about her. The inclusion of medieval texts serves to introduce modern readers to other versions of Arthur's story, but it also serves to justify the new version of the story, establishing a place for it in the Arthurian tradition.

Chapter Six: Truth and Grandeur

Grandeur is an essential component of Arthur's story, and while it can be questioned, the verdict is almost required to be favorable. That is, authors can question whether the story really is grand or glorious, but they must conclude that it is glorious if their novels are to be successful at capturing the hearts and minds of more than a select group of readers.

Why, then, should there even be a question, if the answer is guaranteed to be affirmative? The question must be raised because the story of Arthur is a psychomachia which exists in part to answer that question. Because the story is enjoyed as a psychomachia, readers expect it to be psychologically truthful, yet they still want to be assured that it is glorious. It is from this combination of the two elements, truth and grandeur, that the best of the Arthurian novels draw their power.

Another way of looking at the combination of the truth of psychomachia and the softening effect of grandeur is to consider that Arthur's story works on both the mythic (or elevated, or glorious) and the realistic (or psychomachian) levels. While one gets tired of hearing stories praised for having archetypes or mythic resonances -- indeed, few stories do not -- Arthur's story, with or without conscious intention on the part of its many tellers, has become an ideal vehicle for archetypes (See Hlavaty). The large cast allows authors to use a wide variety of archetypes and myths, or to pick and choose between them. The flexibility of the story allows archetypes to be used in different ways. The nurturing mother can be Guinevere, but she can also

be Morgan Le Fay. Either of these women can be the devouring mother. There is so much flexibility that nearly any character can embody one of a variety of archetypes, more than one archetype, or even contradictory archetypes.

Arthur and the rest become symbols, and their stories give people a myth to identify with and thereby gain self respect. At the same time, Arthur is a very human character, far from perfect. Indeed, Jane Yolen, a Jewish author who has written many Arthurian short stories, has said:

Christ was too good. A god. Who could yearn for that?...But the Arthur stories had everything: love, lust (the Christ story had agape but no eros), murder, betrayal, sacrifice, and its own special resurrection magic. It was filled with humans, not gods. (Yolen 1987, 21)

Moreover, as Yolen points out, just as Arthur is not a perfect man, Camelot is not a perfect society (1987, 21). Beneath the pristine surfaces, there is plenty of dirt. Some would say that both man and society are flawed from the first; others might claim that Arthur's sins infect the kingdom he rules. This idea is present in stories about the Waste Land and the quest for the Grail; for example, in the movie *Excalibur*, the health of the king is reflected in the health of the land. It is Arthur, not the Fisher King, who must be healed in this movie if the land is to recover. It is because Camelot is not perfect that it captures our attention, and it is because Arthur is not perfect that he wins our admiration.

The flaws in king and society make them real to the reader, while the ideals both strive to achieve make them admirable. Even though Arthur is a fallen man, and Camelot a flawed society, both strove to be

something better. Ironically, this ensured that Arthur and Camelot are synonyms for the ideal that neither achieved.

The flaws in Arthur and Camelot also open the field of Arthurian fiction to the satirical and ironical writers. Arthur's story is a favorite both with those who would hold up a shining ideal for us to reach for, emphasizing the grandeur of the legend, and with those who would mock that ideal and reveal the all too realistic imperfections of the society which strove for that ideal. The ideals of Camelot are worth striving for; the people of Camelot are imperfect.

The imperfect people of Camelot have problems not greatly different from those troubling the people of our own imperfect society. The issues which Arthur and his society faced are the same issues confronting us today. Our methods of confronting them may be different, but we have no more clear answers than Arthur did. The gap between the ideal society and our real, flawed society has always been a troubling problem.

This problem is considered by many authors who write Arthurian novels set in Arthur's time, and many novels draw their power and appeal from the combination of a psychologically truthful examination of the problem of this gap and the idea that Arthur and his people gain a certain grandeur both because of their historical weight and because they at least make the attempt to overcome this gap. While there are many exceptions, in the most famous and, perhaps, greatest of the modern novels, the play between truth and grandeur confirms that Arthur's story is truly glorious, and in doing so, confirms that our own lives are also truly glorious. We cannot help raising the question, but it must be answered to our satisfaction.

If the flexibility of Arthur's story allows it to reflect the truth about our society, the grandeur accompanying the story makes the truth palatable. At the same time, authors of Arthurian novels rarely take the easy way out, so to say that Arthur's story lends grandeur to what it touches is to oversimplify. The story owes much of its success to the combination of its honesty and its mythic overtones; it is on the play between the two extremes of realism and myth that the Arthurian novel draws.

This too oversimplifies, to a degree, for the term "Arthurian novel" is extremely broad. To discuss grandeur, it will be convenient to divide Arthurian works into two groups: Those set in Arthur's time (whether that is depicted as the Dark Ages or the Middle Ages) and those set after Arthur's time (generally, in the twentieth century or in the future).

Novels Set in Our Time or in the Future

Novels set in contemporary or future times draw most obviously on the grandeur associated with the legend of Arthur. Less concerned with showing "what happened" in Arthur's time, these novels show how Arthur's story affects those who came after, uplifting and glorifying them through association with the legend.

Simon Hawke's *The Samurai Wizard* contains a scene where Modred (Mordred), still alive in the twenty-fourth century, explains the psychology of Kobayashi, a Japanese mobster, to Merlin. Merlin insists that Kobayashi is "still a gangster. You make him sound like Lancelot." Modred replies: "In some ways, he is....In his own way, Kobayashi lives by a code not unlike that of chivalry." (77) As strange as it may seem, the mobster is a modern version of Arthur's greatest knight.

Now, one could say that Sir Lancelot is nothing more than a gangster in armor. Indeed, several authors take this slant when dealing with the Arthur legend (Drake, Hanratty). Arthur and the knights of the Round Table are no more than thugs.

However, this ignores the other side of the coin, the side we need to see. We can accept, intellectually, that the "real" Arthur may have been a thug. But we will not give up our image of Arthur, the ideal Arthur. We want the side of the coin that says not that Arthur's knights were thugs, but that even thugs can be knights.

The Japanese mobster needs to believe that he is a modern knight with a sense of honor. He needs his dignity, his sense of worth. This is what Arthur's story provides, better than many other forms of psychomachia. We can project the contents of our mind outward, to examine and analyze, learning the truth about ourselves, and we can still keep our sense of grandeur.

In Tim Power's novel *Last Call*, Scott Crane must prevent his father from winning a magical card game. However, to join the game, Scott must go in disguise, so that his father will not recognize him. Diane, the woman he loves, and Nardie Dinh, her friend, suggest that

Scott dress as a woman, and pretend to be a "brassy transvestite." (452)

When Scott protests, Nardie says:

Do you remember Sir Lancelot?...He was riding to rescue the Queen, Guinevere, and on the way he had to ride in a cart. It was a horrible disgrace to ride in a cart in those days; criminals were paraded up and down the streets in them, so that people could jeer and throw things, okay? Lancelot hesitated for just a moment before climbing in, and afterward, when he had rescued her, she wouldn't speak to him because of his brief hesitation, because for a couple of seconds he had put his personal dignity ahead of his duty to her. And he agreed that she was right. (Powers 1993, 452)

Scott, realizing that Diane's life, as well as his own, depends on his success at infiltrating and sabotaging his father's game, agrees, and says, "Let the record show...that I hesitated no longer than Lancelot did." (453) He asks Nardie if Guinevere ever forgave Lancelot, and she says, "Yeah, she did eventually." (453)

The parallels with Arthur's story are called for, since Powers is retelling the Grail story. Scott is both the fool Perceval, and the wounded Fisher King, but he is also Sir Lancelot to Diane's Guinevere. It is true that more is at stake for Scott than we would expect to find in the average person's life, for *Last Call*, although set in modern Las Vegas, is a fantasy novel, where magic is real.

Nevertheless, Nardie demonstrates the power of the Arthurian story, insisting that Scott act as Sir Lancelot. His apparent loss of dignity is not absurd, she tells him: He is a bold hero, not a laughable drag queen. The dignity of the legend compensates for the apparent indignity of the disguise. Furthermore, Scott need not be ashamed of his hesitation: he glorifies it by comparing it to Lancelot's own, and he hopes that Diane will forgive him for his part in the death of their

foster father and the shooting of her son, since Guinevere did forgive Lancelot.

Hawke's Japanese mobster may not be aware that his self-image of an honorable knight or samurai is created to elevate himself, but Power's Scott Crane is consciously, deliberately grasping at Arthurian imagery to elevate his actions from an embarrassing disguise to a heroic act. This is made more complicated by the fact that Scott's act truly is heroic. Something similar happens in Anthony Price's novel *Our Man in Camelot*.

The protagonist of Price's novel, Mosby, is a CIA agent who discovers evidence of a KGB plot to make it appear as if the CIA has destroyed the site of the Battle of Mount Badon. He demands the right to defend the honor of the CIA. In doing so, Mosby draws on the ideals of Arthur's story, not on any training the CIA ever gave him, and on a knowledge of human psychology as well.

Mosby knows that the KGB plans to kill a man who sincerely, albeit mistakenly, believes their fake evidence. Mosby also knows that this man, Billy Bullitt, expects to be killed (although Billy believes that it is the CIA who will kill him). Billy, he is told, "is so steeped in conventional Arthurian morality that Ordeal by Battle comes quite naturally to him." (Price 219)

The story of Arthur is so popular and has so much weight that there is a recognized Arthurian morality. Mosby draws on this, and says that he must take Billy's place, explaining:

He thinks we're a bunch of assassins and murderers. Okay -- then I accept the challenge. I say we're not....I accept it the way he accepted it. And if he's a man of honour, then he can't refuse me first go. (221)

Mosby goes to the supposed site of Badon, disguised as Billy, knowing that the KGB will try to kill him. He explains: "It's an old Arthurian game, carrying someone else's shield in to battle. Malory's full of knights doing that in good causes." (222) If Billy were killed by the KGB, it would convince most of the British that the CIA assassinated him, fearing the exposure of their role in the destruction of the site of Badon. However, it is Mosby who is the target of the assassination attempt, and his bravery convinces Billy that there is no CIA plot, for the CIA would not shoot at one of their own agents (or, perhaps, not under these circumstances).

Mosby is not merely making a shrewd political move, although that is certainly part of what he is doing. Like Billy, he has been steeped in the Arthurian mythos, and he believes in it enough to draw dignity from it. He is not just a CIA agent trying to prevent an embarrassing, but stupid incident, showing the CIA to be incompetent fools; he is a knight defending the honor of his liege and his country.

The Arthurian connection also redefines his relationship with his fellow agent. Mosby is not just an agent pretending to be married to a woman who, in reality, has no interest in him; he is a knight enamored of a disdainful lady. His bold actions earn him an invitation to her bed the night before the "ordeal," an invitation he refuses. Nevertheless, when he is wounded by the KGB sniper, she tends to his wounds, as carefully as any of Malory's ladies. Price's "Tale of Sir Mosby and King Arthur" (13) ends with the modern knight vindicating himself and winning the love of his lady. The association with Arthurian materials makes the story more glorious than the story of a man who wants to copulate with a co-worker and conceal a potentially embarrassing incident.

The graphic novel *Camelot 3000* presents a different way for a character to associate himself with the grandeur of the legend. Tom Prentice does not have to content himself with stories of Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, for by his own actions, he has awakened them in the thirty-first century. Arthur and his knights bring hope to an Earth fighting a desperate battle against alien invaders, much as Arthur brought hope to the native British in their battle against the Saxons in the sixth century. In both cases, the battle is elevated from a territorial skirmish to a showdown between good and evil:

words he said *centuries* ago spiral to the *surface* of Arthur's mind[...] "Through the history of this earth, the *strong* have had their way...I pledge the dawn of a *new* day, when strength shall be used *not* for its own ends...but to *protect* the weak...to crush the wrong...to serve the *right*!"
(Barr and Bolland 7, 19 - 20)

The grandeur granted by the legend is drawn on not only by the characters in *Camelot 3000*, but also by the authors. By adding the Arthurian elements, Barr and Bolland are proclaiming that they are not creating just another comic book about an alien invasion, with a plot that could have come from a B-movie; instead, they are creating a legend of Arthur's return in Earth's time of greatest need. *Camelot 3000* was the first graphic novel, or "maxi series" (Don and Maggie Thompson [4]), that is, the first comic book novel, with a set beginning, middle, and end (as opposed to an ongoing, endless series), which "helped change the face of comic book publishing in many ways, all of them important." It took risks which DC Comics had never taken before, for it dealt with "adult themes -- including, but not limited to, sex," and it was published "outside the restrictions of the Comics Code Authority, the industry's self-censorship board." (Don and Maggie Thompson [4]) It is

surely no coincidence that such a risky, ground-breaking publication chose to anchor itself to the grandeur and weight of Arthur's story.

For the most part, novels set in the present or the future will take the grandeur associated with Arthur's story at face value, and will do little or nothing to challenge it. This is not always the case, however; *Camelot 3000*, a work which defends this grandeur nevertheless questions it, intentionally or otherwise. Even as Tom Prentice is stirred by the ideals of Arthur's Round Table, Matthew Jordan, the reincarnation of Mordred, realizing who he is, is moved by his memories of the less glamorous side of the Table. He remembers how Arthur tried to drown him, holding the infant Mordred under water, while the supposedly virtuous Tristan raped the woman who tried to save Mordred (Barr and Bolland 9, 7 - 8). No comment is made on this scene, but its inclusion is significant, for it questions the virtue of the Round Table. Arthur does not merely give the order for the May Babies to be killed; he himself kills them. He must be aware of Tristan's treatment of the woman, but there is no indication that Arthur punishes, or even rebukes him. Tom's idealism is questioned, for what grandeur is there in this picture of Arthur's society?

Simon Hawke's books also raise the question of the value of the Table, as Merlin's scathing comments about Arthur reveal. However, this questioning is more the exception than the rule, and is not usually taken very far. This is because if one is writing a contemporary or future novel which draws on the grandeur associated with Arthur, it is not in one's interest to then question this grandeur, unless one is doing something very unusual indeed. Therefore, while Merlin and Arthur both muse about the mistaken beliefs people hold about their society in

Peter David's *Knight Life*, they do not question the underlying assumption that the values they strove to uphold were worthwhile, nor is the grandeur associated with them ever called into question.

Novels Set in Arthur's Time

Authors telling Arthur's story setting it in Arthur's time, whenever they deem that time to be, do not have the same agenda as an author who sets Arthur's story in the present or the future. They are not borrowing Arthur's grandeur for other characters; they are examining it. This makes it not only possible, but also often desirable for these authors to question this grandeur.

Authors who question may be divided into two categories: those with serious reservations, and those who on the whole, approve of the grandeur associated with the legend. The more critical group includes authors such as David Drake, Henry Treece, Richard Monaco, and Peter Hanratty.

David Drake's *The Dragon Lord* presents a bloodthirsty, megalomaniac Arthur, whose followers are as bloodthirsty as he is. Treece's *The Great Captains* features an Arthur who is a barbarian, however many cities he may save from the Saxons. These two novels are grouped together here because, although critical of Arthur and his society, they concede to Arthur a certain grandeur, in spite of everything.

This is more obvious in Treece's *The Great Captains*, where Arthur is clever and bold, tricking his way to claiming the sword of Ambrosius.

He is an efficient war leader, and one with a vision greater than any held by the petty kings, or by Medraut, his rival. He chides the petty kings for their rivalry, placing their shields around his, to demonstrate that all are equal, paving the way for stories to grow up about a Round Table which never existed (112 - 113). He is ruthless, but he is the man Britain needs.

Treece's Arthur has many faults, but they are great, like the man himself. He breaks the incest taboo, a terrible thing, yet somehow admirable, for it takes great courage to do so. When he discovers that his wife has betrayed him with Medraut, his vengeance is awful, or "aweful," and is designed to drive home the impression of his power. He is a barbarian, but a great barbarian. What he does would have seemed petty or hypocritical if a lesser man had done it, but the point is that Arthur is not a lesser man.

Drake's Arthur is far less admirable than Treece's, but there is still a grandeur in his megalomania, his mad desire for conquest. His ambition is what sets him apart from everyone else in his world. Additionally, it must be admitted that it is hard to blame him for having a certain bloodthirstiness when almost everyone around him has it (Thompson 1985, 120). Even the protagonists must admire him, although they are happy to be free of him at the end of the novel.

In contrast, Monaco and Hanratty show Arthurs with little to dignify them. Monaco's Arthur is caught up in a mysterious battle for the Grail, and quickly vanishes from the story, but if his knights are any example, no honorable man would want to be associated with his court. Hanratty's Arthur in *The Book of Mordred* has his sister burned as a witch, and complains about his relative powerlessness to the visiting

Palomides (38 - 40). The reader is likely to be no more impressed than Palomides, for if there is one thing less glorious than brutality, it is self-pity. There is absolutely no grandeur here.

It is worth noting that Monaco and Hanratty are concentrating on a character other than Arthur, Parsival (Perceval) in Monaco's case, Mordred in Hanratty's. Since the story is de-centered, that is, since Arthur is displaced from his traditional position at the center of the story, removing the grandeur associated with Arthur does not necessarily hurt the story. In *The Book of Mordred*, Mordred gradually becomes disenchanted with Arthur's kingdom, and decides to take power and responsibility to make the kingdom a better place, vowing that no villages will burn during his reign (256). Monaco's books deal with that strange artifact the Grail, which makes its own rules. Ultimately, grandeur and glory are less important in Monaco's bleak and eerie world than compassion and ties of love.

None of these novels could be considered part of the "Arthurian canon," although *The Dragon Lord* and *The Great Captains* both have admirers. Nevertheless, the latter is out of print, and admired more by scholars and authors than by readers, who tend to be outraged by Treece's portrayal of Arthur (See Thompson 1995). As for *The Dragon Lord*, the most frequent comment I have heard is: "Well, it's -- different." (Leibowitz) I have yet to meet someone other than a scholar of Arthuriana who has read either Hanratty's book or Monaco's series, and while I enjoyed the first, I read the second more out of a sense of duty than for enjoyment.

In short, none of these novels, regardless of their particular strengths or weaknesses, is central to the Arthurian "canon" and none of

them captures the spirit of an age or a culture in the way that White, Tennyson, or Bradley did. This is not to deny the contribution these novels make to the story, nor is it to deny their appeal. These novels have their fans; they are memorable; however, they are not, nor are they likely to become, the definitive version of Arthur's story for any group, as T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* or Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* has.

T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* is a personal psychomachia, as well as one of the definitive versions of the story of Arthur and his knights. It grapples with the problem of force, and is as much about the world of World War II as about the world of the sixth or fifteenth century. White raises the question of grandeur many times: Merlyn (Merlin) often appears as a comic figure; Lancelot sees himself as a failure; Guenever (Guinevere) is often less than regal in her dealings with Lancelot, and Arthur himself becomes a tired old man, watching the inevitable destruction of all he holds dear, but helpless to prevent it. Arthur's court loses the glory of its early years and looks to fashion-conscious, cynical, and bitter men such as Agravaine and Mordred for role models.

Nevertheless, White does allow Arthur, Lancelot, and Guenever to retain their grandeur, perhaps never more than when Camelot collapses. He achieves this by combining the characters' most human qualities with their most admirable ones. Their humanity is elevated by their admirable qualities, while these become even more precious for being mingled with

their humanity. T. H. White's Arthur is, as Tennyson's Guinevere said of Tennyson's Arthur, with less justice, "the highest and most human too." ("Guinevere" 644)

White's Guenever is often condemned by critics for her jealousy and shrewish personality, and White himself is sometimes considered misogynistic in his portrayal of the queen. Yet such criticisms ignore the passages where White explains, with obvious sympathy, why Guenever acts as she does. Indeed, I would rather have his Guenever, a real human being, with believable faults, than a Guinevere confined to a pedestal.

From the moment where Guenever's feelings are hurt by Lancelot, White stresses, "she was a real person." (334) This becomes her leitmotif. White says, "It is difficult to imagine her" (379), and that

One explanation of Guenever, for what it is worth, is that she was what they used to call a "real" person. She was not the kind who can be fitted safely under some label or other, as "loyal" or "disloyal" or "self-sacrificing" or "jealous". Sometimes she was loyal and sometimes she was disloyal. She behaved like herself. And there must have been something in this self, some sincerity of heart, or she would not have held two people like Arthur and Lancelot....It is difficult to write about a real person. (472 - 473)

Both her humanity and her grandeur are stressed in this passage, and the former is a prerequisite of the latter, even as it seems to undercut the latter. Indeed, when Guenever is at her least glorious, dressed in loud silks and too much make-up, Lancelot finds her beautiful and touching, and is in far more danger of renewing their relationship, despite his vows, than when she appears more glorious (458 - 459, 473 - 474).

White adds: "She even became unpopular. But unpopularity is often a complement -- and Guenever...was never insignificant." (473) Like Treece's Arthur, Guenever's faults do not detract from her greatness;

they do not make her a good or a bad person, but only "herself." Cabell takes this notion even further in *Jurgen*, where his Guinevere explains that her commands are divine, transcending the categories of right and wrong (289).

White's Guenever need not rely on divinity, for she has virtues, as well as flaws. Arthur will not ask Guenever if Lancelot is her lover because he knows that "if he were to ask his wife, she would admit it. Her three great virtues were courage, generosity and honesty." (389)

Her grandeur is also linked to Arthur and Lancelot, for White stresses that their love for her is proof that there is "something in [Guenever's] self, some sincerity of heart." (472) Lancelot, despite his self-doubt, despite his madness, is capable of surrounding himself with an aura of grandeur. This aura extends to others, as when Gawaine (Gawain) refuses to forgive Lancelot for the death of his brothers, and forces Arthur to banish his greatest knight:

Lancelot pulled himself together with a sort of final care. He looked from England to his tormentor. He turned slowly to the Queen, who had not spoken. He saw her ridiculous olive branch, her clumsiness and silly clothes. With a lifted head, he raised their tragedy to nobleness and gravity....He took her by the hand, led her to the middle of the room, translating her into his remembered lady. Something in his grip, in his step, in the fullness of his voice, made her bloom again -- it was their last partnership -- into the Rose of England. He lifted her to a crest of conquest which they had forgotten. As stately as a dance, the gargoyle took her to the centre. There, poising her flushing, the archstone of the realm, he made an end. It was the last time that Sir Lancelot, King Arthur and Queen Guenever were to be together....He kissed her fingers deliberately, turned stiffly, and began to pace in silence down the length of the room....Fifteen days to Dover was the time assigned to any felon who had taken sanctuary....Gawaine or his men would be skulking at his heels...But still, whether in shirt or mail, he would be their old Commander. He would walk steadily, without haste, looking straight in front of him. As he passed the threshold, the look of endurance was already on

him. People felt tawdry in the Justice Room when the old soldier had left it. (603 - 604)

White uses scenes like this effectively, so that the reader remembers the grandeur, not the tawdriness or the occasional pettiness of the three protagonists.

All of White's tactics are used on Arthur: the idea of what he tried to do remains, even when the reality is a shambles; his humanity emphasizes his grandeur, and, even if he does not have Lancelot's ability to create an awed silence, he is remembered at his best, not his worst. When Mordred and Agravaire decide to accuse Lancelot and Guenever formally of treason, White describes Arthur's entrance through the eyes of Gareth, a knight given to hero-worship:

Arthur, who had come pattering through the stone corridors of his palace with a mind fixed on the work in front of him, stood waiting in the doorway without surprise. The men of the chevron and thistle, turning to him, saw the old King in the last minute of his glory. They stood for a few heartbeats silent and Gareth, in a pain of recognition, saw him as he was. He did not see a hero of romance, but a plain man who had done his best -- not a leader of chivalry, but the pupil who had tried to be faithful to his curious master, the magician, by thinking all the time -- not Arthur of England, but a lonely old gentleman who had worn his crown for half a lifetime in the teeth of fate.

Gareth threw himself on his knee. (554 - 555)

Despite White's use of the domestic word, "pattering", he stresses not the domesticity of Arthur, but the fact of his glory, even though that glory will soon end. Gareth responds not to a hero, but to a human being; nevertheless, that human being is heroic precisely because he is human, not larger than life. Gareth recognizes this, kneeling to the man, not the legend, no longer worshipping Arthur blindly, but still recognizing his greatness. Arthur is not the strongest nor the wisest of men; his greatness is a plodding kind of greatness, consisting in

doggedly following the path laid down for him by Merlyn, whose own greatness lies in the fact that he created Arthur and Camelot. Merlyn is brilliant, but Arthur's achievement is no less worthy for being won by persistence, rather than by brilliance. Arthur has not succeeded in his goal of building a society free of force, and he has committed a terrible crime by sentencing the May Babies to death, yet there is still something quietly dignified and heroic about the tired old man who has spent his life in a battle he cannot win.

Even though Arthur understands why Agravaire and Mordred have waited for him, he does not give in to their plans without a struggle. He

watched and waited -- as a man who was to be hanged might submit to the hangman, but who would not need to help with the noose. He watched with a tired irony, leaving the work to them. (555)

However tired his irony, it contrasts favorably with the bitterness of Mordred and the ghoulish exultation of Agravaire. Their lack of grandeur emphasizes Arthur's grandeur.

As the book ends, Arthur draws new strength and dignity from the idealistic page Tom, proving that the moment before the accusation of Lancelot and the queen was not "the last minute of his glory." His thoughts, as the novel closes, are similar to those of Rick in *Casablanca*: "The fate of this man or that man was less than a drop, although it was a sparkling one, in the great blue motion of the sunlit sea." (639)

The idea of the sparkling drop in the ocean is repeated in *Camelot*, the musical based on White's novel, but there the emphasis is different. Pellinore asks Arthur who Tom is, and the king replies:

One of what we all are, Pelly. Less than a drop in the great blue motion of the sunlit sea....But it seems some of the drops sparkle, Pelly. Some of them do sparkle! (Lerner and Loewe 469)

It is not the unimportance of the "drop," or the individual, that is emphasized here, but the fact that "drops" like Arthur and Tom sparkle.

Moreover, what really makes Tom "sparkle," in both the play and the novel, is the idea of the grandeur of Camelot and the Round Table. It is this idea which Arthur sends Tom away from the upcoming battle to spread. This is made even clearer in *Camelot*, where Arthur is astonished to learn that Tom wishes to be a knight not because he has ever seen one, nor because his parents or his village were ever protected by knights, but because he knows about the knights and the ideals of the Round Table "from the stories people tell." (Lerner and Loewe 468) However tawdry the reality, the ideal has such power that it captures Tom's heart and elevates the flawed knights associated with it.

White, then, uses the ultimate failure and the humanity of the characters to question the grandeur of the story, and, by extension, of human endeavors to create a better society in any age. He concludes that the effort is worthy, despite the failure, and that human flaws do not detract from the dignity of great people, but may enhance it. Similar tactics of questioning and reaffirming the grandeur of the legend and its characters are used by many other authors, some of whom use one or more of the characters as first person narrators.

Each book of Gillian Bradshaw's trilogy is narrated by a different character. Gwalchmai (Gawain) narrates the first, which tells of his struggle to free himself from his mother's dark sorcery and his subsequent struggle to win Arthur's trust and acceptance. The stakes are high, for Morgawse (Morgause) serves the powers of darkness and evil,

while Arthur fights for good and "the Light." Because of this, the grandeur of the story is never in question. The second novel is narrated by Gwalchmai's servant, who is not as elevated nor as glorious as his master; nevertheless, his high opinion of Gwalchmai and Arthur's ideals confirms their grandeur. Even though Arthur's kingdom will fall, the reader is left with a sense of tragedy and greatness, not with a sense that the story is at all mundane or tawdry.

However, in the third novel, the magic from the other two is gone, as is the sense of a titanic battle between good and evil. This novel is narrated by Gwynhwyfar (Guinevere), and she moves in the world of human beings, not the world of legends which Gwalchmai once visited. She is as domestic as White's Arthur, making sure that the city of Camlann is well stocked.

Yet, like White's Arthur, Lancelot, and Guenever, Bradshaw's Gwynhwyfar wins admiration and respect as much because of her humanity as in spite of it. Certainly, much of the grandeur associated with her accumulates because of the historical weight of the story, but it is no easy thing to manage Camlann. Nor does Gwynhwyfar show the slightest trace of self-pity, and her acceptance of responsibility when her affair with Bedwyr (Bedivere) is discovered grants her an unassailable dignity, causing her accusers to defer to her, as she instructs them in how to proceed.

This is not to say that the grandeur of the story is unchallenged, however. The farmer Sion ap Rhys wonders how Arthur's warriors can fight to hold back the darkness when they have that darkness within themselves. As Thompson points out (1985, 107 - 108), even Gwalchmai succumbs to this darkness, losing the clarity of vision he once

possessed, when the grandeur and worthiness of the struggle was plain.

Gwalchmai tells Gwynhwyfar:

Once I sailed to the Kingdom of Summer, the Otherworld. I thought then that the struggle between Light and Darkness was fought upon the Earth, and that the intentions of our spirits reflected it, and bound Earth and the Otherworld. But now that world seems unconnected and remote from here, for even the best intentions of those devoted to Light can create Darkness. And so there is no justice, can be no justice. Perhaps we are wrong to act at all. (Bradshaw 1982 b, 291)

Gwalchmai is understandably bitter, for his only son has been slain by Bedwyr as the queen's lover tried to prevent her from becoming the victim of her cousin's vengeance. More bitter are Gwynhwyfar's words to Taliesin after the battle of Camlann:

An emperor commits incest with his sister and begets his own ruin in the person of a treacherous, malicious son; and an empress divides the realm at the critical time by playing whore with the emperor's best friend! What a beautiful story! What a theme for songs! Not only is it all lost, it was we who lost it, we who by our own stupidity and weakness allowed ourselves to be divided and break, like a pot flawed in the firing that spills everything put into it. It is gone like smoke into the air, like mist before the wind. There is nothing left of the empire, and nothing remaining from which we could build again, and nothing to show for our lives' effort but guilt, shame, and a few lying songs! (Bradshaw 1982 b, 370)

Gwynhwyfar's self-recriminations and accusations reflect both the criticisms levelled at the story and the fears that our own lives are no more than shapeless messes, unmitigated failures, lacking even the pathos of tragedy. Her challenged is strengthened by her position in the story, for if the queen herself questions the value of the attempt to restore the glory of Rome and accuses herself of being a whore, can there be any grandeur in the legend?

Yet, despite her words, Arthur's achievements are renowned in song and story, and years later, even she admits:

I could not wish to forget...I could not lose the memory of Camlann in the morning, the sun shining from the snow on the roof of the feast hall, the smoke of the morning fires, the feast in the great dim building, the glitter of much gold, the strains of the harp. Whatever the bitterness that mingles with the memories, what we had in Camlann was the dream that the hearts of all men have ever longed for....Of course the loss of that is bitter, more bitter than the loss of all the world. But I cannot wish to forget that it was there for a few years....We failed in Camlann; nothing of what we struggled to build remains, except the longing that drove us in the first place. But it was worth it to have possessed that joy for a few years, and I cannot regret that we tried. (Bradshaw 1982 b, 376-377)

Here, Camlann, Bradshaw's version of Camelot, resembles Yeats' Byzantium, the gilded mosaic, like the one in Gwynhwyfar's father's hall. Though fallen to pieces, the grandeur Camlann/Camelot gave and continues to give is real. The longing for Camelot is a longing as much for our lives to mean more than a tawdry story about incest and whoredom as it is for a utopian society.

Given this grandeur, the idea that what Arthur and his people strove for was important, worthy, in spite of the human failures of the individuals involved, those failures are invested with the nobility of tragedy. Some versions of the story go further, and claim the nobility and grandeur, while denying that the end is all that tragic. Woolley's Guinevere does this, sitting quietly and anonymously in her convent, listening to tales of the return of Arthur:

The people need us, and they will not let us die....So I smile, knowing the truth of it, loving the humans at the heart of the myth.

Yes it was magnificent, and no, it was never easy[...]yet, still in all[...]I'd do it all over again, tomorrow. (Woolley 1991, 432)

Guinevere recognizes and celebrates both the flawed humans and the myth which elevates and glorifies them, and concludes, more optimistically than Bradshaw's Gwynhwyfar, not only that the gain was worth the loss, that it glorified otherwise tawdry events, but that it would be worth repeating. This conclusion must surely be shared by those authors who retell the story again and again.

Talking to Guinevere in a dream while he is dying, Parke Godwin's Arthur imagines his queen saying, "A grand time, Arthur. We didn't win it all, but we gave it a fine try. The two of us in a legend." (Godwin 1980, 394) Again, we have the same juxtaposition of ideas: the human failure, the worthy effort, and the resulting ennobling myth.

Thompson maintains (1985, 155 ff.) that the definitive statement of this theme is uttered in Berger's *Arthur Rex*, by Gawaine (Gawain), or more accurately, by his ghost, which appears to the dying Arthur on the battlefield. Arthur asks the question which haunts us all: "For have I not been a buffoon?" (Berger 483) A buffoon, a figure of fun -- the opposite of the dignified figure we wish to cut in the world. Gawaine responds:

[T]here is no man who hath not believed the same of himself
in very bad times, and verily we are all fools for we live
but temporarily, and beneath our armor we wear human skin,
which is to say, motley. (483)

In other words, Arthur is no more foolish than any man. But that is not enough of an assurance for the reader who wants to believe that one can achieve more than being a fool amongst fools. Gawaine continues:

But the difference between a great man and a mere
entertainer is that the former doth seek to please no
audience but God, and thus he goeth against the mean
instincts of humanity: the prevarications of vanity, the
sentimentalizing of envy, the cowardice of greed, the

slothful molesting of the weak, for all these are to celebrate nothing and to despise everything. And though man be eternally contemptible, he should not be contemptuous of that which he can achieve. (483)

One can be merely a fool, or one can be God's fool. The latter at least has a hope of achieving something, while the former, represented by those who "despise everything," achieve nothing. Yet, this satisfies Arthur no more than it does perhaps the reader:

"Methinks I have achieved nothing, Gawaine!" King Arthur cried. "For amongst our company we had every human failing, and have we been better, except in rhetoric, than these barbarians, in killing whom we die ourselves?"

"Yea!" said the ghost of Sir Gawaine. "For can we not say, without the excessive pride which is sinful, that we lived with a certain gallantry?" (483)

We may seem no better than our foes, but we have style. Is this not a laughable statement? Indeed it is, and Berger invites laughter. At the same time, is it not also the truth? We admire these characters because of their style, because of the glitter of their reputations (See Cabell 1934).

Arthur is still not entirely satisfied, yet Gawaine has one final argument: "We sought no easy victories, nor won any. And perhaps for that we will be remembered." (Berger 484)

Indeed it is not an easy battle to create a society in which all people live decently, but is that not the only battle worth fighting (See David 66)?

One final tactic used to drive home the grandeur of the legend is humor. Berger used it in this way, as did Godwin, Woolley, White, Twain,

and Cabell, among others. It seems strange that humor reinforces the grandeur, rather than tearing it down, but this is, nevertheless, the case.

In Godwin's novel, most of the humor comes from Arthur himself, for the story is narrated by the king. Thompson points out: "Most important of all, Arthur is able to laugh at himself." (1985, 129) This is important because one way of deflating pomposity is through humor; as Tam Olin says in Gordon Dickson's science-fiction novel *Soldier, Ask Not*, there is no throne so steady it cannot be rocked by laughter (60).

No throne save one: Godwin's Arthur is so secure on his throne that he can laugh at himself. His grandeur is increased because he is not afraid to lose it by mocking his own aspirations, just as Gold's Constantine wins Yluned's admiration by being brave enough to appear foolish in front of the entire court (1992 b, 167).

Arthur has been a target for satirical humor since the Middle Ages, but most modern satirical Arthurian novels can be traced to Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Thompson says:

Despite the criticism of ignorance and callousness of both medieval and modern society, and the comedy of the exaggerations of the world of romance, there remain in the novel an underlying admiration and affection for Arthurian legend itself. The heroism of Arthur when he carries a child dying of smallpox to its mother and the generosity of Lancelot when he offers to help Hank after the latter has defeated him in a tournament, are qualities that the self-centered protagonist lacks, and they reveal that the legend possesses an imaginative power absent from Hank's view of life. As Hank himself admits, he is "nearly devoid of sentiment,...or poetry in other words" (p. 50).

In Twain's work are thus found the three major strands of ironic fantasies that deal with Arthurian legend: satire of mankind's self-destructive impulses, comedy at the expense of his foolish pretensions, and a poignant affection for the aspirations of high romance. (1985, 141 - 142)

Twain mocks the characters for falling short of their ideals, but he does not deny that the ideals are worth striving for. His medieval characters are no less glorious than the people of his own time, just as Berger's Arthur is no less glorious than any human being, but Twain, like Berger, is not content with that. Arthur is a noble character, more selfless in his way than Hank Morgan, and more glorious. Because Twain is often mocking and ironic towards his characters, the moments when he treats them with seriousness and respect, as in the scene mentioned by Thompson, stand out. His characters are so often buffoons that when they achieve a rare grandeur, that grandeur is even more impressive and poignant.

Another view of the importance of the elevation of a normal, rather shabby, story to the realm of myth is presented by Cabell, albeit he is not dealing with the Arthurian characters themselves in this case. In *The Silver Stallion*, a legend grows up around Manuel, Redeemer of Poictesme, who, like Arthur, had a group of knights, the knights of the Order of the Silver Stallion. The legend is created when young Jurgen (who will grow up to become the middle-aged protagonist of *Jurgen* and will have an affair with Guinevere before she marries Arthur) says that he saw Manuel after the Redeemer's death. Jurgen is lying to escape punishment; nevertheless, the lie is so effective that the spirit of Manuel lets it stand, even when begged by Jurgen's father Coth to "return, and with the brave truth do you make an end of your people's bragging and lies." (102) Manuel refuses, telling Coth:

I have gone, forever. But another Manuel abides in Poictesme, and he is nourished by these fictions. Yearly he grows in stature, this Manuel who redeemed Poictesme from the harsh Northmen's oppression and lewd savagery. Already this Manuel the Redeemer has become a most notable hero,

without fear or guile or any other blemish: and with each generation he will increase in virtue. It is this dear Redeemer whom Poictesme will love and emulate: men will be braver because this Manuel was so very brave; and men, in one or another moment of temptation, will refrain from folly because his wisdom was so well rewarded; and at least now and then, a few men will refrain from baseness, too, because all his living was stainless. (101)

In other words, the Manuel of legend will elevate the people of Poictesme by his example. Manuel admits that he, like Coth, does "not recall this Manuel" (101), but maintains that such a Manuel is needed:

Manuel said: "...Poictesme has now, as every land must have, its faith and its legend, to lead men more nobly and more valorously than ever any living man may do. I, who was strong, had not the strength to beget this legend: but it has been created, Coth, it has been created by the folly of a woman and the wild babble of a frightened child; and it will endure."

Coth replied, brokenly, "But, master, we are men of this world, a world made of dirt. Oh, my dear master, we pick our way about that dirt as best we can! The results need surprise nobody. The results are rather often, in a pathetic fashion, very admirable. Should this truth be disregarded for a vain-glorious dream!"

And Manuel answered: "The dream is better. For man alone of animals plays the ape to his dreams." (102)

The lies of Manuel may be vain, but they are glorious indeed. Their grandeur may not be as truthful as the truth held out by a pure psychomachia, but Manuel insists that grandeur, that illusion is more important than truth, and that it can, perhaps, create its own truth, a better truth than even the pathetically admirable deeds that he and his men really performed.

Manuel, then, says that the lie must stand because people need it. Woolley's Guinevere maintains essentially the same thing. Winston Churchill, asked if the stories about Arthur were true, responded, "It's true, or it ought to be; and more and better besides." (Price 118)

There is a healthy skepticism about how ideal the court of Arthur was. Treece, Drake, and Hanratty do not scruple to show the dark side of Camelot, while even authors who maintain a more positive tone, such as Barr and Bolland, and Hawke, reveal that all is not rosy in Arthur's realm.

Cabell points out that Arthur's knights take an oath every Pentecost

"never to do outrageosity nor murder"; to fight in no wrongful cause; to preserve loyally their personal virtues; always to grant clemency when it was asked; and to serve chastely and faithfully every gentlewoman who needed aid against giants or heathen or dragons or her nearer relatives or any other of this world's ills. (1934, 112 - 113)

However, like Berger, Cabell admits: "Being human, these gentlemen did not keep this oath in every particular." (1934, 113) Indeed, he continues,

So the knights of the Round Table...lived each man his own more or less self-seeking, more or less lecherous, and more or less abominable and unheroic private life; and enjoyed it tremendously. ("To Sir Galahad" 114)

Nevertheless, the general consensus is that, despite their flaws, Arthur and his people have a special grandeur. Even if this grandeur is an illusion, it is an illusion which is important to readers, and which they need, as much as, if not more than, the truth. Churchill maintains that the story is true, and if it is not, it should be. Cabell criticizes Galahad for destroying the Round Table by causing the knights to take their vows seriously. However, Cabell causes Manuel, who has several parallels with Arthur, to insist that the lies told about the Redeemer of Poictesme and his Order of the Silver Stallion, like the

lies told about Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, are better than the truth.

The majority of authors, then, come to one of two conclusions: either, in spite of everything, there is a nobility and grandeur about Arthur and his people, or, even if there is no such grandeur, it is necessary to invent it, for people need it. Why is this so? What is it that they need?

Part of the answer has been given before: People need a sense of grandeur, a sense that they are noble. But there is something more held out by Manuel's Order of the Silver Stallion, and something more held out by Arthur's Round Table. This something is what gives Arthur his grandeur, if one concludes that his grandeur is not illusory. This something is the ideals of the order of very fallible men.

Chapter Seven: Ideals and Heroes

G'Kar: I can't recall the last time I was in a fight like that! No moral ambiguity! No hopeless battle against ancient and overwhelming forces! They were the bad guys, as you say. We were the good guys. And they made a very satisfying "thump" when they hit the floor.

David McIntyre (who believes himself to be King Arthur):
It's wrong for the strong to prey on the weak.
That idea was at the very heart of the Round Table.
To correct injustices, to promote a society of laws,
not arms...that is the purpose which God and the
crown have set before me.

--"A Late Delivery from Avalon" (episode of the science-fiction television show *Babylon 5*)

Ideals

While it is true that Arthurian fiction is lent grandeur by virtue of its historical weight, it is no less true that it achieves grandeur by virtue of its characters' attempts to uphold ideals, regardless of how successful their attempts are. The division between the ideals and the heroes who uphold them is not absolute, but a preliminary examination of the ideals is the best place to start.

Geoffrey of Monmouth

Geoffrey of Monmouth extolls the ideals of the epic hero. In Arthur's day,

[Women] scorned to give their love to any man who had not proved himself three times in battle. In this way the

womenfolk became chaste and more virtuous and for their love the knights were ever more daring. (*HRB* 229)

The ideal qualities are courage, daring, and martial prowess for men, and chastity and virtue for women. Yet Geoffrey does not neglect to mention that Arthur "established the whole of his kingdom in a state of lasting peace" for twelve years (*HRB* 222). Virtuous women cause the men to become valorous warriors, and the ideals of the warrior lead to a peaceful land. This is the first statement of the Arthurian code, and already the question of what to do with a nation of warriors in a time of peace is beginning to be raised.

Malory

The Arthurian code is stated and restated until its culmination in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. This is the source for Tennyson and White, and through them, for many other authors. Malory's Arthur has his knights swear

[n]ever to do outrageousness nor murder, and always to flee treason; also by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succor, upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law, ne for no world's goods. Unto this were all the knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young. And every year they were sworn at the high feast of Pentecost. (I, 115 - 116)

The Pentecostal oath is, as Cabell pointed out (1934, 113 - 114), broken many times, but it is no less admirable for that.

Tennyson

The man credited with single-handedly reviving interest in the story of Arthur states the code of behavior in terms not far removed

from those of Geoffrey and Malory. Arthur explains that his knights swear

To revere the King as if he were
 Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
 To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
 To ride abroad redressing human wrongs.
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
 To honour his own word as if his God's,
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
 And worship her by years of noble deeds,
 Until they won her; for indeed I knew
 Of no more subtle master under heaven
 Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
 Not only to keep down the base in man,
 But teach high thought, and amiable words
 And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
 And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
 ("Guinevere" 465 - 480)

As in Geoffrey, women are important to the ideals Arthur is trying to instill, for men learn virtue by loving them. As in Malory, these virtues go beyond prowess in war; the knights are expected to uphold Arthur's ideals in times of peace as well.

Lawhead

The ideals of Arthur's court have not changed much over the centuries. In a novel written in 1988, Stephen Lawhead's *Merlin*, is taught to revere the vision of his father, Taliesin:

There is a land shining with goodness where each man
 protects his brother's dignity as his own, where war and
 want have ceased and all races live under the same law of
 love and honor.

It is a land bright with truth, where a man's word is
 his pledge, and falsehood is banished, where children sleep
 safe in their mothers' arms and never know fear or pain. It
 is a land where kings extend their hands in justice rather
 than reach for the sword; where mercy, kindness and
 compassion flow like deep water over the land, and men
 revere virtue, revere truth, revere beauty, above comfort,

pleasure, or selfish gain. A land where peace reigns in the hearts of men, where faith blazes like a beacon from every hill, and love like a fire from every hearth, where the True God is worshipped and his ways acclaimed by all (1990 b, 108 - 109).

Taliesin calls this land "the Kingdom of Summer," and Merlin passes his vision of it to Arthur, who will strive to make it real.

T. H. White

However, for the modern reader, perhaps the most influential statement of the ideals of Camelot comes from T. H. White. Arthur, trained carefully by Merlin, has decided that justifying actions on the grounds that one can carry them out -- saying that Might makes Right -- is wrong. He cites the example of Sir Bruce Sans Pitie, who rides around molesting virgins (247). Like many legendary kings, Arthur is credited with keeping his land so safe that a maiden with a bag of gold could ride through it without fear of molestation. But what keeps the maiden and her gold safe from those who would abuse their power?

The answer is, of course, the greater power of Arthur. He uses the same means as his foes; but his goal is different. He harnesses force, a potential evil, in the service of good. Arthur explains this idea in T.

H. White's *The Once and Future King*:

Might is not Right. But there is a lot of Might knocking about in this world, and something has to be done about it. It is as if People were half horrible and half nice....Why can't you harness Might so that it works for Right?...The Might is there, in the bad half of people, and you can't neglect it. You can't cut it out, but you might be able to direct it...so that it was useful instead of bad....I will institute a sort of order of chivalry....We shall have to make it a great honour, you see, and make it fashionable and all that. Everybody must want to be in it. And then I shall make the oath of the order that Might is only to be used for Right....The knights in my order will ride all over the world, still dressed in steel and whacking away with their

swords - that will give an outlet for wanting to whack... - but they will be bound to strike only on behalf of what is good, to defend virgins...and to restore what has been wrong in the past and to help the oppressed...It will be using the Might instead of fighting against it, and turning a bad thing into a good. (247 - 248)

We may not be able to conquer our "bad half," but we can tame it, and use it to prevent others who are controlled by their "bad half" from harming us. Indeed, many of Arthur's knights were formerly ruffians who robbed and imprisoned his subjects. These men were defeated by the knights of the Round Table, and joined their ranks, serving Arthur with as much loyalty as those who conquered them. Arthur is trying to enlist force to protect people from force.

Later, he will question if even this use of force is correct, and will turn to law. As in Malory, all subjects are bound by the same law, even the king and queen. This is the cornerstone of Arthur's kingdom, and it means that he must confronts the necessity of burning his wife for adultery. He could, he admits, choose to ignore his laws and save the queen. But if he did that, the rules would no longer protect his people.

Can the Ideals Be Upheld?

Yet, for all of Arthur's efforts, Camelot is destroyed. He expected much of his people; did he expect too much? Is it possible to uphold the ideals of the Round Table? Perhaps not; Tennyson's Merlin warns Gareth, in riddling language:

...the King

Will bind thee by such vows as is a shame
 A man should not be bound by, yet the which
 No man can keep; but so thou dread to swear,
 Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide

Without, among the cattle of the field.
("Gareth and Lynette" 265 - 270)

Arthur's ideals are impossible to uphold, says Merlin; yet, it is shameful not to make the attempt to uphold them. Without these ideals, men are no better than beasts.

The tension between the ideals of the Round Table and the fallibility of the very human knights who make up the Table reflect the problems people have every day in trying to apply ideal codes of behavior to practical matters. Tennyson's Merlin insists that the effort to uphold ideals which cannot be upheld is worthy, even if it is doomed to failure.

This is a comfort to the modern reader who wishes to believe himself good, but must acknowledge that his behavior often falls short of the standards he sets for himself. Yet, Arthur's story is not just a sop to assuage our guilt or our conscience, for the story urges us to strive continuously to act better, not to resign ourselves to mediocrity or to give up the struggle to uphold the ideals of Camelot. Reading about the successes and failures of Arthur's knights helps us to accept ultimate failure while continuing to strive for partial success.

Moreover, that is only one view of the place of ideals at Camelot. Several versions of the story, including Tennyson's, do maintain that it is possible to live up to the ideals of the Round Table. Tennyson's Arthur insists that this is so in "The Holy Grail." White's Arthur, tutored by Merlin, is convinced that somehow it will be possible for all people to live up to his ideals, while White's Lancelot is tormented precisely because he does believe that he can live up to the standards

of his king, and that his affair with Guinevere is something that he could end if only he would.

It is easy to understand the attraction of the position which states that ideals cannot be achieved, so one should not feel badly about one's failures. It is not difficult to understand the attraction of the position which states that ideals, although unachievable, are there to inspire people to come ever closer, rather than being an excuse for laziness or complacency. But the view that ideals are achievable is surprising, for it allows no excuses for falling at all short of perfection. It insists that we can build a perfect society, here on earth, if only we uphold the ideals of the Round Table.

But, after all, that is what Arthur's story claims. In Stephen Lawhead's trilogy, for example, Taliesin's wife, Charis, calls his vision of the Kingdom of Summer a "wonderful dream," but he replies, "Not a dream only...It is a true world." Charis insists, "But it is not our world" and he says, "No...But it is our world as it was meant to be, as it *will* be. It can happen, Charis." (1990 a, 444) Taliesin's faith is rewarded, for Charis passes his vision to their son, Merlin, who, in turn, passes the vision to Arthur. Arthur makes the Kingdom of Summer a reality, as Taliesin always knew it could be.

Bradshaw's Gwynhwyfar reflects that Arthur's vision became a reality, and White points out that, despite Arthur's ultimate failure, he did succeed in bringing Merlin's vision to life. For a time, however brief -- twelve years or twenty-five -- the ideal society existed on Earth. It was destroyed by no outside enemy, but by the shortcomings of its creators. On the surface, this lays a heavy burden on the individual, for it is not possible to blame outside sources for one's

own failures. Accepting responsibility for one's actions is not something one expects people to do, but it is something one wants others to do. Reading about people who take responsibility is a welcome relief from reading about current events where people scramble to fix blame anywhere but on themselves. Also, accepting responsibility is a way of claiming power: If Lancelot blames himself for the destruction of Camelot, he is saying that he alone is capable of destroying everything Arthur worked so hard to build. There is an attraction in claiming such power, one which need not be perverse, for although one can gloat over one's failures, one can also take responsibility for empowering oneself to succeed (Burling, Personal Discussion).

However, there is still another way to look at the ideals of Arthur's knights. There is a certain comfort which comes from knowing that there is a code of honor, a guide to proper conduct. The clarity of such a code, even when it is impossible to abide by it, is appealing to people of any century who are weary of moral ambiguity and want a clear definition of right and wrong, however strict. It is a relief to know that one is morally wrong, for that means that there are standards which give some sort of order to the world.

For, ultimately, nearly all versions of Arthur's story agree that there is an order to the world, that there are ideals, and that it is possible to uphold these ideals in everyday life. When tragedy overtakes all the characters and destroys the society of Camelot, what is left are the ideals which are passed on to the survivors. This is why White's Arthur sends Tom away from the final battle, for a new generation must rebuild (See Kipling's "Hymn to Breaking Strain"). The success of

Arthur's story may be seen in the similarity of the stated code of honor over the centuries.

How Relevant Are These Ideals?

But is this code of honor still relevant today? There are, of course, those who question whether the black-and-white morality of the Arthurian stories is applicable in any society, even Arthur's. This question is raised in Malory, where Gawain refuses to guard Guenevere (Guinevere) from Lancelot's attempt to rescue her from the stake (II, 470 - 471). King Pellinore's refusal to turn aside from a quest assigned to him by Arthur results in the death of his daughter and her husband (I, 115).

Modern authors raise questions about the ideals as well, as in *Camelot*, where Pellinore expresses scornful disbelief upon learning that nothing can be done to prevent Mordred's treachery until it has been committed, asking: "Do you mean to say, Arthur, that a chap has to wait till he's killed before he can attack?" Arthur is forced to admit: "I have no answer to that." (Lerner and Loewe, II, ii) But sometimes, the reader is moved to question the ideals of Arthur's knights even when the author does not seem to be challenging them.

In Cochran and Murphy's *The Forever King*, the unaging Saladin tries to destroy the child who is the twentieth century reincarnation of King Arthur. He is prevented by Hal Woczniak, a cop, and by the knights of the Round Table who awaken from their slumber. Surrounded by the knights, Saladin appeals to their code of honor:

"Give him a sword," he commanded, his eyes fixed on Hal. "If I must die, I wish to die honorably. I challenge the king's

champion to single combat."

The knights murmured among themselves. Single combat. Despite his wickedness, the Saracen had offered an honorable settlement. One man against another. It was acceptable. (386)

Merlin protests:

Don't allow it, Arthur....Saladin attacked you openly, after you granted him his freedom. Have your men execute the black-hearted devil now....Your friend does not know how to handle a sword!...If you permit him to fight that monster, you might as well kill him yourself! (386)

Merlin is correct on both counts: Hal has never used a sword, while Saladin is an accomplished swordsman. The battle is uneven. Moreover, Saladin is not a man of honor; he is using the code of the Round Table, but he does not believe in it. He intends to kill Hal and take Arthur hostage, forcing the knights to give him the Holy Grail. He thinks to himself:

The knights would not interfere. Single combat was the cornerstone of their quaint code....And later...they would trade the cup for the king's life, then permit Saladin to go free. That, too, was what the chivalrous fools considered to be noble behavior. (387 - 388)

Saladin appeals to a code of honor which he has no intention of following. Why, then, does Arthur agree to allow him to fight Hal?

Hal, watching the knights, begins to understand:

[The knights] were looking to their king to uphold their honor. For eleven knights in armor to attack a single man, regardless of the circumstances, would be a mockery of justice. And justice was what Arthur had stood for, back in the days when injustice was the rule of law.

That, Hal understood at last, was what had kept the legend of the once and future king alive. Not charisma, not victory, but *justice* had been the shining light that Arthur brought to the darkness of the world. (386)

That justice should be upheld is something few would question; however, the passage above makes certain assumptions. It assumes that executing a

traitor is not just, unless the traitor has a fair chance of killing his executioner, and it assumes that matching an evil but capable sword fighter against a good man who has never picked up a sword before in his life represents justice.

This is likely to leave some readers skeptical. It may be possible to justify fair combat, even in the case of a man like Saladin, but the combat is not fair. Not only is Hal unskilled, but Saladin projects his thoughts into Hal's mind in an attempt to weaken his resolve. Hal wins the fight, nevertheless, apparently justifying Arthur's position, but it is uncomfortably clear that his victory is due to a combination of the magic of Excalibur and authorial fiat.

A more thoughtful consideration of this problem is provided by Thomas Berger, whose *Lady of the Lake* insists that a knight is obligated to provide mercy when asked, no matter what the circumstances. Yet, even here, the reader can be forgiven for questioning this dictum. Berger draws on an incident from Malory. Gawain refuses to grant mercy to a knight who has slain his hounds:

Sir Gawain would have no mercy but unlaced his helm to have stricken off his head. Right so came his lady out of a chamber and fell over him, and so [Gawain] smote off her head by misadventure. (Malory, I, 101 - 102)

Berger changes the story. Gawaine (Gawain) grants the knight mercy, and the knight tries to kill Gawaine as soon as his guard is lowered.

But Sir Gawaine struck him down once more and removing his helm altogether he swore he would cut off his head.

Now the knight made great moan and begged so piteously for his life to be spared that Gawaine relented and gave him mercy. And then the knight arose, and once again did he attack Sir Gawaine. (Berger 100)

It is not until the second treacherous attack of his foe that Gawaine refuses to grant mercy. Nevertheless, the Lady of the Lake (who was also

the woman beheaded by Gawaine in Berger's version, and who is none the worse for being decapitated) chides Gawaine, for he would have killed the other knight had she not been present. Gawaine protests: "Surely there is some limit to mercy towards the deceitful." The Lady, however, will not budge from her position:

"Nay," said the Lady of the Lake, "there is no limit to mercy, and the treacherous need it most of all."

"Then," asked Sir Gawaine, "these yieldings and forgivings should have continued *ad infinitum*?"

"Until," said the lady, "thou slewest him standing."
(Berger 106)

The Lady's philosophy is not unheard of; nevertheless, to hear that Gawaine must continue to be merciful, no matter how many times his foe attempts treachery, is not entirely convincing.

The idea of a fair fight continues to crop up in popular culture. In the latest movie version of *The Three Musketeers*, D'Artagnan confronts the man who murdered his father as Cardinal Richelieu kidnaps the King and Queen of France. The murderer is disarmed, but D'Artagnan gives him a sword. Is it really appropriate to preserve the rules of fair combat when the King and Queen may be murdered at any second? Could D'Artagnan not have knocked out his foe, and fought him after the rulers of France were rescued? Is his code of honor, however admirable, not a form of treason if it endangers his king?

What makes that version of *The Three Musketeers* and books like *The Forever King* more troubling than books like *Arthur Rex* is the apparent lack of consideration of the consequences of following the code of honor. If *Arthur Rex* does not satisfactorily resolve the contradictions of a code which demands that the dishonorable be treated with honor, it does, at least, acknowledge these contradictions.

These contradictions are also examined in Guy Gavriel Kay's Fionavar trilogy, where Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere are eternally reborn in countless worlds to reenact their love triangle. Guinevere sends Lancelot to protect her son, Darien, and Lancelot faces an enemy that he cannot overcome fairly. He chooses to place Guinevere's command above the code he follows, and has Darien scream to distract his enemy at a critical moment. Nevertheless, Lancelot insists that by using this trick, he has surrendered to the darkness. Even though he has saved the life of Guinevere's son, and even though Darien's survival is necessary to save the world of Fionavar from an evil demigod who plagues it, Lancelot remains convinced that his action was wrong. He explains:

Save in one thing only, a love for which I will make eternal redress, I have served the Light in everything I have ever done. In that service, a victory won with a tool of the Dark is no victory at all. (Kay 1986, 204)

Like Lancelot, Kimberly, the seer of Fionavar, must make a difficult choice about following a code. She knows that the Fionavar's divine creator expects her to use her power to compel a dragon to fight against the enemy, even though this dragon is what gives the dwarves of Fionavar their identity. Magically binding the dwarves' dragon would destroy them as a people, even if it would save the world of Fionavar. Kimberly refuses to do this, saying, "There is a point beyond which the quest for Light becomes a serving of the Dark." (Kay 1986, 291) This is a bold statement; nevertheless, the reader is likely to feel that Kay has rigged the dice in favor of Kimberly, for the dragon does not prove to be necessary to the war effort.

Michael Cule's Dagonet does not adhere to the code of chivalry either. Facing a knight he cannot overcome in fair combat, he cheats,

for he believes that he must get past this knight to save one of the May Babies from Merlin. Dagonet discovers that the knight he defeated was Arthur and that the king was attempting to stop Merlin, for the wizard was not acting with the king's approval.

Arthur is impressed enough with Dagonet to offer him a seat at the Round Table. Dagonet protests that he overcame Arthur unfairly; by the laws of the Round Table, he does not deserve to be made a knight. Arthur replies that he could use a knight who cheats -- but only one.

This is a troublesome position. Either the laws of chivalry are absolutes, to be upheld at all times, or they are not, and each knight must decide when they should be set aside. How can Arthur claim that they are absolutes, except for Dagonet?

Dagonet is a fool in some versions of the story, and, as such, is outside the rules. Cule emphasizes Dagonet's otherness by making him capable of seeing through Merlin's illusions, an ability shared by all fools. Perhaps Dagonet should be considered a safety valve, able to say anything and do anything because he is, by definition, not bound by the rules of society.

At the same time, Dagonet is part of his society, and he is acting not to release tension, but to uphold the values of society. He does not break the rules of chivalry because he is a fool or a mocker of chivalry: Where Saladin appealed to the rules of chivalry to achieve a dishonorable end, Dagonet breaks those rules to achieve an honorable end: the rescue of a child. It would be hard to condemn any knight for doing as he did, and Arthur's action seems an uncomfortable invocation of pragmatism to justify the creation of something which is traditionally symbolic.

Another tactic used by authors is to contrast those who strive to uphold ideals with those who mock them. For example, White explains, "Mordred and Agravaine thought Arthur hypocritical -- as all decent men must be if you assume that decency can't exist." (478) An idealistic Arthur, however naive, is preferable to the jaded Mordred and Agravaine. Similarly, Maelgwn's cynical comments on the duel between Lancelot and Gawain in Newman's *Guinevere Evermore* makes the nobility of the knights, however foolish, shine brighter (199).

Nevertheless, those who mock Camelot sometimes make valid points, often more valid than the authors seem consciously aware of. In Gil Kane and John Jakes' *Excalibur*, Arthur is shocked to realize that Modred (Mordred) has not been leading his men personally. Modred points out that this is not a wise tactic: "A prudent general commands from a distance." (498) However, the reader is supposed to agree with Arthur, who believes that Modred has acted shamefully. Modred is a villain; there is no doubt of that, but he has a point. And it has been proven that he is not a coward, so his choice not to wade into the thick of battle was not motivated by fear.

Arthur also protests when Modred claims that Arthur's kingdom was built by force:

"You have great scorn for honor and mercy and justice, don't you?" Arthur said...

"Yes! No matter what you think, this kingdom is not held together by -"

"But it is!" Arthur thundered, whirling. "Those are the lynchpins of all we've built over the past years!"

Modred shook his head. "How deluded you are....you're blind to the real binding force that keeps the house of Pendragon paramount. It isn't mercy, Father. It isn't compassion." He pointed at sheathed Excalibur. "It's force. Fear." (Kane and Jakes 459 - 460)

Again, the reader seems to be expected to agree with Arthur, and certainly honor, mercy, and justice are finer linchpins to hold a kingdom together than force and fear. But Modred is correct. Arthur's kingdom is built by force; something with which the Arthur of Geoffrey and Malory would enthusiastically agree. The gentle Arthur of White and the sensitive Artos of Sutcliff are both well aware that their peace is won by war, and that force is used to suppress force. They seek constantly for a better way, but neither are hypocritical enough or ignorant enough to deny the truth.

Kane and Jakes put the argument against Arthur into Modred's mouth, probably believing that the argument will be considered invalid because the speaker is a villain. This tactic is used by Parke Godwin's Constantine in *Beloved Exile*, who mocks Guinevere's dedication to her people. She tells him, "You'd be astonished at what peasants can do." He replies,

You weary old platitude: uplifted through suffering and humility....Give power to one of those bleating sheep, you think he'll be a Brutus crying Up the Republic? He's no different from us, just hungrier and more brutal. (Godwin 1985, 417)

Guinevere's view of the people is more accurate than Constantine's, but his cynical jibe has an uncomfortable degree of truth: Guinevere has learned to love her people only after ten years of slavery.

Intentionally and unintentionally, modern authors question the ideals of Arthur's kingdom. Today, it can be hard to take seriously the rules of chivalry which demand fair and merciful treatment of even the most treacherous foe. Nevertheless, many still find such a code attractive, and it appears in Westerns, and in many movies, television shows, and novels that do not explicitly mention Arthur. Even if

Arthur's code is not practical in our society, we wish that it were. We admire the ideal it represents, even as we condemn the folly of attempting to follow it.

Interesting Changes

Among those who question the ideals of Arthur's court are the very authors who write of them. As we have seen, some raise questions only to maintain that, nevertheless, the ideals are worth upholding. Other authors deal with the question of ideals by modifying the code that Arthur follows.

Parke Godwin's Arthur, for example, does not let any code get in the way of expediency. When he learns that Agrivaine (Agravaine) plans to lead an army against him to prevent him from becoming king, he sends Gawain to parlay with Agrivaine. Gawain believes that Arthur will wait for him to return from his diplomatic mission to his brother, but Arthur has no intention of doing so. As soon as Gawain is out of sight, Arthur leads his men around Agrivaine's army, thinking, "Shameful lying to Gawain like that, but the feint was necessary. I'd used Cadur's own well-named tactic: constructive dishonesty." (1980, 182)

Godwin's Arthur is no power-hungry tyrant; he seizes the throne because he believes that he is the best man for the job. And, he is. Earlier, Gawain explains that he is following Arthur "Because, damn you, you're right." (1980, 164) That is Arthur's ultimate justification for his actions: He is right. As in White's *The Once and Future King*, Right justifies the use of Might. The ends justify the means.

Nevertheless, Godwin's Gawain speaks for those who believe in the ideals of the Round Table (which does not appear in Godwin's story).

Guenevere (Guinevere) tries to make peace between him and Arthur, saying, "If Arthur is Britain, he is all Britain and can no longer play foolish games of honor." (1980, 199) Guenevere, like Arthur, is a realist; the two are well matched. How can anyone who would rule a country be bound by the laws of honor?

But Gawain, predictably, does not he agree. He insists, "Honor is not foolish! It is all a man has." (1980, 199) This is the traditional position of Arthur's society. But in this novel of the 1980s, Arthur is a different person. He tells Gawain:

when you swore [to follow me], you said it was because I was right. And right is bigger than men; if not, the next assassin who doesn't miss deserves that chair as well as me.
(1980, 199 - 200)

Right is bigger than men; this is the same position that White's Arthur took. But that Right is bigger than Honor is not a position one necessarily expects in an Arthurian novel; rather, one expects to hear that what is right and what is honorable are the same.

Godwin will give us no such reassurance; his Arthur uses whatever means are necessary to preserve his country. He has led men against the Saxons, killing not only the men, but also the women and the children. The Arthurs of Geoffrey and Malory broke the standard rules of war, as White recognized, but they never massacred women and children in war. (However, the massacre of the May Babies in Malory and White remains to discomfort the reader.) What manner of man is Godwin's Arthur?

Surprisingly enough, he is a dreamer, a man with a vision. And while he will do anything to bring this vision to life, he is also a man who regrets the massacre of the Saxons, and who admires Gawain's code of

honor and wishes that he could afford himself the luxury of following it. He tells Gawain:

As a king, I apologize for what had to be done. As a friend...I'd give anything to have you back....As a man, I'll make what answer your honor demands. (1980, 200)

Note what has happened here: Arthur, the most practical of men, has offered to meet Gawain in single combat, where Gawain, as the injured party, has the right to set the terms. After all Arthur has done to put himself on the throne, for all that he knows that Britain needs him as a ruler, for all that Guenevere says he cannot play games of honor, he is prepared to risk everything in combat with a man who is much stronger than he is. No one can compel him to do this: His only motive for offering to fight Gawain, ironically, can be the desire to behave honorably. Equally ironic, it is Gawain's own sense of honor that prevents him from accepting Arthur's offer (Godwin 1980, 200).

It should come as no surprise to learn that Godwin's Arthur does not take action when Guenevere takes Lancelot as a lover. Arthur explains to Lancelot that the political repercussions of putting the Queen on trial for treason would divide the kingdom, and that would be a worse problem. He tells Lancelot:

you see why the earth didn't shake or the angels weep
because Guenevere came to you. I can live with that, but *no*
one carves up my country. (1980, 315)

It is not surprising that Godwin has downplayed the importance of the affair between Lancelot and Guenevere. Indeed, many authors, including Malory (II, 458), take the position that Arthur knew about and tolerated the affair, if not for political reasons, then because he sympathized with the lovers. He acts against them only when his hand is forced, and

in some versions of the story, such as Godwin's, he never punishes the lovers for their affair. In Kane and Jakes' *Excalibur*, Guinevere is condemned only because Modred (Mordred) had the king drugged so that he could barely speak (472 - 473). She has never slept with Lancelot.

Making the lovers innocent is a modern change, as near as I can determine. It solves the problem of how Lancelot can be a good knight and Camelot a good society when the Queen is betraying her husband and his ideals, for there is no betrayal. In the play *Camelot*, and in Stewart's novels, Guinevere remains faithful to Arthur. Another simplification involves Mordred, for if he is only Arthur's nephew, and not his son, and, especially, if Arthur did not massacre the May Babies, then Arthur becomes an unambiguously noble figure. It is harder to question his ideals, for he is "the blameless king."

This kind of simplification is more likely to happen in movie and television treatments of the legend. One such treatment shows a surprising change in the story, but one which has permeated modern Arthurian fiction. *The Black Knight* is about a blacksmith who becomes a knight, even though he is not of noble birth. He is told by Linet, the noblewoman he loves, that "birthright's an accident, nothing more," while another knight supports his goals, and Arthur himself trains him. Alan Lupack sees the movie as representative of the American Dream, where, regardless of one's birth, one can become what one chooses to be by hard work (Lupack, 30 - 35). It is certainly different from medieval Arthurian works. There, men who seem to be peasants may become knights, but they are always discovered to be of noble blood, such as Gareth, Tor, and Arthur himself.

What has happened is a sort of democratization of the Round Table. The Table is a kind of proto-democracy, for none of the knights are seated above the others, and the laws of the land apply to all:

neither for favour, neither for love nor affinity, there should be none other but righteous judgement, as well upon a king as upon a knight, and as well upon a queen as upon another poor lady. (Malory, II, 383)

Nevertheless, certain assumptions are never questioned: Kings are essential; knights are of noble blood. This is the way things are meant to be.

To a large degree, the ideals of Arthur's court remain unchanged in modern novels, but there is a democratizing effect, as if the glass ceiling of medieval society were removed. Also, the flexibility of the story ensures that different authors will impute different values to Arthur and the Round Table. The ideals are shaped by the interpretations of the characters, as is clear in Godwin's *Firelord*.

Heroes

A code of ideals is best understood when it is embodied or exemplified by a hero. People who find codes of honor overly abstract will respond to the appeal of a hero, and will want to emulate this hero. Indeed, in many Arthurian novels set in the present day, such as *Our Man in Camelot*, *The Forever King*, and *Last Call*, the protagonist draws on Arthur's story for inspiration, aspiring to the goal of being a modern Arthurian hero, perhaps a Lancelot or a Galahad, if not an Arthur. The modern hero dreams of bearing the banner into battle,

defending the weak, and upholding the honor of the cause or the side (Price, Cochran and Murphy, Powers 1992).

Readers can identify with this modern hero, for his desire is often theirs. Many readers dream of being heroes. The variety of material helps them, for they can find an Arthur who meets their expectations of a hero. If Arthur is not their idea of a hero, in any incarnation, they can turn to one of his knights. They use this to ennoble themselves. Gangsters and mercenaries become knights with a sense of personal honor (See Hawke, Powers 1992, *et al.*). All groups, whether children at play, gangs fighting or selling drugs, mob thugs, mercenaries, terrorists, or soldiers, want to believe that they are heroes. The story of Arthur and his knights gives these people a myth to identify with and thereby gain self respect.

With this in mind, it is time to examine the heroes of Camelot, beginning with Arthur.

Arthur

As Rosemary Morris said, Arthur can exist without the rest of the trappings of the story. However, the story cannot exist without him. Even if he does not appear in person, he is always implied. The tales of Arthur's wandering knights imply the existence of Arthur and his court. The court and the knights are extensions of his authority (2). Arthur "stands for" both; he symbolizes the laws of his country, laws which, in many versions of the story, he himself made. He is an embodiment both of the society of Camelot and of its ideals. He makes the laws which treat

all of his subjects fairly. He sends out the knights to enforce his laws. He has the ultimate responsibility to see that his people thrive and prosper.

Arthur's defining characteristics is that he is not a simple wandering hero who goes from village to village righting wrongs, but a king. This is true despite those modern authors who take their cue from *Historia Britonum*, and make Arthur a warlord. Whatever the "real" Arthur may have been, the Arthur of our dreams is a king. Despite modern changes to the story, one is left with the fact that Arthur is a king. He is not running a democracy.

Why, then, is he such an effective hero for people who live in a democratic society? There are many reasons. First, as stated above, Arthur's society is a kind of proto-democracy, and some modern authors attempt to make this society more democratic than it was pictured by medieval authors. The Arthur of T. H. White is constantly laboring to use his power to destroy itself. Can anything be more heroic than a king fighting to destroy the necessity for kings?

But this does not fully explain the effect of Arthur's story on people widely separated in time and space from sixth, or even fifteenth, century Britain. It does not explain how Arthur's power continues to affect modern authors and modern audiences.

In America, the story of Arthur became attached to the Kennedy presidency. This is not entirely due to the charisma of John F. Kennedy, for it was in 1960, during the Kennedy administration, that the musical *Camelot*, based on T. H. White's novel, *The Once and Future King*, opened on stage. It was almost inevitable that a comparison between Camelot and

the Kennedy administration would be drawn, even before Jacqueline Kennedy first made the parallel at her husband's funeral (*NYT* 25).

This connection sealed Arthur's victory over America: Now, Americans, too, can claim descent from Arthur, through John F. Kennedy, whose wife was as renowned for her social grace, charm, and beauty as Queen Guinevere was in her day. The "real" story of Camelot -- the adultery of the queen, the incest of the king, the less than flawless behavior of the knights -- was ignored, for the important thing was the historical weight added to the Kennedy administration by its newly forged connection with Arthur's centuries-old story.

Nor did it hurt that the connection rested on the musical *Camelot*, and through it, on White's novel. For White's Arthur was neither aloof, nor overly regal, but a man given to swinging in the trees to steal a peak at his bride-to-be. This Arthur is not an upholder of royal prerogatives, as was the Arthur of James I, but a proto-democrat, a more suitable role model for Americans.

At the same time, people in America are fascinated with kings and queens, and are perfectly willing to fit heroes into the royal mold: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, King Elvis -- and the charismatic King Kennedy. It does not matter that Kennedy was a president, not a king, or that his power is balanced, to a greater or lesser degree, by members of the legislative or judicial branches of the government. The key to the power of the kingship consists of charisma, pageantry, and a sense of legitimacy. The Kennedys' personality and JFK's election to the presidency assured the first and third, their wealth and fashion-sense the second.

Note that this is a different type of kingship than the one to which James I aspired. It is limited to external appearances, and has little to do with the actual power traditionally wielded by a monarch. This is why the pomp and circumstance of a symbolic kingship is not incompatible with the ideals of democracy. Both are celebrated in the comparison of Kennedy's presidency to Camelot, and the former lends support to the latter.

To the British, Arthur is a national hero; to the Americans, it is as if he bequeathed his ideals and his charisma to Kennedy. To people of both countries, as well as to those of other countries, he is the embodiment of centuries of historical weight based on legitimacy, and he fits into our myths about the order of things.

However, this is not the only image of Arthur. Arthur embodies his society, mirroring its virtues and vices within himself. Or, perhaps it could be maintained that the city of Camelot is the personification of Arthur's virtues and vices, his own psychomachia, as much as the reader's or the author's. In that case, he must be the ruler. His attempt to harness Might to the service of Right is nothing less than the struggle of all people to control their passions.

On a somewhat more literal level, one expects a country to reflect its ruler and vice versa. Therefore, all that is heroic about Camelot will be reflected in Arthur, making him the obvious choice of hero. Yet, is it absolutely necessary for him to be a king? Could he not be a mayor, or a president?

As children, many of us have fantasized about being kings and queens. Kingship (and queenship) is associated with power, the kind of power mayors and presidents do not have access to. Power, in our

fantasizes, implies total freedom; thus, by reading about Arthur, one might assume, we vicariously enjoy the freedom that the power of kingship brings.

T. H. White's Arthur is lured, however temporarily, by the power implied by kingship. He considers killing a peasant on a whim, realizing that no one can call him to account for this (226). While Arthur does not do this, he is entertaining a fantasy shared by more people than would ever dare to admit it, the fantasy of having absolute power over everyone and complete freedom to use it.

However, Thompson points out that many modern Arthurian novels teach the valuable lesson

that power brings not freedom but responsibility, not privilege but sacrifice, and it is a lesson that all young people struggling toward adulthood need to learn. (Thompson, 1992, 61)

This is something the Arthur of Pamela Service's post-holocaust novel, *Winter of Magic's Return*, realizes:

"That world needs you, Arthur."

"Needs me! That's what you said before. But I was young then, truly young. It was exciting, exhilarating. I was to be king! But, Merlin, I know what that all means now. I've gone through it once. Certainly there was pride and beauty and satisfaction, but there was also pain, failure and loss. Being kin[g] isn't being revered and leading troops to glory. It's taking on other people's pains and problems, being responsible for their lives and happiness and sacrificing your own. Merlin, I loved and was betrayed! I built and saw what I built destroyed! Are you asking me to go through all that again?" (189)

The theme of responsibility runs through much of modern Arthurian fiction. Arthur can refuse to take responsibility (Hanratty), relinquishing the role of hero to others, but more often, he realizes that being a king means accepting responsibility, while Mordred believes that it means having total power (Newman, White, and others). Indeed, in

Mists of Avalon, Morgaine explains to Arthur: "We must serve before we command." (200) The consequence of claiming the power of kingship is not freedom, but an acceptance of servitude.

What are we to make of this? If we are drawn to the fantasy of being an ideal ruler, exercising power, why do so many novels teach us that power means responsibility?

The fantasy can be used to work through to reality. For example, in several of Hitchcock's films, the protagonist fantasizes about killing a loved one, until, when confronted with the potential embodiment of his fantasy, he realizes that he does not want this fantasy to materialize in reality (Wood). Everyone, at some time, wishes for power, total power, then asks himself what this would imply. The answer to this question is in many Arthurian novels. It implies that we take the burden of responsibility, of answering to others who need us, but do not appreciate us, of trying to lead people with wisdom when they fight us every step of the way. For some, this kind of narrative is a reaffirmation of their daily routine. Parents, teachers, politicians, and so forth can all identify with a protagonist who realizes this truth about power. They can all identify with the Arthur who is a hero because he accepts responsibility for himself and for his people.

This Arthur also fulfills the flip side of the fantasy described above. Just as there is a part of us which longs for total power, there is a part of us willing to sacrifice that power to a leader in return for total freedom and lack of worry.

In our age of impersonal bureaucracy, there is something within many people which cries out for one powerful, charismatic, and efficient monarch. They do not, of course, want an actual monarch to rule over

them, any more than the numerous fans of *Gone With the Wind* truly want a return to the antebellum South. Instead, they project their desires onto the figure of a great monarch. People fantasize about a monarch, but this does not mean that they want one actually to materialize. As one science-fiction writer points out:

Nobody leaves the TV for a snack during the rape scene. That does not necessarily mean that *anybody* wants a rape for Christmas...a fantasy is not necessarily a wish. (Robinson, 47 - 48)

Just because readers eagerly devour the latest book about King Arthur, this does not mean that they want Arthur to return and claim the throne of Britain. They are projecting desires onto the figure of Arthur in part precisely because they do not truly expect him to return. They are like the princess in Peter Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* who attempts to summon a unicorn. The unicorn, however, declines to appear, realizing that the princess would be frightened, not gratified, by the fulfillment of her desire (Beagle 1979, 93 - 94).

Why should modern people need a legendary monarch on whom to project their desires? In a large democratic society, people are expected to accept responsibility for their political situation. This is part of the price of living in such a society. People do not want to be ruled by a government over which they have no control, so, with their votes, they create the government which rules us.

However, this means that they are responsible for the actions of that government. If they do not like what it does, they have only themselves to blame. Many people do not like this fact. As a result, they fantasize about a political savior, someone who will solve the country's problems. Even the most responsible of citizens occasionally

tires of his responsibilities and longs for a trustworthy figure to whom he can abdicate them.

Again, this is not to say that people really want this fantasy to materialize, although politicians have successfully used it to get elected. It is enough for Arthur to remain in the realm of fantasy. So long as the monarch remains figurative, he simplifies the complications of modern life. How are we to know what is right? How are we to know what to do? We follow the virtuous king. Whereas medieval audiences may have seen in Arthur an antidote to the less benevolent monarchs who ruled them, modern audiences see a man who can take on the responsibilities of an entire society. He can cut through bureaucratic red tape with Excalibur and deal with people directly, solving all of their problems. The fact that no one could do this, not even Arthur, is irrelevant. Readers are not looking for a real man, but for a symbol that fulfills a psychological need.

Arthur is also a symbol of unity. One problem we face today is the tension and hostility between different countries, and between different cultural, religious, and ethnic groups within the same country. One characteristic of Arthur's knights is that they come from all over Britain, and, in many medieval versions of the story, from all over the world. While modern authors are less likely to attach large numbers of prominent foreign knights to Arthur's court, they stress that Arthur was the one man who, at least for a time, could unite all of the factions of the Britons against the Saxon invaders. In Parke Godwin's *Firelord*, when Arthur leads his men into battle, he realizes: "Now, for one moment, we were not mere tribes but something called Britain." (128) In today's world, with special-interest groups clamoring for attention, the notion

of a united world, or even a united country, where petty differences are set aside for the greater good, seems like an unachievable dream.

Arthur is seen as an efficient strategist, able to protect his country from invaders. He is seen as a compassionate ruler who is capable of uniting his people and making his country safe for all. He is, above all, charismatic, drawing knights from different countries to join his Round Table and writers from all ages to tell of his deeds to readers eager to hear them.

At the same time, in one of the contradictions characteristic of Arthurian literature, Arthur is a nationalistic hero, a British king. Arthur's stories, after all, are *The Matter of Britain* (Kruger). Authors of Arthurian fiction can, once again, eat their cake and still have it. They can appeal to the desire for unity and to the desire to close ranks against the outsider. They can do this within the same novel. Arthur can be presented as unabashedly nationalistic, trying to unite warring tribe against foreign invaders. He can be trying for something better than nationalism. Or, he can be trying to balance the goals of nationalism and internationalism, uniting his tribes against the invaders, but then making peace with those same invaders, ushering in a golden age where all people profit.

There are different levels of unity. A family can be united. A tribe or a clan can unite against its enemies. A nation can be united against other nations. All nations can unite to form an international community. Arthur's goal is usually to unify the tribes or clans which he considers to be his own people against Saxon invaders. Sometimes, he looks further, attempting to unify Britons living in Gaul, helping them against the Franks (Lawhead, Newman). Sometimes, he tries to integrate

the conquered Saxons into Briton, recognizing that many of them were born in the British Isles (Sutcliff, Bradley).

However farsighted or nearsighted he is, Arthur almost always attempts to replace cries of "My clan!" and "My family!" with cries of "My country!" There is still a division. Those considered to be outsiders are fought, but Arthur is, at least, expanding the definition of "us" or "insiders."

This does not necessarily endear him to all of his people. Arthur can be a man who forgets that not all people place nation above tribe (Godwin, Newman, Sutcliff, *et al.*). One strand of Arthur's tragedy is the fact that the unity he fights so hard to maintain is constantly in danger of being destroyed. Tribes and clans, petty kingdoms and duchies insist on putting their own interests before the interests of the nation. Individual families will not act against their own interests.

Newman's Arthur ignores this fact, to his detriment. Morgause attempts to explain this to her nephew Modred (Mordred):

"What did you feel when Gareth died and Gawain?"

Modred squirmed. "Nothing, nothing at all. They were fools."

"So are you if you ignore the blood ties. I never cared about avenging our mother's rape by Uther. But you can't ignore the bonds; they're part of the weaving that holds all things together. Arthur has tried to ignore them with his laws and artificial justice. Even the Romans were smarter than that. They gave the power to the families who had always wielded it, as long as there was order and prompt payment of taxes. In return, Rome gave its civilization. Arthur believes that veneer is enough. But what survived were merely Romanized Cornovii and Dumnonii and all the other tribes of Britain." (1985, 210)

Morgause has hit upon one frequent component of Arthur's tragedy. It is precisely Arthur's insistence on thinking of the entire country and his refusal to favor one clan or tribe or family above another that costs

him the loyalty of many of his knights, for cries for justice in times of peace are often camouflaged cries for favored treatment. White's Gawaine wants neither strength nor justice to triumph over his family. Bradshaw's Gwynhwyfar is angered to discover that her cousin Menw wants her to use her marriage to get lands to which her clan has no just claim.

Menw believes that Gwynhwyfar is selfishly refusing to help her own kindred, and sends her a written ultimatum:

If you refuse us this service...I will know that you have chosen to be no part of your clan...you have no right to keep to yourself riches and honors which ought to be shared with your family. Accept that you are one of us, do what I ask, and I will forget the past. But if you prefer the imperial purple to your own blood, you must suffer for it.
(Bradshaw 1982 b, 9 - 10)

Menw cannot see beyond the clan, and he effectively exiles Gwynhwyfar from her home because she insists on putting the needs of the kingdom -- choosing the "imperial purple" -- before the self-seeking desires of the clan. Gwynhwyfar realizes:

It was no use to tell him of the ties of justice and the laws: he did not wish to understand anything more than the tie that binds each man to his own clan. (Bradshaw 1982 b, 11)

These ties are important to Newman's Bors and his clan. They have met Lancelot late in his career, as he was seeking for the Holy Grail, and realized that he was a member of the clan. After Lancelot rescues Guinevere from the stake, the lovers flee to this clan, which is ruled by Lionel. Both Lionel and Bors are delighted to see Lancelot again, to Lancelot's astonishment:

"How can [Lionel] be pleased?" [Lancelot] asked. "We have nothing but my horse and sword and the clothes we wear. We may have pursuers close behind us. I could be bringing ruin to his door."

"It doesn't matter," Bors assured him. "We are a family, a tribe. Our own are more important than any outside realm." (Newman 1985, 185)

Even though Lancelot's kinsmen hardly know him, even though, technically, they owe allegiance to Arthur (for Newman places Lancelot's clan in Britain, not in France), even though sheltering Lancelot and Guinevere will lead to war with Arthur, the clan never considers turning the lovers away. Lancelot is family, whatever he has done, and Arthur is not, even though he is the king.

The families and clans of Lancelot, Gawain, and Guinevere all demand preferential treatment. Arthur is forced to balance the need for their support against his ideals of justice. Like a modern politician, he strives to unite the country despite the special interest groups demanding favors. Arthur's reign is sometimes portrayed as a desperate struggle to unite the selfish tribes and clans against the Saxon invaders.

This is seen in the medieval works as well. Malory's Gawain demands personal vengeance for his family, rather than considering the implications of a war. White realizes this, as do all those authors who recognize that Britain is always in danger of breaking into warring factions. While pure selfishness exists, as the actions of Mordred and Morgause make clear in the works of such authors as Bradshaw, Newman, White, and Bradley, among others, it is rare; however, one can convince oneself to put family or clan interests before one's own more easily than to put kingdom interests before family, or country interests before kingdom.

Today, this is a very real issue. We have special-interest groups in America, each clamoring for recognition. Arthur is a law-giver,

making all equally subject to the law. We claim to want this, yet do we not all want special treatment, just as Arthur's people did? Is justice to be based on clan interests or political necessity? If it is subjected to either, how can it be called justice?

However, let us assume that each country has a national identity. What then? It bands against the stranger and the outcast. Arthur fights to keep the Saxons out, yet those very Saxons are the ancestors of most Britons today.

Nevertheless, Arthur gave his people a national identity, at least for a time. This is another reason for the legend's continuing popularity. Who can unite us? What does it mean to be British? I have been told that calling someone from Ireland "British" is unacceptable. What is an American? Must one be African American, Jewish American, Italian American? It is no wonder that so many Americans like the Arthur stories: We are at least as divided as the Britons of Arthur's day.

Therefore, another reason Arthur is a hero is that, as king, he gave his people a national identity. Instead of thinking of themselves as Cornishmen, Dumnonii, Welshmen, Parisii, and so on, Arthur wants his people to think of themselves as Britons. That Arthur succeeded, at least for a time, makes him attractive to modern readers who recognize that most countries today are as divided as the Britain of Arthur's day.

Arthur has no easy task when he sets out to unite his people. Clearly, the British must unite or be conquered; yet, the individual groups will not give up their independence. This is often the situation when Arthur takes the throne. Every petty king and chieftain wants to take Uther's place, refusing to compromise even when the foreign invaders threaten to overrun the land (See Bradshaw, Godwin, Gold, *et*

al.). Nevertheless, for a time, Arthur makes the lesser leaders listen to him, either through the force of his logic or through the force of his army. He is a hero for doing this: How often does one wish that one could make people unite and do what was clearly the correct thing to do? Arthur does this.

Many readers, then, fantasize about a monarch who is a good king. He will use his power correctly, to protect the people, not to abuse them. He will unite them, and he will treat them all equally. He will take all responsibility, allowing them to abdicate their own and to blame him for anything which troubles them. Parke Godwin's Arthur realizes this, and acknowledges, without bitterness, that his people will deify him, then turn him into a scapegoat and sacrifice him for their sins. He conjures up Merlin, his alter-ego, who says:

You'll be remembered. They'll sing your name through long, dark nights and darker centuries. They'll conjure with it, make you a legend and a god and sacrifice you as all god-kings are sacrificed. (Godwin 1980, 59)

Arthur is not only a hero; he is a dying god, sacrificed for his people.

This picture of Arthur, reminiscent of Christ and other dying gods, is not limited to Godwin's novel. Tennyson's Arthur has obvious parallels with Christ, while Sutcliff's Arthur comes to understand that it is the duty and honor of a king to die for his people. He sees Ambrosius sacrifice himself while hunting a stag (Sutcliff 1963, 369), recognizes in this the sacrifice made by a warrior who died to help others (134), and recognizes that he is made a king not by the official proclamation, but by his own soldiers who deify him after the victory at Mount Badon (402 - 405).

Arthur's apotheosis speaks to our need for a scapegoat god to accept our sins and to take all responsibility upon himself. The fantasy of being powerless, and, therefore, free of responsibility, while a benevolent patriarch takes care of us, is just as attractive as the fantasy of having the power of a king.

It can be charged that this is not everyone shares this fantasy. I have been asked "if marginalized groups feel this need -- or like Arthur? How about women? (for example, Arthur as big daddy isn't my reason for reading the stories)." (Tobin)

There are several, contradictory ways to answer this, just as there are several, contradictory ways to explain the popularity of the story. First, on some level, I would argue, all people -- women, men, minorities, majorities -- do like the idea of Big Daddy protecting them and taking the blame for everything that goes wrong. Parke Godwin suggests that this is why we raise our leaders up, elevating them to the status of gods, and why we then destroy them:

[The people] need a god. This name, that name, what matter? The Nazarene was only a builder with a genius for men, but their need for a Messiah made him a god.

And they crucified him.

They needed that, too. (Godwin 1980, 135)

Later, Merlin explains: "They've made you a god for all the usual reasons. If they can't be something higher, they want to believe it's there." (Godwin 1980, 342) If people cannot measure up to their own ideals, at least in Arthur they have a figure who can.

Next, Arthur does offer something for the marginalized: the promise that in his kingdom, they will no longer be marginalized. They will be treated fairly, and the same laws will apply to all. (Many

politicians promise this, as well, even if they have no other similarity to Arthur.) Even authors who attempt to bring a grain of historical truth to the story often see Arthur as offering something better, if not perfect:

Arthur had achieved a goal, namely the use of the power of knighthood for something other than hacking enemies into small bits of meat. Men were treating men like human beings, and women like chattel that needed protection, which was a damned sight better than the way both genders were being treated earlier. (David 66)

Does this damn Arthur with faint praise? I think not. Causing a change for the better, however limited, is an achievement worthy of respect (Feld).

Arthur's rule, then, promises better treatment for the marginal. Ideally, all of Arthur's knights should treat the common people with respect. This is not always the case. However, the best of Arthur's knights are respectful to the common people *even when there is no gain to be had*. Arthur's gesture of carrying the plague-stricken child to its mother in Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee* is a fine example of this. Arthur does what he does not out of the hope of any gain, for himself or others. He is in disguise, so even if the peasants were to survive, he would gain no extra fame. His gesture is motivated solely by compassion. He wants the doomed mother to have the comfort of holding her child, even though there is no possible gain, and indeed great danger (206 - 207).

This, then, is what defines the good knight, warrior, king, or indeed, any member of the ruling class: The good man helps the marginal even when there is no possible gain from doing so.

This is the truth of Arthur's society in Bradshaw's trilogy. Arthur mistrusts his nephew Gwalchmai (Gawain) until he discovers, by accident, that Gwalchmai attempted to save the life of a common peasant. Gwalchmai failed, and did not consider boasting of deed in any case, but the dead man's wife came to thank him, for no other person in Arthur's camp, warrior or chiurgeon, even tried. Gwalchmai's brother, Agravain (Agravaine), cannot believe that Gwalchmai made such an effort for "[a] beggerly farmer's woman, and a farmer himself who was surely dead." (1980, 306) Gwalchmai's modesty and his courtesy to the woman contrast favorably with Agravain's scornful disbelief, and Arthur realizes that Gwalchmai is worthy of joining his warband (310 - 311).

In the second book of Bradshaw's trilogy, Gwalchmai's servant Rhys tries to decide whether to believe Gwalchmai or Medraut (Mordred):

Suddenly, there flashed before my mind the image of Gwalchmai kneeling to offer his sword to my father. There was no one to impress there, no advantage to be gained. The gesture was a pure gift...and it was real. The image was quickly followed by others: my lord laughing with admiration and telling me to keep the brooch; unthinkingly helping with a task unbecoming his rank...There was really no question. Medraut was lying, and he had lied all along. While Gwalchmai's eloquence and courtesy were real things, expressions of his whole life, Medraut's came from words alone, fine paint over rotten timber....I realized that I had never actually seen him do anything courteous, noble, or gentle unless he stood to benefit from it. I could weigh the two men together, and their two visions of the world, and there was no question whom I should believe. (Bradshaw 1982 a, 141 - 142)

Rhys decides to trust Gwalchmai because he realizes that Gwalchmai has always treated the marginal well, regardless of whether or not there was anything to gain. In contrast, Medraut's good deeds were only done in front of witnesses he wanted to impress. Even before he makes his decision, Rhys is aware that Medraut is not as considerate of the

marginal as he seems. Recalling how Medraut treats one of his servants, Rhys explains:

I liked Medraut, I was sure there would be a good report of him [...]

On the other hand, I was not quite as sure as all that. The manner in which he'd treated Eivlin leaped before my mind. No matter what task she was engaged in, he expected her to drop it at once if he told her to run and fetch something...And I had a nagging awareness that he treated her better than he treated most servants. (1982 a, 132)

Indeed, Medraut's pleasantness to Rhys is merely a facade. As soon as Medraut no longer has to impress Rhys, he shows his true colors. When Rhys openly opposes his schemes, Medraut says, "I am glad it worked this way, whatever Mother says. I do not like having to be gracious to insolent servants." (1982 a, 147)

It is hard to know how to tell when a person is truly sincere, and the criterion of Twain and Bradshaw is a helpful guide. It suits readers' ideas of what is right. The problem of telling the good man from the bad, the generous from the selfish, the truly virtuous man from one who merely pretends to be virtuous for some kind of gain is one that troubles people today. Twain and Bradshaw use an Arthurian setting, but the problem they consider is not limited to the Dark Ages.

With Rhys, Bradshaw gives the marginal a voice in her trilogy. Each of her books can be read as the story of the attempt of a member of a marginalized group to win a place in society. All three novels end with the acceptance of the outsider into society.

The first novel is narrated by Gwalchmai. At the beginning, he is considered to be somehow less than a man because he is not a skilled warrior. Although he becomes a skilled fighter, he is not accepted into Arthur's warband until he shows that he is capable of treating the

marginal properly. In other words, it is not enough to have the skills of a warrior to join their ranks. Arthur insists that his men treat the marginal well, even, or especially, if they themselves came from a marginalized group.

Nevertheless, this rule is not universally followed. Before he joins Arthur's warband, Gwalchmai intervenes to see that the farmers whose carts and horses are claimed by the warriors of Arthur's court get justice, insisting that the warriors "at least mark down the value of the goods, so that [the farmers] can be sure of full payment when they reach the high king." (Bradshaw 1980, 172). He is prepared to fight the warriors alone, if necessary (173), and they finally agree to his terms (175).

Would the farmers have been treated fairly without Gwalchmai's presence? This is by no means certain. The warriors are led by Bedwyr and Cei. Bedwyr seems to be a good man, yet he allows Cei to do the negotiating. Cei's sharp tongue and sharper sword are his tools, and he is not above using the first to issue a threat to use the second (172). When the woman of the man that Gwalchmai tried to save comes to Arthur's camp to thank him, she is viewed with scorn by Agravain (306). This does, however, serve a useful function: it drives home to Arthur even more clearly that Gwalchmai had nothing to expect in return for his generosity. Arthur does rebuke Agravain, saying that the farmer's wife he thinks so little of

is an honorable woman...to come miles into an armed camp to return thanks for an attempt at healing; a noble and brave woman. (307)

Nevertheless, Agravain immediately dismisses both the woman and Arthur's rebuke from his mind (307). He mistreats Gwalchmai's servant Rhys,

hitting the man for what he considers insolent behavior. Rhys reflects: "Agravain might be a good man to those he considered "people," but I felt that included only a small segment of humanity." (1982 a, 89) Gwalchmai induces Agravain to leave Rhys alone; however, Rhys is aware that "the Agravains were more common" than the Gwalchmais (88), and that not all of Arthur's warriors share their leader's attitude towards the marginal.

Indeed, when Gwalchmai first meets Rhys, he himself seems to have forgotten this attitude. This is understandable, for he has been fighting for several years for people who would rather curse him for taking some of their grain than thank him for saving all of it, and their lives as well. When he seeks shelter from Rhys and Goronwy, Rhys' cousin, the latter attempts to evade the request (Bradshaw 1982 a, 6).

Therefore, it is understandable that Gwalchmai overreacts when it is discovered that he is wounded. He is afraid that the farmers who shelter him will kill him. However, his fear is unfounded, as he himself admits (14 - 15). He has known one member of this family, and known that he was a good man. He still forgets this, and the lessons he learned from Arthur.

Why has Gwalchmai forgotten? One answer, of course, is that he has been fighting for so long that he has forgotten the ways of peace. Another is that he has been taking abuse from other farmers who would cheat him, rob him, curse him, and kill him if they discovered a weakness. However, both reasons are rooted in the main reason.

In Bradshaw's first novel, Gwalchmai was trying to become a member of Arthur's warband. Despite his noble birth, he was a member of the marginal, and only at the end does he join the warband, becoming a

member of the empowered class of warriors. In *Kingdom of Summer*, he has been a member of this class for nine years. He is no longer comfortable with the marginal, although, unlike the Agravains of the world, he treats them with courtesy, and unlike the Merdrauts, he expects nothing in return.

Bradshaw's trilogy is not the only version of the story to consider the treatment of the marginal. T. H. White's novel is one of the most famous examples, but Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset* and Godwin's *Firelord* and *Beloved Exile* also give extended consideration to this issue. Indeed, few Arthurian novels do not at least consider the issue briefly, if only to assure the reader that Arthur ensures that the marginal have a better place in his society than in the society which preceded his reign. Marginal readers, then, will find that at least some consideration is given to their situation, and that Arthurian novels, therefore, have something to offer them.

Another answer is that women are now writing Arthurian novels, paying more attention to the female characters. They often revise Arthur's character, not necessarily for the better. For some, he is the god they are trying to tear down, the Big Daddy against whose rule they are revolting. If Arthur is an idol of the patriarchy, he is one which many Feminist authors find that they cannot ignore. Whether they like him or loathe him, they are attached to him like the fox was attached to the Tar Baby.

A similar situation exists for members of marginalized religions. The Neo-Pagan movement inspired authors such as Bradley to take a new look at Arthur's story. Arthur is such a charismatic figure that it is tempting to attempt to claim him for one's own and claim that he was

"really" Pagan, or at least tolerant of Pagan beliefs. Alternatively, pro-Pagan authors can attack the Big Daddy icon as Feminists can. He can represent patriarchal, intolerant Christians who trample benevolent, matriarchal Pagans.

I would also note that some treatments, like *Camelot 3000* have a token Black. This does not necessarily indicate that minorities are drawn to the story, but it indicates that publishers and authors want to draw them in. It also indicates that the story is being changed to reflect our age, as can be seen by current attempts to make Palomides a more impressive character (See Christian, Hanratty, Newman, Woolley).

It is even possible to have a Black or female Arthur if the story is set in the twentieth century. Arthur may have reincarnated into a new body (Wagner, Martine-Barnes, Goetz). Or, the novel may deal with Arthurian themes, and the role of Arthur may be filled by a character who is not a White male. The graphic novel *Mage* has a Black Lady of the Lake. Or, stories can deal with descendants of the original characters (Laubenthal, Hawke).

Homosexuals make up one group of the marginalized. Arthurian fiction does have a place for them; indeed, some novels speculate on Arthur's sexual orientation (Bradley, Nye). T. H. White, himself homosexual, chose to write about Arthur. His Lancelot is an unhappy man, at war with himself, fighting always to control his impulses. White wondered whether Lancelot (Malory's Lancelot as created by White) might be bisexual and also speculated on the relationship between Mark and Tristram (Warner).

I do not know how popular the Arthur stories are in the African-American community, but I have spoken with African-Americans who are

familiar with the stories. One man told me, with frightening earnestness, that he wanted to find Excalibur. This type of desire is not limited to any single group, as the at least nominally nonfiction books about locating the Grail show. Items such as Excalibur and the Grail are symbols. They mean different things to different people, and their appeal is not gender specific, nor limited to any particular ethnic or cultural group.

Excalibur is a significant choice of symbol. Although, properly speaking, Excalibur is the sword given to Arthur by the Lady of the Lake, rather than the sword he pulled out of the stone, many modern authors combine the two swords into one, and people who have not read versions of the story which are closer to Malory often assume that Excalibur was the sword in the stone. Therefore, Excalibur is seen as a symbol of Arthur's right to be king. Drawing the sword granted him power; surely, the fantasy of being centralized, of being powerful and in control of one's destiny, is even more attractive to the marginalized than to society's elite.

Similarly, the marginalized can appreciate the reverse side of the fantasy, the recognition that with power comes responsibility, and that kings must be good. The doctrine of Might for Right holds that those with power must protect the powerless, not abuse them (White). The ideal knight is one who treats the marginalized with respect even when there is no gain to be had from doing so, and no one witnesses his good deeds (Bradshaw). This vision of the way things ought to be is appealing to those who live in an un-ideal world. In the stories, Arthur's ideals attract the marginalized who hope that their wrongs shall be redressed.

A marginalized protagonist may discover himself suddenly with power and must realize that he is not freed by it, but burdened with responsibilities (Cule, Service, and others). A reader from a marginalized group may identify with such a protagonist and wonder what he or she would do in a similar situation. This type of story is neither escapist pap, nor an attempt to convince the marginalized that they are better off without power. Rather, it is an honest look at a timeless problem.

Several modern novels have as their theme the treatment of outsiders or marginalized groups. Consciously or not, modern authors are judging both our age and Arthur's by showing how outsiders are treated. The idea of Arthur as a national hero is bound up with the theme of outsiders, or the marginalized, for outsiders include the Saxons, and other foes conquered by Arthur. Are they demonized in the stories? Does Arthur make an attempt to absorb them into his realm, or does he consider them implacable foes?

These questions apply to other marginalized groups. How are women treated? Are they allowed to speak freely, or are they sequestered from Arthur's councils? How are religious minorities treated? Must they convert to Arthur's religion if they are to be accepted, or does he tolerate many different religions? In other words, one reason Arthur is relevant to the marginalized is that one of the questions considered in Arthurian literature is: How should the marginalized be treated?

This should not be surprising. After all, in many versions of the story, Arthur himself is an outsider. He begins life as a member of the marginal in his society, an apparently nameless bastard who becomes High King of Britain. He can speak for the marginalized because he knows what

it is to be marginalized. He can act as a bridge between the aristocratic knight and the peasant farmer because he is familiar with both worlds (Godwin). At least one of his knights, Gareth, has a similar experience. He spends a year working anonymously in Arthur's kitchens under the sharp-tongued Sir Kay before he becomes a knight.

It can be argued, of course, that Arthur is never truly one of the marginal. He is not raised as a peasant, after all, but as Sir Ector's foster son, and he is made squire to Kay, an honor which is not usually bestowed on a peasant.

However, modern authors often make Arthur a more marginalized figure before he claims his kingship than medieval authors do. T. H. White creates a lonely boy, persecuted by Kay, who is sensitive to the needs of the servants of Sir Ector, and who stays out all night to retrieve a hawk, not because Sir Ector values it, but because the hawk's trainer would be heartbroken if it were lost (White 17 - 18).

Few authors go as far as Joan Wolf. Although her Arthur is still the son of Uther and Igraine, he is raised as a peasant, and he is abused by the man who should have protected him. However, Wolf's novel does not focus on this. A more thorough consideration of an Arthur who has close ties to the marginal is found in Parke Godwin's *Firelord*.

Godwin's Arthur underlines his connection to the marginal. In this case, the division between the elite and the marginal is the division between the knight and the peasant, or warrior and farmer. Arthur explains that he alone, among all the candidates for the throne, understands what a peasant must do to provide the knight with food. Now, Godwin's Arthur has been raised with Kay, as one of better than peasant

blood, but Arthur is still emphasizing his similarities to, rather than his differences from the peasant. He reflects that the men he leads

were warriors, a means somehow deluded into seeing themselves as an end. They never worked for food, they fought or waited in a hall to fight while someone pulled their food out of the ground, someone cooked it and someone else served it to them. Not one ever worried over sick cattle or drove them miles to grass that wasn't there or went hungry so gaunt children could eat. Not one ever bent their stiff backs one inch because someone stronger enjoyed a right that was denied them.

None of them except me. (1980, 171)

Arthur's connection with the marginal goes further, for he discovers that his mother was not the child of noble parents, but a changeling, a child of the Prydn, the ultimate marginal group, despised by nearly everyone in Britain.

However, it is not merely Arthur's lineage that is important. Understanding is the key, and Arthur only begins to understand and to learn when he spends time with the Prydn, becoming the lover of Morgana, one of their leaders. Thinking of Morgana and the children of the Prydn, looking at a Saxon woman holding her own child, Arthur tells his men:

My lords, this woman would kill you without a second thought and use you sensibly for manure. But then she's closer to reality than you lot. Ambrosius knows this, that's why he's king. Learn it now and never forget. (171)

Ambrosius is a king because he knows that the Saxon woman, although an enemy, is "closer to reality" than his British warriors. These warriors, despite Arthur's admonition, do not learn the lesson. Arthur already knows it; that is why he is the only man who is qualified to be a king.

What Ambrosius knows and Arthur learns is that the peasantry, the despised marginal class, is not marginal at all. The warriors, the supposedly elite class, are the true marginal. The farmers are at the

center of the world, and if they are expected to support the warriors, that is only so that the warriors may protect the farmers. Arthur muses:

Lords were not of themselves terribly important when you came down to it. If we vanished from the earth, the Morganas and Cunedags, this [Saxon] woman and her child would prosper, make new children, draw new food from the earth. Just keep the lords off their backs, they'll do fine, thanks.

But take them away from us, and we have no purpose, mere violent children scuffling over a pointless game. And because it's pointless we puff it out with self-importance, gild it with tinsel like honor, courtesy, pride of descent and blood. Our function is to keep the land clear for the vast majority who work it, to clear away the carnal debris like carrion birds. The Catuvellauni coming home to plant, that's our reason and our only meaning. The rest is rarefied delusion our vanity puts between us and the horror.

A Guenevere, a Trystan, an Arthur may be the flowers of the earth, but its fruit is a Morgana. Still, try telling that to the flower. (171)

Indeed, the "flower" Guenevere does not accept Arthur's judgement. When Morgana comes to Arthur's court, bringing their son, Guenevere has her killed, even though Arthur has placed Morgana and Medraut under crown protection.

Understandably, Arthur is furious. Personal feelings aside, the execution of Morgana sends the message that "imperial unity is a joke, that no man is safer than the Parisi queen allows." (1980, 314) But the most disturbing feature of the murder is that most of Arthur's subjects believe that Guenevere's action was correct. They have no sympathy for the marginal Prydn; Morgana's dead body is "the sewer that runs beneath our ideals." (271)

Not all authors are convinced that Arthur is a friend to the marginalized. Nevertheless, the popular view of the monarch is that he is concerned for all of his people, from highest to lowest. Bradley's Arthur tells Morgaine, "I like that everybody be happy." Morgaine

realizes that Arthur is sincere, that he does "indeed seek to see everybody happy." (621) It is this genuine desire which makes her brother such a popular monarch.

Perhaps the most moving example of Arthur's compassion for even the most wretched of his subjects appears in Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Arthur risks his life to carry a plague-stricken child to its mother. Practically speaking, this gesture is worse than useless. Child and mother are doomed, and Arthur's gesture could plunge the kingdom into chaos if he died. But this is what makes Arthur a hero: he does not consider the political ramifications of his act, nor is he considering the risk to himself; he is moved by compassion to grant the dying wish of one peasant woman (206 - 207).

This is sweet, charming, even, but is it wise? Many interpreters of Arthur fault him for lacking a certain realism. Arthur is also faulted for naivety; for example, the Arthur of Kane and Jakes does not want to admit that Modred (Mordred) is evil; he believes that if Modred is evil, he must also be evil (409, 427). As a result, Modred is allowed to gain a position of power. From there, he poisons the king and condemns the queen to death (461, 472 - 473). Arthur is not the only one to blame for Modred's perversion of his rule. As Modred realizes, he could not have taken power if Arthur's people had risen against him (473, 478). The people "had hailed Modred by not raising a hand against him when he seized Excalibur." (478) Nevertheless, Arthur is too trusting for his own good.

This is frequently a failing of Arthur. Tennyson's Arthur explains that knights must not listen to or believe evil of others. Yet, how can one be on guard against evil if one dismisses every ill report?

Bradshaw's Arthur is so ashamed when he realizes that his suspicions of Gwalchmai are unfounded that he insists upon giving Medraut a chance to prove himself, despite the advice of Gwalchmai and Gwynhwyfar. Medraut is evil; however, Arthur had no proof of this. To pre-judge him would be to repeat the mistake he made with Gwalchmai and to go against everything he stands for. This is a dilemma people are faced with every day. We do not want to be taken in by a con artist or politician, but how can we fairly refuse to give the benefit of the doubt?

If Arthur is too trusting, if he is too ready to give others the benefit of the doubt, this is a flaw we can admire. It is true that his attitude opens the door for Mordred's treachery; however, it also allows deserving knights to prove themselves. If this strikes a note of sympathy for readers in America, it is no wonder, for our legal system is founded on the principle that a person is innocent until proven guilty, and that it is better for one hundred guilty to go free than for one innocent person to be unjustly condemned.

War

However, it is possible to criticize Arthur for ruthlessness, as much as for being too soft-hearted. For the man who decreed that all should be treated as equals by the law, and that Might should serve Right, is the same man who led armies into battle where hundreds of people died and who tried to murder his own son.

Like it or not, Arthur's story is bound up with the question of war. T. H. White's Arthur

often thought that it might have been better for all his

dead soldiers to be alive -- even if they had lived under tyranny and madness -- rather than be quite dead. (364)

Peter Beagle criticizes Arthur for his military endeavors, praising instead Christian X of Denmark, who "knew what mattered in being king." (Beagle 1986) Authors such as Drake see Arthur as a megalomaniac, bent on conquest for its own sake. Even Malory allows Merlin to criticize Arthur's behavior in war, saying:

Thou hast never done, hast thou not done enough? Of three score thousand this day has thou left alive but fifteen thousand, and it is time to say "Ho!" For God is wroth with thee, that thou wilt never have done. (I, 17)

Karr's Sir Kay is duly impressed that the battle is "so bloody even his closest advisor Merlin was disgusted" (1982, 81) and had to threaten him with God's wrath. Nevertheless, it is Arthur who leads men into battle, and, in some sources, enjoys the thrill of crushing his enemies.

Usually, however, Arthur is a man who does not enjoy fighting, and who does it only because he must. T. H. White's Arthur dedicates his life to ending war, while Sutcliff's Arthur spends the last twenty years of his life trying to build alliances that will prevent an outbreak of war at his death. If this is typical of Arthur, why, then, is there so much war?

One reason is that battles are exciting. We may not want to experience an actual battle, but they make for great stories. Also, the concept of heroism often includes heroism in battle. A king must be capable of fighting a war, even though he should endeavor to avoid it.

Arthur's wars fall into two basic groups: his wars to claim the crown, and his wars to fight back the Saxon invaders. The second is often considered no more than self-defense, although some authors give Arthur the insight to realize that the Saxons are in Britain to stay.

Nevertheless, a demonstration of military skill is necessary if there is to be the possibility of peaceful coexistence.

More ambiguous than the Saxon wars are the wars Arthur fights for the crown. Bradshaw's Arthur feels guilt for this, and wonders if God is punishing him. Yet, he was not motivated by a desire for power, but by the overwhelming necessity to unite the small kingdoms of Britain against the Saxon invaders. White's Arthur defeats his enemies, but then rehabilitates them, hoping to channel their force for good.

This is the standard justification for war in the story of Camelot. It is not something which is desirable, but it is necessary. The early years of war are justified by the long years of peace during Arthur's reign. This is why Arthur must be a war leader, as well as a king; it is not possible to achieve peace in his sixth century world without war.

His abilities as a war leader also help make him an effective leader in times of peace, when he must channel the aggression of his knights into more socially acceptable activities, such as tournaments and quests to rescue people from bandits. The knights are more likely to follow a man who has proven himself an able fighter than to follow a pacifist who refuses to fight. Also, if Arthur's eventual goal is peaceful coexistence with the invaders, they must respect his abilities as a war leader too much to break the peace treaties.

At the same time, authors who deal with Feminist issues and tell the story from the female point of view point out that "men fight battles; women suffer them." Other authors, not all of whom are Feminists, duck the question of the morality of war by de-centering the story from the battles, and concentrating instead on chivalric

adventures, where a lone knight delivers justice to the wicked and protects the innocent.

The question of war is not a simple one, and most authors acknowledge this. But however much one dislikes war, one may still admire people who are effective leaders.

Childslaying

In Malory, Arthur has a dream which is interpreted to mean that his son by incest will destroy the kingdom. Arthur tries to prevent this outcome by killing the child, along with all other children born at the right time.

One can understand how a man who embodies military virtues can be a hero, but the incident of the May Babies is disturbing. How can a man be a hero who, like the pharaoh in Exodus, or Herod in the Gospels, could order the deaths of hundreds of children?

Inevitably, some authors change the story so that someone else, Guinevere, Merlin, Lot, or Morgause, is responsible for killing the babies. In some versions, such as Sutcliff's, Bradshaw's, or Bradley's, there is no attempted murder. Merriman claims that the story of Mordred's incestuous birth is not part of the core story, and he may have a point. Ask a random person on the street what he knows about Arthur, and he will mention the Round Table, Excalibur, the Holy Grail, and the affair of Lancelot and Guinevere. He will likely not have heard of Mordred, let alone know of Mordred's incestuous birth or Arthur's attempt to drown him with all the other May Babies. Indeed, when I taught sections of *The Once and Future King*, this proved to be the case.

My students were surprised and disgusted to learn that Arthur had, even unknowingly, slept with his sister, and were shocked to learn that he had tried to drown the May Babies. Yet the slaughter of the May Babies remains one of the more intriguing parts of the legend.

Those authors who choose to include it must confront the question: How can a good king commit such a terrible crime? Even T. H. White's Arthur is guilty of this crime. White's Arthur is young and afraid; priests have told him that he will burn in Hell. Guy Gavriel Kay's Arthur does not want the good that he does to be destroyed, so he tries to protect it with his evil, perhaps an extreme attempt to harness force to serve force. Barr and Bolland's Arthur does not seem too concerned with evil, for he says nothing as Tristan rapes a woman who was protecting the child Arthur himself attempted to drown.

Arthur does not go unpunished, for he is in fact slain by the child he attempted to murder. In Guy Gavriel Kay's trilogy, his punishment is even harsher: Arthur is forced to re-live the love triangle with Lancelot and Guinevere in world after world, fighting for the forces of Good, yet doomed to die before the final battle. Harsher still, he is summoned to each world by his secret name, "Childslayer." There is a brutal justice to this, as his crime was terrible. Yet the reader is left feeling that it is not fair that a man who tried to do so much is summoned by the name of the crime he committed.

This crime, it should be noted, is an active crime, to protect his people. It is wrong, unforgivable, even. Nevertheless, Sutcliff's Arthur, who commits no such crime, is annoying enough in his passive acceptance of his doom that one wishes he would at least try to avoid it.

One interesting twist is Godwin's. Arthur does not attempt to kill his son; Guinevere does. However, Arthur does kill the Saxon women and children of the Midlands, sparing only one woman and her son, and then, much against his better judgement, and because he and his men are sick of it. It was pointed out that the "cleansing" of the Midlands, uneasily reminiscent of the ethnic cleansing of Bosnia, is Godwin's version of the slaughter of the May Babies (Jacobowitz 1993).

Godwin's Arthur has been given his orders by Ambrosius, but he does not use this as a defense. Rather, his only defense is that the slaughter of the Saxon women and children is necessary. This is probably what the Arthur who drowned the May Babies believed, yet a childslayer makes an odd hero.

One could maintain that Arthur's negative characteristics make him somehow more human. Yet, while this can be applied to his pre-marital affairs and to his possibly excessive compassion, childslaying is quite another matter. Still, there is an honesty in the admission that a great hero may well have done terrible, unforgivable things, and may have committed atrocities. Does this take away from his greatness?

Somehow, it does not turn the reader against T. H. White's Arthur, perhaps because he acknowledges that his act was terrible, or perhaps because White carefully chooses when the reader learns of the slaughter. Mordred is conceived at the end of "The Queen of Air and Darkness," and immediately, the story shifts to Lancelot in "The Ill-Framed Knight." The reader does not learn about the slaughter of the May Babies until "Candle in the Wind," and then, the reader is not getting the story first hand. Arthur is not shown gathering the babies and causing them to be set adrift; rather, he tells the story of the slaughter to Lancelot

and Guenever (Guinevere) years after it has happened. At this point, the reader has admired Arthur for too long to turn suddenly against him. He has murdered infants, but offstage, long ago, and he sincerely regrets the act. The reader is carefully distanced from the slaughter, and this, added to Arthur's regret and lack of self-pity, ensures that the reader continues to sympathize with Arthur. In addition, the only spokesman the May Babies have is Mordred, who makes Arthur look good by comparison.

If Godwin's Arthur gains heroism from the cleansing of the Midlands, it is because he was ruthless enough to do a very dirty job, yet human enough to be sickened by what he has done. T. H. White's Arthur is heroic for a different reason: the deed was futile and unheroic, yet Arthur's acceptance of responsibility and lack of self-pity are heroic. Guy Gavriel Kay takes his cue from White, and his Arthur is, if anything, even more heroic because of his stoic acceptance of his punishment.

Nevertheless, it is odd that the childslayer Arthur should be so popular. It has been said that people love excess and hate moderation; people reward excess with immortality. This is true of Arthur. His failings, his adulteries, his unjustifiable murders are strangely attractive, just as the doings of the royal family of Britain hold the attention of many who do not live in Britain. Arthur's charisma is rewarded with immortality, not only in the literary sense, but also with the myth that he will return. The same comedian who pointed out that people love excess also reminded his audience that people have said that Elvis will return as well, making him, in effect, a god. Arthur too is a god in that sense (Mahler). What is unforgivable in a human being may be considered acceptable for a god or a legendary being (Brust 58).

Another way of explaining Arthur's popularity, despite his flaws, was suggested by a Jewish author who has written many Arthurian tales:

Christ was too good. A god. Who could yearn for that?...But the Arthur stories had everything: love, lust (the Christ story had agape but no eros), murder, betrayal, sacrifice, and its own special resurrection magic. It was filled with humans, not gods. (Yolen 1987, 21)

Unlike Christ, Arthur makes mistakes, and they are not small mistakes. Yolen maintains that he is a hero because he is human enough to make these mistakes.

It could be argued that Christ is as human as Arthur. After all, is it not a tenet of Christianity that Christ is both human and divine? But Christ is a religious figure, while Arthur is a secular figure. For readers uncomfortable with Christianity, Arthur is a safer hero. There is even a twelfth century Hebrew version of the story of Arthur.

At the same time, Arthur is not entirely human. Like Christ, Arthur is expected to return from the grave, if he is indeed dead (something often left unresolved in both medieval and modern fiction). His grave is unknown, a thing of mystery. Indeed, in many modern novels, Arthur does return, fighting evil in the twentieth, or even thirtieth century.

Also, those content with Christ as a hero can see His heroism reflected in Arthur. Those who are dissatisfied with Christ can find a more satisfying hero in Arthur. Which path authors take will influence their choice of incidents in Arthur's life. An author who wants a Christlike figure, or even a less troublingly ambiguous human hero, may delete the killing of the May Babies (Tennyson), or modify it so that Arthur is not the one responsible for the atrocity (Stewart, Cule).

The Arthur that Yolen praises for his humanity and fallibility is, like Homer's Odysseus and Joyce's Leopold Bloom, a complete man. Joyce explains that Odysseus

is son to Laertes, but he is father to Telemachus, husband to Penelope, lover of Calypso, companion in arms of the Greek warriors around Troy and King of Ithaca. (Budgen 17)

Arthur too is presented as father and son, as brother and companion-in-arms, as husband and lover, as warrior and king. All facets of his life are shown.

One scholar wonders

if this "complete man" business needs a modifier (like "nearly") to placate all the special interest groups (like gays) who Arthur doesn't represent. (Tobin)

While this is a valid question, it implies that bisexuality is a prerequisite of completeness. I am not prepared to state that this is the case. Also, as noted above, Bradley, Nye, and others do suggest that Arthur has a sexual interest in men.

It is necessary that Arthur be a complete man because he is the microcosm of his society. This concept is taken to its logical extreme in the movie *Excalibur*, where Arthur takes on the role of the wounded Fisher King, and the land is only as healthy as he is. All of the knights can be seen as facets of Arthur's own psychomachia, from Lancelot, with his nobility; to Gawain, with his pride; to Mordred, with his bitterness. Arthur has made it possible for each of these knights, and many more besides, to exist in his realm.

Cunning Justice

One modern difference in Arthur's story, perhaps, is that there is more of an open acknowledgement about the dirty politics essential to running a kingdom. This may be most obviously demonstrated by Parke Godwin's novels, yet even Mary Stewart's mild-mannered Arthur, modeled on White's, demonstrates a recognition of the necessity to temper justice with cunning and diplomacy.

Stewart's Arthur tricks Melwas into challenging him to a duel so that the true story of Melwas' abduction of the queen will remain unknown, and Guinevere's reputation will not be endangered. Merlin explains:

[Arthur] could, of course, have summoned King Melwas to the council hall on a trumped-up excuse, but this he would not do. "If we harass him until he makes a complaint himself, it comes to much the same thing in the sight of God," he said dryly, "but in terms of my conscience -- or my pride, if you like -- I will not use a false charge in the Round Hall. It must be known as a place where no man need fear to come before me, unless he himself is false."

So harass him we did....Somehow or another there came to be constant arguments about harbour dues, rights of free way, levies and taxes arbitrarily imposed and hotly contested. Any of the petty kings would have grown restive under the constant stream of minor vexations, but Melwas was even quicker to protest than most....it was apparent from the start that Melwas guessed he had been deliberately brought before the King to answer the older, more dangerous charge....It was Melwas who suggested single combat. How he was brought towards this was not quite clear; my guess was that he took very little steering. (1984 a, 312)

Nevertheless, Melwas was steered. He deserves what he gets, but Arthur's tactics are unjust: he taxes Melwas unfairly -- and Arthur's actions hurt Melwas' subjects, who are blameless in the matter of Guinevere's abduction and do not even know that it occurred, much as a military blockade may hurt innocent people who do not support the atrocities of

their leaders -- regardless of the sophistry used to justify this strategy. Melwas is "false," as Arthur puts it, but what does that say about Arthur? Even Tennyson's Arthur is not perfect; he allows Lynette to believe Gareth no more than a kitchen boy. While Lynette overreacts to perceived insults, her cry "Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall, / In Arthur's presence?" ("Gareth and Lynette", 1223 - 1224) raises a valid question, given the impossibly high standards of the "blameless King." (Tennyson, "Geraint and Enid", 969)

This kind of trickery might be expected to leave a bad taste. No doubt, for some readers, it does leave a bad taste, but others must admire Arthur's cleverness, recognizing that sometimes, strict justice must be set aside for the good of the kingdom. This leads to both moral and political double binds familiar to all who engage in politics on any level. Godwin's Arthur realizes that his foster brother's people will hate him for not killing Tristan, who murdered one of their tribe. Arthur spared him for purely political reasons: Queen Isolde offered to convince Mark to build sea forts for Arthur, and these forts are essential for the safety of his people. Yet, it is politically unwise to lose the support of Kei's tribe, and, although Kei remains loyal, his tribe refuses to aid Arthur at Mount Badon, endangering the safety Arthur tried to preserve by his bargain with Isolde. Of such double binds are stories made.

Godwin's Arthur is a ruthless man, tricking Gawain into delaying Agrivaine so that Arthur can seize the throne. This ruthlessness is a quality of a certain kind of hero. Perhaps Shakespeare's *Henry V* demonstrates that this ruthlessness has always had admirers. Moreover, Arthur's predicament in *Firelord* rings true. Sometimes it is not

possible to deal with a situation in a way that will satisfy all: Arthur must displease one powerful ally, whatever he does. And sometimes, it seems impossible to bring justice to all. Whatever one's intentions, someone will be treated unfairly. This, too, is a situation with which modern readers are all too familiar.

Arthur is the embodiment of his kingdom. However, he is not always the central character of the story; sometimes that honor is given to one of his knights. While there is no space for a full consideration of all of the Knights of the Round Table, brief consideration will be given to the most important knights.

Lancelot/Bedivere

Lancelot is the strongest supporter Arthur has, but is also his rival for Guinevere's affections. Lancelot is a better fighter than Arthur, but is not a threat to Arthur's claim on the throne, despite his prowess as a warrior. Like Mr. Spock on *Star Trek*, he is subordinate to a man he could defeat in battle. Like Mr. Spock, he is considered more attractive than his leader by many.

What makes Lancelot a hero? He is a brave and generous man, and he upholds Arthur's ideals. He defends the weak and he shows mercy to the defeated enemy. Also, he is good enough to convince Meleagrance to accept a fight where he fights naked on his left side -- and wins.

Lancelot is also a lover. Perhaps he is more successful than Arthur at this role, because Arthur has the affairs of the kingdom to worry about.

Lancelot is popular in the movies, being a photogenic presence, a hero easy to identify with. Yet, he is less popular as a protagonist in Arthurian novels. It is as if T. H. White wrote the definitive book about him, and few authors have come up with much new to say. Godwin relegates him to the background, making him a dull, uninteresting man, paling in comparison to the charismatic, dynamic Arthur. In Bradley, he comes out rather badly, like most of her male characters.

Three interesting changes should be noted. First, in some versions of the story, Lancelot and Guinevere have never slept together. One alternative: he is not drawn to her, as in *The Forever King*, where he is thought to be her lover only because he protests against Arthur's injustice in banishing her to a convent for barrenness, and in Lawhead's *Arthur*, where he is an Irish man called Llwch Llenlleawg, charged with protecting the Queen (269). Another: although he is deeply attracted to her, he successfully resists temptation, as in the stage version of *Camelot*, Kane and Jakes' *Excalibur!*, and *The Wicked Day*, tales in which he and Guinevere are tricked into a compromising position, but have committed no actual infidelity. The reason for this would seem to be a demand for greater purity in our heroes. I would note that in all the above versions, Arthur is not responsible for the deaths of the May Babies; he, too, has become purer than the legend suggests.

The second change is that Bedwyr (Bedivere) is sometimes given Lancelot's role. The justification for this is that Lancelot was a French invention, but Bedwyr was attached to the story from the beginning. These versions try for greater authenticity, so the heroes are more likely to keep their raw edges. Stewart's Merlin trilogy and

its sequel is a notable exception; Sutcliff, Bradshaw, and Wolf all portray the affair with Guinevere as being consummated.

Lancelot has long been shown as having the power to heal and to perform miracles. In Malory, he performs a miracle in his youth by rescuing Elaine from her burning bath. Later, he heals Sir Urre. Like Mr. Spock on *Star Trek*, who developed ever more Vulcan powers, or Superman, Lancelot's powers grew over time, depending on the needs of the story, until the third change to his character took place: In *Camelot*, the musical, he does not merely heal a dying knight; he actually brings a dead knight back to life. Lancelot's ability to raise the dead is kept by authors such as Kay and Barr and Bolland.

The key to Lancelot's character is that he is both the great hero of Arthur's court and the eternal outsider. This view of Lancelot was emphasized by T. H. White. Lancelot is often a foreign knight, almost always an adulterer who cuckolds the King, and, therefore, by definition, a traitor. Often too, he is hated for his skill and his goodness. If Arthur, as the King, represents the kingdom as a whole, Lancelot, as his best knight, represents the individual.

Gawain/Gwalchmai

Originally as courteous as Lancelot, Gawain had lost most of his admirable traits by Malory's time. Yet, as Raymond Thompson points out, modern authors combine medieval prose and poetic versions of the story to his advantage. Gawain's primary tragedy is that he cannot renounce loyalty to his family; yet, this is an admirable quality in him. If

Lancelot is an extension of Arthur, Gawain is, to some extent, the foil of Arthur.

Kay

Kay was originally an impressive warrior, but he gradually became a buffoon. In modern versions of the story, he is everything from a traitor (as he is in the medieval *Perlesvaus*) to one of Arthur's most loyal companions. Several versions do preserve the tradition that Kay has a sharp tongue. In some ways, he is a jester figure who is allowed greater freedom of speech than anyone else, and indeed, it is often comical how he gets defeated so easily in battle. He is also, as Karr's Sir Kay points out, able to ensure Arthur's popularity at the expense of his own: "Along with my other duties, I serve as scapegoat for anything that might otherwise dent Arthur's popularity." (*Idylls of the Queen* 28) Sir Kay has been a scapegoat for both medieval and modern authors, and it is only recently that he has begun to re-emerge as a heroic figure.

Mordred

Mordred and Arthur are often seen as two sides of the same coin. If Arthur is a good ruler, Mordred is generally a selfish tyrant. If Arthur is weak, ineffectual, or tyrannical, Mordred is often shown as strong, effective, or concerned for the people. However, there are other versions, such as Stewart's, where Mordred and Arthur respect each other, and only fate sets them on opposite sides. In one version of the story, Mordred survives the battle of Camlann (which was instigated by

Kay, here a traitor), and marries the daughter of Pelleas (Jones 1995). However Mordred is portrayed, his character serves to comment on and to define Arthur's.

Queens

What is a Queen?

Paxson's Branwen believes that a king is a man who must mediate between humanity and higher powers that are older than Christianity, but she is not sure what a queen is (*The White Raven* 1). Godwin's Guenevere comments patronizingly that Iseult is a wife, not a queen. What, then, is a queen?

Bradley's Igraine thinks:

When you put it into the simplest terms, the queen was the king's lady; not only his hostess and keeper of his house -- any chamberlain or housekeeper could do that -- but, like the priestess of Avalon, a symbol of all the realities of life, a reminder that life was more than fighting and war and dominion. A king, when all was said and done, fought for the protection of those who were unable to fight for themselves...As the King was joined to the High Priestess in the symbolic marriage to the land in token that he would bring strength to his kingdom, so the Queen, in a similar joining to the King, created a symbol of the central strength behind all the armies and the wars -- the home and the center for which the men rallied their strength. (275)

The function of queen and priestess can merge. Igraine reminds herself:

In these civilized days, a queen was not a priestess over villagers tending their barley fields, any more than a king was the great hunter who ranged among the deer! (276)

Despite Igraine's belief to the contrary, Arthur has recently played the part of the hunter among the deer, while Morgaine has been his priestess and queen, if only for a night (171 - 181).

A queen's first duty is to provide an heir to the kingdom, and it is one of the strands of Arthur's tragedy that Guinevere fails to do so. Guinevere is occasionally given daughters. Even more rarely, she is given a son; however, in almost all versions of the story, her son dies. I know of three exceptions. One is Patricia Morrison's spacefaring Gueniver, whose son Arawn founds a dynasty on a distant planet. The second is Elizabeth Wein's Ginevra, whose son Lleu is still alive at the end of the novel. However, the novel ends in the middle of Arthur's reign, and there are hints that Lleu, always in fragile health, will not long survive his father's death. Finally, Susan Cooper's Guinevere hides her son in the twentieth century.

Bradshaw's Gwynhwyfar suggests that Arthur put her aside for a more fertile woman (1982, 149), while Bradley's Gwenhwyfar reflects:

Whatever else a queen might do for her lord, her first duty was to give him a son, and she had not done that duty, though she had prayed till her knees ached. (309)

Bradley's Gwenhwyfar is obsessed with her failure to bear a child, for she considers herself of no value until she does so. She believes that the only way to win her husband's love, respect, or even attention, is to provide him with an heir. When she believes herself to be pregnant with Arthur's son, she insists on riding at once to tell Arthur, heedless of the dangers of war, thinking:

And if I was at Tintagel and the countryside was filled with Saxons, there would I remain until the war had ended and all the country at peace again...and if Arthur did not even know I was with child, he might be content to let me dwell there forevermore. Why should he want to bring back a

barren queen to his new palace at Camelot? Like enough, he would...put me away for some woman who could bear him a bouncing brat every ten moons or so[...]

But all will be well, once Arthur knows[....] (365, bracketed ellipses from original)

Gwenhwyfar fears for her position at court. More, she feels that she will never have her husband's love until she bears him an heir.

Gwenhwyfar's fears of being put aside are unjustified; the neglect she senses may be partly imaginary, but the urgency to provide the kingdom with an heir is felt by her husband as well as herself. Arthur himself is responsible for bringing Gwenhwyfar and Lancelot together to consummate their love. Arthur understands and sympathizes with the lovers' plight, but his primary motivation in bringing them together is to ensure the safety of his realm. Feeling that he may be incapable of fathering a son, he urges the lovers to have intercourse, explaining:

Bishop Patricius would call it grievous sin, no doubt...I think it greater sin to make no provision for a son to inherit my kingdom. Then should we fall into such chaos as threatened before Uther came to the throne...And...if I am here with you, my Gwenhwyfar, then should a child come of this, then you may swear without any untruth that this child was conceived in your marriage bed, and none of us need ever know for certain. (448 - 449)

While Gwenhwyfar will later ask if Arthur wanted to make love to Lancelot (546 - 547), and while there may be more than a little truth in her accusations, nevertheless, Arthur is truly concerned about the future of his realm.

Stewart's Guinevere is really two women. The first, Guenever, dies, and the child in her womb dies with her (1979, 226), while the second, Guinevere, is constantly compared unfavorably to the first because she is barren (305). If, as Arthur says, she is afraid "of life itself, and of living (300), it is partly because she is reproached, silently or aloud, for her failure as a queen to bear heirs.

T. H. White's narrator claims that Guenever went mad for a time, because she was barren:

Guenever's central tragedy was that she was childless. Arthur had two illegitimate children, and Lancelot had Galahad. But Guenever -- and she was the one of the three who most ought to have had children, and whom God had seemingly made for breeding lovely children -- she was the one who was left an empty vessel, a shore without a sea. This was what broke her when she came to the age at which her sea must finally run dry. It is what turned her for a little time into a raving woman...It may be one of the explanations of her double love -- perhaps she loved Arthur as a father, and Lancelot because of the son she could not have. (472)

In *The Forever King*, Arthur is finally convinced to put Guinevere away for barrenness, yet he never remarries (Cochran and Murphy 246 - 249). In most versions of the story, he never even considers putting his wife aside, despite his concern for the realm. Morgause suggests a reason for the barrenness in Newman's trilogy. Hearing from Modred (Mordred) that Guinevere does not seem to age, she says:

it sounds like...the sort of spell that the old priestesses used to put on the children they intended for sacrifice, so that they would not be damaged before it was time for the offering. If that's so, then somehow the time passed without the sacrifice being made....Although, certainly it should not last so long after the appointed time. It must be wearing thin by now. Yet, it might account for her looking so young. (1985, 82)

Morgause is correct, for Guinevere's nurse cast the spell, intending to sacrifice her to the pagan gods. She was prevented, obviously, but the spell is only broken when a "healing-woman" needs to cut Guinevere's foot to keep her from dying of an infection (189 - 190). By that time, Guinevere is too old to bear children.

Guinevere is often a surrogate mother for the entire kingdom. In some versions of the story, she has several miscarriages, but never brings a child to term. In other versions, she has a child, but the

child dies young. Guinevere remains the Barren Queen, unable to perform the royal duty of conceiving an heir.

Another interpretation of the role of a queen is found in the novels of Bradley and Gold. The queen, while not a ruler, is a symbol of rulership or sovereignty. Whoever controls or marries the queen rules the land. In *Morgaine's Story*, this idea is strengthened by Gwenhyvere's lineage. Morgaine explains this to Arthur:

I told him the bloodline of Custennin the Blessed as my mother had taught it to me. "His eldest child was a daughter who married a lord of Dyved. Their only child was a daughter who married the lord of Gwynedd. Her only child was Gwyneth who married the lord of Pen Sans, my uncle Gurvod. And their only child was Gwendolyn whose elder child was Gwenhyvere. By the old reckoning, she'd be the High Queen of Britain and you only her husband." (*Morgaine's Story*, 186 - 187)

Arthur is not slow to realize the implications of this. He now understands why Melwas abducted Gwenhyvere: "if he'd kept her, he could have claimed the kingship." (187) When Gwenhyvere is later abducted by Medraut (Mordred), Arthur instructs Morgaine:

Tell Lancelot all you told me about Gwenhyvere, that she's eldest heir to Custennin the Blessed by the female line. Medraut may try to marry her to give himself a second claim to the crown...Tell Lancelot that I trust him to keep that from happening. (212)

In *Mists*, one of Meleagant's motives for kidnapping and raping Gwenhwyfar is to justify a claim to the throne. Kevin, the Merlin, or messenger of the gods, muses:

Leodegranz of the Summer Country has just died, and his young wife and her last child with her, Gwenhwyfar is queen there now; but Leodegranz had a kinsman...and I think he would like it well if he could claim to be king in the old manner of the Tribes, by bedding with the queen. (473)

One of the priestesses of Avalon replies, "By the old custom...Gwenhwyfar is not wedded to any unless she has borne him a son, and if another man can take her from Arthur --." (473) Meleagant himself later confirms that this is the custom, telling Gwenhwyfar,

In the old days, lady, the consort of the queen was king of the land, and if I hold you and get sons on you, no man will gainsay my right to rule. (513)

Meleagant wants the land that Leodegranz held, and tells Gwenhwyfar, "I rule by the old laws, and I will make myself king by that law, which says your man rules here." (513)

This theme of sovereignty was not invented by modern authors. They found it in scholarly essays discussing the sovereignty figure in the early Welsh and French tales. However, in the figure of Guinevere, we have more than just a symbol of sovereignty, and much more than a tragically barren woman. Increasingly, modern authors are creating a Guinevere who is a well-developed, recognizably human being, and often an admirable woman.

Guinevere

The character of Guinevere, as might be expected, has drawn the attention of feminists, both authors and scholars. Some scholars claim that she only becomes an admirable figure in Stewart's trilogy, but the literature does not support their contentions. Even medieval authors do not universally scorn her. She becomes the gracious lady of Camelot, and the embodiment of civilization. Geoffrey of Monmouth praised the ladies who would not give their love to a man who had not won three separate

tournaments, and the woman who set the standards of what chivalry should be and inspired men to achieve them was Guinevere.

T. H. White praises Guenever's virtues of courage, honesty, and generosity (389), and says that she was a real person (472 - 473). His Guenever is too often criticized for being shrewish, but she is realistic, and she is admirable. White points out that she cannot follow the traditional masculine path of heroism:

Guenever could not search for the Grail. She could not vanish into the English forest for an adventure with the spear. It was her part to sit at home, though passionate, though real and hungry in her fierce and tender heart. For her there were no recognized diversions except what is comparable to the ladies' bridge party of today....So we must imagine the Queen as a woman who had been robbed of her central attribute. (472 - 473)

One modern version of the story tries to change this. The television movie *Guinevere* makes the queen a pupil of Morgan Le Fay, who trains women, as well as men, in the art of the sword. However, Guinevere's heroism is usually seen as being different from traditional, masculine heroism.

Guinevere often helps to rule the kingdom, in some cases, being more essential to its smooth running than Arthur, however indispensable Arthur may be in times of war. Karr's Kay explains

the kingdom runs by the Queen's efforts...Folk should at least remember what happened in this kingdom when Guenevere's look-alike seduced Arthur and supplanted the true Queen for two years: The country came near to rotting away...the kingdom only started to recover when Dame Guenevere agreed to leave her sanctuary in Surluse and come back to her first husband. Maybe the common people remember that interlude more clearly than they are willing to say. (1982, 28 - 29)

Woolley's Guinevere is so capable of running things that Arthur jokes uneasily: "They tell me you have done a fine job in my absence. Behooves

me to get well before you decide you can do it all by yourself." (1990, 302)

Bradshaw's Gwynhwyfar and Godwin's Guenevere are both extremely competent stewards, managing household affairs, bargaining for produce, and so forth. Bradshaw's Gwynhwyfar explains why she is the one who bargains with the farmers for their grain:

The steward could have done it, but he was a bad bargainer, and could make no use of the information we could obtain from them about the state of things in the countryside, which was invaluable to me. When it came to buying large amounts of goods later in the year, the price paid by Camlann [Bradshaw's Camelot] set prices for all the south, and the amount taken by Camlann checked availability everywhere, so it was very important for me to understand what was happening outside the fortress as well as what was happening within it. (1982, 27)

The information Gwynhwyfar gets while bargaining for grain is, no doubt, invaluable to Arthur, as well as to herself. Her careful, personal handling of the bargaining shows that she is concerned about the welfare of all her people, from the highest to the lowest.

Godwin's Guenevere is chosen by Arthur to rule Britain after his death. Never one for false modesty, she scornfully addresses Constantine, her chief competitor for the throne:

I'd hear your views on a workable policy with Picts and Demetae. Or for that matter on interior trade. Do you know who forges our best iron? Where our best wool comes from, the going price per bale and how much it's worth oversea? What is your policy toward the British Church, the orthodox dioceses and radical monasteries, and how would you favor the one without the other calling you heretic, since you may need both behind you? (1985, 16)

Guenevere questions Constantine about matters of which a king must have a thorough knowledge; however, it is clear that Britain's queen is fully as knowledgeable as Britain's recently deceased King Arthur.

In both Godwin's and Bradshaw's novels, then, Guinevere is aware of political leanings, religious affiliations, the interplay between the two, and the important factors in trading and bargaining for goods. In Bradshaw's novel, Arthur relies on Gwynhwyfar's skill, almost ruthlessly, writing to her in their first year of marriage:

The alliance with Urien wears badly. He begins to complain that he cannot support his own warband these days. I will need him to raise his army for me in a few months: make him a gift of six hundred head of cattle and something golden -- I have given all my own plunder to Ergyriad. We have nothing to eat...Beg Urien to send something, especially grain, to supply us at Yrechwydd, for I have told the men there will be food there. (1982 b, 22 - 23)

Gwynhwyfar "wrote madly to every king between Camlann and Caledon to produce those wretched cattle, and wrested a gold crucifix from a monastery." (23) However, she does not congratulate herself when she has succeeded, thinking of the cost to Arthur and to her subjects who are not fighting with the warband:

Kings and the Church offended, less tribute received the next year, and at Camlann, a sullen anger poisoning everything. You cannot blame a man for being angry when he has lived on cabbage for a month, only to see six hundred head of fat cattle sent north, and not even to his own king, but to a wealthy ally....I was alone, distant from my family and from my new husband, and the people in Camlann appeared to hate me. (23)

Despite her loneliness, Gwynhwyfar can still empathize with the men of Camlann and can still think about the long term consequences of Arthur's request. She is as brave as Godwin's Guenevere, even though she does not appear on the battlefield, as Godwin's queen does, and even though her tongue is not as sharp as the other woman's. Gwynhwyfar's courage is of a quieter type, displayed in the way she succeeds in the near-impossible task of securing Arthur's gift to Urien, and in the way she constantly refuses to burden her husband with her doubts and fears.

Courage may be considered a masculine virtue, but Bradshaw and Godwin are far from the only authors to grant it to Guinevere as well. T. H. White's narrator explains that courage is one of Guenever's "three great virtues." (389). Berger's Guinevere shows no fear of Mordred, and faces Arthur boldly, defending her affair with Lancelot. In the latter scene, Berger writes:

And though kneeling in entreaty Guinevere was humble in no wise, but rather she was as proud as she had ever been, for she was the sort of woman who could not be otherwise to save her soul. (457 - 458)

Modern authors have medieval models to draw on here, for courage is also a quality of Chretien's queen and Malory's Guinevere.

However, neither of them, nor any other medieval author that I know of, praises Guinevere for her skills at bargaining and managing such mundane tasks as keeping the granaries full and learning the going price of wool. To modern audiences, it is a mark of historical verisimilitude to portray such a domestic Guinevere, and the mundane details become fascinating, since we are at a safe remove from the sixth century, and need not bargain for enough grain to fill a larder. Modern readers need the reminder that it was not possible for the people of the sixth or the fifteenth century to go to a supermarket and pick up an extra loaf of bread at the last minute (Sibley).

At the same time, a Guinevere who manages the daily affairs of a kingdom is a Guinevere who strikes a chord of recognition for modern readers. Housewives are only now receiving recognition for the work they do in keeping a house in order, and Guinevere is a role model for them. The role of housewife gains grandeur when it is compared to the role of

Guinevere whose careful management of Camelot was an essential ingredient in her husband's success.

At her best, Guinevere is an admirable and capable woman. She accepts responsibility. Although barren in most versions of the story, she serves as the mother of all of Camelot. She is loving and lovable. She is clever, keeping Meleagrance and Mordred at arms' length in many versions of the story, and nearly escaping Medraut (Mordred) in Bradshaw.

Guinevere and the Marginal

A queen may help her husband to rule; she may even rule in her own right. In some versions, Guinevere is kept in the background; in others, she takes an active role in governing the affairs of the kingdom. Godwin's Guenevere is especially capable in this regard. Like Arthur, she has learned a certain ruthlessness which would seem to be essential to any kind of leadership. Her policy is "Think first, act, and then feel." (1980, 2)

Unlike her husband, Godwin's Guenevere is full of contempt for the common people. Bedivere points out her error when she runs over a woman and her child:

Do you remember how frightened [the woman] was, how she couldn't stop crying? Country folk never see any lords but their own and not much of them....They're cautious of your kind, and good reason: in the time it takes to think it you could step on them like ants or take everything they own. That girl didn't have much but her dirty bairn, but she wanted it to be safe. And there's the bloody High Queen of Britain herself....you were God just then. Just one word, a hand on hers, and she would have told her children and grandchildren about it. 'Na, I was there the night of the troubles when the High Queen herself took me by this very

hand and said, No fear, child. It will be well.' And remember to the inch just where you stood saying it. Well, they'll remember, right enough. She reached out and you knocked her down. (1985, 128 - 129)

Yet this seems more a matter of policy than of compassion. In other words, Godwin's Guenevere's weakness is that she fails to adhere to her own policy.

Bradshaw's Gwynhwyfar, unlike Godwin's Guenevere, but like Godwin's and Sutcliff's Arthur, loves the common people over whom she rules. When she makes her escape after being captured by Medraut, she flees to the family of one of Gwalchmai's servants, confident that she will not be found, for "Medraut would never know or remember a servant's clan." (1982 b, 311) Medraut, like Godwin's Guenevere, cannot be bothered thinking of common servants.

Newman's Guinevere, although not as intelligent as Godwin's or Bradshaw's, develops a sense of responsibility to equal Arthur's. When Modred (Mordred) brings Jutish soldiers to Camelot, Guinevere agrees to marry him to save the women and children (1985, 214 - 216). Arthur is willing to lay down his life for his people. Guinevere does more: she allows herself to be subjected to Modred's lusts. Perhaps that is the difference between a king and a queen.

Modern Changes

Guinevere has become an everywoman figure. Woolley presents a modern woman, trying to live in the business world, a very masculine world. Although a queen, Guinevere is marginalized because she is a woman surrounded by the knights of the Round Table. Their reverence for her does not conceal the fact that she may have little actual power, and

modern authors are using Guinevere to talk about the plight of contemporary women, much as Victorian authors used the story of Guinevere's love for Lancelot to consider the problem of extra-marital affairs in a safe context.

Guinevere is actually raped in Bradley and Woolley, while in Bradshaw, Medraut (Mordred) beats her when she prevents him from raping her. Newman's Guinevere is repeatedly beaten and raped by Modred (Mordred). What has happened? Where does this image of Guinevere as victim come from?

First, it should be noted that, thus far, only women authors emphasize this image. Male authors, to the best of my knowledge, never allow the queen to be raped. One reason for this may be that male authors are concerned about the reaction of their readers. If a female author includes a scene where Guinevere is raped, the author is not likely to be accused of being a misogynist, whereas a male author might be. In addition, it was suggested that the queen is an image of the ultimate feminine for men, and that perhaps male authors do not wish to destroy this image. The image of Guinevere as the somehow untouchable figure is not as attractive to female authors, for it freezes her on a pedestal (Cole).

Traditionally, Guinevere's function is to be alternately threatened and rescued. However, in Newman, the queen's repeated rape and brutalization by Modred is the catalyst to turn her into a hero. No longer the passive, empty-headed inspirer, she must rescue herself. She wonders what else she might be capable of. In Bradley, the rape serves to free Guinevere of her guilt for feeling attracted to Lancelot. In Bradshaw, Gwynhwyfar's reaction to attempted rape shows her wit and

courage, as she fends off Medraut and convinces his ally to free her.

But why is it there?

Perhaps because rape is a crime of which people are more and more aware and worried about, they cannot believe that even Guinevere is immune. Perhaps they want to see a rape victim overcome her violation, and Guinevere is used as a model for women in this way.

Finally, Guinevere is more active in many recent tellings of the legend. In *First Knight*, Guinevere fights off and kills bandits and jumps over waterfalls. She even enjoys an Isolde-like idyll in the forest with Lancelot. None of these things seem in character for Guinevere, but, as has been pointed out, they are now part of her character. When I protested in horror, "Guinevere doesn't *do* waterfalls," I was informed, "She does now." (Goetz 1995) In the television movie *Guinevere*, the queen is trained by Morgan Le Fay in the use of the sword, and she fights off men who try to assassinate her. Nor is this active Guinevere solely the product of the visual media; Lawhead's Gwenhwyfar is an Irish princess who strides into a church to claim Arthur as her husband (1990 c, 326), who "fully expected to fight" alongside Arthur's men and is furious to be left behind (272), and who, when taken hostage by Medraut, grabs a spear and faces an army with her husband (409). Guinevere is too potent an archetype to be discarded; instead she must be changed to fit the needs of modern audiences.

Chapter Eight: Religion, Fantasy, and Magic

Religion

Introduction

Priests and Priestesses

Priests are not often main characters in Arthurian novels, although they do motivate much of the action. Pagan priestesses, however, are coming into their own, especially since *Mists*. Priestesses are responsible for the welfare of their community, and must be prepared to lay down their life or virginity, like a king or a queen. They are responsible for rituals for the well-being of their community. The danger for them is to confuse their duty with the duty of the king, and to seek to rule in his place. There is a delicate balance of power: religious leaders cannot rule, but their support is essential to the man who would rule.

Although Arthur is not irrevocably attached to any one religion, religion is an important element of his story. Before the twentieth century, everyone "knew" that Arthur was a Christian; indeed, medieval authors considered him the greatest of the three Christian worthies. Today, many authors still portray a Christian Arthur; others, however, show him as a Pagan, or as a pragmatist, concerned with religion only insofar as it suits his political or military purposes.

A common theme in Arthurian novels is the idea that, during Arthur's reign, Paganism was gradually eroded by Christianity. The

victory of Christianity over Paganism is seen in some medieval sources, such as *Perlesvaus*, and is considered, of course, to be an unambiguously good change. Today, this victory may still be considered good, as in works by Lawhead and Bradshaw, but it is often considered sad, if inevitable, as in Bradley.

Two questions will be considered in this section. First, what does a Christian Arthur have to offer non-Christian authors and audiences? Second, why has Arthur's Christianity been called into question?

Why is a Christian Arthur Valued by non-Christian authors?

The medieval Arthur, although nominally Christian, is often seen as paying no more than lip service to his religion. He is shown in conflict with saints, often coming out badly in debate. He sleeps with women he does not intend to marry, one of whom is not only married herself, but is also his own sister. He is guilty of massacring infants, an act more reminiscent of Herod than Christ.

In short, Arthur is far from a perfect Christian, so accepting him as a hero does not mean that one must accept the Christian worldview and all its associated doctrines. Indeed, it is the opinion of Greg Stafford, the creator of the role-playing game *Pendragon*, that with the rare exception of works such as *Perlesvaus*, Arthurian literature does not display serious religious intolerance. Stafford is not entirely correct, however. It is noteworthy that the Arthur of Geoffrey and the *Alliterative Morte D'Arthur* leads a Western Christian army against an Eastern Pagan army (Moe). Charles Williams uses this division in his Taliesin poems. Yet it is also noteworthy that these version are not the

ones with which modern readers are most familiar, and that the religious division can easily be missed in the medieval source material.

The Christian aspect of Arthur, then, falls by the wayside in many versions of the story, medieval as well as modern. What is left? A good story and virtues that nearly all cultures respect. The story angle must not be overlooked; one scholar maintains: "[T]he Bible is popular for religious, not storytelling reasons." (Herman, 5 May 1995) There are stories in it, but the religious framework is the most important fact. It is the other way around for Arthur: the story is more important than any religious framework.

The ideals discussed in the previous chapter are also vital, and they are surprisingly easy to separate from any religious frame. For example, there is a medieval version of the story written in Hebrew, *Melech Artus*, by an anonymous Jewish author. Although my Jewish background has never prevented me from enjoying the stories of Arthur, I could not help wondering why a Jewish author felt the need to retell his story. It was explained to me that Arthur is a type of the Good King, and this type is celebrated in many Jewish stories (Feld). Since Arthur is so well known, it is not surprising that his story was used by the author of *Melech Artus*.

Arthur as a good king, or as "Goodness in Government," as a correspondent expressed it (Herman, 16 April 1995), is larger than any religious framework. Religious minorities, like other marginal groups, see in Arthur a man who will treat all people justly, regardless of their religious beliefs. That this is not necessarily true of the Christian Arthur of the epics or of certain versions of the Grail story

is irrelevant. Arthur is a Good King, a Just Leader first; any religious affiliation comes afterwards.

This is true even when Arthur is shown as a devout Christian. Lawhead's Arthur is devoted to the ideals of Merlin, who, in Lawhead's version, was a Christian who tried unsuccessfully to convert the druids of Britain to Christianity. It is impossible to miss the rhetoric of Lawhead's trilogy, which states that Christianity is the true religion. It is true that Arthur goes on no crusades against the Pagans, using his military strength only against those who would invade Britain. However, Lawhead's message is clear: the Pagans, however admirable in other ways, are wrong in their religious beliefs.

While many modern authors make Camelot a Christian court, it is more common to duck the religious issue or to say that the Christian way is but one of many by which to live than to maintain, as Lawhead does, that it is the only correct way by which to live. It is true that authors such as Williams and Lewis come out firmly on the side of Christianity; however, modern readers are more likely to be familiar with Stewart or Bradshaw, who create Pagan deities who pass the torch of civilization to Christianity, explaining that, for this time, Christ is the new god who will protect civilization. The implication is that Christ may, in turn, pass the torch to another deity. Nothing could be further from Lawhead's stance, for while he might agree that older religions once served a useful function, he would not agree that Christianity could ever become obsolete. His stance is that of Bradley's Gwenhwyfar, although Lawhead is both more comfortable with his religion and a better spokesman for it than the troubled queen of *Mists*.

This attitude is not as immediately acceptable to a modern audience as to a medieval one; indeed, it may be found embarrassing, or even offensive, by modern readers. Yet, it is difficult not to be moved by Lawhead's passages on the ideals which form the foundation of Arthur's kingdom. True, there is a sentence stating that everyone will worship Christ, but this is easily ignored. The important part is that, in Arthur's kingdom, people will be treated well, and they will be able to live in safety and with dignity.

In this respect, Lawhead's novels are not far removed from their medieval source material. The epic Arthur fights invaders, and he fights to expand his borders, but nowhere is it directly stated that he fights for religious reasons; he is not on a crusade. The medieval Arthur who fights to acquire more territory is gradually phased out in favor of a more idealized Arthur, one who is not thought of as a conqueror. The many portraits of this Arthur culminate in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, where Arthur and the knights of the Round Table express the wish that Palomides become a Christian, but never attempt to convert him by force. This is an Arthur whose ties to Christianity are rather tenuous.

Gillian Bradshaw's Arthur is nominally Christian, although he does not appear to be particularly devout. Morgawse, his sister, is a Pagan, and she is also an evil sorceress. Her spells are effective against her own servants, who are Pagan, but not against her son's servant, who is a Christian, and who manages to save a Pagan from Morgawse by baptizing the unfortunate woman.

However, Morgawse is a villain because she is evil, not because she is a Pagan. Gwalchmai, her son, serves a benevolent Pagan deity who sends him to fight for Arthur. It is Gwalchmai who ultimately heals

Morgawse's enchanted servant, once baptism has saved her life. The conflict between Gwalchmai and Morgawse is moral, but not primarily religious. Arthur hardly enters into this conflict, being more concerned with uniting his people against the Saxons. The conflict between Arthur and the Saxons is political, not religious.

Arthur, then, is an acceptable hero for non-Christians because he is a secular hero, rather than a religious hero. His Christianity is often perfunctory, more a matter of lip service than of conviction. Even when he is a devout Christian, however, his secular virtues are what readers remember and admire.

Why is Arthur's Christianity now called into question?

Today, criticizing Christianity is not only safer than in medieval times, it is almost expected. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to give a history of the attitudes towards Christianity. Suffice it to say that many alternative religions, old, new, and invented, were introduced in Britain and America in the latter half of this century.

Wicca and other forms of Neo-Paganism are the Pagan religions most relevant to modern Arthurian fiction. Wicca was invented by Gerald Gardner, who claimed that he had been instructed in the tradition of Wicca by his grandmother. Soon, many people in Britain and America were speaking about their experiences as Pagans. Some of them may have learned old family traditions which somehow survived through centuries of persecution; others invented them or learned them from authors whose claims of authenticity were often dubious (See Adler).

Nevertheless, the claims that Paganism had survived provided a myth that fit the needs of many people. Women especially were drawn to Wicca, with its Goddess-centered theology, and there was a large overlap between the Neo-Pagan movement and the Feminist movement in the 60s and 70s. It was not relevant how old various ceremonies really were; the myth was all (See Adler).

The same can be said about the story of Arthur. It does not matter how much of the story is true; the myth fills a need. So, it was not altogether surprising that the two myths should be joined. Indeed, it is a natural development. There are evil sorceresses in Arthur's world, but the Neo-Pagan movement sees the demonization of magic and of women as necessary conditions for the victory of Christianity over the Pagan religions. Neo-Pagans stress that neither women nor magic is evil. Since many Neo-Pagans are Feminists, it is pointed out by them that much of history is written by men; if women had written the histories and the myths, particularly Pagan women who were powerful sorceresses, how different it might seem! One of the most charismatic figures partaking of the qualities of both myth and history is Arthur. The way was paved for Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon*, told from the point of view of the women in Arthur's kingdom, but most especially from the point of view of Morgan Le Fay, long despised and feared because of her powers.

Bradley combined three elements in *Mists*: different narrative points of view, a sympathetic portrait of Morgan Le Fay, and the respectful treatment of Paganism. She was not the first to use any, or even all, of these elements, but her timing was perfect, and her novel was grander in scope than earlier treatments of these themes, such as Laubenthal's *Excalibur*, Karr's *The Idylls of the Queen*, or Marshall's

The Pagan King. The success of Bradley's novel is responsible for the many novels which followed that used female viewpoint characters, the Pagan religion, and the notion that the "truth" of Arthur's story depended on who was doing the telling.

Why is it necessary to add this dimension to Arthur's story? Paradoxically, Arthur is popular both because he is not shackled to any one religious framework and because he can be associated with at least three different religious frameworks, those of Christianity, Celtic Paganism, and the Roman mystery cult of Mithras. Adding the religious dimension does not diminish the universal appeal of the figure of Arthur, but it adds a special relevance to particular works. We constantly reinterpret old stories to make them relevant to our age, and the story of Arthur is certainly no exception.

If the Arthur of the Christians is acceptable to non-Christians because of his secular ideals, he is, nevertheless, looked upon with suspicion by many who question the status quo. His ideals may be admirable, but is not he himself a patriarchal, authoritarian figure, suppressing women and the Pagan religion? The two areas of religion and gender roles overlap, and Bradley's novel is considered the standard in exploring these issues.

Bradley's Britain is becoming more Christian as Arthur's reign progresses. There are many reasons for this, but the most obvious one is that Gwenhwyfar (Guinevere) is a Christian, and she is determined to impose her religion on all of Britain. She will not accept that other religions hold any validity, and she is guided by Bishop Patricius, who feels that the earlier, tolerant priests were misguided at best, and heretics at worst.

The Christian religion, as it appears in Bradley's novel, is one which leads to the subjugation of women; in this way, Gwenhwyfar is working against her own interests. She resents the freedom seemingly enjoyed by the Pagan Morgaine, yet, she flees from that freedom whenever it is offered. Bradley's Christianity is unattractive, and Arthur eventually embraces it. Why is he still somehow admirable and why is the novel not entirely depressing? Arthur is admirable because, even though he breaks his oath to favor Pagan and Christian equally, he has good intentions. Arthur's intentions and his sincerity win him the love of his people. Morgaine realizes that Arthur truly wants the best for his people, and wants them all to be happy. He is bigger than any religion, more tolerant than either his wife and his sister, both of whom are blinded by their own fanaticism. It also helps that Bradley omits the infanticide: her Arthur does not slaughter babies.

Tennyson's Arthur said, "The old order changeth, yielding place to the new, / And God fulfills himself in many ways." ("The Passing of Arthur" 408 - 409) Bradley accepts this attitude towards history in her novel. Despite the attempts of the priestesses of Avalon to restore their island and their mysteries to the world by putting Arthur on the throne, it is clear that the time of Avalon and the Pagan religion is at an end. Kevin, the Merlin of Britain, explains that the heart of the land is no longer Avalon, but Camelot (596). He steals the sacred objects of Avalon, feeling that they must be available to all, even if only as Christian symbols, and even though he will be killed for his trespass. Eventually, Morgaine accepts the Christian victory, finding solace in the notion that her goddess is still worshipped as the Virgin Mary and as Saint Brigid (875 - 876).

A Pagan Morgan is not difficult to accept. Once Morgan is viewed as a devoted worshipper of her goddess, rather than a power-hungry evil sorceress, her actions may be revised and seen in a more positive light. However, the Paganism of Bradley's Morgan Le Fay is not sixth century Paganism, whatever that may have been like, but twentieth century Neo-Paganism. Bradley combines the myth of Arthur's golden age with the Neo-Pagan myth of a time when magic was our birthright and women held power. She gave shape to the needs of countless people.

Bradley is also the author of a series of novels known as the Darkover series. These novels are set in the future, on the planet Darkover, which was settled by humans whose descendants forgot that they had ever lived anywhere else. The Darkover novels have some of the elements of *Mists of Avalon*. Nearly all the major characters have access to laran, a sort of psychic force, or magical ability. Like the rituals in *Mists*, the rituals in the Darkover books are familiar to modern Neo-Pagans. As in *Mists*, Bradley considers issues of gender in those Darkover novels known as the Free Amazon novels. One woman explained that, in these novels, Bradley puts into words what many women felt, but could not articulate. (Source unknown, Personal Discussion 19??).

However, the Darkover novels never achieved the popularity of *Mists*, nor are they as mythical as the Arthurian novel. By using Arthur's story, Bradley found an ideal way to tell her own story and to capture the spirit of an age, however unwittingly.

Once *Mists* was published, Bradley's themes were quickly explored by other authors. Persia Woolley's trilogy shows the rise of Christianity, and the diminishing of Paganism. Like Bradley, Woolley links the victory of Christianity to the diminishment of women's power.

Guinevere notes that when she is condemned to the stake, the kingdom has judged Pagan queens such as herself, and destroyed their power.

However, while Bradley's novel is the embodiment of its age, and perhaps the most impressive of recent Arthurian novels, consideration of religious issues existed prior to *Mists*. The idea of the old Paganism yielding to the new Christianity is present in Stewart's Merlin trilogy, where the change in order is peaceful. Mithras himself, Merlin's patron deity, tells him that it is now time for Christianity to hold sway. Gwalchmai's patron god makes a similar comment in Bradshaw's *Hawk of May*. Sutcliff's Arthur attempts to appease Christians, Celtic Pagans, and followers of Mithras, but he remains uncommitted to any particular religion. Instead, he recognizes the "oneness of all things" in these events: Christ's death on the cross, the self-sacrifice of a native Briton who gives his life to hold the gates open for Arthur's army, and the death of his uncle Ambrosius while hunting a deer. All of these things prepare Arthur to accept both his deification by his men and his own death for his people at Camlann. Godwin's more cynical Arthur also accepts that he will be deified and slain, while his Guenevere becomes an embodiment of Epona, the horse goddess.

Perhaps the key to understanding the treatment of religion lies in the attitudes of the Arthurs of Godwin and Sutcliff. Arthur is a mythological figure, as well as a literary one. As a type of the hero, whom he worships is less important than what he stands for.

The Holy Grail

Most people have heard of the Holy Grail, but comparatively few people know the story of it. Certainly, many people will tell you that it is the cup which caught Christ's blood at the crucifixion, or that it was the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper, neither of which is mentioned in the Gospels. However, they will not know what happened to it in Arthur's story. At best, they may know its eventual fate in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

Their confusion is understandable, as there is no definitive version of the Grail story. The various versions are even more convoluted than the versions of Arthur's story, and the Grail has been identified as everything from a cup connected with Christ to the cauldron of a Pagan goddess, usually Ceridwen, to a seder plate. The Church never officially endorsed the Grail, nor did it denounce the Grail. This careful distancing only contributed to the ambiguity surrounding it.

The Grail does not appear in all stories about Arthur, nor do all stories about the Grail have anything to do with Arthur. Nevertheless, the two subjects draw freely on each other's historical weight.

The Grail can be no more than an object of a quest, searched for by different parties, much like the Maltese Falcon. True, the Grail sometimes displays powers of healing or of plot-resolution, but what it is and its religious meanings are not important. In these Arthurian novels, it exists to motivate a treasure hunt.

Whatever the Grail is, everyone knows that it is something precious. This may be why Neo-Pagans wish to co-opt it, much as they try

to co-opt the story of Arthur for their purposes. The Grail is a symbol of spirituality, of religious truth, so it is not surprising that both Neo-Pagans and Christians wish to fit it into their theology. However, the Grail need not be only an object of a search; it can stand for something. Usually, it stands for enlightenment, generally religious, and often, of a kind that each individual must discover on his own. This is one reason for its lack of popularity with the Catholic Church. However, it is also a reason for its popularity with Neo-Pagans, whose religious beliefs tend to be anti-authoritarian. In addition, it is popular with individuals of all religions who believe that there is some truth which can only be discovered by searching for God, rather than by hearing official dogma.

The Grail, then, is used variously to symbolize the highest truths of Christianity and Neo-Paganism. In some stories, it symbolizes the ultimate truth which lies behind all religions. In Naomi Mitchison's *To the Chapel Perilous*, many different Grails are discovered, each symbolizing the beliefs of the seeker.

In both *Mists of Avalon* and Laubenthal's *Excalibur*, the Grail is important to Christians and Pagans alike. In Bradley's novel, the Grail is actually Pagan, but it sparks the Christianized knights to go on a religious quest. In Laubenthal's novel, the spirit of Morgause tries to convince her sister Morgan to destroy the Grail, but Morgan refuses when she realizes that the Grail is sacred to her Goddess as well as to the Christian God.

In both novels, the Grail is one of four holy objects, as it is in medieval sources, the others usually being a sword, a spear, and a stone or a dish. In Jesse Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, she argues that the

story of the Grail and the wounded Fisher King contains a memory of a fertility ritual. Weston's theories may not be universally accepted, but they achieved a great deal of popularity, particularly after Eliot used them as one of the sources of *The Waste Land*: he suggests that these objects appear as the four suits of the Tarot.

Eliot's poem highlights another element common to the Grail stories, a surreal or disorienting atmosphere. This appears throughout Richard Monaco's Grail books, where the shining promise of the Grail is hard to remember in a land torn by war, where the principle characters of the Arthurian story are neither admirable nor present for long. The search for the Grail is full of dangers, both physical and spiritual.

The dissociation and danger, though not the bleakness of Eliot, appear in the film *Excalibur*, where the religious content is subordinated to one of the themes of the film, drawn from Weston: the land and the king are one. The Waste Land is a direct result of the king's wound, and, in this movie, the Fisher King is none other than Arthur himself.

In most versions of the story, it is made clear that searching for the Grail is dangerous. An individual may die or be caught in a spiritual slough. However, the Grail is also dangerous to the kingdom as a whole: when the knights go searching for the Grail, Camelot is left undefended, and when most of the knights die and are replaced by younger men who do not understand Arthur's vision, the foundation of his society begins to crumble. Indeed, Bradley's Morgan believes that this is why her goddess allowed the Grail to be used in a Christian ceremony, for Morgan believes that Arthur's kingdom should be destroyed.

Therefore, the individual's search for enlightenment is, on some level, selfish. The individual's desire is put above the community, and this is a threat. There can be no community if everyone is searching for personal enlightenment. Authors such as Tennyson take this attitude towards the Grail, as does Hunter, whose Percival realizes at last that he has been living off the charity of peasants, who may have been ill able to afford feeding him, while he was searching for the Grail.

Yet, there is another way to look at the Grail quest: it can be viewed as the journey of the Hero of Joseph Campbell to the otherworld to bring back a gift to his people. Perhaps this is what the Grail quest was originally, as the Welsh poem *Preiddeu Annwfn* seems to indicate. However, the rhetoric of the Grail story in Malory and *Queste* works against this interpretation: Many search for the Grail, but after it is found, it departs from the world. It benefits only the one who discovers it, not the community.

Of course, the Grail can be secularized, as in Godwin's *Firelord*, where it turns out to be an ordinary tin cup. Nevertheless, the Grail continues to symbolize something mystical and dangerous, potentially of great benefit to an individual, but ultimately destructive to society. However, a knowledge of the dangers does not prevent a person from getting Grail fever and joining the quest.

Fantasy and Magic

Magic is always powerfully attractive, and it appears in many of the movies and television versions of Arthur's story, including modernized versions, such as *Knightriders*. Any doubts I had on the

attractiveness of magic vanished when I summarized the events of *Gawain and the Green Knight* for one of my students who asked what I was reading. Her eyes grew wide, and she said, "He really put his head back on? Did Gawain know he was going to do that?" It was the presence of magic, of the supernatural, which held her attention.

The use of magic places many Arthurian novels squarely within the genre, or marketing category, of fantasy. This is a popular category, and many readers of fantasy are drawn to Arthurian novels.

Also, the popularity of the role-playing game *Dungeons and Dragons* brought both magic and a medieval setting into the minds of many adolescents, and, according to one scholar, is responsible for a large amount of popularity enjoyed by Arthur's story and other medieval stories (Herman, 18 April 1995).

The story of Arthur may be kept completely on the secular level, and there are certainly advantages to doing so. However, religion is an aspect of our lives, and for the psychomachia to be complete, it must include the idea of religious passion. However, there is another reason for the inclusion of saints and pagans, sorcerers and spells, and grails and cauldrons in the story of Arthur.

Magic fascinates people, however much they may deny its allure, and however much official censure it draws. Religion is often associated with magic in Arthur's story, as knights draw strength from their Christianity, while heathen sorceresses and magicians abound. Religious conflicts may make the modern reader uncomfortable, but if they are presented as duels between spell casters, rather than as battles between armies, where countless people die, they become fascinating.

The conflict between Gwalchmai and Morgawse in Bradshaw's books is effective because of the magical dimension of the struggle, while Medraut is a dangerous foe because his magic tells him of the affair of Gwynhwyfar and Bedwyr. Laubenthal's *Excalibur* is exciting because it is full of magical events, from attempts at spiritual possession to forces which appear to tempt a modern-day Grail quester. These forces are not rationalized; they are clearly intended to be magical. The most powerful scenes in *Mists of Avalon* are full of magic, culminating in the manifestation of Morgan's goddess at the Mass of the Grail, an event of great religious, as well as magical significance.

Magic is not limited to its religious connotations in Arthur's story. Many who know about the sword in the stone do not recall that it appears after the knights pray to Christ for a sign; many more confuse it with the sword given to Arthur by the Lady of the Lake, whose religious convictions are never made clear in Malory. The sword in the stone, and that only Arthur could draw it out are still remembered by many, and many still remember the image of the sword offered by the arm of the Lady of the Lake. The traditionally evil Morgan Le Fay and the traditionally benevolent Merlin are both vivid figures to modern readers because these people can do magic.

There are many novels and comic books where Arthur does not appear, but where Merlin, Morgan Le Fay, or both do. Often, these stories are set in the twentieth century. For modern readers, it is easier to explain the presence of a magician than of Arthur, for, after all, one can always say that it is Merlin's magic which allows him to exist in the present day. Merlin is popular, and his presence lends weight to Arthur's story in many novels which otherwise have little to

do with the once and future king. Where there is Merlin, there is almost always magic.

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Chapter Nine: Other Media

It is noteworthy that people who have never read and will never read a novel about Arthur are still familiar with him through other media. As for those who enjoy reading novels about Arthur, quite often they will look into treatments of the legend in other media.

Although I have been concentrating primarily on novels, stories, and poems, it must not be forgotten that Arthur's influence extends beyond the printed medium. There are movies, plays, and television shows about Arthur. There are Arthurian Tarot decks. There is an abundance of Arthurian art from many centuries. Even within the printed medium, I have scarcely begun to consider comic books and New Age books.

With the information explosion currently occurring, there are World Wide Web pages on the Internet which contain pictures of Arthur and his people, as well as the text of several medieval works on Arthur. Indeed, there are texts from the nineteenth and early twentieth century online as well. There is an electronic discussion group, ArthurNet. There is a woman on the Internet who keeps a list of books about Arthur (and who added some of my entries to it), updating it constantly and posting her updates to the Web.

The following chapter is not meant to be any kind of in-depth analysis of all of the various media infiltrated by Arthur and his knights, but is rather meant to give a sense of the variety of material, and to examine, to some extent, the differences between these media and the printed medium.

Generally, where books tend to make characters more complicated, movies and plays tend to simplify events and personalities. *Camelot*, in any of its incarnations, is far less rich and complex than T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, upon which it is based. This is not to denigrate the play; it does a fine job of bringing the essentials of the story to the stage in the space of two hours. In a way, it points out what is considered the most important. The ideals of Arthur and the love triangle of Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot are kept. Almost everything else is dropped.

Gone is the slaughter of the May Babies, wisely so; there is simply no room for an examination of an ambiguous Arthur in the structure of the play. Nor is there any room for Elaine. Mordred remains, and he is acknowledged to be the son of Arthur and Morgause, but all mention of incest is removed. However, the biggest change is that Lancelot and Guinevere do not consummate their love in the stage version of the musical.

The lovers do consummate their relationship in the movie version of *Camelot*, as they do in the movie *Excalibur*. The director, Boorman, claimed that *Excalibur* was a faithful retelling of Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. This is not the case. The countless adventures of Malory's knights are omitted, as are the roles of Agravaine and Mordred in revealing the adultery of the Queen and Lancelot. Arthur discovers this on his own, but does not take action against the lovers. His discovery leads to his sickness, and, therefore, the creation of the Waste Land, until the discovery of the Grail. During this time, Mordred is set up as his nemesis, and it is clear that Mordred's attack would have occurred

regardless of whatever else was happening in the kingdom. Again, the movie should not be criticized for being too simplistic -- if anything, it is unnecessarily complicated -- but it is far less convoluted than Malory's *Morte*, or than the novels of modern authors such as White or Bradley.

First Knight, one of the most recent foray by movie makers into the Arthur legend, is also simplified. In some ways, it is a return to earlier source material, as the movie is essentially about the conflict between Arthur and Malagant, a version of Meleagrance (ArthurNet). It has been compared to a typical thriller where

Arthur is the President, Guinevere is the First Lady,
Lancelot is the Secret Service bodyguard, and Malagant
is the terrorist threatening to bomb Camelot. (Herman,
July 1995)

The Arthurian elements are attached to this framework, with some interesting changes. As in *Excalibur* and *Camelot*, there is no reference to the slaughter of the May Babies; perhaps it would be hard to picture Sean Connery as being capable of such an atrocity. There is no reference to Mordred at all; he never appears in the film. One of Arthur's knights is called Agravaine, but he plays no part in the discovery of the love between Guinevere and Lancelot. As in *Camelot*, the two do not consummate their love; Arthur discovers them in a passionate farewell kiss.

What *Camelot* and *First Knight* have in common is that both stress the importance of Arthur's ideals, of the idea of Might harnessed to the service of Right. Like many Arthurian films, they simplify the story and condense the timeline. This may not be essential for the film or stage media, but it is easier.

My two favorite Arthurian movies; *Knightriders* and *The Fisher King*, are set in the present day, with only limited references to Arthur. The former works because it emphasizes the code of honor followed by Billy and the modern knights he leads, while the later works because it is an original fairytale, drawing only what it needs from the stories, and wisely omitting the rest. I have not seen the movie *A Kid in King Arthur's Court*, which opened on August 11, 1995, and which vanished from theaters before I could see it, nor have I seen *Dragonheart*, a film set three centuries after Arthur's time, where one of the characters refers to the chivalric code of the Round Table.

On television, there several animated cartoon programs about Arthur. One is *Prince Valiant*, based loosely on the comic book of the same name. Another is a French show where Arthur's knights have been imprisoned in a magical slumber by Morgana, and Merlin has summoned a football team to take their place. There is also an episode of a Japanese animated cartoon program where a time-travelling teapot transports people to Arthur's Britain.

Recent Arthurian novels have not been neglected by producers. The BBC serialized Mary Stewart's novel *The Crystal Cave* (Lacy 607), while Lifetime aired *Guinevere*, a very loose adaptation of Persia Woolley's novels. Neither television adaptation uses all of its source material. The BBC may adapt Stewart's other novels, and Lifetime may air a sequel to *Guinevere*.

There is a series called *Young Arthur Warlord*, showing Arthur not as a high king, but as a leader of one group of Britons. The episodes range from the comical, where he prevents King Mark from marrying the Jutish woman he loves, to the thought-provoking, where he realizes that

an ally may be correct to make peace with the Saxon invaders. I have heard of a BBC miniseries which is a more straightforward re-telling of the story, but I have not seen it. However, I would note that the limited series or miniseries format would seem best suited to a retelling of the entire story.

The comic book has the potential to create an epic about Arthur. Indeed, Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant* is an epic, spanning over twenty volumes, taking the story all around the world, and past the battle of Camlann. My lack of familiarity with this comic book necessitates its omission from this paper.

Arthur often makes a cameo appearance in mainstream comics. For example, *Swamp Thing* has an issue where the title character travels back to Arthur's time and witnesses the destruction of Camelot, while the graphic novel *Books of Magic* contains a scene where the young protagonist, Tim Hunter, speaks with Merlin. The mage is aware that it is his destiny to be imprisoned by Nimue, but this does not lead him to despair. Later, Tim sees a king, who may be Arthur, sleeping in Titania's Fairy kingdom, watched by a harpist, who may be Thomas the Rhymer. Arthur and Merlin show Tim the possible risks and rewards of getting involved with magic, effectively acting out his internal conflicts, as a psychomachia is intended to.

There are also comic books where Arthur is the central character. *Camelot 3000* was a major release for DC Comics in 1980, using brighter colors and better paper, and it became the center of a DC ad campaign

which claimed a position for the company as a publisher of "comics of quality." (Maroney)

When DC published *Camelot 3000*, it was trying to reinvent itself, and it used the story of Arthur, not the story of Superman or of Batman, as its centerpiece. *Camelot 3000* had no ties to the DC "universe" in which nearly all DC comics are set. While *Camelot 3000* was not "ravingly popular," it was "one of the most successful titles," and it received critical attention, as well as the attention of comic book fans, despite the irregular publishing schedule. And, for all its flaws, *Camelot 3000* "was head and shoulders above ninety percent of what Marvel and DC were doing at the time." (Maroney)

Camelot 3000 told the story of the return of Arthur and his knights in the thirtieth century. This was one of the first mainstream comic books which dealt with adult themes, such as adultery and a lesbian relationship, and certainly the first major mainstream treatment (Maroney). Guinevere married Arthur for the second time in the thirtieth century, but was unfaithful to him again, with Lancelot. Sir Tristan, to his disgust, found himself reincarnated as a woman, and refused to resume his relationship with Isolde, also reincarnated as a woman. Nevertheless, by the end of the series, Tristan once again became Isolde's lover.

Matt Wagner's *Mage: The Hero Discovered* takes a different approach. Arthur, Merlin, and the Lady of the Lake appear in the guise of Kevin Matchstick, Mirth, and Edsel; however, Wagner is not interested in retelling the story of Arthur in all its detail. Instead, he is interested in exploring the concept of heroism and the relationship between Merlin/Mirth and Arthur/Kevin. Wagner originally planned two

more graphic novels chronicling the adventures of Kevin and Mirth, but it is increasingly unlikely that he will write them.

Foster's comic strip still has its devotees, but the average person on the street is unlikely to be familiar with it. *Mage* had a limited audience as well. *Camelot 3000*, despite its achievement, is not always thought well of. *Swamp Thing* and *Books of Magic* are popular; however, Arthurian elements appear only briefly in them. In short, the comic book is a medium of great potential for Arthurian authors. It has been used in a variety of ways, but much of its potential is not utilized, or, at best, is under-utilized.

Many New Age books have been written about Arthurian magic or meditation, and many books have been written about the secrets of the Grail. Books such as *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* are large on speculation, but short on references. Norma Goodrich has written several books on the Arthurian story, and these have met with mixed reactions from scholars who distrust her research. Other books take their cue from Robert Graves' *The White Goddess*, although perhaps relying somewhat more on research than poetic intuition. Among the more well-known are the books of John and Caitlin Matthews, discussing topics from the bardic tradition as exemplified by Taliesin to a consideration of the various Arthurian women as goddesses to a synthesized form of Arthurian magic. This is not the magic which appears in the medieval source material, but rather the magic of Neo-Paganism, with an Arthurian gloss.

New Age books are written about the personalities of Camelot precisely because the story does function as a psychomachia. The different knights and ladies are different aspects of the self, to be contacted in guided meditations. They can fulfill some of the functions of saints for a group of people who would be uncomfortable working within a Christian framework, but who want a familiar and respectable framework, which the story of Arthur can provide.

A consistent framework is also provided by the tarot, traditionally a set of 78 cards. Today, there are hundreds of different tarot decks, most of which show a set of symbols which fit together. Despite the European origins of the tarot (for, although some claim that the tarot originated in Egypt or "Atlantis," the earliest surviving deck is from Europe), one can find a Chinese Tarot, a Japanese Tarot, a Native American Tarot, several Feminist Tarot decks, and a Post-Modern Tarot deck. The legends of Arthur provide enough settings, incidents, and characters to fill the 78 cards of a tarot deck with self-consistent symbols. As many devotees of the tarot acknowledge, whatever the precognitive properties of the cards, they are an excellent meditation tool because they represent different facets of the human psyche. Since the same is true of the Arthurian stories, an Arthurian Tarot deck was an almost inevitable variation. Indeed, there are at least three Arthurian Tarot decks.

I was told that Greg Stafford, creator of many successful games for Chaosium, has always held a place in his heart for *Pendragon*

(Maroney). Having read it, I can understand why. This is a game with rules perfectly geared to playing characters from the stories about Arthur and his knights. Over the years, the rules have changed, allowing people to play noble ladies and female knights, Pagans and Jews, magicians and sorceresses, and pages and squires. The portrayal of the central characters has changed as well, especially in the case of Morgan Le Fay, who is no longer the utter villainess behind the scenes. What has not changed are the mechanics, which center on personality traits, such as Chastity or Lust, Honor, Love, and other virtues and vices common to the stories of Arthur's people and to psychomachia in general.

There is also the *Prince Valiant* role-playing game, based on the Hal Foster comic strip. In addition, *Dungeons and Dragons*, the earliest and still the most popular role-playing game, included versions of the Arthurian characters in its supplement *Deities and Demigods*, treating them as a pantheon. Recently, TSR, the company which created *Dungeons and Dragons*, released a worldbook for its *Amazing Engine* game called *The Once and Future King*. It does not use Arthurian characters, but it attempts to use the popularity of the legend, and it details a world where futuristic knights wear medieval-style armor.

Games, New Age books, tarot decks, comic books, movies, and television shows demonstrate Arthur's popularity in many media. The story may be simplified in the visual media, and it is implied, rather than told, in the games and Tarot decks. Nevertheless, Arthur's story is popular enough to make it worthwhile for artists and publishers of many media to use.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion: The Future

Arthurian fiction is not likely to disappear any time soon. At the Sixteenth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, Tom Doherty mentioned that Tor Books is publishing both *Merlin's Bones*, by Fred Saberhagen and a six book series written by Jack Whyte, a Canadian author. Saberhagen's book is already out in both hardcover and paperback, while at least three books in Whyte's series are out in Canada.

Courtway Jones and Patricia Kennealy Morrison have come out with the latest in their series. The former sets his novels in Arthur's time, the latter in the future -- her books have been described as "Celts in Space." There are also a few novels about the return of Arthur in the present or future time.

I do not know if there will be more Arthurian movies in the near future, especially given the reviews of *First Knight* and *A Kid in King Arthur's Court*. Arthurian novels are in no danger of vanishing from the shelves. I suspect that gender issues will continue to be a topic of some importance in the modern Arthurian novel. Also, since Guinevere, Morgan Le Fay, and even Mordred have been "redeemed" by some authors, and made into sympathetic and even admirable characters, it seems likely that Morgause is due for a re-evaluation.

The Internet is already causing changes in the publishing industry, and it will continue to do so. Arthur's story is adapting to this medium. The Arthurian mailing list and the bibliography of Arthurian works are available on the Internet, and the bibliography is updated constantly. Also, pictures can be scanned by computers, so certain World Wide Web sites have "galleries" of Arthurian paintings,

particularly those done by the Pre-Raphaelites. Arthurian texts are available online as well. Older material, both literary and scholarly, is now more available to interested readers, authors, and scholars than ever, while the Internet makes it easier than ever before for new material to find an interested audience.

Changing technology will not make the story less popular because the reasons for its popularity are not directly related to technology. Arthur's story is primarily a moral tale, and the desire for a clarification of moral issues is likely to grow as the world becomes ever more complicated. The historical weight of the story will grow as well, as recent authors inspire a new generation of authors. Not all of the new Arthurian novels will be of high quality. Indeed, most will not, but the sheer volume of novels demonstrates that the themes considered are still important and makes it likely that there will be works as good and as significant as White's *The Once and Future King*, Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset*, Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*, Bradshaw's Gwalchmai trilogy, Godwin's *Firelord*, and Sampson's *Daughter of Tintagel*. These works will add to the story, and they will join the Arthurian canon and attract other authors to try their hand at writing an Arthurian tale.

The flexibility of the story will enable it to discuss what is important to modern authors and audiences, such as the question of war in White's novel, or gender and religious issues in Bradley's. Even the more ephemeral novels have their place, for they answer the need of the audiences of their day, even if they are not likely to be analyzed by future generations.

In any case, whatever twists the Arthurian novels may take, they will continue to be published and read. Arthur's story is still

effective as a psychomachia, still flexible enough to meet the changing needs of different generations of readers, and still full of heroes and ideals which capture our attention and hold our fancy.

Catalogue Raisonné

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I. Modern Arthurian Texts

1. *Novels and Short Stories*

Ab Hugh, Dafydd. *Arthur War Lord*. New York: Avon-Hearst, 1994.

---. *Arthur War Lord: Book Two: Far Beyond the Wave*. New York: Avon-Hearst, 1994

A terrorist sends her mind back to Arthur's time. The hero does the same, landing in Lancelot's body.

Anderson, Dennis Lee. *Arthur, King*. New York: HarperPrism-HarperPaperbacks, 1995.

Arthur chases Mordred to World War II, attempting to retrieve Excalibur and Merlin's book.

Anderson, Poul. *Three Hearts and Three Lions*. First published: 1953. Repr. Riverdale: Baen, 1993.

Twentieth-century man finds himself in an earlier time and discovers he is Ogier the Dane.

Ashe, Geoffrey. *The Finger and the Moon*. First published: Great Britain: William Heinemann, 1973. Repr. St. Albans: Panther Books, 1975.

New Age setting. Ashe makes himself a character in the novel who is trying to create a Grail ritual for a guru figure.

Ashley, Mike. Ed. *The Pendragon Chronicles: Heroic Fantasy from the Time of King Arthur*. New York: Peter Bedrick, 1991.

---. Ed. *The Camelot Chronicles*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1992.

---. Ed. *The Merlin Chronicles*. First published: UK: Raven Books-Robinson Publishing, 1995. Repr. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1995.

---. Ed. *The Chronicles of the Holy Grail*. First published: UK: Robinson Publishing, 1996. Repr. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1996.

Anthologies with mostly modern material, but some medieval material as well.

Attanasio, A. A. *Kingdom of the Grail*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

Twelfth century woman claims to have regained her youth by

drinking from the Grail and to have a mission to overthrow a tyrant.

Barthelme, Donald. *The King*. First published in the USA by Harper & Row, 1990. Repr. New York, London, Victoria, Toronto, Auckland: Penguin: 1992.

Arthur and his people in modern Britain. The main point seems to be that Arthur does not use the bomb.

Berman, Ruth. "Star Drek." Originally published in *Pantopon* #16, a zine in a fanzine called *FAPA*. I was unable to get full data on this, but it had to have been between Sept. 1966, when *Star Trek* was first aired, and Sept. 1967, when the story was reprinted. Repr. *Spockanalia* 1 (Sept. 1967) 62 - 88.

The crew of the Enterprise help a man from the world of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* rescue his beloved.

Berger, Thomas. *Arthur Rex: A Legendary Novel*. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1978.

The critics loved it, but I found it overrated. It is very '70s. Most discomfoting are the snickering jokes about homosexuality. Berger tries to claim that Arthur's subjects are simultaneously selfish and altruistic.

Blaylock, James P. *The Paper Grail*. First published: 1991. Repr. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1992.

Modern quest for the title object.

Bond, Nancy. *A String in the Harp*. First published: Atheneum, 1976. Repr. New York: Puffin-Penguin, 1987.

An American family has trouble adjusting to life in Wales; the son finds Taliesin's harp key, which tells him the story of the bard's life.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. *The Mists of Avalon*. Originally published in hardcover by Alfred A. Knopf Books. Repr. New York: Ballantine Books, 1982.

The most recent addition to the Arthurian canon. Bradley is respected for her treatment of religious and feminist themes. She is not the first who did this, but she's the most famous.

Bradshaw, Gillian. *Hawk of May*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980.

---. *Kingdom of Summer*. First published: New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981. Repr. New York: NAL, 1982.

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---. *In Winter's Shadow*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982.

This trilogy considers gender issues, themes of outsiders trying to join or destroy society, and the struggle to fight for the light when one is oneself filled with darkness. Gwynwyfar is an admirable character, perhaps because the others are made to look less good.

Burnham, Jeremy, and Trevor Ray. *Raven*. London: Corgi Books/Carousel, 1977.

I have not located this.

Cabell, James Branch. *Jurgen, a Comedy of Justice*. First published: 1919. Repr. New York: Dover, 1977.

---. *Figures of Earth: A Comedy of Appearances*. First published: 1921. Repr. New York: Ballantine, 1969.

---. *The Silver Stallion: A Comedy of Redemption*. First published: 1926. Repr. New York: Ballantine, 1979.

---. *Chivalry: Dizain des Reines*. London: Bodley Head, 1928.

---. "The Eighth Letter: To Sir Galahad of the Siege Perilous." *Ladies and Gentleman*. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1934, 109 - 121.

Chivalry, *Figures of Earth*, *Jurgen*, and *The Silver Stallion* are part of the *Chronicles of Poictesme*, the novels with the most relevance to Arthurian themes. Dom Manuel becomes the ruler of Poictesme in *Figures of Earth*, and creates the Order of the Silver Stallion, a group of knights less perfect than their reputation would suggest. Cabell reprises the theme in "To Sir Galahad" where he explains that Galahad's example, not the Grail, destroyed the Round Table. *The Silver Stallion* chronicles the adventures of the order after its founder's death. *Jurgen* details the adventures of the title character who has affairs with Guinevere and the Lady of the Lake, among others. *Chivalry* is a collection of short stories examining the concept of chivalry.

Caldecott, Morya. *Bran, Son of Llyr*. Somerset: Bran's Head Books, 1985.

Retelling of the second branch of the *Mabinogion*.

---. *Taliesin & Avagddu*. First published: 1983. Repr. Somerset: Bran's Head Books, 1985.

Retelling of the story of Taliesin who makes his peace with Ceridwen by arranging a marriage between her son, Avagddu, and the woman he loves.

Canning, Victor. *The Crimson Chalice*. London: William Heinemann, 1976.

---. *The Circle of the Gods*. London, William Heinemann, 1977.

---. *The Immortal Wound*. William Heinemann, 1978.

---. *The Crimson Chalice*. New York: William Morrow, 1978. This volume includes *The Crimson Chalice*, *The Circle of the Gods*, and *The Immortal Wound*.

Carlsen, Chris. *Berserker: The Bull Chief*. London: Sphere Books, 1977.

I have not located this.

Carmichael, Douglas. *Pendragon: An Historical Novel*. Hicksville, NY: Blackwater Press, 1977.

I have not located this.

Chant, Joy. *The High Kings*. First published: 1983. Repr. Toronto, New York, London, Sydney, Auckland: Bantam Books, 1985.

Stories of Britain framed by Arthur's story. The last story is Arthur's story, told in a more mythic way than the frame story. Questions of language and narration, authorial intent, and moral lessons. Also a way of explaining the confusion caused by the source material. The 1983 edition has gorgeous illustrations.

Chapman, Vera. *The Green Knight*. London: Collings, 1975.

Chapman makes Gawain who challenges the Green Knight the nephew of Lot's son Gawain. Bercilak's lady is Morgan Le Fay's niece, a helpless pawn of Morgan's evil machinations. Her wedding is never consummated, and, with Merlin's aid, she and Gawain are married.

---. *The King's Damosel*. London: Collings, 1976.

Lynette's story. She asks the Grail question when none of the knights dare.

---. *King Arthur's Daughter*. London: Collings, 1976.

---. *The Three Damosels: A Trilogy*. First published: 1976. Repr. London: Magnum Books/Methuen, 1978.

Contains *The Green Knight*, *The King's Damosel*, and *King Arthur's Daughter*.

The second novel of the trilogy is the best. The first is

good, but the third is melodramatic. Deals with feminist issues, gives Arthur a daughter.

Charrette, Robert N. *A Prince Among Men*. New York: Warner Books, 1994.

---. *A King Beneath the Mountain*. New York: Warner Books, 1995.

---. *A Knight Among Knaves*. New York: Warner Books, 1995.

Trilogy about Arthur's return in the near future. The setting is based on the role-playing game *Shadowrun*, which mixes science-fiction technology with magic. Starts off well, and considers questions of honor, but several plot threads are never resolved. Disappointing.

Cherryh, C. J. *Port Eternity*. New York: DAW Books, 1982.

Science fiction. Rich woman creates people modeled on the personages of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* to crew her spaceship.

Chopra, Deepak. *The Return of Merlin*. New York; Harmony Books-Crown Publishers, 1995.

Christian, Catherine. *The Pendragon*. First published as *The Sword and the Flame: Variations on a Theme of Sir Thomas Malory*. Repr. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979.

Bedivere narrates the story of Arthur. Some good passages on Arthur's ideals, but basically mediocre.

Cochran, Molly and Warren Murphy. *The Forever King*. First published: 1992. Repr. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty Associates, 1993.

Arthur reincarnated as a boy in the twentieth century. Unpretentious trash and quite good of its type.

Coney, Michael Greatrex. *Fang the Gnome*. New York: NAL Penguin, 1988.

---. *King of the Scepter'd Isle*. Previously published in hardcover by NAL Books; no date given. Repr. New York, London, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990.

These novels are set in the same multiverse as Coney's science fiction novels, *The Celestial Steam Locomotive* and *The Great Gods of the Gateway*. They deal with parallel universes.

Cooper, Susan. *Over Sea, Under Stone*. First published: New York: Harcourt, Brace and World; London: Jonathan Cape, 1965. Repr. New York, Toronto, London, Auckland, Sydney:

Scholastic, 1989.

- . *The Dark Is Rising*. First published: New York: Atheneum, 1973. Repr. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1986.
- . *Greenwitch*. First published: New York: Atheneum, 1974. Repr. New York, Toronto, London, Auckland, Sydney: Scholastic, 1990.
- . *The Grey King*. First published: New York: Atheneum, 1975. Repr. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1986.
- . *Silver on the Tree*. New York: Atheneum, 1977 (1975?).

Children's books, sleeping knights, Guinevere hides her child in the 20th century and he helps Merlin fight the forces of evil. Hints that Arthur may lead the Wild Hunt.

Cornwall, Bernard. *The Winter King*. First published: Great Britain: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1995. Repr. New York: St. Martin's, 1996.

Crow, Donna Fletcher. *Glastonbury: The Novel of Christian England*. Wheaton: Good News, 1992.

About a hundred pages deal with Arthur.

Cule, Michael. *Dagonet: The Knight of Fools*. Unpublished ms on floppy disc, 1993. Gift to the author.

Surprisingly good. Dagonet must make a moral choice. However, Arthur is carefully absolved of blame in the matter of the May Babies, and the tacked-on happy ending leaves a bad taste. Interesting treatment of Morgan Le Fay and Nimue.

Darby, Catherine. *A Dream of Fair Serpents*. New York: Popular Library/CBS Publications, 1979.

Characters in Arthur's story are reborn several times.

David, Peter. *Knight Life*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1987.

King Arthur comes back and runs for mayor of NYC. Better than it has any right to be. Interesting consideration of Arthur's goals and ideals in our time.

Davies, Andrew. *The Legend of King Arthur*. London: Fontana/Armada, 1979.

I have not located this.

Davies, Robertson. *The Rebel Angels*. Copyright Robertson Davies, 1981. Repr. Middlesex, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland: Penguin 1983.

---. *What's Bred in the Bone*. First published in the United States of America by Viking Penguin, 1985. First published in Canada by Macmillan of Canada, 1985. Repr. London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland: Penguin, 1986.

---. *Lyre of Orpheus*. First published: Canada: Macmillan of Canada, 1988. Repr. London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland: Penguin, 1989.

Davies' trilogy about modern Canadian painter whose heir, Arthur, finds himself reliving the love triangle of Camelot while sponsoring an opera about King Arthur. Davies considers themes of infidelity, forgery, originality, nature and nurture, and documentation.

de Lint, Charles. *Greenmantle*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1988.

Intertextuality: a character in this book describes Godwin's *Beloved Exile*.

---. *Moonheart*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1984.

Taliesin fights an evil power in a strange house in modern Canada and spirit worlds.

---. *Spiritwalk*. First published: 1992. Repr. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty, 1993.

Sequel to *Moonheart*. Short story collection. Merlin appears in some of the stories.

Dickinson, Peter. *The Weathermonger*. London: Gollancz, 1968.

---. *The Changes Trilogy*. New York: Dell, 1986. Includes *The Weathermonger*, *Heartsease*, and *The Devil's Children*.

Merlin is woken from sleep by children and makes magic return to the world.

---. *Merlin Dreams*. NY: Delacorte, 1988.

Merlin rests under a stone, dreaming the stories in the book. Gorgeous illustrations.

Drake, David. *The Dragon Lord*. Copyright 1979. Repr. New York: Tor-Thomas Doherty, 1982.

Arthur and his men are thugs, and Arthur is insane, but this still considers themes common to Arthuriana. The use of force, the question of war, friendship, power, how to treat women. The hardcover has a different ending from the paperback.

Endersby, Clive. *Read All About It!* Toronto, New York, London, Sydney, Auckland: Methuen, 1981.

I have not located this.

The Fall of Camelot. Alexandria: Time-Life Books, 1986.

Retelling of the story of Arthur, relying mostly on Malory and Chretien.

Ford, John M. *The Dragon Waiting: A Masque of History.* First published: 1983. Repr. New York: Avon Books, 1985.

Alternate history where Richard III is a good guy and Christianity is a minor cult. Arthur's tale is performed at an annual pageant on a lake, and becomes the excuse for a revolt by Henry Tudor, who is misguided, at best, and a villain, at worst. Minor, as far as Arthuriana is concerned, but an excellent novel. Warning: Ford makes no allowances for ignorance or laziness on the part of the reader.

---. *Web of Angels.* New York: Pocket Books, 1980.

Science fiction, with deliberate references to myths, including Arthur's. The hero's name is Grailer, and he has a personal code of honor.

Freisner, Esther M. "Up the Wall." Copyright 1990 by Davis Publications. Repr. *Smart Dragons, Foolish Elves.* ed. Alan Dean Foster and Martin Harry Greenberg. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1991, 246 - 275.

Caius of the Ninth Legion meets Beowulf, also known as Arctos, or Ursus. Caius kills a dragon when Beowulf runs off, pulls a sword from a log, which a nearsighted wizard mistakes for a stone, and changes his name to Arctos. Caius' wife is Goewin.

Garner, Alan. *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen: A Tale of Alderley.* London: William Collins, 1960; rev. ed. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963.

---. *The Moon of Gomerath.* First published: London: William Collins, 1963. Repr. New York: Ballantine Books, 1981.

Sequel to *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, more mature.

---. *The Owl Service.* First published: London and Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Company, 1967. Repr. New York: Ballantine Books, 1981.

Young adult books with Arthurian elements in the twentieth century. *Weirdstone* and *Moon of Gomerath* have the sleeping knights, Merlin, the Morrigan, and the female relatives of

the knights. *Owl Service* is a modern version of the story of the love triangle of Bloduedd, Gronw, and Llew in *Math vab Mathonwy* from *The Mabinogion*. Surprisingly mature. The author explains that the area described in his books is full of stories about Arthur and the sleeping knights.

Gash, Jonathan [John Grant]. *The Grail Tree*. First published: London: William Collins, 1979. Repr. New York, London, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1988.

This novel is about Lovejoy, an antiques dealer. I did not care for it, but Raymond Thompson points out that Lovejoy is a Perceval character because of his relationships with numerous women.

Gemmell, David. *Ghost King*. First published: 1988. Repr. London, Sydney, Auckland, Bergvlei: Random House: 1989.

---. *Last Sword of Power*. First published: London, Sydney, Auckland, Bergvlei: Random House, 1988. Repr. Legend Books, 1989.

Gilliam, Richard, Martin H. Greenberg, and Edward E. Kramer, Eds. *Excalibur*. New York: Warner, 1995.

Anthology of stories about the sword.

---. *Grails: Quests, Visitations and Other Occurrences*. Atlanta: Unnameable Press, 1992.

Anthology about the Grail.

Gloag, John. *Artorious Rex*. London: Cassell; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977.

I finally got a photocopy of this, but have not yet read it.

Godwin, Parke. "The Last Rainbow." First published in *Fantastic*, September 1977. Repr. in *The Fire When it Comes*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1984. 112-145.

The first appearance of Godwin's "Prydn," the original inhabitants of Britain, so they claim, who reappear in his Arthurian trilogy (see below). Here, Brangaene, a baron's daughter, asks the Prydn prince, Drust, for the Holy Grail.

---. "The Lady of Finnigan's Hearth." First published in *Fantastic*, July 1978. Repr. in *The Fire When it Comes*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1984. 77-81.

Isolde outwits the devil and wins the love of a twentieth-century man.

---. *Firelord*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980.

- . *Beloved Exile*. First published: 1984. Repr. Toronto, New York, London, Sydney, Auckland: Bantam, 1985.

The two together make a fascinating study in gender issues. Also questions of responsibility and kingship, and issues of narration.

- . *The Last Rainbow*. First published 1985. Repr. Toronto, New York, London, Sydney, Auckland: Bantam Books, 1986.

St. Patrick's story which ends as Arthur's begins. Arthur does not appear in the book, but Ambrosius does. Though published after, it is a prequel to *Firelord* and *Beloved Exile*.

- . Ed. *Invitation to Camelot*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1988.

Anthology of stories and poems, most of which have something to do with Arthur's story.

Goetz, Ann, Leslie Danneberger, and John Metcalf. Untitled work in progress.

Goetz began writing a novel based on events in a role-playing game where Leslie plays the reincarnated King Arthur. When Goetz decided not to complete the novel, she gave Danneberger and Metcalf permission to do so.

Gold, Lee. *Morgaine's Story*. Unpublished ts, copr. October 1992.

Currently in fourth draft. Gender issues, games which are not games.

Goldman, James. *The Man from Greek and Roman*. First published: Random House, 1974. Repr. New York, London, and Toronto: Bantam, 1975.

Thriller about a man chased because he has the Holy Grail.

Greeley, Andrew M. *The Magic Cup: An Irish Legend*. First published: New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979. Repr. New York: Warner, 1979.

The story of Tristan and Isolde.

Griffiths, Paul. *The Lay of Sir Tristram*. First published: 1991. Repr. London and Basingstoke: Pan Books, 1992.

Grove, Donna. *A Touch of Camelot*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.

Romance novel set in the American Wild West, with heroine Guinevere, her younger brother Arthur, and a Pinkerton detective who serves as her Lancelot.

Haldeman, Linda. *The Lastborn of Elvinwood*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978.

Merlin helps the elves swap one of their people for a human child to be the bride of Puck.

Hanratty, Peter. *The Last Knight of Albion: The Quest for Mordred*. New York: Blue Jay Books, 1986.

Atom bomb falls on Camelot.

---. *The Book of Mordred*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1988. (There's also a credit for New Infinities Productions, but no date.)

Mordred brought to Camelot after Arthur kills his mother. Ends as Arthur goes to fight Rome and Mordred vows to make the kingdom a better place. Responsibility, the proper use of force. One scene definitely inspired by White.

Hawke, Simon. [Nicholas Yermakov] *The Wizard of 4th Street*. New York: Warner, 1987.

First of the series. The descendants of Arthur's sisters must prevent the Dark Ones from returning to Earth in the twenty-second century where magic has become a science and students get Ph.Ds in Thaumaturgy.

---. *The Wizard of Whitechapel*. New York: Warner, 1988.

---. *The Wizard of Sunset Strip*. New York: Warner, 1989.

---. *The Wizard of the Rue Morgue*. New York: Warner, 1990.

---. *The Samurai Wizard*. New York: Warner, 1991.

Passage comparing Lancelot with a Yakuza boss.

---. *The Wizard of Santa Fe*. New York: Warner, 1991.

---. *The Wizard of Camelot*. New York: Warner, 1993.

Chronologically, the first in the series. Interesting consideration of the morality of forcing peace on a world that needs it.

---. *The Wizard of Lovecraft's Cafe*. New York: Warner, 1993.

Our heroes question the morality of their actions.

Potboilers, and not very good ones. Intriguing considerations of the similarity between knights and gangsters, utopias founded on immoral acts, and immortals marrying mortals, but all of this is buried in some very

skippable material.

Holt, Tom. *Grailblazers*. First published: London: Orbit, 1994.
Repr. 1995.

The Grail quest as Arthur's attempt to keep the knights busy, played for laughs where the background is re-written whenever necessary for a new joke.

Hunter, Jim. *Percival and the Presence of God*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1978.

Percival realizes that he has survived because peasants have fed and cared for him while he was searching for the Grail.

Jack the Giant Killer. n.a. Previously published by Simon & Schuster, probably in 1984, as *Greg Hildebrandt's Favorite Fairy Tales*. Repr. Morris Plains: The Unicorn Publishing House, 1992.

Fantasy artist Hildebrandt illustrates the story, which likely predates this century. Jack helps Arthur's son marry a princess.

James, John. *Men Went to Cattraeth*. First published: Great Britain: Cassell & Co., 1969. Repr. Toronto, New York, London, Sydney, and Auckland: Bantam, 1988.

Jeter, K. W. *Morlock Night*. New York: DAW Books, 1979.

Sort of a sequel to Wells' *The Time Machine*. Morlocks invade the twentieth century with the time machine. Arthur is the only hope for Britain.

Johnson, Barbara Ferry. *Lionors*. New York: 1975.

About the woman who conceived Sir Borre with Arthur.

Jones, Courtway. *In the Shadow of the Oak King*. Copyright 1991. Repr. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: Pocket Books-Simon & Schuster, 1992.

---. *The Witch of the North*. Copyright: 1992. Repr. New York: Pocket Books-Simon and Schuster, 1994.

---. *A Prince in Camelot*. New York: Pocket Books-Simon and Schuster, 1995.

Pelleas, Uther's other son, Morgan, and Mordred turn out to be better fighters than all of Arthur's knights, with the possible exception of Lancelot. Some gender issues in the second book; speculations about Picts and giants in the first.

Jones, Diana Wynne. *Hexwood*. First published: Great Britain: Methuen Children's Books, 1993. Repr. New York: William Morrow-Greenwillow Books, 1994.

Young adult science fiction set in the twentieth century. The Grail is a sentient robot. Arthur and Merlin rebel against their creators, extra-terrestrials who exploit Earth for its flint.

Jones, Mary J. *Avalon*. Naiad P: 1991.

King Arthur's daughter and her lesbian lover. Interesting questions of responsibility, and personal vs. political interests, but that's secondary, unless there's a sequel.

Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. New York: Viking, 1939, 1959.

Has many references to the stories of Tristan and Isolde and Arthur; see J. S. Atherton's *The Books of the Wake*, expanded and corrected edition. (Mamaroneck, N. Y.: Paul P. Appel, 1974.) See also Adaline Glasheen's *Third Census of Finnegans Wake*. (Berkeley: Univ. of California P, 1977, p. 271.)

Kane, Gil, and John Jakes. *Excalibur!* New York: Dell, 1980.

Dreadful. Question of personal vs. political interests, proper behavior of kings. Mordred called effeminate despite his military prowess. Attempt to explain how Arthur would condemn Lancelot and Guinevere. Morgan Le Fay's hair changes color.

Karr, Phyllis Ann. *The Idylls of the Queen*. New York: Ace, 1982.

The story of the poisoned apple, narrated by Sir Kay. Issues of narration, gender, proper use of force, speech.

Katz, Welwyn Wilton. *The Third Magic*. Groundwood Books/Douglas & McIntyre, 1988.

Morgan and Merlin are from conflicting organizations on another planet. A girl from our century journeys to Morgan's world and is mistaken for her. Very interesting twist, gender questions, family relationships.

Kay, Guy Gavriel. *The Summer Tree*. First published: Arbor House, 1985. Repr. New York: Berkley, 1986.

---. *The Wandering Fire*. First published: Arbor House, 1986. Repr. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1987.

---. *The Darkest Road*. New York: Arbor House, 1986.

Arthur and Lancelot are summoned to fight for the first world, Fionavar, while Guenevere is reincarnated as a

twentieth-century woman from Canada.

Kennealy, Patricia. *The Copper Crown*. Copyright 1964 by Patricia Kennealy Morrison. New York, London, Victoria, Toronto, Auckland: ROC-Penguin, 1986.

---. *The Throne of Scone*. Copyright 1986 by Patricia Kennealy Morrison. New York, London, Victoria, Toronto, Auckland: NAL-Penguin Books, 1987.

---. *The Silver Branch*. Copyright 1988 by Patricia Kennealy Morrison. New York, London, Victoria, Toronto, Auckland: ROC-Penguin, 1989.

---. *The Hawk's Gray Feather*. Copyright 1990 by Patricia Kennealy Morrison. New York, London, Victoria, Toronto, Auckland: ROC-Penguin, 1991.

---. *The Oak Above the Kings*. London: HarperCollins, 1994.

---. *Hedge in the Mist*. Forthcoming.

Described as "Celts in Space," this series sets the story of Arthur on another planet. After he is dead, the ruler of the planet searches for the Thirteen Treasures. Recently, the author started publishing as Patricia Morrison.

Kuncewicz, Maria. *Tristan: A Novel*. New York: George Braziller, 1974.

Kushner, Ellen. *Thomas the Rhymer*. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty Associates, 1990.

While visiting the Faerie realm, Thomas meets an unnamed king who is probably Arthur.

Kuttner, Henry. "Wet Magic." First published: 1943, copyright 1942. Repr. in *Echoes of Valor*. Ed. Karl Edward Wagner. Tor-Tom Doherty Associates, 1987, 219 - 286.

Modern pilot must become a hero and gain the courage to confront Morgan Le Fay who is living under a lake.

Kyle, Duncan. *Black Camelot*. First published: New York: St. Martin's, 1978. Repr. New York: Berkeley, 1980.

Espionage thriller set during WWII, when Hitler created his own Round Table.

Landis, Arthur H. *A World Called Camelot*. New York: DAW Books, 1976.

---. *Camelot in Orbit*. New York: DAW Books, 1978.

---. *The Majick of Camelot*. New York: DAW Books, 1981.

---. *Home--To Avalon*. New York, DAW Books, 1982.

The planet Camelot has knights and medieval technology, but no Arthur.

Laubenthal, Sanders Anne. *Excalibur*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1978.

A twentieth century Pendragon goes on an archaeological quest for Excalibur in Mobile, Alabama, confronting Morgause and Morgan Le Fay, while a scholar searches for the Grail. Religious issues similar to Bradley's, nice quest stuff.

Lawhead, Stephen R. *Taliesin*. Copyright 1987. New York: Avon-Hearst, 1990.

---. *Merlin*. Copyright 1988. New York: Avon-Hearst, 1990.

---. *Arthur*. Copyright 1989. New York: Avon-Hearst, 1990.

---. *Pendragon*. New York: Avon-Hearst, 1994.

Very Christian, oddly unusual to the modern reader.

Lawrence, Ann. *Hawk of May*. No further data known.

Leader, Mary. *Triad*. First published: Coward, McCann, 1973. Repr. New York, London, and Toronto: 1974.

Lewis, C. S. *That Hideous Strength*. First published: 1946. Repr. New York: Crowell-Collier Publishing, 1962.

Third volume of Lewis' Space Trilogy. Merlin is a wild magician serving the Pendragon, a wounded philologist named Ransom who also functions as the Fisher King.

Lindholm, Megan. *Wizard of the Pigeons*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1986.

The title character is a streetperson who is also somehow Merlin living in a subculture of eccentric magicians.

Lister, Robin. *The Legend of King Arthur*. First printed in Italy, copyright 1988. Repr. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, and Auckland: Doubleday, 1989.

Merlin narrates the story of Arthur. Lister draws on Malory and Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Lively, Penelope. *The Whispering Knights*. London: William Heinemann, 1971. Repr. London, Auckland, Melbourne, Singapore, and Toronto: Mamouth-Reed Consumer Books, 1995.

Young adult fiction, set in the twentieth century. Sleeping knights.

Lodge, David. *Small World*. First published: 1984. Repr. New York: Warner, 1986.

Grail quest in the twentieth century conference-hopping academia.

MacLeish, Roderick. *Prince Ombra*. NY: St. Martins, 1982.

A hero is reincarnated in every generation to fight his adversary. Arthur was one of many reincarnations referred to.

Malamud, Bernard. *The Natural*. Copyright 1952. Repr. New York: Avon, 1982.

The main character is a Percival figure who plays for a baseball team run by "Pop Fisher."

Marshall, Edison. *The Pagan King*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959.

Historical issues: much of Arthur's life is stage-managed. Psychological study: everyone knows what is going on but him, yet they only seem to have the knowledge when he is beginning to realize it. Kingship. Also, Marshall seems to think that Tyr and Odin are British gods.

Martine-Barnes, Adrienne. *The Dragon Rises*. New York: Ace Books, 1983.

Science fiction. Arthur is one of many incarnations of The Dragon who hopes to break free of Spiral Castle and the Wheel of Regeneration. Issue of war, which is placed before all else, even love, questions of the immutability of destiny.

Mayne, William. *Earthfasts*. First published: London: Hamilton, 1966. Repr. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1972.

Seventeenth century drummer boy goes into the mound where Arthur is sleeping and takes a candle. He emerges in the twentieth century and two contemporary boys must return the candle.

McDowell, Ian. "Chichevache." *Ares* Nov. 1981, 10+.

---. *Mordred's Curse*. New York: Avon, 1996.

In "Chichevache," Mordred rescues a woman by breaking all the rules of chivalry. The novel is the first half of Mordred's story. By the end of the novel, Mordred has become disillusioned

with Arthur, and he is having an affair with Guinevere.

McGowen, Tom. *Sir Machinery*. Chicago: Folet Publishing, 1970.

Reincarnation of Arthur builds a robot.

McKenzie, Nancy. *The Child Queen*. New York: Del Rey-Ballantine, 1994.

---. *The High Queen*. New York: Del Rey-Ballantine, 1995.

Guinevere tells her story.

Meaney, Dee Morrison. *Iseult*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1985.

Mitchison, Naomi. *To the Chapel Perilous*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955.

Grail quest as news event of the decade, with reporters accompanied by dwarf photographers. Religious issues, also gender, historical, and narratology issues.

Monaco, Richard. *Parsival or a Knight's Tale*. First published: New York: Macmillan; London: MacDonald and James, 1977. Repr. New York: Pocket Books, 1978.

---. *The Grail War*. First published: New York: Pocket Books, 1979; London: Sphere Books, 1981. Repr. New York: Berkley, 1982.

---. *The Final Quest*. First published: New York: Putnam's, 1980; London: Sphere Books, 1982. Repr. New York: Berkley Books: 1983.

---. "Blood and Dreams." *Elsewhere, Vol. II: Tales of Fantasy*. New York: Ace Books, 1982.

Addendum to the trilogy about Parsival, incorporated into the novel of the same name.

---. *Blood and Dreams*. New York: Berkley Books: 1985. Parts published as the novella "Blood and Dreams" in Ace's *Elsewhere, Vol. II*.

Although the story and novel were published after the trilogy, they chronicle events which took place between the first and second books.

---. *Runes*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1984.

---. *Broken Stone*. New York: Ace, 1985.

Parsival, The Grail War, The Final Quest, and Blood and Dreams are about Percival, set in a nightmarish, surreal

world. *Runes* and *Broken Stone* are about Uther and Igraine who are Roman gladiators living far earlier than Arthur is supposed to have lived.

Moorcock, Michael. *Gloriana, or the Unfulfill'd Queen: Being a Romance*. London: Allison and Busby, 1978; New York: Avon Books, 1979.

Alternate history in which Elizabeth I, here called Gloriana, is married to a rogue who is granted the title Prince and renamed Arthur.

Morpurgo, Michael. *Arthur, High King of Britain*. First published: Great Britain: Pavillion Books Limited, 1994. Repr. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1995.

Beautifully illustrated, retelling the story from Arthur's point of view.

Munn, H. Walter. *Merlin's Godson*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1976. Includes *King of the World's Edge* (1939) and *The Ship from Atlantis* (1967).

---. *Merlin's Ring*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1974.

Merlin and his godson sail to the New World after the battle of Camlann.

Myers, John Myers. *Silverlock*. First published: New York: Dutton, 1949. Repr. New York: Ace Books, 1982.

Twentieth century businessman visits the magical Commonwealth where he meets characters from literature, including Nimue, Gawain, and the Green Knight.

Newman, Robert. *Merlin's Mistake*. New York: Atheneum, 1970; London: Hutchinson, 1971.

---. *The Testing of Tertius*. New York: Atheneum, 1973.

Newman, Sharan. *Guinevere*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.

---. *The Chessboard Queen*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.

---. *Guinevere Evermore*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.

---. "The Palace by Moonlight." *Invitation to Camelot: An Arthurian Anthology of Short Stories*. ed. Parke Godwin. New York: Ace, 1988, 201 - 221.

Guinevere brought up as an airhead, with the logical consequences. Gender issues, questions of responsibility, country vs. clan loyalties, religious questions, nature vs. nurture. "The Palace by Moonlight" is set during the third

volume of a trilogy where the blind Lancelot and aging Guinevere are visited by a man who wants to know that the legends are true.

Nichols, Ruth. *The Marrow of the World*. New York: Atheneum, 1972.

I have not located this.

Norman, Diana. *King of the Last Days*. London: Hodder, 1981.

I have not located this.

---. *Silver, Jewels and Jade*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1980.

Igraine's story told as a fairy tale, ending with her marriage to her first husband.

Norton, Andre [Alice Mary Norton]. *Here Abide Monsters*. New York: Atheneum, 1973.

---. *Merlin's Mirror*. New York: DAW Books, 1975.

Merlin and Nimue are aliens who disagree about how advanced humanity should be allowed to become.

---. *Steel Magic*. Cleveland: Collins-World, 1965. Repr. New York: Archway, 1978.

---. *Witch World*. New York: Ace Books, 1963.

First of the Witch World series, a man from Earth is sent to Witch World by Siege Perilous, a "stone of Power."

Nye, Robert. *Taliesin*. Copyright 1966. First American edition: New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.

Retelling of the story of Taliesin.

---. *Merlin*. First published: London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978; New York: Putnam's, 1979. Repr. Middlesex, New York, Victoria, Markham, Auckland: Penguin, 1979.

The story of Merlin's birth as a dirty joke. Despite noble intentions, Arthur fantasizing about beating and raping his sister, as Uther did to Igraine. Neither woman is unwilling.

O'Meara, Walter. *The Duke of War*. NY: Harcourt Brace World, 1966.

I just recieved a photocopy of this, but have not read it.

Paxson, Diana L. *The White Raven*. First published: 1988. Repr. New York: Avon-Hearst, 1989.

Gender issues, question of kingship and queenship, question of responsibility, passive-aggressive behavior, and abusive relationships.

Percy, Walker. *Lancelot*. First published: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Repr. New York: Avon, 1978 (by arrangement with Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

A man who murdered his wife and her lover finds parallels between his story and Arthur's.

Peters, Elizabeth [Barbara Gross Mertz]. *The Camelot Caper*. First published: New York: Meredith Press, 1969. Repr. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty: 1988.

Modern mystery.

Phillifent, John T. *Life with Lancelot*. New York: Ace Books, 1973. Bound with William Barton, *Hunting on Kunderer*, as an Ace Double.

Spaceman called Lancelot on a planet with medieval level of technology.

Powers, Tim. *The Drawing of the Dark*. New York, Ballantine Books, 1979.

Arthur reincarnates as a 16th century mercenary.

---. *Last Call*. Published in hardcover by William Morrow and Co., Copyright Tim Powers, 1992. Repr. New York: Avon Books, 1993.

Las Vegas is the Waste Land because of the death of Benjamin Siegel (Bugsy Siegel), the Fisher King. The protagonist must defeat his father's schemes and become the new Fisher King.

Powys, John Cowper. *A Glastonbury Romance*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1932; London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1933.

Modern parable with a huge cast of characters.

Price, Anthony. *Our Man in Camelot*. First published: London: Victor Gollancz, 1975. Repr. New York: Warner, 1988.

Soviet agents try to frame the CIA for destroying the site of Mount Badon.

Price, Robert. *The Last Pendragon*. New York: Walker and Co., 1991.

Robbins, Ruth. *Taliesin and King Arthur*. Berkeley: Parnassus

Press, 1970.

Taliesin tells the story of his birth to Arthur. Odd deviations from the original.

Roberson, Jennifer. *Return to Avalon: A Celebration of Marion Zimmer Bradley*. New York: DAW Books, 1996.

Anthology of Arthurian stories published in honor of Bradley, author of *Mists of Avalon*.

Roberts, Dorothy James. *The Enchanted Cup*. New York: Apple-Century-Crofts, 1953.

Story of Tristan and Isolde.

Saberhagen, Fred. *Merlin's Bones*. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty, 1995.

I have not yet read this.

St. John, Nicole [Norma Johnston]. *Guinever's Gift*. New York: Random House, 1977.

Archaeologist who specializes in Arthur's time period is an Arthur figure. The love triangle and the Mordred situation recreated by the modern protagonists in modern romance style.

Sampson, Fay. *Wise Woman's Telling*. London: Headline Book Publishing PLC, 1989.

---. *White Nun's Telling*. London: Headline Book Publishing PLC, 1989.

---. *Black Smith's Telling*. London: Headline Book Publishing PLC, 1990.

---. *Taliesin's Telling*. London: Headline Book Publishing PLC, 1991.

---. *Herself*. London: Headline Book Publishing PLC, 1992.

---. *Daughter of Tintagel*. London: Headline Book Publishing PLC, 1992. Omnibus volume containing *Wise Woman's Telling*, 1989; *White Nun's Telling*, 1989; *Black Smith's Telling*, 1990; *Taliesin's Telling*, 1991; and *Herself*, 1992, all published by Headline Book Publishing PLC.

Morgan Le Fay's story told from multiple points of view, incorporating older source material, such as Gwenhyfach. Deals with gender issues, definitely one of MZB's literary heirs.

Seare, Nicholas. *Rude Tales and Glorious: Being the Only*

True Account of Diverse Feats of Brawn and Bawd Performed by King Arthur. NY: Clarkson Potter (dist. by Crown), 1983.

I have not located this.

Service, Pamela F. *Winter of Magic's Return.* New York: Atheneum, 1987.

Merlin returns five centuries after a nuclear holocaust. Temptation of power vs. love, friendship, and responsibility. Arthur realizes that kingship means service, not freedom.

---. *Tomorrow's Magic.* New York: Atheneum, 1987.

Sequel to *Winter of Magic's Return*. More considerations of power. A young witch is warned by a bard that men will shun her because of her reputation, yet he himself helps to create that reputation. Merlin ends threat of a second nuclear holocaust by imprinting the memory of the first one on the genetic structure of humanity.

Shwartz, Susan. "Count of the Saxon Shore." *Alternatives*. Ed. Robert Adams with Pamela Crippen Adams. New York: Baen Publishing, 1989, 121 - 163.

Alternate history where Arthur survives the battle of Camlann.

---. *The Grail of Hearts.* First published: 1992. Repr. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty, 1993.

Last third is almost a novelization of Wagner's *Parsifal*; the rest tells the story of Kundry, who is forced by Klingsor to relive events leading up to the crucifixion. Gender issues.

Steinbeck, John. *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights, from the Winchester MSS. of Thomas Malory and Other Sources.* Ed. Chase Horton. First published: New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; London: William Heinemann, 1976, but written earlier. Repr. New York: Ballantine Books, 1976.

Questions of power and responsibility. Narrative issues as well: Steinbeck begins by translating Malory into modern English, but gradually finds that he has his own story to tell.

Stewart, Mary. *The Crystal Cave.* First published: 1970. Repr. New York: Fawcett, 1971.

---. *The Hollow Hills.* First published: 1973. Repr. Greenwich: Fawcett, 1974.

- . *The Last Enchantment*. First published: 1979. Repr. New York: Fawcett-Ballantine, 1984.
- . *The Wicked Day*. First published: 1983. Repr. New York: Fawcett-Ballantine, 1984.
- . *The Prince and the Pilgrim*. First published: London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995. Repr. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1995.

Gender and historical issues, fate vs. free will. The first three books narrated by Merlin. Perhaps the first popular version dealing with pre-Malory source material.

That Wicked Day tells Mordred's story, and reads more like an outline of a novel than a novel. *The Prince and the Pilgrim* tells the story of Alexander le Orphan and the pilgrim Alice.

- Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The Lantern Bearers*. New York: Henry Z. Walck, 1959.

Gender, question of compassion. One of Sutcliff's historical novels. Aquila joins Ambrosius in the fight to free Britain from the Saxons and watches Artos (Arthur) become a great war leader.

- . *Sword at Sunset*. First published: 1963. Repr. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty, 1987.
- Gender, kingship, responsibility, fatalism. Earliest use of Bedwyr instead of Lancelot as Guenevere's lover. Follows *The Lantern Bearers* in Sutcliff's historical series.
- . *Tristan and Iseult*. First published: 1971. Repr. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991.
- A more mature Iseult than usual. No love potion. Stress on relationships.
- . *The Sword and the Circle*. London, Sydney, Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1981.
- . *The Light Beyond the Forest: The Quest for the Holy Grail*. London, Sydney, Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1979.
- . *The Road to Camlann*. London, Sydney, Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1979.
- The Sword and the Circle*, *The Light Beyond the Forest*, and *The Road to Camlann* retell Malory and the story of the Green Knight, as well as some material from the *Mabinogion*.
- . *The Shining Company*. First published in 1990. Repr. Farrar,

Straus, and Giroux, 1992.

Loosely based on *Y Goddodin*.

---. Taylor, Anna. *Drustan the Wanderer: A Novel Based on the Legend of Tristan and Isolde*. Harlow, England: Longman, 1971; New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972. I have the New York edition.

---. Taylor, Keith. *Bard*. New York: Ace Books, 1981. Portions of this novel appeared in *Fanstastic Stories*, 1975, published under the pseudonym Dennis More.

A wandering bard meets Vivian in one of the stories.

Telep, Peter. *Squire*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.

---. *Squire's Blood*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.

---. *Squire's Honor*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.

Trilogy about a boy who becomes Arthur's squire.

Tolstoy, Nikolai. *The Coming of the King*. First printed: 1989. Repr. New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Auckland: Bantam, 1990.

200+ pages too long, but it is a linguistic tour de force. Merlin tells his story, part of which comes from the story of Taliesin. Lots of underworld voyages where he sees his sister.

Treece, Henry. *The Great Captains*. London: The Bodley Head, 1956.

Gritty realism, Arthur is barbarically splendid. Treece used the idea of Arthur as *ursus horribilis*, and drew on Gildas for the names of the local kings.

---. *The Green Man*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966.

Amleth (Hamlet) meets Beowulf and Arthur, who is a different Arthur than the one in *The Great Captains*. Aging, practical, and ruthless, his sense of humor and justice make him the most attractive character in the book, which is grittier than *The Great Captains*.

Turner, Roy. *King of the Lordless Country*. London: Dennis Dobson, 1971.

Turtledove, Harry. "A Massachusetts Yankee in King Arthur's Court." *Alternate Kennedys*. Ed. Mike Resnick. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty, 1992, 157 - 187.

JFK goes back in time to Arthur's Camelot and makes love to

Guinevere.

Turton, Godfrey. *The Emperor Arthur*. New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967.

Neither realism nor Arthur have much to do with this. It is those meddlesome interfering kids, Pelleas, his sister, and their spouses, Vivian and Gareth, who save the day. Religious issues, a question of compassion vs. prudence. Disappointing.

Twain, Mark [Samuel L. Clemens]. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. First published: 1889. Repr. New York: Airmont, 1964.

Twain uses the story of Arthur to comment on the cruelty of both the Middle Ages and his own time. But he gives a certain respect to Arthur, who is a brave hero, even if he is blind to the evils around him.

Van Asten, Gail. *The Blind Knight*. New York: Ace Books, 1988.

Vance, Jack. *Lyonesse*. New York: Berkley, 1983.

Vansittart, Peter. *Lancelot: A Novel*. London: Peter Owen, 1978.

I have not located this.

---. *Perceval*. London: Peter Owen, 1988.

Percival lives through the centuries from Arthur's time to ours.

Viney, Jane. *The Bright-Helmed One*. London: Robert Hale, 1975.

I have not located this.

Walton, Evangeline. *The Island of the Mighty: The Fourth Branch of The Mabinogion*. First published: 1936. Repr. New York: Ballantine, 1979.

---. *The Children of Llyr: The Second Branch of The Mabinogion*. First published: 1971. Repr. New York: Ballantine, 1978.

---. *The Song of Rhiannon: The Third Branch of The Mabinogion*. First published: 1972. Repr. New York: Ballantine, 1979.

---. *Prince of Annwn: The First Branch of The Mabinogion*. New York: Ballantine, 1974.

Retellings of the four branches of *The Mabinogion*. Gender and religious issues. Although the books were not written in the order in which the stories appear in *The Mabinogion*,

when read in this order, they form a coherent whole. Power gradually passes from women to men. Kingship, inherited by the king's nephew at the beginning of the series, is inherited by the king's son, after Math weds his footholder to compensate her for being raped by his nephews. Even as he does this, Math realizes that he has set a precedent for his kingdom.

Wein, Elizabeth E. *The Winter Prince*. First published: 1993. Repr. New York: Baen, 1994.

---. "Fire." *L. Ron Hubbard Presents Writers of the Future, Volume IX*. Ed. Dave Wolverton. Los Angeles: Bridge, 1993, 3 - 33.

The novel considers gender issues, personal responsibility, sibling rivalry. Morgause as La Belle Dame Sans Merci, also the monster in the dark confronted by the children. Adults appear rarely; Arthur acts as the final speaker of a Shakespeare play, restoring order.

The story is set seven years after the battle of Camlan, where Arthur and Medraut fought together against the Saxons and lost. The Saxons captured Arthur's legitimate heir and keep him as a thrall until Medraut ransoms him. Very sketchy, more an outline than a complete story.

White, T. H. *The Sword and the Stone*. London: Collins, 1938; New York: Putnam's, 1958. Repr. New York: Dell, 1963. Repr. New York: Philomel Books, 1993.

There are at least three different versions of the text: the original, 1938 text, the version which appears in *The Once and Future King*, and the version I discovered in the Philomel edition. The changes involve which animals Arthur turns into under Merlyn's instruction, Madame Mim, and the meeting with Robin and Marion. This last episode has three versions.

---. *The Witch in the Wood*. London: Collins; New York: Putnam's, 1939.

Morgause is an obvious caricature of T. H. White's mother. When this book was revised for inclusion in *The Once and Future King*, she became a more sinister and less comedic figure, and White added discussions between Arthur, Kay, and Merlin about the proper use of force and the justification of war. White's illustrations of Palomides and Grummore disguised as the questing beast are delightful.

---. *The Ill-Made Knight*. New York: Putnam's, 1940.

Gawaine does not speak in dialect in this version, but that was changed when it was revised for inclusion in *The Once and Future King*.

- . *The Once and Future King*. First published: London: Collins; New York: Putnam's, 1958. Includes *The Sword in the Stone*, *The Witch in the Wood*, both in revised form, and *The Ill-Made Knight*, with the conclusion, *The Candle in the Wind*. Repr. New York: Berkley, 1981.
- . *The Book of Merlyn*. First published: Austin, U of Texas P; London: Collins, 1977, but written earlier. Repr. New York: Berkley, 1978.

This contains material previously published in slightly different form in *The Once and Future King* and *The Sword in the Stone*.

White's is still one of the most influential modern versions, providing versions of Arthur, Merlin, Lancelot, Mordred, and Morgause which shape these characters in the hands of other authors. Kingship, proper use of force, narration, religion, relationships.

Whyte, Jack. *The Skystone*. Toronto: Viking, 1992.

- . *The Singing Sword*. Toronto: Viking, 1993.

- . *The Eagles' Brood*. Toronto: Viking, 1994.

The first three of a series of six novels called *A Dream of Eagles*. Arthur is not born until the end of the third one. I have not read these, but I gather that they are of the "gritty realism" school, and that they are not as historically accurate as the author might believe.

Wibberley, Leonard. *Quest of Excalibur*. New York: Putnam, 1959. Repr. San Bernardino: Borgo, 1979.

Arthur returns to the Britain of Wibberley's future, moderating between an overly bureaucratic government and the rebellious Princess Pamela who wants to run away with an American student who is the reincarnation of Lancelot. Delightful.

Williams, Charles. *War in Heaven*. First published in 1930. Repr. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1970.

The Grail is discovered in an obscure British village. This is a supernatural thriller which concentrates on religious issues. Williams is sometimes credited with inventing not only the supernatural thriller, but also the modern detective novel (See Bosky).

Wolf, Joan. *The Road to Avalon*. First published 1988. Repr. New York: Penguin, 1989.

Arthur and Morgan, here his aunt, are secretly lovers; Guinevere sleeps with Bedivere, and Agravaine, attracted to Bedivere, is the villain of the piece. Arthur and Morgan have a telepathic link.

Wolfe, Gene. *Castlevlew*. New York: Tor-Tom Doherty, 1990.

Arthur is a modern car salesman, unaware of his identity.

Woolley, Persia. *Child of the Northern Spring*. First published: 1987. Repr. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo: Pocket Books-Simon & Schuster, 1988.

---. *Queen of the Summer Stars*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: Poseidon-Simon & Schuster, 1990.

---. *Guinevere: The Legend in Autumn*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: Poseidon-Simon & Schuster, 1991.

Guinevere tells her story. Gender, religious, narratology issues. Too much a 20th century trilogy.

Yolen, Jane. *Merlin's Booke*. New York: Ace-Berkley, 1986.

Anthology of stories about the wizard, mutually contradictory. Yolen examines him from many different points of view.

Zelazny, Roger. *The Guns of Avalon*. New York: Avon, 1972.

---. *The Courts of Chaos*. New York: Avon, 1978.

In *Guns of Avalon*, Corwin, the protagonist of Zelazny's Amber series is taken to meet Ganelon by Lancelot. In *The Courts of Chaos*, Corwin discovers he has a son named Merlin. Merlin is the protagonist of the next five books, and he is locked in a crystal cave by his rival, Lukas Reynard.

---. "The Last Defender of Camelot." *The Last Defender of Camelot*. New York: Pocket Books, 1980. 271-94.

Lancelot and Morgan Le Fay team up to fight Merlin in the twentieth century.

2. Selected Comic Books

Arthur Sex #7: The Erotic Adventures of King Arthur. Castle of Ill Repute: Part One of Two. Originally published by Editorial Astri, S. A. Repr. Westlake Village: Aircel Comics-Malibu Graphics, Nov. 1991.

This is a faithful retelling of an incident in Malory. I

have yet to locate other issues.

Barr, Mike W. and Brian Bolland. *Camelot 3000*. DC Comics, 1982.
First published 1982 - 1985 in 12 issues. Repr. 1988 as a single
graphic novel.

Arthur comes back to save the Earth from an alien invasion
led by Morgan Le Fay. It almost confronts the contradictions
of Arthur's reign. This treatment is marred by the stupidity
of the characters and scientific implausibility. We are
supposed to believe that humanity can learn how to create a
sub-race of mindless fighters, yet has somehow forgotten how
to do a sex-change operation.

Buscema, John, Doug Moench, et. al. *Marvel Preview Presents:
Merlin*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1980.

The devil sends his son to corrupt Arthur's court.

Delano, Jaime. *Hellblazer Annual #1: The Bloody Saint*. New York,
DC Comics, 1989.

The protagonist of the *Hellblazer* series learns that he is
descended from Arthur's heir, Constantine. Constantine
adapts with ruthless cunning to the Christian religion,
and he keeps the head of Merlin to advise him.

Rowson, Martin. *The Waste Land*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.

Part tribute, part satire of Eliot's poem. Also a tribute to
Raymond Chandler. Private eye Christopher Marlowe seeks his
dead partner's murderer, encountering famous literary
personages in a surreal world. I found Eliot easier to
understand. There are notes at the end of the story,
patterned on Eliot's notes at the end of his poem.

Wagner, Matt. *Mage: The Hero Discovered*. Graphic novel. 3 vols.
Comico, Donning, 1984.

Kevin Matchstick learns from the Mage, Myrth, and a black
Lady of the Lake that he is Arthur and a magic baseball bat
is Excalibur.

3. *Selected Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Poems*

Alama, Pauline J. "Gawain's Last Words to Lancelot". Unpublished
poem. 1995.

Gawain examines his complicated relationship with Lancelot.

Eliot, T. S. *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the
Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*. Ed.

Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

The Waste Land was first published in 1922. Eliot's poem influenced other authors who wrote about the Waste Land, while his notes drew attention to Jessie Weston's theories about the Grail story being based on a fertility ritual.

Feld, Harold. "The Inman Injuriata." Unpublished poem, 1991.

Written as tribute for a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, in the style of *Orlando Furioso*. Introduces a new holy relic which Arthur passed to Guinevere.

Fiana of Clare. "The Bard's Tale." Unpublished poem. 1994.

Arthur is told how his knights defended a woman's lands from an evil king. When he asks why they did not tell him of this, they reply that they were only doing their job. Like Bradshaw's Gwalchmai, they acted because it was the right thing to do, not because they wanted praise.

Morris, William. *The Defence of Guinevere and Other Poems*. London: Bell and Daldy, 1858.

Contains Morris' Arthurian poems "The Defence of Guinevere," "King Arthur's Tomb", "Sir Galahad: A Christmas Mystery", "The Chapel in Lyonesse", "Near Avalon", and "A Good Knight in Prison." Repr. 1966.

---. "The Chapel in Lyonesse." *The Collected Works of William Morris with Introductions by His Daughter May Morris: Volume I: The Defense of Guinevere and The Hollow Land*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, 31 - 34.

Galahad brings comfort to the knight Ozana.

---. "The Defence of Guinevere." *The Collected Works of William Morris with Introductions by His Daughter May Morris: Volume I: The Defense of Guinevere and The Hollow Land*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, 1 - 10.

Guinevere defends herself, buying time for Lancelot to rescue her. Gender issues.

---. "A Good Knight in Prison." *The Collected Works of William Morris with Introductions by His Daughter May Morris: Volume I: The Defense of Guinevere and The Hollow Land*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, 82 - 86.

---. "King Arthur's Tomb." *The Collected Works of William Morris with Introductions by His Daughter May Morris: Volume I: The Defense of Guinevere and The Hollow Land*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, 11 - 23.

Lancelot and Guinevere meet for a final time at King Arthur's tomb.

- . "Sir Galahad: A Christmas Mystery." *The Collected Works of William Morris with Introductions by His Daughter May Morris: Volume I: The Defense of Guinevere and The Hollow Land*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, 24 - 30.

After much searching and sorrow, Galahad finally achieves the Grail.

Robinson, Edwin Arlington. *Arthurian Poets: E. A. Robinson*. Intro. by James P. Carley. Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1990.

Includes "Merlin" (1917), "Lancelot" (1920), "Tristram" (1927), and "Modred: A Fragment". "Lancelot" and "Merlin" are anti-war and deal with the question of responsibility.

Tennyson, Alfred Lord. "The Epic." First published: 1842; written as early as 1833. Repr. in *The Poems of Tennyson in three volumes: second edition incorporating the Trinity College MSS*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1969. 2nd edition: 1987. II 1 - 19.

Contains the poem "Morte D'Arthur" within a framing device where a friend of the narrator's reads the poem aloud. "Morte D'Arthur" was incorporated into "The Death of Arthur" from *Idylls of the King* without the framing device.

- . *Idylls of the King*. First published: 1857 - 1885; some parts written as early as 1833. Repr. in *The Poems of Tennyson in three volumes: second edition incorporating the Trinity College MSS*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1969. 2nd edition: 1987. III 263 - 563, with some variant readings pp. 602 - 603.

The work that could have started an Arthurian revival by itself. Questions of heroism, relationships, gender issues, ideals, and self-control.

- . "The Lady of Shalott." First published: 1833; substantially revised in 1842. Repr. in *The Poems of Tennyson in three volumes: second edition incorporating the Trinity College MSS*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1969. 2nd edition: 1987. I 387 - 395.

Essentially a version of the story of Elaine of Astolat.

- . "Morte D'Arthur." First published: 1842; written as early as 1833. Repr. in *The Poems of Tennyson in three volumes: second edition incorporating the Trinity College MSS*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1969. 2nd edition: 1987. II 3 - 18.

Incorporated into "The Death of Arthur" from *Idylls of the King*.

- . "Merlin and the Gleam." First published: 1889. Repr. in *The Poems of Tennyson in three volumes: second edition incorporating the Trinity College MSs*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1969. 2nd edition: 1987. III 205 - 210.
- . "Sir Galahad." First written: 1834. Repr. in *The Poems of Tennyson in three volumes: second edition incorporating the Trinity College MSs*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1969. 2nd edition: 1987. II 33 - 35.

Galahad describes himself and his quest for the Grail.

- . "Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere: A Fragment." First written: 1830. Repr. in *The Poems of Tennyson in three volumes: second edition incorporating the Trinity College MSs*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1969. 2nd edition: 1987. I 544 - 547.

A brief glimpse of the knight and queen riding together.

- . *A Variorum Edition of Tennyson's Idylls of the King*. Ed. John Pfordresher. New York and London: Columbia UP, 1973.

Contains many variant readings.

Williams, Charles. *Charles Williams: Arthurian Poets*. Ed. with intro. by David Llewellyn Dodds. Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1991. Includes *Taliesin Through Logres* (1938), and *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944) and previously unpublished poems (copr. The Estate of Charles Williams, 1991).

Difficult, but wonderful. Religious questions.

4. *Entertainment: Selected Plays, Movies, and Television Shows*

"Battlefield." *Doctor Who*. Writ. Ben Aaronovitch. Dir. Michael Kerrigan. BBC, London. 6 - 27 Sept. 1989.

The Doctor, a Timelord who uses a machine to travel in time, tries to prevent Morgaine from starting World War III, and discovers that in her past, but his future, he will become Merlin.

Interesting characterization of Morgaine, who is ruthless in battle, but respectful of those who have fallen in battle. She restores the sight of an innkeeper who served beer to her

son, Mordred. Ultimately, the Doctor keeps her from launching a nuclear missile by appealing to her honor. Arthur's knights seem to be aliens from space, and one of them, Ancelyn, falls in love with Brigadier Winifred Bambera, while the Doctor's companion, Ace, rises out of the sea, holding Excalibur.

The Black Knight. Dir. Tay Garnett. Columbia, 1954.

Dreadful! I did not know that the Moors made common cause with the Pagans. It is nice to know that the latter keep blond wigs around when the gods call for a blond sacrifice, but they only have a brunette!

Camelot. Dir. Joshua Logan. Warner Brothers, 1967.

Film version of the stage play. Despite cutting at least two songs, this drags. Still, it has its moments, and it is interesting to compare the film to the script for the stage play.

Chadwick, Elizabeth. *First Knight*. New York: Pocket Books-Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Novelization of the film.

"A Connecticut Rabbit in King Arthur's Court." Dir. Chuck Jones. Warner Bros., 1978. First aired 23 Feb. 1978 on CBS. Also known as "Bugs Bunny in King Arthur's Court."

Bugs Bunny forgets to take a left turn at Albuquerque and finds himself at Camelot, where he uses the solar eclipse to save himself from being burned at the stake, just as Twain's Hank Morgan did. Bugs Bunny also pulls the sword out of the stone, becoming "King Art-Hare."

Excalibur. Dir. John Boorman. Orion, 1981.

Jumpy, but good treatment of the story. Two notes: Lancelot's hair turns from brown to blond in his old age. Uther takes Igraine in full armor! Ouch!

First Knight. Dir. Jerry Zucker. Columbia Pictures, 1995.

Depressingly mediocre, despite Sean Connery's presence. Color coordinated peasants, anachronistic hand-held crossbows, and Malagant's men are capable of sneaking into Camelot, which is obviously defended by the ancestors of *Star Trek's* security guards. The plot is loosely based on Meleagant's kidnapping of Guinevere. Nevertheless, the ideal of Might used only in the service of Right is present.

"First Look: The Making of *First Knight*." *First Look*. HBO. 1 July 1995.

A behind the scenes look at the movie *First Knight*. Includes

interviews with the actors.

The Fisher King. Dir. Terry Gilliam. 1991.

Excellent updating of the Grail story, using what works and discarding what does not, and adding new features. Issues of responsibility and personal salvation. Beautifully filmed, showing the fantastic in the everyday world of NYC.

Guinevere. Writ. Ronnie Kern. Dir. Jud Taylor. Lifetime. 7 May 1994.

Based on Persia Woolley's books, this movie does an admittedly mediocre trilogy a disservice. Guinevere trained to fight with a sword by Morgan Le Fay, who later becomes her enemy. Logic is not the show's strong point.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. Dir. Steven Spielberg. 1989.

New chapter the the Grail history. Love vs. ambition. The relationship between Indiana and his father is more troubled and, therefore, more interesting than the relationship between Lancelot and Galahad. Here, the father is the more enlightened one.

Knightriders. Dir. George Romero. United Films, 1981.

Bikers perform as jousters, following the ideals of their leader, King Billy. Fate vs. free will, role of a leader, honor vs. compromise.

LaGravenese, Richard. *The Fisher King: The Book of the Film*. New York: Applause Books, 1991.

Includes screenplay, which has some differences from the film, some deleted and altered scenes, interviews, and an introduction by Terry Gilliam, who directed the film. Useful supplement to the film.

"A Late Delivery from Avalon." *Babylon 5*. Writ. and Dir. J. Michael Straczynski. Turner Network. Babylonian Productions, Inc. WWOR, Secaucus. 22 April 1996.

In the twenty-third century, a man claiming to be King Arthur arrives at the space station Babylon Five. He is actually the man who fired the shot which started an intergalactic war, due to a misunderstanding reminiscent of that which started the battle of Camlan. He espouses the Arthurian code of chivalry, and he is finally healed when he gives his sword to the person he considers to be the Lady of the Lake. The other characters discuss the power of the story and assign Arthurian identities to each other.

Lerner, Alan J. and Frederick Lowe. *Camelot. Great Musicals of the American Theatre: Volume 2*. Ed. with Intro and Notes by

Stanley Richards. Radnor: Chilton Book Co. 1976. 386 - 469.
First performed: 3 Dec. 1960.

L'Eternel Retour. Dir. Jean Delannoy. Discina International,
1943.

Written by Jean Cocteau, this is a modernization of the
Tristan and Isolde story, with disturbing hints of bigotry
and Nazi overtones.

MacGregor, Rob. *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. New York:
Ballantine Books, 1989. Copyright: Lucasfilm Ltd., 1989.

Novelization of the movie.

Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Dir. Terry Gilliam and Terry
Jones. Python Pictures, 1975.

Spoof of both Arthur's story and British documentaries.
Questions how good the reality behind the ideals was.

The Sword in the Stone. Dir. Wolfgang Reitherman, Disney, 1963.

Based on the first part of T. H. White's *Once and Future
King*. Merlin turns Arthur into different animals, teaching
him courage.

Wagner, Richard. *Lohengrin*. Dual language. Trans. Stewart Robb.
New York and London: G. Schirmer, 1963.

---. *Parsifal*. Dual language. Trans. Stewart Robb. New York and
London: G. Schirmer, 1962.

The librettos for the operas.

5. Selected Songs

Beagle, Peter. "Good King Christian." Recorded 1986.

Beagle prefers Christian X of Denmark to Arthur, who is
described as a warrior king, but Beagle shares the ideals of
many authors who portray Arthur as a good king.

Freeman, Nancy Louise. "The Knights Who Say 'Ni!'" Copyright
1993. Repr. *Xenofilkia* 44, p. 876.

Song about the infamous knights from *Monty Python and The
Holy Grail*, to the tune of "Pride of Chanur", by Leslie
Fish.

McQuillin, Cynthia. "Morgan's Song." *Singer in the Shadow*. El
Cerrito: Off Centaur, 1986. 12 - 13. Copyright 1983 by

Cynthia McQuillin.

Almost certainly inspired by Bradley's *Mists*. Morgan tells about her life.

Rubin, Michael. "Days of Legend." Unpublished song. 4 Feb. 1987, rev. 3 Apr. 1993.

Argues that the historical truth behind the story is only one factor, and perhaps the least important.

Sterling, Mark D. "Avalon." Performed by Morrigan, 1991.

About Merlin and his visions.

Wolfsinger, Morgan. "The Road to Logres." *Magic and Mercenaries*. Richmond: Catherine DeMott, 1989. [10.] N. pag.

Wandering man tried to find Arthur and Camelot after the battle of Camlann.

6. *Selected Games*

Acres, Mark. *Clash of Kings! A Tale of Arthur and Merlin*. Delavan: Pacesetter, 1984.

An adventure for the role-playing game *Timemaster*. Players take the roles of time travellers who must make sure that Arthur's story unfolds as their history records it.

Aniolowski, Scott, Garrie Hall, Steve Hatherley, Alan Smithee, John T. Snyder, and John Tynes. *The Golden Dawn: A Sourcebook of Victorian Occult Intrigue for Call of Cthulhu*. Seattle: Pagan Publishing, 1996.

This is a sourcebook for a role-playing game based on the works of H. P. Lovecraft. As the title indicates, its focus is on the Golden Dawn and the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the authors tie King Arthur into Lovecraft's "Cthulhu Mythos", creating a new Arthur, one who worshipped the mysterious Sheela-na-Gig, here, actually Shub-Niggurath, inhuman, monstrous fertility deity of the Cthulhu mythos. Mordred was the virtuous Christian who ended Arthur's reign. Arthur is revived by a former member of the Golden Dawn, and he plans to use the Grail to reclaim his empire and destroy the forces of Christianity.

Barker, Jack. *Amazing Engine: Once and Future King Game*. Lake Geneva, Cambridge: TSR, 1994.

Role-playing game set on a futuristic world where people mimic Arthur's knights..

Bourne, Martin, Peter Corless, Mike Dawson, Garry Fay, Mike Manolakes, and Sam Shirley. *The Spectre King: Heroic Adventures in Legendary Britain*. Oakland: Chaosium, 1992.

Adventures for *Pendragon*, including the return of Hengist from his grave.

Brennan, J. H. *Grail Quest #5: Kingdom of Honor*. New York: Dell Books, 1985.

This is a choose-your-own-path book. I am not sure if the others in the series are Arthurian or not.

Brooks, Les, Sam Shirley, and Greg Stafford. *Tournament of Dreams*. Albany: Chaosium, 1987.

Two adventures for the role-playing game *Pendragon*. Winner of the Origins Award for Best Role-Playing Adventure (Schick 78, 415).

Carnahan, John. *Pagan Shores: Ireland in the Age of King Arthur*. Oakland: Chaosium, 1994.

Heavily researched supplement for *Pendragon*.

Corless, Peter, Geoff Gillan, Sam Shirley, Greg Stafford, and Michael Trout. *Perilous Forest: Heroic Adventures in the Forests and Heaths of Western Cumbria*. Oakland: Chaosium, 1992.

Adventures for *Pendragon*.

DiTillio, Lary. *The Gray Knight*. Albany: Chaosium, n.d.

An adventure for *Pendragon*. The players' knights must find the Thirteen Treasures of Britain before Gawain faces the Gray Knight in combat.

Falstein, Mark et. al. *Grail Diary*. Lucasfilm Ltd., 1989.

This is a prop for the computer game inspired by the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Indiana Jones' father describes his research on the Grail.

Fawcett, Bill, ed. *Wizards*. Niles: Mayfair Games, 1983.

Role-playing game supplement, with a scenario involving Merlin and Morgan Le Fay.

Karr, Phyllis Ann. *The King Arthur Companion*. Albany: Chaosium, 1983.

Sourcebook for *Pendragon*, well enough researched that

scholars praise it.

Lampard, Chris, Roderick Robertson, Tom Rogan, Eric Rowe, and Dave Williams. *Beyond the Wall: Pictland & the North*. Oakland: Chaosium, 1995.

Supplement for *Pendragon*, covering the area of Scotland. This is the latest *Pendragon* product. I believe the next one due out will introduce Beowulf.

Shroeck, Robert M. and Peggy Schroek. *GURPS Camelot: Roleplaying in the Court of King Arthur*. Austin: Steve Jackson Games 1991.

Suggests three different styles of games set in Arthur's world with varying levels of realism. Good bibliography; reasonably well researched.

Stafford, Greg with Ken St. Andre, Katharine Kerr, Kallun of Tybermonde, Sandy Petersen, and Bill Keyes. *The Pendragon Campaign*. Chaosium, 1985.

Adventures for the role-playing game *Pendragon*. Won the H. G. Wells Award for Best Role-Playing Supplement (Schick 78, 415).

Stafford, Greg with Sam Shirley and Bill Bridges. *King Arthur Pendragon: Epic Roleplaying in Legendary Britain*. First published: 1985. 4th ed. Oakland: Chaosium, 1993.

The 4th edition contains most of the material in *Knights Adventurous*.

Stafford, Greg. *The Boy King*. Oakland: Chaosium, 1991.
Adventures and background material for the game *Pendragon*.

---. *Knights Adventurous: Expanding the World of Pendragon*. Oakland: Chaosium, 1990.

While this is probably out of print, most of the material is reprinted in the 4th edition of *Pendragon*.

---. *Noble's Book*. Albany: Chaosium, 1986.

Supplement for *Pendragon*.

---. with William Dunn, Lynn Willis, and Charlie Crank. *Prince Valiant: The Storytelling Game*. Albany, Calif.: Chaosium, 1989.

Role-playing game based on the Hal Foster comic strip.

7. Miscellaneous

The Glain: The Quest for the Grail Newsletter. Austin: Stone Ring Games, 1996.

This newsletter is for fans of the Quest for the Grail collectible card game. In addition to discussing the game, it contains William Morris' "The Chapel in Lyonesse" and a contest to identify quotes from various Arthurian works.

Lerner, Barbara. "Merlyn's Magic...and Ours." *American Educator*. Summer 1996, 4-8.

Critical of the idea that the primary goal of teachers should be to bolster their students' self-esteem, Lerner points out that White's Merlyn used different tactics when teaching Arthur. Merlyn serves as the ultimate pedagogue. As Peter Beagle said, "Good guys need myths too, something terrible."

Phelan, Laurel. *Guinevere: The True Story of One Woman's Quest for Her Past Life, Identity and the Healing of Her Eternal Soul*. Pocket Books-Simon and Schuster, 1996.

Phelan apparently believes that she was Guinevere in a previous life.

Schwartz, Scott A. Student Commencement Address. Delivered at the Binghamton Commencement for the State University of New York at Binghamton. 16 May 1993.

Compares college experience to Camelot.

Williamson, Robin. "The Wooing of Isolde." Copyright Robin Williamson, 1985.

Audio tape. Williamson tells the story of how Tristan won Isolde by Arthur's judgement.

II. Selected New Age Non Fiction

Baigent, Michael, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln. *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. New York: Dell, 1983.

Interesting speculations, but reprehensible scholarship.

Ferguson, Anna-Marie with poetry by Ray Rue. *A Keeper of Words: Accompanying Book to Legend: The Arthurian Tarot*. St. Paul:

Llewellyn Publications, 1995.

Book of instructions for using *Legend: The Arthurian Tarot*, with Arthurian poetry.

Ferguson, Anne-Marie. *Legend: The Arthurian Tarot*. St. Paul, Llewellyn Publications, 1995.

Arthurian imagery in tarot deck.

Graves, Robert. *The White Goddess*. Amended and enlarged ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1948.

Consideration of two Welsh poems based more on poetic inspiration than research, but at least he admits as much.

Jones, Kenneth and Marguerite Elspeth. *The Grail Castle: Male Myths and Mysteries in the Celtic Tradition*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1995.

Combination of mysticism and Jungian psychology.

Mann, Nicholas R. *The Isle of Avalon: Sacred Mysteries of Arthur and Glastonbury Tor*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1996.

A book in Llewellyn's Celtic Wisdom series, apparently combining mysticism with archaeology.

Matthews, Caitlin. *Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain: King and Goddess in the Mabinogion*. London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland: Arkana-Penguin, 1989.

Study of the Arthurian tales from *The Mabinogion*.

---. *The Arthurian Tarot Course: A Quest for All Seasons*. London: Thorsons-HarperCollins, 1993.

A do-it-at-home book of exercises guided meditations using the Arthurian Tarot.

---. *Mabon and the Mysteries of Britain: An Exploration of the Mabinogion*. London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland: Arkana-Penguin, 1987.

Study of the four branches of *The Mabinogion* and the story of Taliesin.

Matthews, Caitlin and John Matthews. *The Arthurian Tarot*. Illustrated by Miranda Grey. Northamptonshire: Aquarian-Thorsons, 1990.

Arthurian imagery in tarot deck.

---. *The Arthurian Tarot: A Hallowquest Handbook*.

Northamptonshire: Aquarian-Thorsons, 1990.

Instruction book for the Arthurian Tarot.

- . *Hallowquest: Tarot Magic and the Arthurian Mysteries*. London: Aquarian-HarperCollins, 1990.

A book with further exercises, readings, and meditations using the Arthurian Tarot.

- . *Ladies of the Lake*. London and San Francisco: Aquarian-HarperCollins, 1992.

Study of Arthurian women, with guided meditations. The women are considered aspects of a triple goddess.

- . *The Western Way: A Practical Guide to the Western Mystery Tradition*. Vol. 1: London and New York: Arkana-Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986. Vol. 2: London, Boston, and Henley: Arkana-Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

The first book concentrates on native traditions of magic, including Celtic material, while the second concentrates on Hermetic and ritual magic.

Matthews, John. Ed. *At the Table of the Grail: Magic & the Use of Imagination*. London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

Anthology of essays about magic, religion, and the Grail.

- . *The Elements of the Grail Tradition*. Dorset: Element Books, 1990.

The Grail tradition as a system of magic and meditation.

- . Ed. *The Household of the Grail*. Northamptonshire: Aquarian/Thorsons, 1990.

Anthology of essays about medieval and modern versions of the Grail story.

- . *Taliesin: Shamanism and the Bardic Mysteries in Britain and Ireland*. London: Aquarian/Thorsons-HarperCollins, 1991.

Study of shamanistic elements in Taliesin's story.

- and Marian Green. *The Grail Seeker's Companion: A Guide to the Grail Quest in the Aquarian Age*. Northamptonshire: Aquarian-Thorsons, 1986.

Exercises and meditations using Grail and Arthurian imagery. Good sections describing the various Grail stories, locations, and characters.

Wolfe, Amber. *The Arthurian Quest: Living the Legends of Camelot*.
St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1996.

A book in Llewellyn's Celtic Wisdom series.

III. Selected Sites on the World Wide Web (as of 12 October 1996)

Arthuriana Homepage. <http://dc.smu.edu/Arthuriana>

Web site for *Arthuriana*, the scholarly journal of the International Arthurian Society. Has email addresses of Society members, abstracts and indices of journal articles, and online art.

Arthurnet. <http://www.mun.ca/lists/arthurnet>

Web site for the Arthurnet mailing list. Necessarily a mixed bag. Searchable by keyword.

Avalon: Arthurian Heaven. http://reality.sgi.com/employees/chris_manchester/arthur.html

Chris Thornborrow's home page, http://reality.sgi.com/employees/chris_manchester has a link to an Arthurian subsection. Mixed bag, some fairly quirky stuff (his list of Arthurian characters was entired by a woman who used Woolley as a source), some very useful stuff (film list, faq including warnings about Goodrich and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*). Lovely graphics. He also has links to Cindy Moore's booklist and the script for *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

The Camelot Project at The University of Rochester.
<http://rodent.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cphome.htm>

Scholarly, links to texts, bibliographies, art.

The Charrette Project. <http://www.princeton.edu/~lancelot>

This web site is devoted to Chretien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. The idea is to make both the text and an explication available on the Web.

Doherty, John. "King Arthur on the Internet: A Paper Presented to the Montana Medieval Roundup, Bozeman, Montana, September 12, 1996." <http://www.lib.montana.edu/~slainte/intart.html>

A paper considering the implications of the Electronic Age, using Arthurian Web Sites as examples.

The Labyrinth. <http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth>

Web site whose function is "to provide free, organized access to resources in medieval studies through a World Wide Web server at Georgetown University." Scholarly. Has a subsection on Arthurian studies which, as of this writing, can be reached directly at <http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth/subjects/arthurian/arthur.html>

Oxford Arthurian Society. <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~arthsoc/>

Scholarly. The Society has been around for fifteen years. Its purpose is "to explore the figure of King Arthur in history, literature, and legend." Has a link to *Ceridwen's Cauldron*, the newsletter of the society.

The Quest. http://www.uidaho.edu/student_orgs/arthurian_legend

This is a page run by the Caliburn, an Arthurian club for the students of the University of Idaho. Lovely graphics, somewhat idiosyncratic.

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