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THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND IN MALORY AND THE 1970'S:

A COMPARISON

by

Marian R. Rengel

B.A., St. Cloud State University, 1976

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

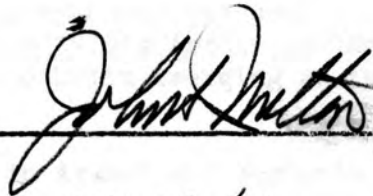
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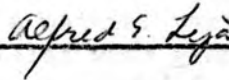
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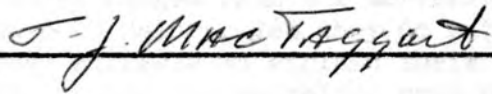
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This thesis submitted by Marian R. Rengel in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.



Chairperson







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THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND IN MALORY AND THE 1970'S:
A COMPARISON

Marian R. Rengel

The 1970's Arthurian fiction represents the latest step in the legend's growth; Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur represents a landing five-hundred years down the staircase. The comparison of Malory and these 1970's authors in their handling of Arthur's and Merlin's characters, of magic, and of violence, not only distinguishes between authors and times, but explores the aspects of the legend which future writers will need to consider.

In working with Arthur's story, modern authors return the king to his place of prominence and work with explaining the inconsistencies in his character which they found in Malory--his abdication of power and fame to his knights, and his reaction to Guenever and Launcelot's affair. Merlin's enigmatic character in Malory also presents a challenge to modern authors and they attempt to discover the source for his concern over Arthur's kingdom. In the 1970's Arthur and Merlin regain their dominant roles in the legend and begin emerging as fully developed characters.

Fantasy plays an integral part in Arthur and Merlin's world; the legend was born when the marvelous was a natural part of everyday life, and Malory's tale is itself fantasy, filled with giants, wizards, and miracles. The modern authors, somewhat estranged from the marvelous, do not deal with magic as naturally as does Malory, yet they do not sever fantasy from the tale. While they struggle to explain their magic, modern authors show future writers that the marvelous must shape and influence the entire tale.

In Arthur's world, war is assumed. Two aspects of violence control its use by Malory and the modern authors: relevance to the story, and distance between the reader and the violence. The appropriateness of violence is determined by purpose and the author's efforts to give man an example of a life he must rise above. Malory achieves a delicate balance between distance to the reader, relevance to the story, and providing his characters with a purpose; the modern authors do not achieve that same balance and it remains the task of a future writer to do so.

The differences between Malory and the modern authors show what might come next in the legend: Arthur's character will continue to develop as the modern authors have struggled to develop it; the elements of fantasy and violence will also be carefully considered and explored in order to achieve a modern effort comparable to Malory's work.

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Approved by Research Committee:



John L. Melton Chairperson

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is challenged by an evil and recurrent opponent. The knights on the bridges and the journeying traditions of so many castle gates are Sir Tristram's theme; he must gain worship and honor whenever and wherever he can. Defending the ideals of the Round Table, protecting the world from corruption, and seeking to destroy King Mark for his treachery are Sir Lancelot's priorities. Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* and the Arthurian fiction written during the 1970's have become, for me, what Lancelot and Tristram were for Lancelot, challenging yet sometimes over-zealous companions. And I, like Lancelot, have set my priorities. I will concentrate my efforts in this study on the major aspects of a comparison between Malory's tale and the retellings of the 1970's, and leave the minor comparisons to those who do battle for honor and worship. Sir Lancelot's common-sense practicality

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

'But ye fare,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'as a man [that] were oute of hys mynde that wold caste hymselff away. And I may curse the tyme that ever I sye you, for in all the worlde ar nat such two knyghtes that ar so wood as ys sir Launcelot and ye, sir Trystram! For onys I felle in the felyshyp of sir Launcelot as I have done now with you, and he sette me so a worke that a quarter of a yere I kept my bedde. Jesus deffende me,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'frome such two knyghtys, and specially frome your felyshyp.'

A decision must be made: to imitate Sir Tristram and joust with every knight who stands on every bridge or in front of every castle, or to follow Sir Dynadan's lead and defend honor and nobility when it is challenged by an evil and recreant opponent. The knights on the bridges and the jousting traditions of so many castle gates are Sir Tristram's bane; he must gain worship and honor whenever and wherever he can. Defending the ideals of the Round Table, protecting the world from corruption, and seeking to destroy King Mark for his treachery are Sir Dynadan's priorities. Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur and the Arthurian fiction written during the 1970's have become, for me, what Launcelot and Tristram were for Dynadan, challenging yet sometimes over-zealous companions. And I, like Dynadan, have set my priorities. I will concentrate my efforts in this study on the major aspects of a comparison between Malory's tale and the retellings of the 1970's, and leave the minor comparisons to those who do battle for honor and worship. Sir Dynadan's common-sense practicality

defeated Sir Tristram's noble zealousness.

A three-dimensional representation of the growth of the Arthurian legend would resemble a very long and very worn staircase. The bottom step would be lost in the distance of time; Malory's work would not simply be one more step, but rather a very large landing where the influences of the earlier steps are gathered together. The works of fiction written in the 1970's represent the top step, the most recent additions; from this step an author can look down the staircase to that landing that has provided, since its creation in the fifteenth century, the strongest influence of all works on the modern form of the legend. The steps, the works of authors, between Malory's time and the 1970's naturally had their influences on the modern stage of the legend, but Malory's work is also the major influence behind all of those works. It seems appropriate, then, to compare that great work of the legend with the influence it had on the authors who chose the Matter of Britain as their subject in the 1970's--the landing with the top step. (It would be a Herculean task to discuss all of the works on the Arthurian legend since 1485, and various authors, who spent years in their efforts, have already covered the earlier periods; it would be presumptuous to duplicate their efforts.) In this project, however, it is not enough to look back down the staircase; it is also important to look up, to see what the next step, or the next landing, might look like. To look backward and then forward is the purpose of this work.

In 1899, Jessie L. Weston asked her reading audience to "take any twelve of our friends, of those whom we know to be above the average in intelligence and culture, and ask them one by one, what

they can tell us of King Arthur . . . and what shall we be told?"² Weston considered herself fortunate to think that "certainly we should be referred to Malory and Tennyson . . . and there, for ten of the twelve, the matter would end."³ And indeed she was fortunate by today's standards. A similar audience today might give a far more ignorant response. Friends would mention Camelot, the Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe musical (1960), perhaps President John F. Kennedy and his new Camelot, and even Walt Disney's film-cartoon version of The Sword in The Stone (1963). Some might refer to T. H. White's The Once and Future King (1939). Few people today remember Sir Thomas Malory (unless they study literature) even though his tale of King Arthur and his noble knights is given credit by Eugene Vinaver as being "the fountainhead of English Arthurian fiction."⁴ However, if this informal poll includes people who contribute to the book-buying public which creates the New York Times bestseller list, they will have a more current knowledge of the direction taken by the Arthurian legend in the last decade; they will know Mary Stewart's Merlin trilogy (1970-79). If they browse through the science fiction shelves, they will know Andre Norton's Merlin's Mirror (1975). Even if friends only noticed what was on display in the front of the bookstore, they will know of Thomas Berger's Arthur Rex (1979).

Popular demand has long been the impetus behind the growth of the Arthurian legend. Few people question that storytellers first wove Arthur's deeds into tales as they gathered around their fires at night, nor do they argue that it has since been the matter of popular entertainment. Popular demand was part of William Caxton's motivation

for publishing Malory's Le Morte Darthur in 1485:

Many noble and dyuers gentylnen of thys royaume of Englonde
 camen and demaunded me many and ooftymes / wherfore that I
 haue not do made & emprynte the noble hysterye of the
 saynt greal / and of the moost renomed Crysten kyng / Fyrst
 and chyef of the thre best crysten and worthy / kyng
 Arthur.⁵

The Arthurian legend was also a subject for popular authors. Even enthusiastic scholars of Malory's work admit that it is not among the greatest masterpieces of literature (he is no Homer, Chaucer, or Dante) and those authors who might have shaped Arthur's story in the greatest epic tradition turned from the subject. Roberta Brinkeley, in Arthurian Legend in The Seventeenth Century, says, "In 1639 Milton clearly expressed his choice of an Arthurian subject; when he came to write his History of Britain, it is evident that his whole attitude toward both Arthur and the British had changed and we never again hear of Arthur as an epic subject."⁶ In discussing John Dryden's rejection of the subject, she says he "gave up his Arthurian epic . . . purely because of financial inability to devote the time to it."⁷ As the centuries passed, Arthur remained important as food for the masses rather than as the subject for literary classics. Alfred, Lord Tennyson's Idylls of The King (1859-85) reached to a public numbering in the millions; one hundred years later, modern audiences "seldom care much for the Idylls," according to Geoffrey Ashe.⁸ So it is in the twentieth century; great contemporary authors may try their hands at retelling Arthur's tale—John Steinbeck never finished his The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights (1958-9)—but it is left to the popular writers to keep the legend alive.

King Arthur was fortunate in the 1960's; several trenches dug through the archeological sights at Glastonbury Abbey and Cadbury Castle did more for reviving the legend than any sixteenth- or seventeenth-century monarch could--if not as the lord of chivalry, then at least as a sixth-century Celtic hero. At Glastonbury, a trench was dug in 1962 "in an area in which it was hoped to find evidence of the grave of king Arthur," according to C. A. Raleigh Radford.⁹ Five years later work was begun by the Camelot Research Committee on the sight at Cadbury. Leslie Alcock, Director of Excavations, does not mention Arthur in his official reports of the excavations of the following three summers: "the imported pottery had already marked Cadbury as the seat of some wealthy family in the period A.D. 470-600. It is now evident that it was formidably defended as well. . . . It is very tempting to think that it must have played a special role in the military affairs of southern England in the generations around A.D. 500."¹⁰ But for the press and the popular enthusiasts he is more liberal and colorful in his expectations; in a July 1967 newspaper article he is quoted as saying "The rash school, represented by myself, sees three [outlines of rectangular buildings at Cadbury]. And one of them is almost too large and too good to be true. But if it turns out to be true, then I would put my shirt on it for Arthur's main hall, the chief building in his court."¹¹ Geoffrey Ashe capitalized on the digs and the archeological Arthur, and his books have since become popular reading matter themselves. From the fascination with digging up Arthur in the 1960's came the Arthur of the popular fiction book shelves in the 1970's in both

England and the United States. The result of all of this activity is that at least ten authors applied their skills to the legend in the 1970's, creating thirteen works of fiction, eleven books and two short stories. (There were probably more short stories printed that escaped me; I did not search too deeply for them, using only those brought to my attention by members of the popular audience. I doubt that many more books were published, since besides my own searching in Books in Print and Publisher's Weekly, I had most of the clerks at the local B. Dalton Bookseller watching for titles.)

The recent enthusiasm in Arthur as a Dark-Ages warlord has had, it seems, a peculiar effect on the hero and the story that surrounds him; it detached him from any particular time and any particular place. Removing him from a medieval castle where he was surrounded by knights in shining armor, and putting him in a sixth-century hilltop fortress, in effect loosened him from any strictures in time and allowed the legend to move forward and backward in time, much as T. H. White's Merlin does: "Now ordinary people are born forward in Time, . . . but I unfortunately was born at the wrong end of time, and I have to live backwards from in front while surrounded by a lot of people living forward from behind."¹² Malory can be given credit for starting this shift in attitude by moving the legend in space; he brought the king home from Logres "which in the French romances," according to Vinaver, "lacked geographical definition," and returned him to "a recognizable part of England with well-defined boundaries."¹³ (Chapter III will treat the effects of Malory's effort more specifically.) But in the 1970's it seems to have taken flight. Three authors, Mary Stewart,

Andre Norton, and Catherine Christian, place Arthur, Merlin, and their people in Saxon-ravaged, sixth-century Britain; they followed the direction that Ashe suggests: "for imaginative writers as well as scientific investigators, the best hope of getting anything more out of the national legend lies in an even deeper knowledge of Britain."¹⁴ On the other hand, several other authors found hope and life for Arthur's ideals in the future. Tim Powers revives Arthur and Merlin in Vienna in 1529 in The Drawing of The Dark; Sanders Anne Laubenthal brings the story into a twentieth-century Alabama coastal town; and Arthur H. Landis, in the least obvious of the modern retellings, moves the image of Arthur and Merlin and the pattern of events that surround their lives to the planet Camelot-Fregis in the far distant future in A World Called Camelot and Camelot in Orbit. (Though Landis' story is highly dependent on gimmicks familiar in much science-fantasy, the parallels between his work, the works of the 1970's authors, and Malory, are strong enough to qualify the two books for this discussion.) Two authors, Thomas Berger and Vera Chapman, decided to leave Arthur and his court in their medieval surroundings.

These ten modern authors seem to be searching for a tried and proved rescuer who can help find peace in a time when nuclear annihilation threatens mankind. At first glance, that seems like a very contrived motivation, more than likely the romance and the opportunity to solve age-old mysteries—What happened to Arthur after he was carried to Avalon? Who or what was Merlin?—were strong enough forces to capture the authors' imaginations. But the literature and commentaries that predict violent ends for mankind make the need for

hope a very powerful motivation.¹⁵ The past is as likely a place to find peace and salvation as is the future, and who better to turn to in the search than, in the words of Charles Moorman, "an idealist, a man of vision, the creator of a stable and beneficent government, in times of adversity stalwart, patient, and enduring, a man created by destiny to rule."¹⁶ It makes little difference to the modern writers that Arthur's kingdom fell beneath the blows of treachery and sin; Arthur, the legend, survives and the details of his life fade with time as the knights fade with the myth. As Moorman also says, "legends and kingdoms endure as myths and heroes do not."¹⁷

In selecting the particular topics for discussion in this thesis, three aspects of the legend and the works of Malory and the 1970's stood out most clearly: characterization, fantasy, and violence. In all of the stories there is always an Arthur and usually a Merlin; obviously the two could not be separated from their own story, and while Arthur could sometimes return in a tale without Merlin, it is impossible to tell his tale without Arthur. Understanding and explaining these two men as they appear in Le Morte Darthur seem to be major influences on, or in some cases, major stumbling blocks for, modern authors. At the same time that these authors feel an attraction to characterization, they struggle with putting those heroes in appropriate surroundings. Because of the influence of Merlin and the marvelous acts he is always associated with, magic and fantasy become necessary elements in the worlds that all of the authors fashion. And because Arthur has always been a warrior as well as a king, the place of descriptive and necessary violence is another part of the world that

the authors must deal with. As a result, Chapter II is a discussion of Arthur and Merlin, Chapter III examines the role of magic and fantasy in the legend, and Chapter IV looks at the violent reality of the legend. (Of these three chapters, only the last offers any great difficulty in expressing points-of-view and personal attitudes, since each person's reaction to violence, to gruesome descriptions, is based directly on individual experiences and influences.)

This is not a definitive study; there are enough other categories of comparisons to be made between Malory and the 1970's to provide material for several more theses. The specific details that make up the legend—Arthur's birth, the drawing of the sword from the stone, Merlin's relationship with, and entrapment by, Nimue, and even the begetting of Mordred—would have provided ample material for discussion, but the overall appearance of the legend at this stage is more intriguing than the individual pieces. Besides which, that comparison would have excluded more than two-thirds of the novels already being discussed—not a fair study of what is on the market. Authors in the 1970's amputated Launcelot, Tristram, and the Holy Grail from their stories as neatly as any surgeon removes a sick or dead limb; analyzing the motivations behind that act, one that seems quite peculiar to the 1970's, would lead into the realm of critical speculation, since it is what does not happen in the stories rather than what does. It might also be interesting to pursue the clue dropped by Vinaver when he said the knight-prisoner was learning his craft as he wrote his tale.¹⁸

Reviewer Spider Robinson said basically the same thing of Tim Powers: "Powers is still learning his craft, but displays enormous natural

story-telling skills."¹⁹ Sanders Anne Laubenthal's overuse of simile and weak description in Excalibur more than clearly shows that she is learning her trade. It might be more difficult to prove that Mary Stewart was learning her craft, since she wrote eleven novels before her Merlin trilogy. It would be even harder to show that Andre Norton, known for her Witch World series and over sixty other fantasy novels,²⁰ was struggling as a new author.

No matter which of these options I might have pursued, I would have had to omit more than half of the Arthurian titles written in the 1970's. As it is, I did reject several novels—Merlin's Ring by H. Warner Munn, King Arthur's Daughter by Vera Chapman, and Parsival by Richard Monaco—the first two because the connection was in name only, and the third because Arthur was not an influential force in the story. I also rejected T. H. White's The Book of Merlyn because, while it was published in 1977, it was written during World War II. How the legendary men who created Camelot and the two major factors in life in Camelot changed with the centuries and adapted to new audiences are far more important factors to consider at this point than are the lesser comparisons. Besides, these topics are far more fascinating than tracing each allusion each author makes.

The following chapters concentrate on those factors in the Arthurian legend that dominate modern fiction, the common denominators, and the roles those factors played in Malory's work. In the chapters, I consider not only what is, but also what should and what might be on the next step of the legend. It is important that analysis not concern itself only with the rather negative processes of partition

or classification; to be of any value to others it must develop some positive aspects of the subject as well. My conclusion will naturally look to the future as well as the past and present to see what the authors of the 1970's and Malory can and will contribute to the futures of Arthur and his legend.

1. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

2. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

3. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

4. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

5. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

6. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

7. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

8. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

9. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

10. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

11. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

12. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

13. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

14. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

15. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

16. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

17. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

18. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

19. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

20. *Malory's Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, London: Dent, 1947, p. vii.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

- 1 Sir Thomas Malory, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugene Vinaver (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), II, 508, lines 1-9 (IX, 24). The reference that Vinaver provides for Caxton's book and chapter numbers appears in parentheses after the citation.
- 2 Jessie L. Weston, King Arthur and His Knights (1899; rpt., New York: AMS Press, 1972), p. [1].
- 3 Weston, pp. [1]-2.
- 4 Eugene Vinaver, ed. King Arthur and His Knights: Selected Tales, by Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. vii.
- 5 William Caxton, ed. Le Morte Darthur, by Sir Thomas Malory, reprinted and edited by H. Oskar Sommer (London: David Nutt, 1889), p. [1].
- 6 Roberta F. Brinkley, Arthurian Legend in The Seventeenth Century (1932; rpt., New York: Octagon Books, 1967), p. 129.
- 7 Brinkley, p. 142.
- 8 Geoffrey Ashe, King Arthur In Fact and Legend (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1969), pp. 124-5.
- 9 C. A. Raleigh Radford, The Excavations at Glastonbury Abbey: 1962 (rpt. from Notes and Queries, vol. 28), p. [1].
- 10 Leslie Alcock, Excavations at South Cadbury Castle, 1967: A Summary Report (rpt. from The Antiquaries Journal, 1968), p. 15.
- 11 Leslie Alcock, quoted by Cyril Dunn, "King Arthur's Court and Mr Alcock's Shirt," The Observer Review, [9 July 1967], np.
- 12 T. H. White, The Once and Future King (1958; rpt., New York: Berkley Publishing Company, 1966), p. 35.
- 13 Eugene Vinaver, ed. The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, by Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), III, 1278.
- 14 Ashe, p. 131.
- 15 For an excellent, though brief, article on hope in modern fiction, see Jack G. Wolf, "Science Fiction and The Fallacy of Hope," Extrapolation, 17 (1976), 151-2.
- 16 Charles Moorman, Kings and Captains (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971), p. 169.

- 17 Charles Moorman, "King Arthur and The English National Character," New York Folklore Quarterly, 26 (1968), 110.
- 18 Vinaver, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, III, 1624.
- 19 Spider Robinson, "The Reference Library," Analog, 19 (1979), 177.
- 20 R. Reginald, Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature: A Checklist, 1700-1974 (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1979), I, pp. 388-390.

ARTHUR AND MERLIN

confusion in Malory—Arthur's seeking acceptance of Guinevere and Lancelot's love affair, and his decline in power and authority—returned Arthur to the position of prominence and power in the legend. They saw the man and his dreams, his efforts, and his motivations, as more important than the lesser knights and their lesser quests. The modern writers cut through the myth that Arthur was slain buried under for years, and revived the man who had been suffocating under the glory of his mythical knights.

In Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur, the stories of Gareth, Tristan, Lancelot, and the Holy Grail obstruct the view of Arthur. A modern reader, picking up Malory for the first time, would learn more of Lancelot and his conceits and sorcery than they would of the king who created Camelot. The adventures that led the members of Arthur's court to honor and worship fill the stage more often than do scenes of the king working at home while his knights roam over the English landscape. In Malory's first tale, The Tale of King Arthur, Arthur is born, defeats the petty British kings who challenge his accession as high king, and settles in as king of all England. At his wedding feast, Arthur establishes his pattern of sitting on his throne and waiting for his knights to return from their quests so they may cause

CHAPTER II

ARTHUR AND MERLIN

The Arthurian writers in the 1970's, in order to sort through the confusions in Malory—Arthur's seeming acceptance of Guenever and Launcelot's love affair, and his decline in power and authority—returned Arthur to the position of prominence and power in the legend. They saw the man and his dreams, his efforts, and his motivations, as more important than the lesser knights and their lesser quests. The modern writers cut through the myth that Arthur has been buried under for years, and revived the man who had been suffocating under the glory of his mythical knights.

In Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur, the stories of Gareth, Tristram, Launcelot, and the Holy Grail obstruct the view of Arthur. A modern reader, picking up Malory for the first time, would learn more of Launcelot and his conceits and morals than they would of the king who created Camelot. The adventures that led the members of Arthur's court to honor and worship fill the stage more often than do scenes of the king working at home while his knights roam over the English landscape. In Malory's first tale, The Tale of King Arthur, Arthur is born, defeats the petty British kings who challenge his accession as high king, and settles in as king of all England. At his wedding feast, Arthur establishes his pattern of sitting on his throne and waiting for his knights to return from their quests so they may amuse

him with their stories. The king no sooner sits down to dinner than a white hart runs into the dining hall being chased by a white brachet; the brachet is abducted by a knight; a lady rides into the hall laying claim to the stolen brachet, and then she is abducted by yet another knight. The result of all of this activity is a quest.

Then he lette calle sir Gawayne, for he muste brynge agayne the whyght herte. "Also, sir, ye muste lette call sir Torre, for he muste brynge agay ne the brachette and the knyght. . . . Also lette calle kynge Pellynor, for he must brynge agayne the lady and the knyght."¹

The reader follows each knight on his quest and easily forgets the great hero left sitting on his throne. The knights report back to the king at the end of their quests. Gawain: "And anone as he was com Merlion dud make kynge Arthure that sir Gawayne was sworne to telle of hys adventure." Torre: "And than the kynge and the quene by Merlions advice made hym swere to telle of hys adventures, and so he tolde and made prevys of hys dedys." And Pellynore: "And there he was made to swere uppon the four Evangelistes to telle the trouthe of hys queste frome the one ende to that other."² Arthur, presumably listening to the tales, is never allowed to react to them. Despite the fact that in the tale of Arthur and Lucius, Tale II, the king leaves the security of his castle and ventures on a journey to inform the Romans, through conquest, that England will not pay truage, by Tale III, The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake, the king is at home sitting on his throne once more, apparently ruling the kingdom and waiting for his knights to provide him with amusement at the dinner table.

Throughout the rest of the book, the reader catches glimpses of Arthur in action—he berates Cornwall's King Mark for his treatment of

Sir Tristram, bemoans the fact that no knight will defend Guenever in "The Poisoned Apple," and presides over too many jousting tournaments—but more often the king remains within the walls of Camelot, far away from the action, an accessory to the story, necessary, but not vital. In Tale IV, the tale of Sir Gareth, Arthur receives the greatest blow a fading hero can suffer; Gareth insists upon being knighted by Sir Launcelot: "Than, sir, this is that other gyffte that ye shall graunte me: that sir Launcelot du Lake shall make me knyght, for of hym I woll be made knyght and ellys of none."³ One of his knights, not the king, but one of his military men, becomes the idol of the young men in Arthur's court. Either Arthur has been knocked from his pedestal—a painful fall—or elevated to such a height that the clouds, and not men, are his companions. Even in the final demise, The Most Piteous Tale of The Morte Arthur Saunz Guerdon, the last tale, Malory pays more attention to Mordred's treachery and Gawain's revenge against Launcelot than he does to Arthur's actions and reactions. From early in Le Morte Darthur Arthur's knights gain more prominence and power in the kingdom from their active participation than the king does. When his kingdom is crumbling in Mordred's hands, Arthur has little, if any, influence over the members of the Round Table. Launcelot's presence, not their love for Arthur and his ideals, had kept many knights in Camelot. As Gawain reminds Mordred and Agravaine, who plan to inform Arthur of Guenever and Launcelot's affair, "for, and there aryse warre and wrake betwyxte sir Launcelot [and us], wyte you well, brothir, there woll many kynges and grete lordis holde with sir Launcelot."⁴ After Launcelot kills Gawain's brothers, Gareth

and Gaheris, Arthur knows that he does not command enough power and influence over Gawain to prevent the imminent war with Launcelot:

"Well," seyde Arthure, "the deth of them woll cause the grettist mortall warre that ever was, for I am sure that whan sir Gawayne knowyth hereoff that sir Gareth ys slayne, I shall never have reste of hym tyll I have destroyed sir Launcelottys kynne and hymselff bothe, othir ellis he to destroy me."⁵

Literary critics make every attempt to explain and justify Arthur's behavior by examining those bits and pieces of him that manage to shine through the shadow of his knights. Elisa Ven-Ten Bensel sees in Malory's Arthur an uncontrollable confidence that often blinds him to the realities of life:

Although Arthur's readiness to make every available knight a member of the Round Table is nothing new, in Malory's romance this tendency is evidential of the king's easy confidence in people's conversion. . . . His ready belief in others sometimes exposes Arthur to imminent danger. . . . With respect to the feelings between Guinevere and Lancelot, the king did not entertain the least suspicion and was fully confident, until their guilt had been proved.⁶

According to her interpretation, had Arthur been less confident in his all-too-human friends, he might have seen the destruction to which the love affair would lead. Such knowledge might have prevented the tragic ruin of Arthur's ideal kingdom. Though Ven-Ten Bensel's is one answer, it fails to solve the puzzle of Arthur's behavior; it still leaves him as a rather simple, doting figure of a former hero.

Edward D. Kennedy, in his article "Malory's King Mark and King Arthur," offers a more plausible explanation for the king's behavior. According to this critic, Malory shaped Arthur into a good king in terms of medieval expectations, even in his attitude toward Guenever. "A medieval reader or audience would have been more closely attuned

than modern readers are to the responsibilities incumbent upon a king; . . . while writing Morte Darthur Malory had become interested in making his Arthur correspond to the medieval concept of a good king." Kennedy, in summarizing his evidence, which he finds in the works of medieval writers such as John of Salisbury (1115?-1180) and Giraldus Cambrensis (1146-1220), says that "a king should not be overly concerned with his wife, and the relationship between a ruler and his people is as important as, if not more important than, the relationship between a ruler and his wife," and that "a king should show concern for his people by preserving law and order, . . . punishing the evil and protecting the innocent." One more statement by Kennedy finishes setting the stage for this part of the argument; he says the king "should always look to the future, consider the effect his actions might have, and exercise due moderation in all of his actions."⁷ Arthur, then, basing his actions on these criteria, ignored the love affair because the consequences of admitting its existence were apparent to him; the division of his court and military force was too great a price to pay and he was correct in his estimation, since that was the eventual result of exposing the affair. Arthur saw the need to provide his people with peace, protection, and justice as being far more important than protecting his dignity in his private life. Once the affair was made public, he took the appropriate actions to preserve the law, sentencing Guenever to death and saying he would award Launcelot the appropriate punishment for treachery. Arthur says to Gawain: "And therefore for my quene he shall nevermore fyght, for she shall have the law. And if I may gete sir Launcelot, wyte you

well he shall have as shamefull a dethe."⁸ Kennedy's explanation may adequately account for Arthur's behavior over his queen's adultery, but like Ven-Ten Bensel, he does not explain enough--the forces that led to Arthur's apparent abdication of his fame, and eventually his power, to his knights are left a mystery.

A look at Arthur's development as a literary entity rather than a creation of one author provides part of an answer to the problem of Arthur's degeneration. "Most puzzling," says Charles Moorman, "is that as the legend develops, Arthur himself becomes less and less an active figure in his own story and recedes into the background. . . . Even at the end, he has little to do except to preside over the fall of his kingdom and be carried away to the Isle of Avalon."⁹ Moorman explains Arthur's behavior in Malory not as a matter of the author's intent, but as one more step in an ever-changing literary and folk tradition. With the advent of Arthur as a hero came the stories. They may have started as exaggeration, increasing the number of men Arthur killed in the battle at Mount Badon ("in quo corruerunt in uno die nongenti sexaginta veri de uno impetu Arthur," according to Nennius¹⁰). (Mary Stewart explains the growth of legends as she tells her story: "he is as tall as an oak and slew nine hundred men with his own hand; . . . Cornish men would always rather sing a poem than state a fact."¹¹) The next step in the process may have been the slow changing of the character from a war leader to a king, as Geoffrey of Monmouth is credited for doing by historians in his Historia Regum Britanniae. Eventually, the legend of Arthur's defense of his land grew to such a proportion that it began absorbing elements

of myth--heroic knights who perform miraculous deeds and possess the attributes of a Celtic sun god--and "as the legend, and with it the sense of national importance, grows . . . the figure of the king takes on a greater shape but a lesser function," Moorman says.¹² The final result of all of this growing and blending of myth and legend, he adds, is that "in becoming an archetype [the king] becomes the center from which all action originates, though he himself may not take part in that action; in creating and representing the glory of an ideal he loses much of his own glory and in time even ceases actively to defend the ideal."¹³ If Moorman's explanation holds true, the critics may search through Malory and find as many examples as they need to support their hypotheses, yet they will finally have to admit that Malory was working more with a literary trend than with intense characterization.

The result of this very brief critical survey is two-fold. First, the critics must constantly keep in mind Malory's medieval audience, what he hoped to achieve in his time with his people. Kennedy says that "medieval readers tolerated such inconsistencies within works of literature,"¹⁴ but that medieval audience left the Earth long ago and Malory's work has remained, influencing authors in the same way he was influenced in his writing. Since the critics are obliged to live within a medieval mentality, the task of reconciling those inconsistencies in Arthur's character is left to the modern fiction writers who are free to adapt the legend to the modern audience. Second, in digging up what is left of the king in Malory and providing him with flesh, bone, and spirit, the modern authors are reversing the fact-legend-myth trend, and, with a slight hint of fact for support,

returning Arthur to the position of legend, surrounded by his own deeds and greatness rather than by the deeds of knights that he quite probably never knew. (In seventeenth-century England, there was a similar reversal in the trend; authors and historians searched thoroughly and scientifically for proof or disproof of Arthur's reality. Their search, however, was mainly an effort to discredit a monarchy that claimed descent from Arthur and that was losing favor with the public. Their efforts resulted from political motivation rather than the loyalty to the legend that encouraged the twentieth-century shift.¹⁵)

For the most part, the 1970's version of Arthur is derived from the Arthur of the stories in Malory that precede the book of Sir Tristram. It would be hazardous to say that this Arthur is closer to the Arthur of the chronicles, based solely on the evidence Eugene Vinaver gives for Malory's development as a writer: "if his work is examined, as it should be, genetically, and his progress traced from beginning to end, it becomes obvious that there was in his case a consistent, though somewhat slow, evolution towards a higher degree of independence of the interpretation of his source."¹⁶ But if Malory remained consistent to the stories he found in his sources for the tale of King Arthur and the tale of Arthur and Lucius while reducing them in bulk, then he would have remained one step closer to the origins of the legend rather than taking one step farther away by adding his interpretations. Even at that, the early Arthur of his work is a much more active and dominant character than the Arthur of his later tales. As a young boy, Malory's Arthur is a powerful leader

and warrior: "So forthwithalle kynge Arthur sette upon hem in their lodgyng, . . . and alweyes kynge Arthur on horsback leyd on with a swerd and dyd merveillous dedes of armes." He fights like a lion. All of his knights marvel at his willingness to take responsibility and lead, though he is "but yonge": "all men of worship seyde hit was myrry to be under such a chyfftayne that wolde putte hys person in adventure as other poure knyghtis ded." Neither is he a coward: "Arthurs swerde braste at the crosse and felle on the grasse . . . whan kynge Arthure saw that, he was in grete feare to dye, but allwayes he helde up his schelde and loste no grounde nother batyd no chere."¹⁷

The Arthur of the moderns grows from the young Arthur of Malory; he is, as Stewart shows him, "eager, impetuous, but with a man's will that would burn its way through any opposition."¹⁸ He is again, in Andre Norton's Merlin's Mirror, the leader that men willingly and eagerly follow: "Time had become not a matter of the counting of seasons but rather of battles, for Arthur was the war leader they sought. He had in him more skill, even in his youth, than Uther had ever summoned."¹⁹ He is also a warrior who faces tremendous odds in battle and survives as victor. Tim Powers' Arthur, in The Drawing of The Dark, "sat up with the heavy hilt of Calad Bolg in his fist. He whirled the long blade once in the air and stung the horse's flanks with the snap of the reins. . . . He snarled up into the sky, 'Ride with us, Morrigan, and rend these dogs limb from socket!'"²⁰

Perhaps Malory's medieval audience knew enough of Arthur to eliminate Malory's need to delve into the king's personality and life story, but, in a time when horror stories and off-color jokes make up

the whole of oral storytelling, that bulk of Arthurian matter no longer survives, if it ever existed. Still, a common conception of Arthur has survived time's passing, according to Moorman: "in spite of his Celtic origins and his shadowy inactivity in the later versions of the legend, the image of Arthur remains to the Englishman [and, if only because of a common language, the American] a symbol of his nation and of his best self."²¹ Arthur's character in the 1970's, whether based on the individual author's conception of the king, or this symbolic image, becomes a complete and consistent whole, dependent on each author and not on a body of assumed tradition. Everything the reader knows of Arthur in each modern story is based directly on what Arthur does and says, and how he reacts in that story. In Malory, the king is acted upon—he has little influence over his behavior, controlled as he is by the other characters—rather than acting himself; he does not contemplate his own actions, nor does he ponder over his future; in the moderns he does.

No matter the length of the modern work, Arthur's actions are based on a philosophy that has grown with, and is consistent to the man. Stewart's Arthur is born and educated for his future in The Hollow Hills; the attitudes he forms as a youth grow into principles and actions when he is king in The Last Enchantment. Young Arthur, unaware of his parentage, and his compatriot, Bedwyr, son of King Ban of Benoic, sit in Merlin's hut in the forest of northwest England, discussing the love affair between Uther and Igraine:

"I'll tell you what I don't understand," said Bedwyr, "and that's a King who would risk setting the whole kingdom at blaze for a woman. Keeping faith with your peers is surely more important than having any woman. I'd never risk losing

anything that really mattered, just for that."

"Nor would I," said Arthur slowly. He had been thinking hard about it, I [Merlin] could see. "But I think I understand it, all the same. You have to reckon with love."²²

Later in their lives, after Guenever and Bedwyr have fallen in love,

Arthur explains his paternal reaction to Merlin:

Am I a cottager, with nothing in my life but a woman and a bed I am to be jealous of, like a cock on his dunghill? I am a king, and my life is a king's; she is a queen, and childless, so her life must be less than a woman's. Is she to wait year by year in an empty bed? . . . If, during the years of days that my work takes me from court, she is ever to take a man to her bed, should I not be thankful it is Bedwyr? . . . Anything I say to Bedwyr would eat at the root of the very trust we have, and it would avail nothing against what has already happened. . . . And we can count her barrenness a mercy.²³

The contemplative Arthur, who is reincarnated to battle the Turks in Powers' book, shows early signs of remorse at being called back to fight and die once again, yet he loyally and diligently performs his duty. When Brian Duffy, an Irish mercenary, learns that Arthur lives again and shares his body, the spirit of Arthur slowly gains dominance and clearly sees the new world surrounding him:

He felt as if the walls and roofs of his mind were being shaken, and falling away here and there to reveal an older landscape. But those walls and hallways are what's Brian Duffy, he thought mournfully. And now that I can remember both lives, I can see I've had much more enjoyment and relaxation as Duffy than I did as Arthur.²⁴

During Suleiman's seige of Vienna, Arthur gains complete control of Duffy's body and faces the challenge of battle: "Very well, then, we fight them here."²⁵ When the battle is won, Arthur, now with Duffy by his side and with more regret over leaving his second life than he felt over leaving his first, returns to Avalon; Duffy

shivered in the cold, damp wind, trying to stand at respectful attention despite his weariness and the pain of his wounds. They had handed the mortally wounded Arthur aboard the barge now, and the old monarch lifted his bloody head and smiled weakly at him. "Thank you," the king said quietly, "and farewell." Duffy nodded and lifted his sword in a salute as the old man let his head sink back upon the cushion.²⁶

The briefly-revived Arthur of Sterling Lanier's "Ghost of a Crown" shows the image that Britain holds of the king: "His face was set like flint, in a brooding but awesome expression; . . . he looked steady as a rock and just as hard to move, but it was more than that. Above all, the impression was regal, in the old sense of the word, that of a great ruler and master of men, one who controlled destiny and was never its plaything." This Arthur, fulfilling his task, chases the reawakened evil back to its grave with a curse shouted into the night air: "That stern look of majesty was never clearer in the moonlight. 'Accursed be thy stones forever! . . . Lie in the sea bottom until the end of time and never trouble the world again!'" Arthur's personality fades from his host body with the hint of return, "So passes the last of an evil lost in time. And I too pass, yet I will . . ." He never finished telling me what he would do."²⁷ Britain, rescued by Arthur at the moment of need, can once more dream of the hero's return.

Arthur is not a stay-at-home king; his responsibility is to defend England from the invading Saxons, or whatever evil forces each author confronts him with. The 1970's version of Arthur will not abdicate the authority he has long and diligently trained for. He cannot sit back on his laurels—his conquests of the petty kings of his realm—he must always fight; the invaders do not stop attacking simply because a

new king has gained the high throne. Arthur need only decide how best to wage the war he faces. Stewart's Arthur assumes responsibility for his army immediately: "If there is to be more fighting, I must be there myself to lead the armies and be seen to finish the work we started."²⁸ During a stretch of peace, Hewil, one of Gaw of Strathclyde's many sons, takes up piracy and raids northern coastal towns, and Arthur is all too eager to ride north and reprimand him: "I had been almost ready to invent some pretext for a foray to the northward."²⁹ Norton's Arthur as eagerly seeks reasons to fight as does Stewart's: "Even I cannot still a quickening of the blood when my hand fits against the hilt of my sword. We were born in war, we lived by war and if war is gone . . . then we may feel purposeless."³⁰

The modern authors deal with Malory's inconsistency concerning Arthur's reaction to Guenever and Launcelot's affair in three ways: finding a kingly, rational explanation, which Stewart does; eliminating the topic from the tale, as Norton does; and copping out, as Catherine Christian does in The Pendragon. (Christian's Arthur, drained of his vitality by the poison of a Pict arrow, wants only to have his dearest friends close to him. He forgives Launcelot and Guenever their transgression, and, a tired, sickly, old man, waits for his end, torn between invading Saxons and Mordred's treachery.) Of the three, the last is the worst; it is no better than the answers the critics find to the dilemma. Arthur's blindness to reality caused by his idealism is far more palatable to a modern reader than is the inexplicable and isolated touch of fate and illness on Christian's Arthur. While Norton may seem to avoid the issue, she sees that being

burned at the stake is no longer an acceptable punishment for treason and that adultery is no longer a force that can destroy an entire kingdom--divorce is a much simpler recourse. (Imagine the state of British history if the kingdom of every ruler who committed adultery fell into ruin—Henry VIII would have burned several times if it weren't for his definition.) The division of power and challenge to the throne that Mordred creates in Merlin's Mirror is a familiar scenario to modern audiences and is a reasonable cause for the fall of greatness. Of the three, Stewart most courageously explains the details found in Malory. She deals with the situation according to the accepted behavior of a good king as Kennedy describes one. She reminds the reader that the purpose of the queen is to bear children and uses two different Guenevers to achieve this point. Arthur's first bride dies during a miscarriage, and he refuses to put aside his second queen simply because she has not born him an heir.

Malory does not commit himself: does Arthur survive the battle near Salisbury and sleep below Avalon to return again when he is needed?

Yet som men say in many p[art]ys of Inglonde that kynge Arthur ys nat dede, but h[ad] by the wyll of cure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wyne the Holy Crosse. Yet I woll nat say that hit shall be so, but rather I wolde sey: here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff.³¹

Malory could not deny the oral tradition of Arthur's survival, yet his tale demanded a tragic demise for the idealistic kingdom. He could not change the plot: the mythical hero must destroy the legendary king. His wish not to destroy the tone of the denouement led him to

attribute the story of Arthur's survival to the common folk. "Most literary men seem to have felt that they could not compromise their own credibility by taking such ridiculous notions seriously," according to R. S. Loomis. Despite the fact that Malory hedged on the topic, Arthur's return is a dominant factor in the works of several twentieth century authors. As Loomis adds, "nevertheless, as we have seen the legends cropped up in the most unexpected places, they resisted the attacks of scepticism, they outlasted the marble tomb of Arthur itself. It is an astounding phenomenon that belief in Arthur's survival was still living 1,300 years after his death."³² Not only is the belief still living, but it is flourishing.

Arthur returns through reincarnation, is survived in principle and name through the pendragonship, and returns in the hearts and spirits of men who fight for the ideals of peace and justice. Arthur's character in these manifestations shows that it is the compassionate, powerful warrior-king who matters to the future, not the obscure man who sits on his throne dreaming his dreams. Character faults that were forced on him by medieval French and English authors are wiped off of his record. He is no longer the pitiable cuckold, and as far as the 1970's authors are concerned, he may never have suffered through the treachery and defeat that ends Le Morte Darthur.

Tim Powers' Arthur is brought back by special permission of the gods ("God if you prefer the singular") to help protect the ideals of western civilization ("Which means more than you know"). This Arthur is revived only to fight: "Before that I had been dreaming, over and over, of the end of things before--that last cold night beside the

lake. Then afterward there was that fight in the forest—I was fully awake then but only briefly."³³ Though he to comes back to fight, Sterling Lanier's Arthur inhabits his host body only for a short night and one last battle on the coast of Cornwall in defense of good against evil. Arthur's spirit enters Sir James, the Earl of Penrudduck, and the forces of evil are embodied in his brother, Lord Lionel. When Lionel finds, below the ruins of a castle on the Atlantic coast, a crypt in which are invested the tools to destroy all good, Arthur takes control of James' body, and, sword in hand, seeks out the Dark Prince's tomb. Though they manage to fulfill the services they were called forth to perform, both of these Arthurs project an air of sadness (see pp. 24-25). Each wants to know why he must come back and fight a battle in which he has already once fought and died. The remorse is not explicit; an air of melancholic sadness at always being duty-bound accompanies both kings on their second partings.

The connection between Malory's Camelot and the Camelot of A World Called Camelot and Camelot in Orbit reaches much farther than name only. Arthur H. Landis (perhaps he is a descendant of the Rede Knight of the Rede Landys, and named Arthur after the great Celtic hero) creates Kyrie Fern, a galactic watcher sent to Camelot-Fregis to discover the evil force that is taking control of the inhabitants; this character is a direct descendant of King Arthur, and he is, as the return of a legend, a hero akin to Powers' Arthur and the pendragon. Fern is allegedly the return of the world-renowned hero, the Great Collin:

For the Collin was legend as was Earth's El Cid, Arthur Pendragon, Quetzalcoatl, and Kim Il Sung. . . . All had been of great service to their people, and all were to return in the hour of the indigenous nation's greatest peril.³⁴

He comes, wielding his sword with more skill and conviction than any of the planet's feudal-type citizens, to save the north from the invading forces of the south. But that is not enough; in the second volume, Fern chases the evil across the ocean and pursues it on its own territory, much as the Arthur of Malory challenged the Romans on the other side of the channel.

"In times of great national crisis, however, in Arthurian times if you please, the devout Englishman feels that Arthur will return as prophesied to save the nation,"³⁵ according to Moorman. In 1973, Sanders Anne Laubenthal latched onto this concept of the returning pendragon as a flesh-and-blood character in Excalibur. (She was not the first to do so; C. S. Lewis introduced the concept in That Hideous Strength in 1946, and presented a character who was given, through some unknown power, the responsibility and authority to rescue England and the world from impending doom.) Laubenthal's character, Rhodri Meyrick, though filling Arthur's place, fails to live up to the standards of a leader or hero as established by both Malory and the modern authors. His sole purpose as the pendragon is to seek out and find Excalibur as it lay hidden outside a small town on the Alabama coast. But he is a weak man, easily swayed by the women in his life, and obsessed in his quest to the point of being blinded to all of the forces working against him. Had Rhodri been solely responsible for the salvation of the world, as the other Arthurs of the 1970's are, instead of dependent on the influences of other forces, the evil Morgause would have successfully laid waste to all of North America.

Rejuvenating Arthur is still only a process; not all authors in

the 1970's gave Arthur his independence; two authors left him in his position as a frame, a setting. In Vera Chapman's The King's Damosel, Arthur is no more than "the king to follow."³⁶ He is necessary to continue the story of Lynnette, the young maid who so berated Gareth on his first quest in Malory. Arthur saves Lynnette from the loveless marriage with Gaheris, into which she was contracted after Gareth fell in love with her sister, by making her his messenger. The king merely sends Lynnette off on various adventures and waits for her to return with the story of her mission; this king has no character. Even though Chapman's book is little more than an afternoon's reading for a teenager, she at least treats her subject with some loyalty and care; Thomas Berger, in his Arthur Rex, deals with the legend as a joke and turns Arthur into a dottering, absent-minded old man when he is only in his mid-thirties. In his first interview with Percival, Arthur has trouble remembering the young man's name—calling him Purnival, Percinell, and Purslaine—and almost knights him with the cutting edge of Excalibur. Later, after a similar interview with his bastard son, Mordred, Agravaine and Mordred discuss the king's failing sanity:

"Yet," said Mordred, "he seemeth not at all feeble today."

"Perhaps not in body," said Agravaine. "Nor perhaps not yet in mind. But certes, his spirit's not what it was once."

"But he cannot be very old," said Mordred, "for I am only—" But he halted here, and indeed he had startled himself by saying too much.³⁷

King Arthur leads a less complicated life in the 1970's than he did in the fifteenth century. He need not worry about the faithlessness of his wife and best friend; he need not compete with his knights for the role of main character in his own story; and most of all, he

need not lose or doubt his role as king. His job is to create, for longer than a brief, shining moment, if he can, a land of peace where his people are free to grow and multiply in safety and love. He need worry over nothing in his various reincarnations; all he need do is repeat his efforts at achieving his ideal. Yet his is an ugly, gloomy life, filled with constant conflict with his fellow man. Perhaps a modern author will one day call Arthur back from the grave to achieve more than victories in battle; perhaps they will let him fulfill the goals of Norton's Sky Lords: "There is more to occupy the hands and minds of men, Lord King. I [Merlin] grant you that only by struggle do we reach our highest feeling of accomplishment, but that need not be struggle against another of our kind. Wait and see."³⁸

Merlin, though the prime sponsor of Arthur's regime, has very little to do in Malory's story once Arthur has pulled the sword from the stone in front of the lords and noble men of England many and diverse times. The seer predicts the evil consequences of Arthur's marriage to Guenever, and establishes the Perilous Siege at the Round Table (the seat Galahad will eventually earn), before he is lured away by Nimue and is buried under a rock forever. Then Arthur is left without a counselor. Since there is not much of Merlin to work with in Malory, the critics say very little of him, except that his origins lay somewhere behind Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the French prose romance La Suite du Merlin. But the fiction writers of the 1970's found some things the critics missed, some characteristics of Merlin that they could build on.

Merlin, little more than a magician, a dream-reader, in Le Morte Darthur, has a very strong and real purpose in life, to put Arthur on the throne of all England. In this he is very different from Arthur. The king has a purpose, to achieve his ideal of justice, but Arthur's is a less concrete, less easily attainable purpose. Merlin knows his task, and once the job is done is free to leave England in the hands of the Fates; Arthur must struggle to his death. One very large question grows in the reader's mind: Why did Merlin do it? If Merlin is ageless, if he is a spirit that can "Spede so sone to go and com,"³⁹ why does he concern himself with the affairs of mere mortals? Malory does not provide an answer, but the writers of the 1970's took up the question and tried to answer it.

In Mary Stewart's trilogy, Merlin strives to achieve two purposes—one of purely human motivation, the other urged on him by the hand of an unknown god. The bastard son of Aurelius Ambrosius, the true heir to the British throne who fled to Less Britain when Vortigern usurped the throne, Merlin, as a young man, helps his father regain the crown. The son then promises his father that he will, with the help of Uther, Ambrosius' brother, create a strong and powerful king who will bring to England the civilization Ambrosius dreamed of. Merlin is a son with a promise to fulfill; he is also a man touched by a god and gifted with the Sight, performing any actions this power desires of him. Through his visions he is led through his life, first putting Arthur on the throne and then, through less frequent visions, helping him stay there. The god's purpose is as unknown to Merlin as it is to the audience, but the question now becomes one for the gods and Stewart

to answer: Why is Merlin made to do what he does?

In Merlin's Mirror, Norton, with her science-fiction skill, creates Merlin, son of a Celtic chieftain's daughter and a Sky Lord, the seed of a greater race from the far reaches of the galaxy. Through the aid of a vast machine-complex buried deep in the Welsh hills, Merlin learns the reason for his conception and the goal he is to work toward in life—creating, through the son of the Queen Igrain and the seed of another Sky Lord, a great, peaceful civilization on Earth that will welcome in brotherhood and love this civilization from space. As the servant of extra-terrestrial beings, Merlin has the galactic future of mankind in his hands.

Powers returns to a character more like Malory's Merlin in The Drawing of the Dark—Merlin Aurelianus, "the last prince of the Old Powers, the figure that runs obscurely like an incongruous thread through the age-dimmed tapestry of British pre-history."⁴⁰ If Merlin, with the help of Arthur and Duffy, cannot prevent the Turks from sacking Vienna before October 31, 1529, the Fisher King and the West will die at the hands of the Turks. A cask of seven-hundred-year-old beer that has slowly absorbed special powers after aging over the grave of Fin Mac Cool is all that the Fisher King needs to be restored to health; the brewery lies within Vienna's walls. This time Merlin is the defender of Europe and culture.

Merlin, "a devyls son,"⁴¹ spends most of his brief role in Malory amazing the ordinary mortals of Camelot, changing shape and appearance at will just to catch his audience unawares; though he serves as Arthur's adviser, he has an impish tendency to present himself and

his advice through the tricks of his trade. Sir Ulfius, Uther's servant, seeks Merlin's help in curing the king of his love for Igraine: "So Ulfius departed and by adventure he mette Merlyn in a beggars aray, and ther Merlyn asked Ulfius whome he soughte, and he said he had lytyl ado to telle hym."⁴² When Arthur is still new to his role of king, Merlin appears to him: "and Merlion was so disgysed that kynge Arthure knewe hym nat, for he was all befurred in blacke shepis skynnes, and a grete payre of bootis, and a boowe and arowis, in a russet gowne, and brought wylde gyese in hys honde."⁴³ The knights marvel more at Merlin's deeds than at his prophecies: "than Ulphuns and Brastias knew hym well inowghe and smyled. . . . Than kynge Arthure was gretly abaysshed and had mervayle of Merlion, and so had kynge Ban and Bors. So they had grete desporte at hym."⁴⁴ Almost as nervous habit, Merlin pops in and out of scenes: "with that Merlyn vanysshed aweye and came to kynge Arthure."⁴⁵

One group of modern authors uses a Merlin similar to Malory's, as little more than a prop. Chapman's Merlin, in The King's Damosel, is a stereotype: "An old man with a white robe, with a white linen coif over his head. . . . Round his neck hung a small crystal globe, and in his hands was a long carven staff."⁴⁶ His job is to direct Lynnette on her quest for the Holy Grail, then he disappears from this story. The character who mysteriously comes and goes as he pleases in Christian's The Pendragon plays his part under a different name--Celidon. A harper with a face "he could twist into so many expressions," he is also the Merlin, "third in rank of the chief Druids of England."⁴⁷ Once Arthur is accepted as the new pendragon by

the clans, Celidon drifts off into the role of messenger and occasionally presager; he is not even the seer of Malory. Thomas Berger's Merlin is little different from the others except that, like Arthur, he is something of a farcical character:

The glossy black bird flapped his wings twice and before their bulging eyes he was transformed into a man with a long white beard and wearing the raiment of a wizard, which is to say a long gown and a tall hat in the shape of a cone, both dark as the sky at midnight with here and there twinkling stars and a horned moon. And the next instant Merlin (for it was he) caused both knights and horses to return to their proper forms [they had been turned into frogs and spotted hounds], and then did he laugh most merrily.⁴⁸

You can almost see Merlin snapping his fingers or twitching his nose as he pops in and out of the story.

Mary Stewart makes the seer a man. In Merlin's relationship with Arthur he grows beyond an adviser and comes to love the king as a son, as more than a fulfilled promise. To Arthur, Merlin is "the man who was more to me than my own father."⁴⁹ Through his knowledge of the science of engineering, Merlin achieves one of his greatest feats, moving the King Stone from Ireland and restoring it to its place in the middle of Stonehenge. His science is known to the eastern world of his time, though long forgotten in his own land: "I spent eight months with a man near Sardis in Maeonia, who could calculate to a hair's breadth, and with whose help I could have lifted the Giant's Dance in half the time had it been twice as great."⁵⁰ He performs his most important task—the rendezvous between Uther and Igraine—through a knowledge of disguise and human behavior, learned as much from schooling in medicine as from an early childhood spent avoiding the

danger of royal bastardy. This man bleeds: ". . . the skin had been stripped from the cheek that lay pressed hard into the turf. There was blood in my mouth, and my right hand was a jelly of pain."⁵¹ And he will, eventually, die. (As the first-person narrator, he is not dead at the end of the story. Merlin does, however, suffer the after-effects of Morgause's attempt to poison him, and lapses into a coma that Arthur and Merlin's lover, Ninian, mistake for death. For several months he lies buried alive in his Welsh cave.)

By the time Stewart's Arthur is made king, Merlin is in his mid-thirties, and slowly, as a result of the tremendous energy needed to work the miracle of the drawing of Maccsen's sword from the stone altar, he is losing the power that helped him achieve Arthur's conception at Tintagel. The counsel Merlin gives Arthur during his reign is the product of education, not magic. "If I've been sure of myself [Merlin says to Arthur] it is because the advice I have been asked for concerns my professional skills, no more."⁵² In his last days, when all power is gone, and human age has forced him into the true life of an old man, he is Arthur's friend, the king's sanctuary from war and strife. "Just as the boy Arthur, racing up to see me in the shrine of the Wild Forest, had poured out all the doings of every day at my feet, so did the High King of Britain bring me all his acts, his problems and his troubles, and spread them out there on the cave floor in the firelight, and talk to me."⁵³

He was conceived in the womb of a human girl via a machine flying through the window at night, and educated by a computer console, but Andre Norton's Merlin is as much a product of C. S. Lewis's inspiration

as he is a product of science fiction and Norton's imagination. In That Hideous Strength, Lewis, writing thirty years before Norton, raised, and in a sense answered, several questions concerning the Merlin of Malory and earlier Arthurian authors:

He's [Merlin] the really interesting figure. Did the whole thing fail because he died so soon? Has it ever struck you what an odd creation Merlin is? He's not evil; yet he's a magician. He is obviously a druid; yet he knows all about the Grail. He's "the devil's son"; but then Layamon goes out of his way to tell you that the kind of being who fathered Merlin needn't have been bad after all. You remember "there dwell in the sky many kinds of wights. Some of them are good, and some work evil". . . . I often wonder whether Merlin doesn't represent the last trace of something that became impossible when the only people in touch with the supernatural were either white or black, either priests or sorcerers.⁵⁴

Norton picked up Lewis's suggestion in 1975 and the masters that her Merlin serves are those wights that live in the sky, who left machines to watch over the Earth when they left for their homes. Merlin is not the last of a great good, as Lewis suggests, but a new beginning of that good. To achieve his purpose, he suffers the pains of loneliness, the feelings of a human male, and the doubts of a student who cannot learn all that he needs to know, but he does not leave the story too soon; he stays with Arthur to the end. Merlin's human teacher, Lugaid, sums up all of Merlin's difficulties and provides the half-breed, this new piece of an old way, with the consolation of the future: "Each man walks his own road in his life; only a few times may he reach out and in truth touch another. You, being who you are, must accept that you stand alone in this world. If you would have company of your kind, then do what you are lessoned in doing."⁵⁵

Arthur Landis has fun with the character of Merlin, and in his name-changing style, creates Hooli, the Pug-Boo. Where Kyri Fern, the galactic adjuster, is the Arthur of Landis' Camelot, Hooli, who resembles a Terran honey bear, is the Merlin, a universal adjuster. Hooli pops in and out of Kyrie's dreams and life as Merlin pops in and out of Malory's court: "The Pug-Boo's fat little body reclined in midair, or so it appeared in the gray mist of my semiconsciousness. . . . I made an effort to shut my eyes, only to find that they were already shut."⁵⁶ Landis makes it hard to find the Pug-Boo's personality, in all of his cryptic, witty, eye-winking contacts with Fern; he will not let either Fern or the audience know exactly what a Pug-Boo is. "Then I [Fern] asked curiously, 'What did he look like?' 'Me, Buby! The Real me! It's not too late. You can still have a peek!' I sighed. 'I'll take a rain check.'"⁵⁷ This Hooli is by far the most mysterious of all of the modern recreations of the wizard.

"Wait for me. . . . Wait for me. I shall come back,"⁵⁸ says Arthur to Merlin at the end of Stewart's trilogy, and Merlin waits. They have waited together over the centuries, surviving time, to finally begin emerging as men, characters in their own rights, legends returned to their own fame. In exploring Arthur and Merlin as dominant entities, the authors of the 1970's have pointed out the direction in which future authors will need to travel to make the heroes grow even more; those same authors will need direction as to what kind of world to create for the characters, too.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

- ¹ Sir Thomas Malory, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugene Vinaver (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), I, 103, lines 18-23. (III, 5). For the reader's convenience, the book and chapter numbers from Caxton's edition, which Vinaver includes at the top of each page and along the margins of the text, will be given in parentheses after each citing. The brackets are Vinaver's.
- ² Malory, I, 108, lines 25-7 (III, 8); I, 113, lines 36-7 (III, 11); I, 119, lines 19-21 (III, 15).
- ³ Malory, I, 297, lines 15-17 (VII, 3).
- ⁴ Malory, III, 1162, lines 3-6 (XX, 1). The brackets are Vinaver's.
- ⁵ Malory, III, 1183, lines 27-31 (XX, 9).
- ⁶ Elise Ven-Ten Benschel, The Character of King Arthur in English Literature ([1925] rpt.; New York: Haskell House, 1966, pp. 146-7.
- ⁷ Edward D. Kennedy, "Malory's King Mark and King Arthur," Medieval Studies, 37 (1975), 191-2, 193, 194, and 196.
- ⁸ Malory, III, 1175, lines 22-4 (XX, 7).
- ⁹ Charles Moorman, "King Arthur and The English National Character," New York Folklore Quarterly, 26 (1976), 103.
- ¹⁰ Nennius, Historia Britonum, ed. Joseph Stevenson (1838, London; rpt., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint, Ltd., 1964), p. 49. The quotation, roughly translated, reads "in that place were overthrown in one day 960 men by one attack of Arthur."
- ¹¹ Mary Stewart, The Last Enchantment (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p. 34. Hereafter cited as LE.
- ¹² Charles Moorman, Kings and Captains (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971), p. 167.
- ¹³ Moorman, Kings and Captains, p. 167. Most of this paragraph is a summary of the article cited here—"The Arthur Legend."
- ¹⁴ Kennedy, p. 225.
- ¹⁵ For a short, but thorough, look at the Arthurian legend in the seventeenth century see chapter four of James D. Merriman's The Flower of Kings (Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1973). For a longer study, see Roberta F. Brinkley's Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century (1932; rpt., New York: Octagon Books, 1967).

- 16 Eugene Vinaver, ed. The Works of Sir Thomas Malory by Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), III, 1624.
- 17 Malory, I, 19, lines 6-10 (I, 9); I, 46, line 25 (I, 21); I, 54, lines 18-20 (I, 25); I, 143, lines 29-34 (IV, 9).
- 18 Stewart, LE, p. 23.
- 19 Andre Norton, Merlin's Mirror (New York: Daw Books, 1975), p. 117.
- 20 Tim Powers, The Drawing of The Dark (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), p. 198.
- 21 Moorman, "King Arthur and The English National Character," p. 110.
- 22 Mary Stewart, The Hollow Hills (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Books, 1973), p. 309. Hereafter cited as HH.
- 23 Stewart, HH, p. 333.
- 24 Powers, p. 185.
- 25 Powers, p. 261.
- 26 Powers, p. 321.
- 27 Sterling E. Lanier, "Ghost of a Crown," Fantasy and Science Fiction, Dec. 1976, pp. 28 and 43. Lanier's ellipsis.
- 28 Stewart, LE, p. 23.
- 29 Stewart, LE, p. 313.
- 30 Norton, p. 146.
- 31 Malory, III, 1242, lines 22-7 (IIX, 7).
- 32 Roger S. Loomis, "The Legend of Arthur's Survival," in Arthurian Literature in The Middle Ages: A Collaborative History, ed. Roger S. Loomis (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 71.
- 33 Powers, pp. 181, 259, and 260.
- 34 Arthur H. Landis, A World Called Camelot (New York: Daw Books, 1976), p. 29.
- 35 Moorman, "King Arthur and The English National Character," p. 112.

- 36 Vera Chapman, The King's Damosel (New York: Avon Books, 1976), p. 50.
- 37 Thomas Berger, Arthur Rex (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978), p. 413.
- 38 Norton, p. 146.
- 39 Malory, I, 25, lines 5-6 (I, 11).
- 40 Powers, p. 242.
- 41 Malory, I, 126, line 20 (IV, 1).
- 42 Malory, I, 8, lines 15-17 (I, 1).
- 43 Malory, I, 38, lines 5-9 (I, 17). See also I, 44, lines 5-7 (I, 10).
- 44 Malory, I, 38, lines 21-6 (I, 17).
- 45 Malory, I, 18, lines 37-8 (I, 9). See also I, 73, line 4 (I, 8); I, 85, line 16 (II, 16); and I, 92, line 8 (II, 19).
- 46 Chapman, p. 23.
- 47 Catherine Christian, The Pendragon (London: Pan Books, 1978), pp. 21 and 34.
- 48 Berger, p. 3.
- 49 Stewart, LE, p. 401.
- 50 Stewart, HH, p. 163.
- 51 Mary Stewart, The Crystal Cave (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Books, 1970), p. 369.
- 52 Stewart, LE, p. 63.
- 53 Stewart, LE, p. 438.
- 54 C. S. Lewis, That Hideous Strength (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1946), pp. 31-2.
- 55 Norton, p. 75.
- 56 Landis, A World Called Camelot, p. 15.
- 57 Arthur H. Landis, Camelot in Orbit (New York: Daw Books, 1978), p. 174.
- 58 Stewart, LE, p. 440.

CHAPTER III

MAGIC AND FANTASY

Turning to the first page of Sir Thomas Malory's work begins, for the initiate, a journey through marvels and wonders, where every bend in the road introduces one to witches, wizards, ghosts, love potions, spells, visions, or magical swords. Every chapter of Malory's tale of Arthur, whether edited by William Caxton or Eugene Vinaver, is one more moment spent in a timeless, placeless world; the story does not take place in the fifteenth or in the fifth century, not in England or in Logres;¹ instead, Malory's Camelot and the surrounding realm exist in a time and space of their own. The human reality of the story--war, sin, tragedy--survives in a symbiotic relationship with the magic, the fantasy, of the tale; one cannot be wholly detached from the other without destroying its partner. In honest recognition of this dualism in the Arthurian legend, the authors of the 1970's worked valiantly (some very successfully, others not so successfully) to retain and use the magic of the legend in their retellings. To show how Malory's use of magic is perceived by modern audiences and to show how modern authors handled the fantastic in the light of the five hundred years that stretch between the two, takes patience, calm, and a willingness on the reader's part to suspend the human need for explicit definition.

Perhaps somewhere in the unknown past there was one definition for the root from which the word "magic" grew; today no simple

definition exists, as Philip Bonewits, a twentieth-century scholar of magic, somewhat humorously illustrates:

One of the first things you will notice, if you do any reading in this field at all, is that there are more definitions of "magic" than there are magicians, mystics, philosophers, occultists, theologians, and anthropologists put together (you wouldn't actually want to put them together, they would be at each other's throats in seconds . . . Hmm, come to think of it, it might not be such a bad idea . . .).²

A quick look at the attempts that have been made at a definition shows how accurate Bonewits is. Jacob Bronowski, identifying himself as a professional scientist, uses an ironic tone to convince his audience:

My definition of magic is very simple. It is the view that there is a logic of everyday life, but there is also a logic of another world. And that other logic works in a different way and if you can only find the secret key, if you can enter into some magical practice—particularly if you can find the right form of words—then either the Almighty will be on your side, or you will collect all the votes, . . . and all of those other things . . . which come to the same thing: trying to command the world and particularly the opinions of other people by some formula which is other than the truth.³

The difficulty of achieving a single definition for magic reaches beyond science; literary scholars cannot agree either. J. R. R. Tolkien describes magic as an entity in itself: "Magic produces, or pretends to produce an alteration in the Primary World. . . . Its desire is power in this world, domination of things and wills."⁴ Lynn Thorndike describes it as a part of man himself: "Magic was not the outright invention of imagination; it was primitive man's philosophy, it was his attitude toward nature, . . . it was a body of ideas held by men universally and which, during their savage state at least, they were forever trying to put into practice. Everybody was a magician."⁵

The influence of this lack of agreement (or this confusion, whichever expression is more appropriate) spreads rapidly as it reaches out toward other terms. Is the supernatural magic? Are ghosts, witches, and seers all part of magic? What is supernatural? "Supernatural is a dangerous and difficult word in any of its senses, looser or stricter," according to Tolkien;⁶ he goes on to use the word in terms of larger than nature rather than the "extraordinary, beyond the common, unexplainable at present" interpretation that Bonewits uses.⁷ Without reconciling these differences, since no one does, one more example will serve to show the lack of control writers have over words and the concessions they are willing to make to magic's ambiguity. Robert West, discussing Elizabethan dramatists, writes: "Of magic dealing with spirits Shakespeare's contemporaries made two main divisions: ceremonial magic and witchcraft"; somewhat in contradiction to his text, West adds this footnote: "For many writers of the time witchcraft and any other spirit magic were virtually synonymous."⁸ Apparently scholars would prefer to leave their audiences in doubt over just what is being discussed. H. P. Lovecraft, in his introduction to Supernatural Horror in Literature, never settles down to writing a definition of "supernatural," but throws around words and phrases that allude to the topic: "spheres of existence whereof we know nothing and wherein we have no part"; "an unreal or spiritual world"; "cosmic fear."⁹ George Kittredge, in Witchcraft in Old and New England, uses the confusion of definition to his advantage in showing the widespread acceptance of witchcraft in English history: "The prevalence of every form of witchcraft and

sorcery in England before the Norman Conquest might be inferred from the richness of the native vocabulary, even if we had no other proofs: for witch, wizard, enchanter, seer, diviner, and so on, there are more than thirty Anglo-Saxon terms."¹⁰ This diversity in lexical items and the lack of consistent usage of words that apply to other-worldly elements leaves the questions concerning magic unanswered.

Still working without a definition, or even a list of categories, it is possible to show how the common attitude toward magic changed from the fifteenth century to the twentieth century. Apparently, to Malory's audience, magic played a very real part in everyday life, as much a part as food, plague, and religion. In the first two chapters of The Place of Magic in The Intellectual History of Europe, Thorndike shows the growth and influence of many different forms of magic on the medieval mind: witchcraft "played its part not only in humble life, but in court intrigues and in the accusations brought at state trials"; "that marvelous power of words . . . was discussed at length by a series of scholars at the close of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century."¹¹ Kittredge, through sheer bulk of examples and citations, convincingly illustrates a belief in witchcraft through the eighteenth century. According to him, "the Englishman of the sixteenth or seventeenth century did not excogitate or dream [a belief in witchcraft] for himself, or borrow it from the Continent, or learn it from his spiritual advisers whether before the Reformation or after. He inherited it in an unbroken line from his primeval ancestors."¹² Slowly, as time drifted from the mid-1400's toward an age when a trip to the moon created heroes and not fear, the attitude toward magic

changed. "By that time [1712] there was much incredulity on the subject in the minds of educated men," according to Kittredge.¹³

West describes the attitude change from Shakespeare's time in two sentences:

They knew rather more definitely than did editors two hundred years later what such things as spirits, witches and magicians were conceived to be. These are terms that have nowadays only figurative or historical signification; but in 1607, as for centuries before and for generations to come, they or their equivalents were part of a universal faith that was, perhaps, as close to the people as technology is to us.¹⁴

Though there seems to be a general agreement that the public's attitude toward magic today is different from that of earlier ages, there does not seem to be much agreement in describing the modern attitude or boundaries. Bonewits suggests that modern interest arises more from curiosity than belief: "almost everyone these days is interested in the occult, and the charlatans and hacks have been quick to capitalize [on its popularity]. . . . The total number of reasons for our modern obsession with magic and ESP runs into the infinite."¹⁵ Bronowski insists that the shift is toward science: "And if you want to think of an alternative title [for his book Magic, Science, and Civilization] you could substitute 'the scientific way of thinking is a human way of thinking'; and it is becoming for us the only human way which we can treat as a unifying discipline."¹⁶ Both men are writing of magic in everyday life rather than the life that exists in literature. There magic unquestionably exists and is accepted, but as the public's acceptance toward magic changed in their daily lives, it went through a similar evolution in their reading material. Authors

learned to deal with magic more delicately and carefully; they learned how much of the unusual their audiences would tolerate and what form they would tolerate. "The time is past when adults can accept marvelous conditions for granted. Every energy must be bent toward the weaving of a frame of mind which shall make the story . . . seem credible—and in the weaving of this mood the utmost subtlety and versimilitude is required," according to Lovecraft.¹⁷ Peter Penzoldt, in The Supernatural in Fiction, shows how the readers' changing attitudes toward magic effected the growth of the supernatural tale:

nor was it necessary to prepare [Shakespeare's] audience psychologically for an apparition they were still willing to accept as reality. . . . The means of vanquishing [a member of the audience's] incredulity and coaxing him into a state of 'willing suspension of disbelief' became more elaborate [for the Gothic writer]. . . . During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the readers' disbelief in the supernatural continued to grow. . . . The public would no longer accept ghosts and goblins for hundreds of pages; it had to be taken by surprise in a short tale. . . . Thus nineteenth- and twentieth-century weird fiction did what the Gothic novel had not yet done; it gave us the tale wholly and uniquely devoted to the supernatural, to the exclusion of all other melodramatic effects.¹⁸

The supernatural becomes magic, for witches, ghosts, and transmutations do not always frighten; they become marvelous when the definition (or perception) of supernatural is shifted from a fear of the unknown to a curiosity toward and fondness for the unknown. As Eric Rabkin says, "we can choose to look at the daylight instead of the gloom."¹⁹ And eventually magic becomes fantasy. "Magic power is the subject of fantasy and shapes the landscape, the hero, his quest, and his discovery," according to Jane Mobley.²⁰ Though Tolkien says that "magic should be reserved for the operations of the Magicians," he does find a skill and craft in fairy stories and fantasy akin to

magic, but he chooses to call it by another name: "art of the same sort, if more skilled and effortless, the elves can also use, or so the reports seem to show; but the more potent and specially elvish craft I will, for lack of a less debatable word, call Enchantment."²¹

Whatever magic is, there seems to be one point of agreement—that it is part of fantasy, and that agreement introduces one more element of confusion that must be looked at before all of the confusion can be bundled up and dumped in that obscure file of the unexplained. Though "fantasy" has cropped up already, I have not discussed what it is. Mobley seeks a practical this-world definition; for her, fantasy "requires the [reader to enter] an Other-World and follow a hero whose adventures take place in a reality far removed from the mundane reality of the reader's waking experience."²² Tolkien leaves his definition in the Other-worldly tone of the undefinable: "Fantasy, the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds, was the heart of the desire of Faërie." He uses "fantasy" as a word to tie together art and imagination: "Fantasy, . . . combines with its older and higher use as an equivalent of Imagination the derived notions of 'unreality' (that is, of unlikeness to the Primary World) of freedom from the domination of observed 'fact,' in short of the fantastic." Even though the reader is never quite sure what Tolkien means by "enchantment" and "Faërie" and "fantasy," he lumps them all into one more statement in his effort to make clear his personal confusion: "To the elvish craft, Enchantment, Fantasy aspires, and when it is successful of all forms of human art most nearly approaches."²³ Both Mobley and Tolkien depend on an understanding of the "This-world" that fantasy is supposed

to be outside of. They drastically separate the real world from that "Other-world."

A more practical approach to a definition of fantasy hides within the work of Rabkin, The Fantastic in Literature. For him "the fantastic has a place in any narrative genre, but that genre to which the fantastic is exhaustively central is the class of narratives we call Fantasy."²⁴ Though he does not define "fantastic" explicitly, Rabkin does provide the reader with four signals which point toward the fantastic:

We have then three classes of signal for the fantastic: signals of the characters, . . . signals of the narrator, . . . and signals of the implied author. . . . However, each class of signal can be properly interpreted only by reference to the ground rules of the narrative world, ground rules that are foisted upon the reader in large part by his whole life's training in the reading of literature and its many grapholects [written subsets of English]. Without the clarity in these signals afforded by definitive reference to a grapholect, the fantastic is often mistaken for something else . . .²⁵

The difference between "fantasy" and "fantastic" for Rabkin appears to be that "fantasy" is the literary manifestation of the "fantastic" and that the "fantastic" is an altering of human perspectives: "By reversing the viewer's perspectives within a single world, the work becomes fantastic." Yet at the end of his book, Rabkin leaves the reader still confused over just what he feels "fantasy" is when he says that "fantasy represents a basic mode of human knowing: its polar opposite is Reality."²⁶ What, after all, is reality?

After eight pages of confusion there is no clarity. Honesty and an acceptance of truth forces on us the reality that magic and fantasy exist in a world without boundaries, limits, or sharp, clear outlines.

Extrapolating from Tolkien's work "On Fairy-Stories" shows that magic and fantasy must be elements similar to the land of Faërie (remember that Tolkien calls elvish magic "enchantment"), a land that does not depend on historical accounts or definitions, but on the nature of Faërie itself:

I will not attempt to define that, nor to describe it directly. It cannot be done. Faërie cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible. It has many ingredients, but analysis will not necessarily discover the secret of the whole.²⁷

To understand magic and fantasy the reader must either be hypermetropic or hold a piece of cheesecloth in front of her eyes to simulate fuzziness. There is something real to be perceived in magic and fantasy, but like a mirage, closeness forces reality to fade. Whether or not authors and scholars can arrive at a common description of what they see when they try to perceive magic, there is one common (though unknown) surety behind all of their efforts.

At this point generalities are a necessary element to understanding specifics. To discuss the marvelous in Le Morte Darthur and to decide how the modern authors used that element in their own versions of the legend, we must have some criteria with which to analyze the works. Since there are no definitions for fantasy and magic agreed to by all, something, almost anything, must be agreed upon to establish boundaries for this discussion. Due to their sense of generality, Bronowski's definition of magic, in a modified tone, and Tolkien's definition of fantasy will best serve the following discussion. (In the case of fantasy, elements of other definitions might come in handy to establish a case for or against a particular argument.) Bronowski's

definition of magic says that there are two logics, one of the everyday world, and one of a magical world, where logic works both on religious faith and on turning knights into rocks. This definition complements Tolkien's definition of fantasy very nicely—"the making and glimpsing of Other-worlds." Fantasy is Tolkien's Other-world and an Other-worldly logic rules that world.

Finally, to Malory. Eugene Vinaver briefly deals with Malory's attitude toward the supernatural which he found in his sources, particularly in the Tale of King Arthur. Vinaver suggests that Malory was aiming at practicality:

. . . he deliberately avoided, as far as he could, any excess of the supernatural. He dismissed in a very summary fashion the episode of Morgan le Fay changing herself and her followers into stone in order to elude Arthur. . . . This reluctance to bring in the atmosphere of the irrational for its own sake shows itself in a variety of ways. . . . Incidents which appealed to the French authors because of their fairy element are reproduced with an emphasis on their human and realistic aspects and with a noticeable neglect of magic. . . . Malory shifts the whole emphasis of the tale from the story of a great magician to that of a great king.²⁸

Apparently Vinaver feels that Malory tried as hard as he could, within the conventions of his time, to eliminate fantasy and to create a fiction based more directly upon reality. However, Tolkien says, with no hesitation, that "the good and evil story of Arthur's court is a 'fairy-story'; he gives little explanation except to say that Arthur was thrown into the cooking pot, boiled together with history, myth, and legend, and eventually emerged as the King of Faërie."²⁹ C. S. Lewis, no less convinced that Malory wrote fantasy, willingly admits that Malory may have done so by accident, but then again he might not have:

For, clearly, even if we know what he did, we can only guess what he intended. It is possible to imagine a burly, commonsensible man who was always trying to turn the faerie world of the romances into something much more earthy and realistic. Accepting that picture, we may smile at the 'success by failure', the happy frustration of his vain labour which has made his book for centuries the chief delight of all who love 'the fairy way of writing'. But a quite different picture is equally possible. . . . Those who love [fairy stories] as alone they can be loved, for their suggestiveness, their quality, will not increase their number. Two enchanters, two ghosts, two ferlies are always half as impressive as one. Every supposedly naturalistic change that Malory made in the story might proceed from a far fuller belief and a more profound delight in it than the French authors had ever known. He would not be the less English for that.³⁰

Though critics may not agree on his intention or his outcome, Malory's work itself shows, according to many definitions, that his tale of King Arthur is a fantasy. According to Tolkien, "most good 'fairy-stories' are about the adventures of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches."³¹ In Malory, human reality and fate working together would not have been strong enough to bring about the fall of Arthur's kingdom. From beginning to end none of the vital episodes could unfold without the characters treading on the edges of Faërie and magic playing a large part in the events. Without the magic surging through Merlin and surrounding Tintagel on the night of his conception, Arthur would not have been born. That same magic, still influencing its subjects years after it was spent, created Mordred. Without Dame Brysen's magic potion that made Launcelot think Elaine, King Pellas' daughter, was Guenever, Galahad would not have been born to lead the quest for the Holy Grail. The achievement of that quest, whether through religious miracle or unholy vision, resulted in the fall of the Round Table, according to Arthur himself:

"'Now,' seyde the kynge, 'I am sure at this quest of the Sankegreal shall all ye of the Rownde Table departe, and newyr shall I se you togydir in the medow, all hole togydirs!'"³² After Gawain, with Arthur's forces, follows Lancelot to Benwick, Gawain's magical strength prolongs the battle between these two great knights, giving Mordred the time he needs to raise his army. The final battle beside Salisbury was caused directly by the magical power of ghosts. Had Gawain's ghost not counseled Arthur to make a month-long treaty with Mordred, perhaps the battle would have fallen in Arthur's favor; after all, the adder would never have bitten the warrior--strategy, and not emotion, would have ruled the battlefield.

Fantasy depends upon the author's creating a world outside of the world in which the reader lives. "What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator.' He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true'; it accords with the laws of that world," according to Tolkien.³³ In that world time and place have a meaning all their own; they are, as Mobley suggests, "fluid, subject to change as the necessities of feeling dictate."³⁴ The England-Logres that knights travel through is not the England of reality; there a three-hundred-year-old Joseph of Arimathea actually appears to Galahad, Percival, and Bors, and manna from heaven once again maintains life on a long journey. The passage of time does not concern the people who live in that land: Lancelot can roam the forests as a madman for two years without being forgotten or given up as dead; Galahad and Lancelot can spend six months sailing from island to island on the death barge of Percival's

sister, sharing adventures with wild beasts, without losing a moment in the search for the Holy Grail.

Though this secondary world that he creates is most like the one Tolkien describes, Malory also uses Rabkin's signals for the fantastic to point out exceptions to the rules. There are times when the deeds of the knights in the tales are so grand that Malory uses the astonishment that both the narrator and the characters show to signal the unusual. In Camelot, knights regularly fight for two hours, or an entire afternoon, without fainting from lack of air or without bleeding to death, yet when one knight fights well beyond his means his peers marvel at his deeds. Sir Palomides, smitten by his love for La Beale Isold, multiplies his efforts in the tournament at Lonezep: "Than sir Palomydes began to double his strengthe, and he ded so mervaylously all men had wondir." Then Sir Tristram says of Palomides, "suche dedis sawe I hym never do, nother never erste herde I tell that ever he ded so mucche in one day."³⁵ Even more marvelous are the Gawain-Launcelot encounters at Benwick. When Gawain's strength doubles from nine a.m. to noon, Launcelot "felte hys myght evermore encrease, sir Launcelot wondred and drad hym sore to be shamed." During their second encounter, three weeks later, Gawain and Launcelot "cam egirly togydirs and gaff many sad strokis, that all men on bothe partyes had wondir."³⁶

One example, Malory's use of death, best illustrates how he established his ground rules, and then, in an effort to sharpen the final tragedy, broke those rules. Rabkin suggests that one factor that may signal the fantastic is the "astonishment that we feel when

the ground rules of a narrative world are suddenly made to turn about 180 degrees."³⁷ In Le Morte Darthur, kings and knights marvelously survive their dolorous wounds, yet Malory, in several about-faces, heightens the grief and tragedy of death and human failure by allowing death to take its course. Wounded knights who should, according to Earthly standards, bleed to death, are saved through magic. Launcelot saves Sir Meliot by touching his wounds with Sir Gilbert's sword, "and than he wyped his woundys with a parte of the bloody cloth that sir Gylbarde was wrapped in; and anone an holer man in his lyff was he never."³⁸ Percival and Ector fight each other so long that "none of them bothe that hadde leste woundys byt he had fyftene, and they bledde so muche that hyt was mervayle they stode on their feete," but before these two knights die, a shrouded figure carries the Holy Grail past them as they lay in the field, "and furthwithall they were as hole of hyde and lymme as ever they were in their lyff."³⁹ Yet even in Malory's fantasy world of miraculous survivals and recoveries—Arthur survives his battle with Accolon despite losing so much blood "that hit was mervayle he stode on his feete,"⁴⁰ and King Pellias is healed of his wound caused by Balin's dolorous stroke—death eventually defies all efforts to stave it off and Malory lets it exercise its full power over man. While on the quest for the Holy Grail, Gawain unwittingly wounds his cousin, Uwain, to the death; nothing can save the knight, and as a result "hit shall be ever rehersed that the tone sworne brother hath slayne the other."⁴¹ The quest has destroyed the Round Table by pitting brother against brother. After the siege at Benwick, Gawain's fatal wounds cannot be cured, by magic or by

medicine, and his last few moments before death force him to realize that his own "hastynes and wy[1]fulness" had as much to do with his death as did Launcelot's sword.⁴² Arthur is left with a shattered Round Table when he comes to his battle with Mordred, and no miracle will present itself to aid him. Just when he has prepared the reader to expect the miraculous survival of noble knights (the major exception being the deaths of Balin and Balan), Malory skillfully turns and shows the unexpected; the death of those same invincible knights during a soul-searching rather than a worship-gathering quest. The magic of Logres has died with the Round Table, and the battle for what was left of the reality of England has destroyed Arthur.

Arthur's last moments in Malory's story represent both death's eventual conquest over magic and magic's survival over the forces of death. Arthur receives a mortal wound from Mordred, "the swerde perced the helmet and the tay of the brayne," and is carried to the Isle of Avalon after Bedivere throws Excalibur back into the lake, where an arm reaches out of the water to retrieve it. Though, according to Malory's story, Bedivere finds Arthur's grave in a hermitage the next day, the knight never sees the king's body and "the ermyte knew not in sertayne that he was veryly the body of [kyn]ge Arthur."⁴³ Perhaps death took Arthur as it had taken Gawain and so many of his knights before him, yet, since no one knows for sure, perhaps magic took Arthur and he is preserved through the powers that preserved Joseph of Arimathea and the Maimed King. Malory has completely shifted directions again: Arthur is not saved from death by magic; death does not take Arthur despite magic; Arthur does not live or die.

Unexpected occurrences become the expected, and the unexpected, later in the story, is confounded by even more unexpected events.

It makes little difference to know what Malory intended. As Lewis adds, of the two images of Malory, "either, it seems to me, will fit the facts. We shall never know which is true."⁴⁴ The intent of the author, whether he lived five hundred years in the past or lives five thousand miles to the east, makes little difference when a reader—curled up in an afghan, sitting on an over-stuffed sofa, reading Malory's book or any of the versions of the legend—is eager to be transported to Arthur's world. Malory's magic will enchant the reader; the writers of the 1970's who want to be believed as knowing, intimately, Arthur, and his times, must also enchant the reader. Whether Malory strove to create fantasy or reality, the result is that any modern author who hopes to follow Malory's lead and retell the legend, must deal with magic, and, whether he creates other worlds in which the characters live or tries to reconcile magic with reality, he should remember to deal carefully with magic, and, as Tolkien says, he should not make fun of the magic.⁴⁵

The writers of the 1970's who chose the Arthurian legend as their subject accepted a difficult and demanding challenge, probably completely unaware that one faced them. First, they needed to take apart Malory's web of fantasy and try to weave an equally fantastic creation; then they had to make certain they knew what they were attempting in their tales, for they were not, and will not be, given the same benefit of the doubt that Lewis gives Malory. They will be judged, as so many talents are today, on the difficulty of the task and on how well they

execute it—the greater the challenge, the greater the success. Tolkien feels that "fantasy has also an essential drawback: it is difficult to achieve."⁴⁶ If they succeed, they earn the satisfaction of executing and accomplishing, in Tolkien's words, "a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode."⁴⁷ The modern authors who achieved the greatest amount of success in their use of magic and the marvelous saw that magic is the primary tool that they needed to use in creating their worlds.

Those who did not succeed either did not recognize the power of magic in the Arthurian story or relegated that power to a secondary position.

In looking at the failures, there are three categories that the modern works fit into: those that make magic incidental to the plot; those that use magic as a gimmick to create the plot; and those that try to reconcile magic with history. (The failures and successes here are being discussed only in terms of the authors' uses of magic and fantasy, not in the overall effectiveness of the works themselves. Strong, powerful characters, creative settings and even intriguing manipulation of the legend, so capture the reader's interest in some cases that the handling of magic fades from view.) When the magic is incidental, or convenient, it becomes noticeably out of place, and the reader's reaction is more one of 'why did he put that in' rather than one of amazement and wonder at the happenings.

Tim Powers, in The Drawing of The Dark, uses magic conveniently, not vitally. Powers' character, Brian Duffy, travels from Venice to Vienna during the spring of 1529; he is, for some reason unknown to him, joined by

a whole parade of silhouettes pacing along. He peered uneasily at the gray forms. . . . One was a bird-headed animal with the body of a huge cat. . . . Behind it trod a thing like a lizard, with the grotesque, wattle head of a rooster. . . . There were other figures in the murky, silent procession--dwarfs, monstrous crabs, and things that seemed to be nothing but knots of writhing tentacles.⁴⁸

Faced with the shadowy horde, Duffy shrugs off their significance and continues his journey through the mountains, letting the creatures lead him through the passes as if they were no more than native guides. Once in Vienna, he fights two black, man-shaped creatures with wings, curved scabbards and high-soled shoes. These scenes are adequately sketched, yet Powers seldom lets Duffy react to the bizarre happenings. After his battle with the devil creatures, Powers has Duffy lie "where he was, panting like a dog as his drying blood glued his hilts to his ravaged hands, and follow the flier with his eyes until the thing disappeared over a roof." Then the scene shifts. When Duffy accompanies Merlin to a river bed outside of the walls of Vienna, where the magician performs a rainmaking ceremony, Duffy's reaction, when he notices that the skies are still clear blue, is to humor Merlin with conversational questions about the wizard's power. The rain never comes, at least to Duffy's knowledge, yet when Merlin explains, months later, that it was his rainmaking that made it impossible for Suleiman to bring his heavy artillery to bear on the city walls, Duffy still reacts with a "yeah, sure" attitude. "The rain was damned fortunate, certainly, . . . but can you be sure it was summoned rain and not a natural phenomenon that was going to happen anyway?"⁴⁹ For Powers, the struggles that both Arthur and Duffy face as they adjust to the knowledge of their shared bodies, and adjust to working as a fighting team, provide a more challenging and successful writing effort. His

scenes of battle-weary Vienna, of the death cart that hauls away the victims of the latest attack, of the men as they lie in their make-shift bunks waiting for the next hole to be blown in the walls, provides the reader with a much greater sense of being there, of reacting as the characters react, of living in that world of war, than does his work with the magical conflict between the powers of West and East.

Sanders Anne Laubenthal in Excalibur and Keith Roberts in "The Big Fans" encounter problems in establishing as well as in maintaining the magical worlds that their characters encounter. In both stories there is a sense that the authors needed a gimmick in order to write. Laubenthal grabbed at anything within reach—ESP, mind control, age-old evil spirits (Morgan le Fay), and a kindly old aunt who dabbles in witchcraft—and Roberts combined the modern controversy over energy with the magical influence of ancient English sites and for eleven paragraphs sent his hero spinning through time, back into Arthur's battle camp as the king prepared to face Mordred. In Excalibur, Laubenthal's characters react to walking through a mysterious passage into another world as if they had walked through a door connecting the kitchen with the living room: "'It's incredible but a fact; we walked out of that passage into some other place,' said Rhodri [the Pendragon]. The Otherworld, probably, along with unicorns and cockatrices and whatever else is here.' . . . Reassured by a rational explanation, however bizarre, Linette released his hand and looked more carefully around her."⁵⁰ Her "good" characters confront and defeat each new obstacle with the same dullness, diligence, and monotonous effort that an assembly-line worker uses to attach one more door to one more car.

In "The Big Fans" Glyn Thomas experiences "the oddest sensation of giddiness and disorientation,"⁵¹ just before the switch is thrown to start up the giant wind-powered turbines that dot his English countryside. That is about all the reaction that the author, Keith Roberts, lets Thomas feel in the events that follow. Thomas takes in his time-shifted surroundings "apparently without surprise,"⁵² and apparently without any other reaction; instead of being curious and intrigued at riding in a cart bound for Arthur's battle camp, Thomas takes advantage of being alone with his female companion, Sarah. The result of the evening's experience is that Thomas, perhaps regretting his inattentiveness to the strange surroundings and wishing he had been more curious on his first trip, seeks out wind-powered energy systems that cross through ancient holy places in hopes of once again traveling through time. E. M. Butler's description of a magician's powers best illustrates the problems Laubenthal and Roberts stumble over: "a professional magician must first and foremost, as a basic requisite, possess no small degree of power over the minds of his fellow men."⁵³ Laubenthal and Roberts do not wield enough power to influence the readers' minds; they should have followed Tolkien's advice and left the magic to the magicians.

Mary Stewart's trilogy is, as much as possible considering the topic, historical fiction. She tries to recreate the world of Arthur as it might have been in the fifth century according to historical speculation and fact. Contrary to Mobley's opinion that "to write and read fantasy demands . . . a willingness to be enchanted and to give up the maps or norms that chart our consciousness,"⁵⁴ at the beginning

of each volume, Stewart provides her readers with clear maps of the land in which her characters live. Since she is not working with an Other-world, the success of Stewart's magic depends on two elements—its restriction to three characters, and its foundation on religious belief. Merlin gives all credit for his Sight to his god Myrrdin, or, as he willingly acknowledges, the God of Christianity. Merlin says:

"Don't be afraid for me, Mother. Whatever god uses me, I am content to be his voice and instrument. I go where he sends me. And when he has finished with me he will take me back."

"There is only one God," she whispered.

"That is what I am beginning to think."⁵⁵

Later in life Merlin explains to Uther, his uncle and Arthur's father, "I am not the kind [of magician] that can walk through walls and bring bodies through locked doors."⁵⁶ The prophecies and illusions in the three books come from Merlin, primarily and dominantly. Two other characters display power to a limited degree: Merlin's mother, Niniane, who also attributes her limited Sight to God; and Nimue, Merlin's lover, who was a priestess of the Lady of the Lake before she met and learned from Merlin. Not only do the characters in the trilogy need to have faith in the unknown god who gives them power, but so must the reader. Since the only intelligent, speaking creatures that inhabit Stewart's world are unquestionably human, the reader must accept Merlin's unusual power on faith and suppress the why's and how's that occasionally intrude into the atmosphere Stewart creates.

Three authors in the 1970's wrote stories that stand apart from the others for their total and integral use of magic: Sterling Lanier's "Ghost of A Crown"; Andre Norton's Merlin's Mirror; and Arthur H. Landis' A World Called Camelot and Camelot in Orbit. Lanier's story

fits nicely into H. P. Lovecraft's category of a tale of the supernatural with spirits returning from the grave and inhabiting host bodies; he also uses all three of Rabkin's indicators to signal the fantastic. The narrator, Ffellowes, shows his astonishment: "I could only nod, for somehow speech seemed out of place, or else my tongue simply would not function in my dry mouth." The characters signal their surprise and belief: "Brigadier, that's one of the best stories I ever heard, and if you say it happened, it happened, at least in my book." And finally, the author signals his own belief in describing the characters: "Ffellowes looked around at all of us before he continued speaking, but we were as silent as the grave. The library fire had long since gone out, and we sat, intent, lit only by a small lamp in a corner of the bay."⁵⁷ Through these signals, as well as the spine-tingling descriptions, the reader is immediately immersed in the atmosphere and feels that Arthur did return to the shores of Cornwall to save England once again from the forces of evil.

Mobley excludes science fiction from her definition of fantasy since it uses scientific exposition to provide a this-worldly frame for the story, yet despite Norton's use of computers and space flight, Merlin's Mirror is fantasy. In the story, that which is real through scientific knowledge is magical through a lack of that knowledge. Merlin's moving the King Stone with sound waves is not based on his knowledge of the physical laws that are in operation, but on his faith that the power within him can indeed move the gigantic rock. He does not know the principles at work (nor does the reader), yet a knowledge greater than his told him that beating the rock with his sky-metal sword

and chanting a particular word-pattern in a particular tone would indeed move the stone, and Merlin believes. His ability to defeat the evil powers of Nimue is also based upon a solid faith in those who taught him through the alien mirror: "He sensed that beyond the reach of his own mind there were things gathering, prowling unseen, moving on a level not open to the eyes of man. But he would not give heed to those things, concentrating his whole will on what he would do."⁵⁸ Though Norton's world is a recognizable England, the story she weaves is so complete that the audience knows that only in Merlin's Mirror will that world be found.

In his two books, Arthur Landis, like Norton, uses science fiction as a basis for his story, but it is the native belief in magic (and even Fern's curiosity toward magic) that shapes the story; throughout the tale it is magic, created by a lack of scientific knowledge, that "shapes the landscape, the hero, his quest, and his discovery." With his opening quotation from James Frazer's The Golden Bough (Anno: circa 2000),⁵⁹ Landis tells the reader that magic, as a practical thing, and not science, which is alien to the world of Camelot-Fregis, will control the actions and lives of the people who emerge from the following pages. When Kyrie Fern says that the countryside he is scanning "was something like Vermont-land, . . . or better yet England-Isle": images of a globe drifting around a sun light-years from Earth immediately establishes that Other-world. From then to the end of the second book, anything that happens on the planet, though often still surprising to Fern, is readily accepted by the reader as real. There is no doubt that Fern's description of the magic is accurate, true and believable. "It was

like a page from the book of the mythical Earth Sorcerer Merlin. The first sensation was all-encompassing. The prick of a needle accompanied by the smell of fire, the roar of thunder, and an instantaneous inundation of rain." Fern's battle with what he takes for a man—it wears armor in "black-steel and yellow-bronzed splendor"—is no less dangerous or deadly when he learns he is fighting "something else again," an invisible power that fills the armor. There are no loopholes in the magic, no falling back to Earth and awakening to the New England that Camelot-Fregis resembles. (Fern, unlike Norton's Merlin, comes to learn the nature of magic on Camelot-Fregis, which is caused by manipulations of the planet's magnetic field, but he never explains the situation to the Fregisians or his companions in orbit around the planet.) Magic, even Fern's scientific marvels—which the natives can only understand as being of their own magic—is as necessary to the story as the fur that covers the Fregisians, and the monstrous Vuuns that fly through the skies. It is even an institution: the "Marack Collegium, Home of Scholars, Students, Poets, Minstrels and Those Who Teach," offers work in "Introductory Steps to Magick, Sorcery, and Astrology."⁶⁰

Now that something has been said about magic, fantasy, Malory, and the 1970's fiction, and now that peripheral vision has proven clearer than direct vision, it is necessary, or at least preferable, that something be said about all four topics together. No matter what magic is, is not, or will or will not be, it is definitely woven inextricably into the Matter of Britain. The reason for that is quite obvious; the legend was born and developed in times much closer to the

marvelous, to enchantment, to magic. And though he is spending part of his later life in a time estranged from magic, Arthur's world cannot be distilled into two parts, England and Logres; doing so would cause greater damage to his kingdom than Mordred caused. Without the magic, Camelot would be lost forever. But it would seem that as both contemporary fantasy fiction and modern versions of the Arthurian legend grow in popularity and academic respectability, modern audiences will move closer to the marvelous, and then future writers will be able to produce a version of the Arthurian legend equal in the fantastic and the marvelous to Malory's great work.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹ Malory constantly interchanges the name of England and Logres in his book, particularly in the tales of the Holy Grail; the best indication that he sees his land as either, or both, England and Logres is when Launcelot says, "'For I am banysshed the contrey of [Logrys for ever.] (That is for to sey the contrey of] Inglonde)." The brackets and parentheses are Vinaver's. (Sir Thomas Malory, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugene Vinaver [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967], III, 825, lines 15-17 (XII, 5). References to Carton's book and chapter numbers, provided by Vinaver, follow each citation of Malory's work in parentheses.)

² Philip Bonewits, Real Magic (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1971), p. 27. Bonewits' ellipses.

³ J[acob] Bronowski, Magic, Science, and Civilization (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 11-12.

⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," The Tolkien Reader (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), p. 53.

⁵ Lynn Thorndike, The Place of Magic in The Intellectual History of Europe ([1905]; rpt., New York: AMS Press, 1967), p. 29.

⁶ Tolkien, p. 4.

⁷ Bonewits, p. 223.

⁸ Robert West, The Invisible World (1939; rpt., New York: Octagon Books, 1969), pp. 3 and 212, note 6.

⁹ H. P. Lovecraft, Supernatural Horror in Literature (New York: Ben Abramson, 1945), pp. 13 and 15.

¹⁰ George L. Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (New York: Russell and Russell, 1929), p. 27.

¹¹ Thorndike, pp. 11 and 20.

¹² Kittredge, p. 5.

¹³ Kittredge, p. 4.

¹⁴ West, p. 2.

¹⁵ Bonewits, p. ix.

¹⁶ Bronowski, p. 4.

17 H. P. Lovecraft, quoted by Jane Mobley in "Toward a Definition of Fantasy Fiction," Extrapolation, 15 (1974), 119.

18 Peter Penzoldt, The Supernatural in Fiction (New York: Humanities Press, 1952), p. 5.

19 Eric S. Rabkin, The Fantastic in Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 226.

20 Jane Mobley, "Toward a Definition of Fantasy Fiction," Extrapolation, 15 (1974), 119.

21 Tolkien, p. 52.

22 Mobley, p. 117.

23 Tolkien, p. 53.

24 Rabkin, p. 29.

25 Rabkin, p. 29.

26 Rabkin, p. 217.

27 Tolkien, p. 10.

28 Eugene Vinaver, ed. The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, by Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), III, 1278-9.

29 Tolkien, pp. 7 and 28-9.

30 C. S. Lewis, "The English Prose Morte," in Essays on Malory, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 12-13.

31 Tolkien, p. 9. Tolkien's emphasis.

32 Malory, II, 864, lines 5-7 (XII, 6).

33 Tolkien, p. 37.

34 Mobley, p. 123.

35 Malory, II, 738, lines 8-9 (IX, 70), and II, 738, lines 15-17 (X, 70).

36 Malory, III, 1217, lines 11-12 (XX, 21), and III, 1220, lines 2-4 (XX, 21).

37 Rabkin, p. 41.

38 Malory, I, 281, line 36 to 282, line 3 (VI, 15).

- 39 Malory, II, 815, lines 27-30 (XI, 13), and II, 816, line 36 to 817, line 1 (XII, 14).
- 40 Malory, I, 143, lines 10-11 (IV, 9).
- 41 Malory, II, 945, lines 3-4 (XVI, 2).
- 42 Malory, III, 1230, line 20 (XXI, 2). Vinaver's brackets.
- 43 Malory, III, 1237, lines 20-21 (XXI, 4), and III, 1242, lines 19-20 (XXI, 6).
- 44 Lewis, p. 13.
- 45 Tolkien, p. 10.
- 46 Tolkien, p. 48.
- 47 Tolkien, p. 49.
- 48 Tim Powers, The Drawing of The Dark (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), p. 41.
- 49 Powers, pp. 127 and 155.
- 50 Sanders Anne Laubenthal, Excalibur (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), pp. 101-2.
- 51 Keith Roberts, "The Big Fans," Fantasy and Science Fiction, May 1977, p. 32.
- 52 Roberts, p. 36.
- 53 E. M. Butler, The Myth of The Magus (New York: Macmillan, 1948), p. 5.
- 54 Mobley, p. 127.
- 55 Mary Stewart, The Crystal Cave (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Books, 1970), p. 267.
- 56 Stewart, p. 337.
- 57 Sterling E. Lanier, "Ghost of A Crown," Fantasy and Science Fiction, Dec. 1976, pp. 28, 40, and 45.
- 58 Andre Norton, Merlin's Mirror (New York: Daw Books, 1976), p. 169.
- 59 Arthur H. Landis, A World Called Camelot (New York: Daw Books, 1976), p. 5. This is Landis' citation, given as a footnote and

maintaining the concept of the far-distant future.

⁶⁰ Landis, pp. 5, 14, 105-6, and 48-9.

CHAPTER IV

VIOLENCE

The Arthurian legend, as told by Sir Thomas Malory and the authors of the 1970's, provides a unique situation for the discussion of violence in literature. All of the authors are, to a major extent, writing about the same world. In that world of King Arthur war is accepted. His is the story of defending his people from barbarians who rape, plunder, and destroy all that another people has tried to cultivate. Arthur's is a higher human civilization defending itself from a lower, more instinctive form of civilization. This factor allows each author to use warfare in one of two ways: to make war an unseen setting in which to develop the characters and motivations, or to make warfare the dominant setting for the story. If warfare, and all of the brutality that accompanied it when it was fought on a class-range basis, is something that controls the characters but is designated to the offstage, as occasional scenes of violence, blood gushing from the gaping mouth of a freshly skewered knight, leaves the reader feeling shocked and curious--why was the scene inserted into the story? If the characters are made to live closely with war and violence, onstage and throughout the story, both can be effective in the tale only if they are put to some purpose. If, after the fields have run red with the blood of both forces and the cries of the dying

CHAPTER IV

VIOLENCE

The Arthurian legend, as told by Sir Thomas Malory and the authors of the 1970's, provides a unique situation for the discussion of violence in literature. All of the authors are, to a major extent, writing about the same world. In that world of King Arthur war is assumed. His is the story of defending his people from barbarians who rape, plunder, and destroy all that another people has tried to cultivate. Arthur's is a higher human civilization defending itself from a lower, more instinctive form of civilization. This factor allows each author to use warfare in one of two ways: to make war an unseen setting in which to develop the characters and motivations, or to make warfare the dominant setting for the story. If warfare, and all of the brutality that accompanied it when it was fought on a close-range basis, is something that controls the characters but is designated to the offstage, an occasional scene of violence, blood gushing from the gaping mouth of a freshly skewered knight, leaves the reader feeling shocked and curious—why was the scene inserted into the story? If the characters are made to live closely with war and violence, onstage and throughout the story, both can be effective in the tale only if they are put to some purpose. If, after the fields have run red with the blood of both forces and the cries of the dying

have stopped their echoing in the survivors' ears, the conquering forces treat their enemy with the dignity and honor due to men, at least the bloodshed will remain only as a part of war and not as an aspect of the rest of life.

The handling of war and the place of violent struggle represents one of two major factors that control the effectiveness and necessity of violence in Arthurian fiction--relevance or necessity to the tale. The other factor is the distance between the reader and characters and the violence. Nothing, a rose or a bloody hand, can be seen clearly when you stand too close to it--the eyes need distance to focus--but too much distance also blurs the object. The same situation applies to perception in literature. If an author or reader has never seen a man's hands butchered off at the wrists by a sword, it seems unlikely that either could appreciate fully the suffering and agony of the victim or the brutality of the perpetrator. If an author has walked among the dead and dying bodies that remain when a battle has ended, he can stand in their midst and describe the chaos that surrounds him, or he can step back and clearly and compassionately show the tragedy that needs to be shown and let the individuals die in peace.

Mary Stewart puts Merlin far from the center of the battlefield to give distance to the physical aspects of war. As he stands on a rocky crag, wrapped in his cloak, Merlin watches over the plain where Ambrosius' forces battle with the Saxon forces of Hengist. He sees only the swaying of colors as each enemy gains the advantage, and the axeheads that constantly catch the glint of the sun. In this scene it is more important that Merlin sees his father win the battle for

Britain and for Merlin to watch his prophecies come true, than it is for the reader to see the details of the battle. Distance between the reader and the reality can be achieved in other ways, too; Malory puts his main characters in the middle of the battle, but achieves distance through repetition of phrases and exaggeration of numbers. It is rather difficult for a reader to imagine "ten thousand good mennes bodyes"¹ lying dead on the battle field, or to envision one man swinging his sword and killing twenty knights without pausing for breath or to wipe the blood from his face. A knight does not seem too real when he has slain one hundred knights and maimed another hundred simply to attract Launcelot's attention. Several of Malory's phrases, used constantly, kill the opponent without spilling his blood, brains, or intestines over the battlefield. Opponents frequently receive such blows from knights of the Round Table that they "felle downe to the erthe dede,"² but the image the phrase brings to mind is more one of a swatted fly falling on the floor than a mortal man being severed from his soul. The death of the knight is the death of a substanceless enemy. When Malory shows the course of a sword as it cuts through an opponent, he gives the barest information: King Mark "smote sir Bersules on the hede that the swerde wente to his teithe"; the result of such a blow is little more graphic: "the bloode com oute at his erys, nose, and mowthe."³

Malory has the potential for being extremely brutal. He could easily have added to his descriptions, showing the sword shattering the enemy's skull, slicing through the brain, and shattering the teeth, but he resisted the temptation so that the reader could react

to the human struggles that created the wars. Malory, through dimming the lights on the brutality, heightens the lessons that Arthur and his knights must learn in order to achieve the king's dream. He has, through distance, put war and violence in its place in the tale, yet there are times when watching a man breathe his last breath is relevant to the story. When that is the case, Malory does not hesitate to draw the reality as close to the scene as possible. In their battle during the quest for the Holy Grail, Gawain's spear pierces Uwain "thorow the breste, that the speare come oute the other syde."⁴ The reader can feel the anguish Uwain must feel when he falls from his horse and breaks that spear. That he is still conscious and has the strength to travel to a nearby abbey is one of the incredible feats the reader comes to understand, but the pain that Uwain suffers when Gawain pulls the truncheon from his body makes the reader understand how any release from the pain, even death, is welcome. The most gruesome scene in Le Morte Darthur emphasizes a knight's loyalty to his king. Sir Lucan and Sir Bedwere try to lift the dying Arthur after his battle with Mordred:

and in the lyfftynge sir Lucan felle in a sowne, that parte of hys guttis felle o[ut]e of hys bodye, and therewith the noble knyght his harte br[aste]. And whan the kynge awoke he behylde sir Lucan, how he lay fomyng at the mowth and parte of his guttes lay at hys fyete.⁵

Malory keeps the reader a healthy arm's length from brutality through most of the story, yet always makes him aware of its existence so that, when a lesson is to be learned, he can directly confront the audience with the full tragedy of slaughter. That consistency is vital to holding the reader's interest, to presenting a story where all of the

parts fit together. This blending is an achievement none of the modern authors have managed as well. The modern authors do not seem able to maintain a healthy distance from violence and at the same time keep the reader in touch with the reality of Arthur's world.

The primary concern in life for Stewart's Arthur is securing the boundaries of Britain against the Saxons; he spends more time leading his troops in skirmishes in the far reaches of his land than he does establishing his government. Immediately after he is crowned king, his first priority is to prove his authority by following the defeated Saxon remnant into the northern lands. He never stops to question what it means to be king, to rule the lives of men; he has been given the job of chief warrior and that is the responsibility he will meet. Throughout the rest of The Last Enchantment (he is recognized as king at the end of The Hollow Hills) Arthur is concerned with the protection of his citizens and leaves the throne in Camelot and its responsibility to seek the familiarity of the battlefield. Even in his efforts to control the lesser kings of his country, Arthur himself, rather than sending a subordinate, travels north to stop the restless Heuil, son of Caw of Strathclyde, from pirating off of the western shores. Since Merlin is the first person narrator of the trilogy, Arthur's conquests and feats of arms are stories that he tells Merlin on his return from the victories; they are never battle scenes that the reader is invited into. The details of the battles are left on the unseen battlefields. Only once does Stewart wield Arthur's sword in the print of her pages and then it is with such brutal deliberateness and passionless unconcern that the reader wonders what kind of barbarian she has been hiding on

those battlefields. Arthur rescues the aged Merlin from three soldier-robbers, Red, Erec, and Balin:

[Erec's] eyes stared, fixed. The head, severed cleanly by that terrible slashing blow [of Arthur's sword, Caliburn], bounced on the horse's neck in a splatter of blood, then thudded to the ground. . . . The headless body bobbed and swayed for a bound or two before it pitched from the saddle to the road, still spouting blood. . . . Arthur drove the great stallion in and killed Red with a blow through the heart. . . . There was one more vicious, brief flurry, and Balin took Caliburn's point in his throat, and fell to the trampled and bloody grass. . . . Arthur's way of clearing up the "mess"—three men violently dead—was to haul the bodies by their heels to a decent hiding-place at the forest's edge. The severed head he picked up by the beard and slung it after. He was whistling while he did it. . . . "And even if I had a spade or mattock, I'm damned if I'd spend the time and trouble in digging that carrion in. Let the ravens have them."⁶

Perhaps, in the intricacies of the human mind, Arthur can be the compassionate ruler of the kingdom who understands the yearnings of Guenever and Bedwyr and the solitude of Merlin and at the same time the coldblooded, merciless slaughterer of the highway robbers. But the fact that he never questions his role as a professional soldier and its influence on his life, creates an uncomfortable inconsistency within the whole of Stewart's trilogy. She makes her Arthur think through the conflict between love and fidelity (as was shown in Chapter II), yet she never allows him to question the necessity of bloodshed, nor does she have him search for something better than war. If a man can question the place of love in life, he should also be able to question the place of war.

Through his words, his tone, his upbringing, Stewart's Merlin is a peaceful, wise and patient man, one who understands and appreciates the simplicity and honesty of the ordinary folk he meets on his

journeys as an eye doctor. He is not a man trained in the use of the sword—"My battles were not fought with sword and spear."⁷ He is a man of healing whose task is to be ready when the battle is over—"There was no need to ask where the wounded had been taken. . . . I stripped to the waist and started to work."⁸ Yet twice Stewart puts him in the middle of a gruesome fight. After being discovered in Tintagel on the night of Arthur's conception, Merlin and his aid must fight with two of the Duke of Cornwall's men. Though Merlin wins the three-page fight with Brithael, the effects of the fight on Merlin make the reader's nerves twinge in sympathy:

I lay there breathless, retching, choking on bile, my face to the ground and my left hand driven into the soft tufts of sea-pink, as if it clung to life for me. The beat and crash of the sea shook the cliff, and even this slight tremor seemed to grind pain through my body. It hurt at every point. . . . The blood in my mouth bubbled and oozed down my chin into the ground. . . . The pain in my hand was cruel, the worst of all; I heard rather than felt the small bones grind where their ends were broken.⁹

Fourteen years later, as Merlin races to the Green Chapel from the victory feast where the dying Uther has proclaimed Arthur his heir, to prepare the sword of Maccsen which Arthur will draw from its magical stone protection, the magician is ambushed by King Lot's men:

I shifted my grip on the man beneath me, forcing my full weight down to hold his arms pinned. I heard something crack; it sounded like a dead twig, but the fellow screamed. . . . The other murderer crashed down the last few feet through the bushes and rocks above me. I heard his drawn sword scrape on stone. The moon marked it as it whipped upwards to strike. I tried to wrench myself clear of my opponent, but he clung close, teeth and all, grappling like a hound, holding me there for the hacking sword to finish me.

But I was already half free, and falling, my clothes tearing from my opponent's grasp, and my fist bloody from his teeth. It was his back that met the sword. It drove in. I heard the metal grate on the bone, then the screams covered the sound.¹⁰

Both times the reader wants to know why the fights were inserted and why Merlin has not been waylaid by his enemies sooner and more often; he was always vulnerable. Perhaps there is some hidden justice in beating a man who, knowing the hour of his death, does not fear the evil that surrounds him; the beatings could be taken as reminders for Merlin, that, though he might not die now, he will suffer the other pains that men suffer. But that is reaching for a motivation that Stewart does not suggest.

Violence only occasionally intrudes into Merlin and Arthur's lives (the lives that appear in the lines and not between them) and not often enough to be a problem or a concern to the men. In these examples, Stewart may have been trying to show the brutality of her fifth-century world, but these isolated scenes suggest that Stewart suddenly remembered that her characters lived through a time very different from hers. A delicate line separates subtlety and obscurity; Stewart's occasional use of violence makes bloodshed seem more like the exception to be tolerated rather than the rule that needs changing.

One section of the trilogy does have the potential of showing the brutality of man in England before Arthur became king. During Ambrosius' march across Britain to rid the island of Vortigern and his Saxon guests led by Hengists, Stewart describes in some detail the nature of war and inserts several phrases that suggest the savagery of the times. When he was trapped Vortigern behind the walls of a fortress in Doward Valley, Ambrosius sends a messenger to the enemy's camp:

Vortigern . . . sent back the messenger without a message, but with the man's own two hands severed, and bound in a bloody cloth to the belt at his waist.

He stumbled into Ambrosius' tent just after sundown of the third day, and managed to stay on his feet long enough to give the only message he was charged with.

"They say that you may stay here, my lord, until your army melts away, and you are left handless as I."

. . . He pitched forward on the word at Ambrosius' feet, and from the dripping cloth at his belt the hands fell sprawling.¹¹

After the final battle between Ambrosius and Hengist, at Kaerconan, Merlin walks from his observation post on a hillside through the dead that litter the field. He spies a dying Saxon, stuck through with a spear:

I drew my dagger, pulled my cloak aside out of the way, and carefully, so that I would be out of the jet of blood, stuck my dagger in at the side of his throat. I wiped it in the dead man's rags. . . . A raven flapped down from behind me with a croak, and settled on the breast of the man I had killed.¹²

At one point, Stewart mentions the commonplace occurrence of death on the highways: "We took them nicely by surprise, and fought a very unpleasant little action. One roadside skirmish is very like another."¹³

At another point she suggests that the hero is not unlike his enemy: Ambrosius' "reduction of Doward, and the savagery with which he did it, had their effect," the Saxons began to flee the country.¹⁴

The methods that Ambrosius uses to defeat the Saxons could, once again, serve as an example for Arthur not to imitate; or at least the time could provide the incentive the characters need to strive for peace. But no lesson is learned from Ambrosius' conquest; there is no growth in the characters as they witness the slaughter. Nor does the reader learn anything. Had the messenger, after tottering in a faint in his saddle, roused long enough to pant his message in pain-broken spurts and then fallen from the horse, dead in Ambrosius' arms, the

reader could be made to feel the rage that led Ambrosius to massacre the Saxon horde. At the same time, the reader, and the characters participating in the events, could have hoped that someone with compassion and strength would find an answer to revenge. Had she filled the air of the battlefield with the smell of burning flesh as the beheaded Hengist and his dead troops were put to the torch, the stench might have hung in the reader's nostrils until someone with a different way of life came and cleared the air. Arthur is little different from his uncle; he is only more fortunate in that he succeeded to his throne rather than having fought for it. Stewart makes her brutal Ambrosius a hero for Arthur to emulate.

These are but a few scenes, too few to achieve any effect Stewart might have hoped for. Perhaps, had she spread the scenes throughout the trilogy, the pre-Arthur world would have served as a society to work against, but Stewart's violence, in the detail that she achieves, is not enough to serve a purpose, and is little more than intrusive. The rest of her land is too pleasant: Merlin's cave and the mill at the bottom of the hill that survives fifty years of alleged turmoil undisturbed; the beauty, peace and solitude of Applegarth; and Arthur's secure boyhood, spent in energy and impetuosity in northern Rheged.

In contrast to Stewart is Andre Norton's handling of physical human violence in Merlin's Mirror. Though the burning of homesteads is a fact of life in Norton's society, and she recognizes Arthur's role as a warrior, she puts those factors offstage and leaves them there, only to refer to them when necessary. Her work is a fifth of the size of Stewart's, yet there are no scenes that threaten the reader with the

unexplained eruption of violence; nothing stands out as excessively brutal; even the final battle between Arthur and his son is given the cleanliness of distance. While the battle rages through uncounted hours, Merlin works with the wounded. From that distance the failure of Merlin and Arthur to establish the Sky Lord's time of peace and tranquility stands out as the main tragedy, not the bloody destruction of one human being at the hands of another.

Throughout Norton's story, the battle of the good forces of the Sky Lords against the evil forces of their enemy (personified in Nimue) captures prime interest and attention, and that is a conflict of mental powers and not a conflict between strong sword arms. Norton is consistent to that one conflict. When Merlin is sleeping in the protection of Stonehenge, he does not fear the robber's blade at his throat; he fears the old and eternal evil that Nimue brings with her, which can far more easily destroy his life and his goals than can a sword blade. Merlin does not try to destroy Nimue and her power by planning her assassination—he knows that that would be a futile effort since her powers can easily overcome any earthly threat—he destroys the instrument of her learning, effectively preventing her from any more knowledge of the ways of the evil ones. It does not matter to Norton, and she must think it does not matter to the reader, whether the reader be reminded that warfare in the fifth century covered the opponents and the scenery with the blood of its victims. She accurately assumes that the reader realizes a state of warfare and goes on with her story from there, to question the roles of good and evil—Was Merlin acting on behalf of good in trying to shape and control the growth of mankind?

Tim Powers' state of war in The Drawing of The Dark balances the personal suffering of war with the abstract conflict between the good powers of the West (personified in the Fisher King) and the evil powers of the East. Powers uses the unsettled times, the state of turmoil that all of Europe is in, to contrast the time of peace Merlin says will come to pass when the West once again dominates and controls the East. In the opening pages Duffy walks through Venice and witnesses the unrest caused by the Turkish occupation of that city. He sees a surly gondolier out to cheat his customers of every lire, and a young nun entertaining a man in the shadows of a doorway; he does not see the thief who is following him through the street. During his night's walk he reminisces over a life spent running from country to country, using, and teaching the use of, the sword everywhere he stopped. Friendships are not easily formed, and fear, rather than trust, is the rule of the times. The only people Duffy trusts are his fellow mercenaries. Even his faith in Merlin comes more from the Arthur within him than from the spirit of his own time.

Powers' images of the reality of war are presented vividly:

"Dead!" came a call from up the dark, rubble-choked street, extinguishing the men's good humor like a bucket of sand flung on a candle. "Night call for the dead!" A creaking, high-sided cart appeared from the shadows, and no one looked at the grisly cargo stacked in it. The driver was gibbering garbled prayers between calls, and his eyes glittered insanely between his tangled hair and beard. . . . A crew of anonymous laborers left off their attempts to clear the street of debris and set about carrying the day's corpses to the wagon and flopping them into its bed.¹⁵

However, he does not exaggerate the circumstances or dwell on the scenes. No soldier in the book stops to examine the result of his

actions; he kills and flees, and in something of a coldblooded way leaves the death and destruction behind him. "An eddy in the tide of the battle left him momentarily in a corpse-strewn clearing, and he knelt there for a moment, panting, before . . . struggling to his feet and lurching back into the fight."¹⁶ The characters live and breathe in an environment filled with death, but the tragedy of death is not the only, or even the main, image that Powers tries to portray. He clearly shows what a time of war and fear does to a man's ability to love. Years earlier Duffy had fallen in love with Epiphany Vogel, but she married another man. When Duffy returns to Vienna he falls in love with the widowed Epiphany again. The Turkish siege of Vienna interrupts his plans: "The knife hilt stood out of [Epiphany's] side, with no metal visible between the hilt and the cloth of her dress. There was very little blood. . . . After a few moments Duffy carefully lowered Epiphany's head to the ground. 'Much has been lost, and there is much yet to lose,' he said softly."¹⁷ He realizes that he has grown numb to death and sorrow. The rugged quality of Duffy's time blends completely into the story; it is not interjected on occasions, nor eliminated in the face of other issues.

Though his world is consistent, Powers' characters change little. The tired, weathered, fighting man that Duffy is when he bids the dying Arthur farewell is the same man who met Merlin in Venice. Arthur himself has little chance to react to the changes he finds in the new world around him. Bringing a man one-thousand years into the future provides, for the imagination, an intriguing opportunity to compare and contrast one stage in man's development with another: to see what

changes, if any, man has gone through in that time. Powers does not take advantage of the situation and the reader is left to decide, outside of the pages of the book, what Arthur might have thought of the crowded walled city in which he found himself a captive, or of the kind of men he sat drinking with in a Vienna Bar.

There is one author in the 1970's who takes violence to its meanest level: Thomas Berger in Arthur Rex. For him, every character must be perverted in some way, and for him violent perversion is the most frequent gimmick. King Mark is a notorious sadist: "Mark in impulsive fury had Frocin beheaded, the which he later regretted because he would rather have tortured him to death slowly."¹⁸ Mordred, as a ten-year-old, shows every potential for outstripping Mark's vileness: "Now may I assure thee that I shall furnish myself with a dagger and that, with all respect, if you do assail me again, now that we are quits, I shall rip out your belly."¹⁹ Even Agravaine is infested with hatred and cruelty over his lust for Guenever and his jealousy of Launcelot. Compounding the viciousness of his characters, Berger's descriptions of violent acts overwhelm the reader. Uther instructs his troops on how to deal with the enemy: "Cut down the shit-eaters and carve their rotten bellies out and wind their stinking guts around their necks."²⁰ When Berger's Launcelot kills Gareth and Gaheris, he does not do it with the distance of a man in a hurry: "Launcelot cut down through Gareth's skull and parted his brains and Gareth plunged dead to the floor"; when he kills Gaheris, "Launcelot smote him backhanded cutting him through mail and flesh and bone, and his bosom opened and his heart and lungs fell out, and he gave up the ghost."²¹

Though in all honesty Berger may be trying to make fun of something, he brings the reader too close to brutality for comfort or appreciation; author William Styron summed up the effects of such violence as Berger uses it: "by sheer repetition, sheer closeness, it lost a lot of what might have been its very important impact."²² The final result of Berger's sentimentality toward violence is to drown the potential of his humor and satire.

So far it seems that I have introduced an element of ambiguity, suggesting that violence is something to strive against and objecting to it in excess, yet also suggesting that some authors could have worked more with the violence than they have. Though I hope to avoid the physical intrusion of violence into my life, I do recognize and admit it in literature as long as it serves a purpose and influences the characters. As Fredric Wertham makes clear: "History relies on the survivors; art should make up for the silence of the victim."²³ This sentiment has intimate applicability to the Arthurian legend since Arthur, his knights, his country, and his dream all fell as victims to the tragedy of war, and literature must speak for them. The differences in how each author uses and understands the role of violence in the legend extends then beyond physical description and reaches into the moral and human way that violence influences the characters.

In Malory, the habit of violence is not broken by a decree. Arthur does not merely order that killing and destruction stop, rather he annually swears to a pattern of behavior he hopes to follow and that he hopes all of his knights will follow. After Gawain, Torre, and Pellinor return from their quests during Arthur's wedding feast, Arthur

charges his knights

never to do outrage nothir morthir, and allwayes to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy, uppon payne of forfiture [of their] worship and lordship of kynge Arthure for evirmore; and allwayes to do ladyes, damesels, and jentilwomen and wydowes [soccour:] strengthe hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them, upon payne of dethe. Also, that no man take no batayles in a wrongefull quarell for no love ne for worldis goodis.²⁴

Arthur and his knights must resist the temptation to revert to more violent habits—revenge, lust, and greed—and must remind themselves that they are noble knights and must act in an honorable fashion. In giving his characters this challenge, Malory is interested in how they struggle and grow to meet it.

In his battle with Emperor Lucius, Arthur is at the heart of the battle, fighting alongside his men, killing enemy knights with all the force and power of Excalibur and his arm. When the war is over, Gawain must remind the king of the uselessness of revenge. Arthur, seeing Gawain wounded, offers his nephew the heads of those who wounded him. "That were lytyll avayle," sayde sir Gawayne, 'for theire hedys had they lorne, and I had wolde myself, and it were shame to sley knyghtes whan they be yolden.'²⁵ Arthur accepts Gawain's advice, learns a respect for the place of mercy, and understands that killing, even if necessary to create peace eventually, is never to be allowed once it is no longer necessary. For years after his march through Europe, Arthur is given his own distance; Malory leaves him sitting home. Of evil knights that once ransacked castles and held maidens and good knights captive Arthur sees only the repentance of the villains. Of the wounds that his knights suffer in their quests Arthur knows only

the smiling faces of his men as they tell the stories of their victories. The king never sees the men suffering with lances embedded in their sides. Even the death of his knights on their quest for the Holy Grail comes back to Arthur as stories to be mourned over, not as images to haunt the king in his sleep.

The king feels regret and remorse at the suffering of his kingdom, and his men; he understands both from experience and philosophy the viciousness of a sword-fight, and knows that the first step in stopping the bloodshed is establishing a society where brother cannot kill brother. But not having felt the personal tragedy of pain since he immured himself within the walls of Camelot, when the final fall of his kingdom comes, Arthur is afraid of two things—the violent revenge that seeks an eye for an eye, and the threat of violence toward his immediate world. Arthur regrets the exposure of the love affair between Guenever and Launcelot because he knows that, if Launcelot is not captured, the kingdom will be split into two factions. "Whan they harde that kynge Arthure and sir Launcelot were at debate many knyghtes were glad, and many were sory of their debate." Throughout the siege of Benwick, Arthur is reluctant to watch Gawain leave to fight Launcelot; the king repents his action, through Gawain, against Launcelot: "'Now, alas,' seyde the kynge, 'that ever thys unhappy warre began! For ever sir Launcelot forbearyth me in all placis, and in lyke wyse my kynne, and that ys sene well thys day, what curtesy he shewed my neveawe, sir Gawayne.'"²⁶

Though Arthur himself, through such close contact with his own ideals, has moved far down the road to a time when man can share love,

compassion, and companionship, he regresses at the end of the tale. As a result of the death of Gawain and his estrangement with Launcelot, he must lead the final battle against Mordred; he must once again surround himself with violence. The king, though he has tried, cannot escape his times and the violence of warfare that alone has kept his small kingdom secure. Awash with the blood of his victims, Arthur feels the revenge that once seized Gawain and he himself seeks vengeance against Mordred. "And whan kynge Arthur shulde departe he warned all his [hoost] that they se any swerde drawyn, 'loke ye come on fyersely and sle that traytoure, sir Mordred, for [I] in no wyse truste hym.'"²⁷

Malory recognized the need for peace, the need to try to eliminate violence as a motivating factor in a noble and Christian king, and the need to cultivate loyalty and faith:

Lo ye all Englysshemen, se ye nat what a myschyff here was? For he that was the moste kynge and nobelyst knyght of the worlde, and moste loved the felyshyp of noble knyghtes, and by hym they all were upholdyn, and yet myght nat these Englyshemen holde them contente with hym. Lo thus was the olde custom and usayges of thys londe, and men say that we of thys londe have nat yet loste that custom. Alas! thys ys a greate defaughte of us Englysshemen, for there may no thyng us please no terme.²⁸

Malory also realized that peace cannot be forced on men by the sheer will of another. All "Englysshemen" must come to love the ideals of peace and brotherhood for themselves, as Arthur did. Then the waste of slaughter will be evident to all and not merely dominating one man's dreams. Arthur, without the absolute support of friends who dreamt the same dreams he dreamt, falls back on the ways of his early life. Gawain, though instructing Arthur in the ways of a victor in their early days together, did not live by his own advice, seeking

revenge—against Pellinor and Launcelot—rather than offering mercy. Arthur, though struggling harder to refrain from killing, could not conquer the warrior instincts within him during the last moments of his reign. Charles Moorman describes Camelot and the Round Table in their fall:

By the practice of courage, . . . mercy, humility, graciousness, and 'good faith' man can raise himself from barbarism and create a society based on justice and virtue. Yet man is in the end only man; the old primitives and standards and values continually reassert themselves and even the most nobly conceived society cannot survive the failing of human nature.²⁹

If Malory's Arthur was not yet strong enough to overcome human weakness, he at least took one step forward in his evolution as a just and virtuous leader. According to two authorities, Malory felt a need to eliminate much of the brutal nature which he found in the Arthur of the English alliterative Morte Arthure, his source for the Tale of Arthur and Lucius. William Matthews, in comparing the earlier work with Malory's, shows that Malory worked at making Arthur a more compassionate, Christian king:

But Malory's conqueror is a far milder figure than the formidable warrior of the alliterative poem. The terrifying anger that Arthur displays toward Lucius' messengers and his brutal threats to them are excised. Subdued too is his passionate emotionalism. Malory's king is a man of measure, notably stronger in self-control.³⁰

Eugene Vinaver feels that Malory made the changes to accommodate a new literary form. "Malory may well have thought that Arthur's brutality in the Morte Arthure was in keeping with the traditional behavior of an epic hero; and whatever Malory did to soften Arthur's character could easily be part of the process of adjustment to a new setting."³¹

Whatever his motivation, Malory, according to these authorities, diminished the story he found in the Morte Arthure by at least half; he moved Arthur closer to civilization. William Caxton, in editing Le Morte Darthur in 1485, reduced Malory's version of that particular tale by half again,³² eliminating still more of the violence and brutality that Malory had retained. Caxton, it seems, was primarily interested in showing Arthur's right to rule as the greatest Christian king, and was not interested in the details of how Arthur achieved the role.

In the 1970's, the reaching for a basically good leader and a time where the power of mercy is stronger than the power of the sword, can be found in only one author, Andre Norton. Both Merlin and Arthur are born to create a time of peace among the peoples of Earth, or at least of England. Merlin struggles to achieve his goals throughout his life, and Arthur, who, through Nimue's fourteen-year entrapment of Merlin, grows up ignorant of his heritage, aids in the effort once the Sky Lords' machines inform him of his mission. Though it appears a mark of cowardice in the light of tremendous odds, Norton has these two half-breeds run from the conflict of the fifth century. They retreat to the cave where Merlin's learning mirror is hidden, and are put into a state of suspended animation by the machines, to be brought back to life when mankind is civilized enough to welcome the ideals of peace and humanity:

He had done all this by instinct alone. What would follow now?

It was the mirror that answered him:

"Go to the box at your right, Merlin, and press there the four small buttons. These shall master time for you. When

you awake, you will find that men are again looking to the stars. Then your hour will strike. This time was flawed—we must wait for a better day."33

Their retreat is, however, an act of wisdom and honesty; they realize that this child of mankind is not yet grown enough to understand the ideals of the Sky Lords, and that the child must be given more time to grow in its own direction before it will welcome brothers in peace and understanding.

In the other authors of the 1970's there is a hodge-podge of civilization and barbarism. Mary Stewart's Merlin struggles all of his life to bring about Arthur's kingship, but then, for reasons known only to the gods and the author, he sits idle in the middle of the British Isles during his final years, not knowing or asking what will become of his life's efforts. Arthur admits that he is a fighter, and he admits that he prefers to defend his country from invaders rather than to build toward an ideal peace—he refers to such an ideal only once. There is the suggestion in The Crystal Cave and The Hollow Hills that Merlin's deeds will lead to something great and marvelous for the civilization that is trying to develop, but that something never comes.

Powers and Arthur H. Landis, though the chronological settings of their stories are separated in time by several thousand Earth-years, have one element in common, the use of violence against humans to defeat a supernatural evil. Here the source of the evil is no longer man, but rather a non-corporeal entity that represents evil. Both authors show the regret their characters feel at having to destroy so many innocent people in achieving their missions, yet neither regards the price as being too high for the good that will result at the end

of the battle. Landis' Kyrie Fern loses one of his best friends, Breen Hoggle-Fitz, in the final effort to destroy the alien Hish. When Hoggle-Fitz is in danger of losing the battle with the Hish's guardian, Fern questions his single-minded determination: "What difference then does it really make to me if I kill the Dark One in his cloistered room while all I love in life are slaughtered here?"³⁴ When Hoggle-Fitz proves the victor in the fight (he eventually dies of his wounds), Fern loses all concern and continues with his duties. In these two stories, the men are still given power over no more than the sword, and they have not learned any alternative with which to defeat their enemies; patience, reason, or the desire to seek alternatives has not yet been developed in the characters. The heroes anxiously lead their forces into the battle in the name of peace and justice.

Sanders Anne Laubenthal, in Excalibur, and Sterling E. Lanier, in "Ghost of a Crown," take the non-human enemy one step farther and make it the only force to be conquered; their characters do not fight through human troops on the way to destroying the evil. Since there is no physical human to be destroyed, the reader feels no regret or remorse at the destruction of the evil, even if it is by the blade of a sword. Lanier's evil force (represented in Sir James' younger brother, Lionel, who seems more the devil in human form than a man possessed by the devil) is destroyed by the shattering of the Dark One's tomb and not by the physical killing of Lionel. In a like manner, Laubenthal's evil force is destroyed in a battle between light and dark, and not between human beings. Again, in both of these stories there is no lesson learned, no clarity provided. Lanier's hero has no memory of

his night's efforts against the dark powers, and all Ffellowes, Sir James' companion on the mission, takes from the scene is a spooky story with which to impress his companions as they sit around the club's fireplace. After their extraordinary conflict on the Alabama coast, Leubenthal returns all of her human characters to their respective homes as if they were children returning home from the adventures of summer camp.

A peculiar situation exists when an act of violence is perpetrated on a non-human entity. For some people (and I must be one) when a sword slashes through a giant, or a serpent, no matter how gruesome the description, there is little revulsion or fear, as long as the readers do not see themselves as potential victims, a situation created through sympathy with human characters.³⁵ In Malory, no matter how squeamish the giant munching on the limb of a man while roasting twelve children on a spit makes the reader, there is little revulsion connected with Arthur's killing of the giant, though both descriptions are equally detailed. "Than the kynge sterte up unto hym and raught hym a buffette and kut his baly in sundir, that oute wente the gore, that the grasse and the grounde all foule was begone."³⁶ Since giants are not real to Malory's twentieth-century audience, the image is not as real or as graphic as if the giant had been a man—what pain does a giant feel? Leubenthal's Morgan le Fay is absorbed in a supernatural fire of her own creation and drifts back to the world she came from, but her fire is not the same type that consumes Hengist and his men in Stewart's trilogy: Morgan "had come back for one moment to mortal lands; then her earthly body had fallen away in dust."³⁷ When Landis' Kyrie Fern

attacked a group of the living dead (creatures of nightmares and not waking reality) and "cleft the head down through the shoulders to below the waist, from which there poured entrails and sundry putrescent effluvia containing a second life of maggots and yellow filth,"³⁸ the strongest analogy that comes to mind is the carcass of a wormy carp lying on the pile of butchered fish. It takes a living victim to feel pain.

Extrapolating from the direction in which Malory was traveling, we see a time when man need not kill for justice, need not destroy his fellow man for honor. It will be a time when the evil could be destroyed without destroying the host it inhabits, when freedom and peace are instinctive habits and the only goals worth struggling toward. The fact that Malory's Arthur failed to look closely enough at the effects of his ideals does not mean that Malory himself did not imagine the potential of such a civilization, and did not hope for its actual creation. Fate ruled much of man's life in the fifteenth century, but in the twentieth century the fate of each man, at least theoretically, is in his own hands. In a time when the rhetoric of global peace is on the lips of most humans, an Arthur, uncontrolled by the violent nature of his succession to the throne, who does not need to use force of arms to protect his throne, might successfully build a Camelot.

The modern authors, save Norton to some extent, do not recognize this potential in the Arthurian legend. They fail to study the role that warfare, and the inability to overcome it, plays in the Arthurian legend. They do not recognize the importance of the struggle of the knights of the Round Table to achieve something better than the violent

circle in which they have been forced to live. The modern authors see violence as a frame; they do not see it as a force, the conquering of which puts man above the level of instinct and habit.

Mankind is, one hopes, striving to reach a point where he no longer needs to destroy any force that threatens his survival; the situation is reversing—man must protect the forces that surround him in order to survive. Though violence is a part of life today, it does not play the all-consuming role that it played when man had to use force everyday to protect himself and his property from nature or from his fellow man. We have not yet escaped violence; indeed we may never escape it. But we can, as with alcoholism, admit that violence exists in our lives, learn to recognize its symptoms, and then say it will not control us; we will control it. As one hero of the 1960's and 1970's, Captain James T. Kirk, is made to say for his creator: "But we too have killed in the past. . . . Nevertheless, we can stop. We can admit we have been killers—but we're not going to kill today. That's all it takes; one simple decision. We are not going to kill today."³⁹ It is the place of literature, and those who conscientiously write it, to show the way.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

- ¹ Sir Thomas Malory, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugene Vinaver (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), I, 27, lines 10-11 (I, 14). References to Caxton's book and chapter numbers as given by Vinaver follow each citation in parentheses.
- ² Malory, I, 116, lines 10-11 (III, 12).
- ³ Malory, II, 578, lines 24-25 (X, 7); I, 145, lines 607 (IV, 10).
- ⁴ Malory, II, 944, lines 8-9 (XVI, 2).
- ⁵ Malory, II, 1238, lines 17-21 (XXI, 5). Vinaver's brackets.
- ⁶ Mary Stewart, The Last Enchantment (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979). Hereafter cited as LE. This quotation is a condensation of a five-page description of the fight. The only relief the reader is given is when Arthur recognizes Merlin, who the king thought was dead and buried.
- ⁷ Mary Stewart, The Crystal Cave (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Books, 1970), p. 274. Hereafter cited as CC.
- ⁸ Stewart, CC, p. 280.
- ⁹ Stewart, CC, pp. 368-9.
- ¹⁰ Mary Stewart, The Hollow Hills (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Books, 1973), pp. 427-8.
- ¹¹ Stewart, CC, pp. 287-8.
- ¹² Stewart, CC, pp. 278-9.
- ¹³ Stewart, CC, p. 261.
- ¹⁴ Stewart, CC, p. 272.
- ¹⁵ Tim Powers, The Drawing of The Dark (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), p. 298.
- ¹⁶ Powers, p. 267.
- ¹⁷ Powers, pp. 279-80.
- ¹⁸ Thomas Berger, Arthur Rex (New York: Delacourte Press, 1979), p. 280.
- ¹⁹ Berger, p. 225.

- 20 Berger, p. 24.
- 21 Berger, p. 441.
- 22 William Styron, printed transcript of a panel discussion, "Violence in Literature," The American Scholar, 37 (1968), 489.
- 23 Fredric Wertham, A Sign For Cain: An Exploration of Human Violence (New York: MacMillan Company, 1966), p. 323.
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- 25 Malory, I, 211, lines 29-30 (not in Caxton).
- 26 Malory, III, 1178, lines 17-19 (XX, 8); III, 1218, lines 18-21 (XX, 22).
- 27 Malory, II, 1235, lines 9-12 (XXI, 4). Vinaver's symbols.
- 28 Malory, III, 1229, lines 6-14 (XXI, 1).
- 29 Charles Moorman, Kings and Captains (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971), p. 165.
- 30 William Matthews, The Tragedy of Arthur (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 175.
- 31 Eugene Vinaver, ed. The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, by Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), III, 1370.
- 32 Vinaver, III, 1369, n. 1.
- 33 Andre Norton, Merlin's Mirror (New York: Daw Books, 1975), p. 204.
- 34 Arthur H. Landis, Camelot in Orbit (New York: Daw Books, 1978), p. 165.
- 35 See "Violence in Literature," p. 494.
- 36 Malory, I, 203, lines 11-14 (not in Caxton).
- 37 Sanders Anne Laubenthal, Excalibur (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), p. 230.
- 38 Arthur H. Landis, A World Called Camelot (New York: Daw Books, 1976), p. 100.
- 39 "A Taste of Armageddon," Star Trek 2, ed. James Blish (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), p. 24. Adapted from the screenplay by Robert Hammer and Gene L. Coon. The episode was first televised on NBC on February 23, 1967.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

What did the authors of the 1970's contribute to the Arthurian legend? What did they fail to see in Sir Thomas Malory's work? Why, if Malory's is the last word on the subject, did they choose Arthur's story as their topic? What caused the modern authors the most difficulty? As has become the cliché, where do we go from here? And what roles do characterization, fantasy, and violence play in that new world? When all of these questions have been considered and the finished picture is put into one package and wrapped together in a cover, table of contents and appendices, the package will not look as if a professional gift-wraper had tied the bow; it will look as if a five-year-old boy, excited with the present he made for Mom and Dad for Christmas, had put all of his love and care into folding the paper and had tied on a bright red bow. The corners might stick out, the edges not meet exactly, and the tape might not stick, but the substance and love will certainly shine through.

Modern authors saw the development of characters as their primary challenge; second came the exploration of the motivations that led to the successes or failures of the characters on their quests. These authors had the benefit of writing after the novel had developed into a full-grown literary form; Malory wrote his prose fiction before the

novel was born and living on its own. "Great work of prose that it is, it is by no stretch of the imagination a novel," according to literary historian Walter Allen.¹ In their writing processes, the modern authors asked themselves about Arthur's life and what factors in his childhood, not mentioned by Malory, shaped him as a king, what factors in the world around him influenced his decisions. They could look at the enigmatic Merlin and accept the challenge of discovering why he sought to put Arthur on the throne, of discovering what sort of man, or being, would devote his life to such a single-minded purpose. For the most part, they met that challenge admirably, fleshing out from Malory's sketch a sympathetic and understandable Arthur and a Merlin who is more than the traditional instigator.

Malory, on the other hand, had the advantage of living closer to the wonderful, to the magic which created the atmosphere for his tale; he also lived closer to the intense influence of the Catholic church, which pushed mankind toward the moral, more benevolent, teachings of the Bible. He could reach into his everyday beliefs and paint a reality that, though untouchable to his hands, was the concrete working world of Arthur's experience, a world of miracles and apparitions of evil forces. At the same time that magic and the supernatural filled Malory's life, the Catholic church was a consolidated, united effort to better the existence of man and to improve his behavior patterns. Today, not only has the reality of magic faded to the world of Faërie, but the Catholic church has been shattered into the Christian faith, and though that coalition still teaches brotherhood and love, it is no longer the dominating force that ruled the lives of Western societies

in the fifteenth century.

The authors of the 1970's revitalized and nourished the heroes of the legend according to more modern standards, but in devoting their attention to them, neglected to give their characters worthy challenges to confront and new worlds to live in. They worked with the inconsistencies of the legend that survived in Malory (caused in Malory's time by the "discrepancy between the lofty religious idealism of the modernized legends and the wantonness of the stories inherited from the age of courtly love," according to Ernest Baker²). And they worked with location, trying to put Arthur in a specific country—England, Austria, Alabama, and Camelot-Fregis (a close kin to Logres). But they failed to look closely at and benefit from the strongest elements in Malory: the place of warfare in the legend and the struggle of man to reach above baseness and human conflict; and the Other-worldly quality of Camelot, which through its detachment from the drudgery of reality, provided a dream to strive for.

The influence of purpose creates an even more powerful difference between Malory and the authors of the 1970's. No matter what Malory's social purpose was in compiling, reducing, and editing the extant versions of the Arthurian legend of his time—whether he was trying to revitalize the place of the knight in English society, illuminate the consequences of courtly love and fate on men's lives, or to glorify the life of Henry V—he had as his primary goal the unifying of all the pieces of the legend, which had scattered themselves over both England and France, into one complete whole and directed tale.

According to Baker:

The back of his task had really been broken for him by a succession of labourers upon the vulgate versions, especially by that master of dramatic story-telling, the author of Mort Artus; yet there was something to add and much to omit before the vast miscellany of stories could be told as one having any kind of unity and coherence.³

This purpose led him evenly and directly toward the end of his tale, gave him guidelines for what to retain and what to eliminate; it kept him heading in the same direction from the first tale to the last tale. Not only did Malory recognize the need to compile the different Arthurian stories in one work, he also recognized the influence such a unified collection would have on future audiences; there would be one thorough and complete work for readers to turn to. Through that insight Malory found an element of originality in his work; he did what no one else had done, or had thought of doing. (He might also be given credit for rescuing Arthur from the scattered fate that befell Robin Hood; readers could turn to Malory to indulge in romantic-fancy, for they no longer needed to scour the countryside for bits and pieces of the legend.)

The moderns had no such purpose to control their efforts; there was no great need for the works that they wrote, no cry from history, for a new retelling of Arthur's story. There seems to be more than fad, though, behind the occurrence of so many works in one decade, particularly after two rather quiet decades. T. H. White, with his various versions of The Once and Future King, dominated the 1950's,⁴ and the figures that survived in the 1960's were based directly on White's characters. Walt Disney's The Sword in the Stone (1963) shows in film-length animation a boy transmuted into a fish, a goose, and an ant; it also shows an eccentric Merlin who occasionally confuses spells

and has mice living in his hat. Lerner and Loewe's Arthur in Camelot (1960) is, for the most part, the king in White's later episodes, though much of White's humorous efforts with the age of the characters is not represented. This Arthur shivers in a tree, afraid of the new life that awaits him in marriage to Guenever; in a cowardly manner and to no purpose, he ignores the adultery, and he whimperingly bemoans the fall of his kingdom in the last scene. Merlin, in this movie, is nothing more than a somewhat wise old man who sings to Arthur on "How to Handle a Woman." Both Arthurs, old and young, are neither strong, intelligent, nor the ideal leaders that should come to mind when the name "Arthur" is mentioned.

The coming of a new, strong, traditionally heroic Arthur to popular attention through the archeological digs at Glastonbury and Cadbury, revitalized Arthur's image and gave future authors and readers a new Arthur to look toward and idolize, a man with courage, conviction, and leadership qualities of the highest degree. In earlier periods of literature, authors who wrote of Arthur as a fifth-century warlord depended on the word of Nennius, the eighth-century historian, for substantiation, and though Nennius may once have been familiar to popular audiences, today his work is of interest only to scholars. With newsworthy discoveries being unearthed in the southwest of England and publicized throughout the land, and with the common enthusiasm over the archeological digs and the hope of finding solid proof of Arthur's existence, Arthur was born anew, and the modern writers took serious advantage of the situation. The romantic, pretty life of Arthur and his court became the hard, dangerous, and cunning life of a warrior, a

worthy savior of his people. The stigma of the frivolous dreamer was lifted from Arthur's crown.

Though they now had a new opportunity to explore the life of the warrior-king, in further depth and possible detail, none of the 1970's authors accepted the challenge to its fullest; rather they depended on self-centered purposes for their writing and used cliches rather than imagination to form hypotheses. Though we shall never know, it seems unlikely to me that Malory was fulfilling a lifelong dream of his own in writing his book, as were Andre Norton, Thomas Berger, and Mary Stewart. Nor was he following a set pattern established by his predecessors, as were Sterling Lanier, Keith Roberts, Vera Chapman, and even Arthur H. Landis, in filling in the blank to the question "What if Arthur _____?" For Berger, Arthur Rex is essentially his "memory of that childish version as edited and expanded according to the outlandish fantasies he has had in the years since."⁵ Stewart's motivation is one of curiosity and challenge, "it is exciting to interpret these sometimes weird and often nonsensical legends into a story which has some sort of coherence as human experience and imaginative truth."⁶ Both of these authors had established their reputations before tackling Arthur and Merlin's story (Berger with Little Big Men, and Stewart with The Moonspinners) and could now afford to risk exposing their versions of the legend to the public. Such loyalty to self rather than to the king and Merlin and Camelot can only detract from the full potential of the story. Malory's main purpose was centered on the legend, on telling the story of Arthur and his noble knights, on bringing Arthur home to England; the central

purpose of the modern authors seems to be a blend of one-upmanship, financial endeavor, and individual ingenuity. Malory thought of how he could best serve the legend; the modern authors worry over how the legend can best serve them—can I write a better story than the other popular authors? Will this topic sell well? Can I rearrange the pieces any differently?

Malory created a problem for all of the aspiring authors in love with his Arthurian legend that followed him in time. His work had become the best, most comprehensive, and anyone who came after him needed to be keenly aware of the intricacies of Malory's tapestry, as well as to have a keen sense of his attitudes toward the legend. The problem of Malory's originality was the bane of his successors, and none of the writers of the 1970's looked at Le Morte Darthur closely enough to see the suggestions that Malory makes for Arthur's future and to see the delicate balance that Malory created between Arthur's world and the world of reality. John Hoaglund, in The British Journal of Aesthetics, writes a sympathetic passage on the struggle of following after a master:

Once certain feats have been achieved the artist who aspires to be original operates within a narrower range of possibilities. Once the sculptor has given us the human figure in all its natural poise and grace the aspiring original artist must set some other goal, e.g., to render the dramatic power of a conflict or struggle. The dynamism of this sort of development in art constitutes a pressure on the aspiring artist. In response to this pressure his work will surely be at least in part derivative, but perhaps also in some way original. The way in which he successfully meets the challenge to produce unique works constitutes part of his creativity. The artist is usually at least dimly aware of this pressure; some are acutely aware. An artist who produces great works thereby makes art difficult for the generation of artists that succeeds him.⁷

The authors of the 1970's struggled under the pressure that Hoaglund describes and under the pressure of communicating their imaginings to another human mind. In the face of their efforts, it seems rather cold and vicious of me to sit here and comment, subjectively or objectively, on their treasures. The statement that mothers and fathers love to pound into their teenaged children's minds, and that rules most kind-hearted people, is clamoring all too loudly in my mind: If you cannot offer any constructive suggestions, do not criticize. Another truism, unfortunately, hammers inside my head, too, fighting against that sentiment: I know what needs to be done, but I do not have the skill necessary to do it. The works of the authors of the 1970's must lead somewhere (as must all of the works that came before theirs). Looking ahead from their opened floodgates, there is, looming off in the confusing distance, the hazy figure of an artist who can, with insight and feeling, gather together all of the pieces of the Arthurian legend that have been falling to the ground since Malory gathered his pieces together, one who can produce a version of the legend that has, in feeling, scope, and originality, a modernized influence on the legend similar to that of Malory's fifteenth-century effort. Though he is not yet known, one part of his character has already been determined by the legend itself. He will not be, as no one working with the subject since and including Malory has been, a Chaucer, or a Shakespeare. "The poets who shaped the Arthurian cycle belonged to the knightly class," according to Baker.⁸ Though his creation will eventually win fame and recognition (as did Malory's), the artist will not have been of the calibre from which such a success

would be expected, nor would he have been poorly equipped to confront the challenge; this artist will be greatly talented, yet unknown (as was Malory).

He will continue to develop the characters of Arthur and Merlin, only with more care and a more delicate touch. Both men will grow and learn; their purposes in life will be achieved. Arthur will be given undeniable success; he will not have his victories stripped from him again. To see him struggle against another army, against the treacheries of his fellow man, and even against the same personal failings that he has struggled against throughout his life without being given the chance to learn from his mistakes, would be a worse tragedy than the one that befell him in the end of Malory's tale. And Merlin, now that Stewart and Andre Norton have so valiantly hammered to help him out of the shell he has been trapped in since not long after Geoffrey of Monmouth's Vita Merlini, cannot be returned, casually or traditionally, to his place as Arthur's wizard. He too, must grow and achieve a goal equal to his role in the legend. There is nothing in Malory (indeed Malory suggests the opposite) that says Arthur and Merlin must always return to be killed in the final battle or trapped by the wiles of a sorceress. If Arthur comes back, it can be as a man who has learned from the ideals that man has achieved and fallen under in the five-hundred years that have transpired since Malory finished Le Morte Darthur. Norton, through Merlin's words, set a worthy challenge before Arthur and mankind (see Chapter II), and she gave him a direct means through which to learn of the men who live around him, and of the changes that pass through the centuries until he is revived

once more to lead his people; the machines he is attached to as he sleeps in suspended animation, could, conceivably, though Norton talks only of dreams, teach him of the world outside his cave, so that, when he is revived, he will be as much a man of the current century as he was of the fifth.⁹

The major problem facing a future writer of the Arthurian legend is the one of place. Arthur, his companions, and his counselor cannot be forced to return to England or the known world one more time. If they are brought back anywhere in the Earth's recorded history, they will once more automatically be put into the stereotyped expectations that have thwarted his ideal at every step of the legend in its long history. Arthur H. Landis found a new world for Arthur and tried to give him a new start, but taking the king completely off of Earth removed the human conflict that is the center of the legend—man's struggle to reach beyond the life he has always known, man's battle to achieve the perfect human civilization. Yet he cannot be left in the Earth's real history; the readers would constantly be comparing the king's success with the reality that is painted in the history books (which happens in Tim Powers' book). A similar reaction would take place in the reader's mind if Arthur's life were moved into the definite future; the reader would wonder if such happenings could possibly take place one day. There are other worlds in literature that Arthur would fit into beautifully. At the end of J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy The Lord of the Rings, after the elves leave man and Middle Earth for the Western Isle, Arthur could successfully grow and help build a new Middle Earth, a beautiful new world to live in. Ursula K. LeGuin's Earthsea,

once Ged has defeated the evil wizard who has destroyed the magic of the world, could use Arthur to rebuild the ideals of the island-world. Merlin would fit easily into both worlds (if he did not inspire them in the first place). But both of those worlds are someone else's and Arthur and Merlin would be treading on the turf of other renowned (in their own worlds) heroes. Arthur's new world must be like those creations—a new beginning, a conflict with nature and old habits of mankind, but not with his fellow man, a place and time to test his mettle as a hero. Authors have already shown that he cannot defeat the Saxons, and that he cannot defeat the influences of Gawain and Mordred in his life, yet if Arthur is the man around whom the legends grew, he must be given an opportunity to be the great leader who comes to save his people. He needs to be given a place on Earth, created solely for him and his story, and he needs a time that is also his own. Someone, in a flash of inspiration, in a quiet night's dream, will need to find that world and that time so that Arthur can return once more from Avalon. If he is not given a new world, a new goal, and the success he deserves, the king will eventually die too many deaths.

I am torn now between a wish to see Arthur sleeping in peace, never to be called forth to fight another battle, and a wish to see him return as a man, one who can overcome the habits of his time and achieve a greater ideal, a greater condition in man. If minor forces, unclear in their intentions and action, reincarnate the hero, there will be little energy left in Arthur when the time comes for a master story-teller to call him forth. What do we do then? Hope that Arthur retains enough strength to fulfill that final task, or put him to rest

and lean on his memory for consolation? The answer depends on how long it is before a writer, confident in his own ability and originality, dares to challenge the rebukes of the literary critics and historians alike, and accepts the challenge of giving Arthur the nobility and success he deserves. If he is to come soon, let us wait, but if Arthur's story is not to become the noble subject, worthy in itself, that Malory gave us, then let Arthur sleep forever in Avalon.

King were published separately between 1930-40. But since the influence of a work takes time to spread, and since the forces that created the surge in Arthurian fiction in the 1970's began exerting themselves in the mid-1940's, the two-decade estimate for White's popular dominance seems appropriate to the reality of the events.

⁵ From the jacket to *Arthur Rex* by Thomas Berger (New York: Delacorte Press, 1979).

⁶ Mary Stewart, *The Hollow Hills* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Books, 1973), p. 441.

⁷ John Houghland, "Originality and Aesthetic Value," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 16 (1976), 51-52.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁹ Unfortunately, part of the reason Gordon's *Camelot* fell was that Arthur was not a man of the 15th century, but the half-breed son of a woman and a Sky Lord, and his kingdom would not have followed a dream-born.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

¹ Walter Allen, The English Novel (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1954), p. 8.

² Ernest A. Baker, The Age of Romance: from the Beginnings to the Renaissance, Vol. I of The History of The English Novel (1924; rpt., New York: Barnes and Noble, 1950), p. 193.

³ Baker, p. 190.

⁴ It may be argued that the influence of White's effort began in the early 1940's since the first three parts of The Once and Future King were published separately between 1938-40. But since the influence of a work takes time to spread, and since the forces that created the surge in Arthurian fiction in the 1970's began exerting themselves in the mid-1960's, the two-decade estimate for White's popular dominance seems appropriate to the reality of the events.

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⁷ John Hoaglund, "Originality and Aesthetic Value," The British Journal of Aesthetics, 16 (1976), 51-52.

⁸ Baker, p. 163.

⁹ Unfortunately, part of the reason Norton's Camelot fell was that Arthur was not a man of the fifth century, but the half-breed son of a woman and a Sky Lord, and his kingdom would not have followed a demon-born.

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SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CERTAIN ARTHURIAN WORKS

WRITTEN IN THE 1970'S

SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CERTAIN ARTHURIAN WORKS
WRITTEN IN THE 1970'S

Cordery, Peter. *The English Chalice*. New York: Charter Books, 1976.

The journey leads from slavery for Rowley, son of the chief of the Nightingale Crew, and a Romano-British girl's flight from Roman rule. It is a strong and lasting love affair that eventually creates the heroic warrior-king Arthur. As a young man, Arthur goes over-ambitious to face the Saracens and takes of setting off in the army of Prince Constantine. He abandons his homeland and strikes out on his own to seek out Constantine's forces; slowly he builds his band of followers and establishes himself as a great leader. Thus begins the story of Arthur, a man touched and moved by the gods, who mark the young warrior's greatness with the crown chalice.

SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CERTAIN ARTHURIAN WORKS

Gwynn, the Younger. *Written in the 1970's* Gwynn in this reshaping of the Green Knight story. This Gwynn is the son of Gareth and great nephew to King Arthur. He is joined in the story by Vivian, Merlin's grand-daughter, who is, through Morgana le Fay's power, forced to marry Sir Bertilak, the green knight. The story is traditional through the scenes where the green knight takes his three swings with his ax at Gwynn's neck; the rest of the story is a short but dangerous journey to escape the sorceress's vengeance.

King Arthur's Daughter. New York: Avon Books, 1975.

Vivian, the daughter of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, struggles to claim her birthright through the turmoil that follows Arthur's fall. Eventually failing to master the scattered strength of Britain against the Saxons, Vivian and her young hero-lover marry, prosper in the wilderness, and continue the true line of Arthur's blood.

Housoo, Richard. *Paradise of a Knight's Tale*. New York: Pocket Books, 1977.

The young and innocent Paradise finds adventure and learning in Housoo's version of this knight's legend. His first conquest after

SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CERTAIN ARTHURIAN WORKS
WRITTEN IN THE 1970'S

Canning, Victor. The Crimson Chalice. New York: Charter Books, 1976.

The journey home from slavery for Baradoc, son of the chief of the Enduring Crow, and a Romano-British girl's flight from Saxon raiders, begins a strong and lasting love affair that eventually creates the heroic warrior-chief Arturo. As a young man, Arturo grows over-anxious to face the Saxons and tires of sitting idly in the army of Prince Gerontius. He abandons his homeland and strikes out on his own to seek out Count Ambrosius' forces; slowly he builds his band of followers and establishes himself as a great leader. Thus begins the story of Arturo, a man touched and moved by the gods, who mark the young warrior's greatness with the crimson chalice.

Chapman, Vera. The Green Knight. New York: Avon Books, 1975.

Gawain the Younger replaces the legendary Gawain in this reshaping of the Green Knight story. This Gawain is the son of Gareth and great nephew to King Arthur. He is joined in the story by Vivian, Merlin's grand-daughter, who is, through Morgan le Fay's power, forced to marry Sir Bertilak, the green knight. The story is traditional through the scene where the green knight takes his three swings with his ax at Gawain's neck; the rest of the story is a short but dangerous journey to escape the sorceress's schemes.

———. King Arthur's Daughter. New York: Avon Books, 1976.

Ursulet, the daughter of King Arthur and Queen Guenever, struggles to claim her birthright through the turmoil that follows Arthur's fall. Eventually failing to muster the scattered strength of Britain against the Saxons, Ursulet and her young hero-lover marry, prosper in the wilderness, and continue the true line of Arthur's blood.

Monaco, Richard. Parsival, or a Knight's Tale. New York: Pocket Books, 1977.

The young and innocent Parsival finds adventure and learning in Monaco's version of this knight's legend. His first conquest after

reaching King Arthur's court is to challenge and kill Sir Roht, the Red Knight. His journeys eventually lead him to the Holy Grail. Blending into Parsival's story is the journey of three other characters: Broaditch and Waleis, two servants to Parsival's mother, who seek the young knight to inform him that he is now king of his father's realm; and Alienor, a former serving lady to the wife of Duke Orilus.

Munn, H. Warner. Merlin's Ring. New York: Ballantine Books, 1974.

Gwalchmai (the name is the Welsh form of Gawain) is the son of Ventidius Vero, a Romano-British warrior who survived Arthur's final defeat, and Vero's North American wife; he is also Merlin's godson. As the story opens, the immortal spirit of Corenice, a survivor of the once-splendid Atlantis whose body perished when her spirit was infused into a metallic replica, enters a young Scandinavian girl's body. In her new form, Corenice leads two men to the iceberg that has held Gwalchmai frozen for centuries and frees the warrior. At last reunited, the young couple lives through the histories and legends of most of Europe and Asia, sharing adventure and love throughout the book. Gwalchmai's life is prolonged through the story by a magical ring given to him by Merlin.

REVIEWS OF SOME 1970'S MEDIEVAL WORKS
DISCUSSED WITHIN THE TEXT

David Burgess, Arthur Rex, 1979.

In this book, Arthur is a sensible thirty-five-year-old; Lancelot is a disturbed knight with suicidal tendencies; Gawain is a pot-bellied, gardening husband, and Mordred is a sly seducer. The events are basically Malory's, with the insertion of topical-the-scene action, and of Burgess's version of Gawain's adventures with the Green Knight.

Vera Chapman, The King's Jewel, 1976.

Ighite becomes an envoy for King Arthur after her newlywed husband, Sir Gaheris, reports her on her wedding night. After serving Arthur on several peace-making missions **APPENDIX** Ighite's lesser leaders, Ighite meets and falls in love with Ighite, a blind young man who has but a year left to live. After successfully completing her quest for the Holy Grail, she must choose to use the power of the Grail to save her lover's life or to retain his sight to him.

Catherine Christman, The Pendragon, 1976.

Christian tells her story of post-Roman Britain through the eyes of Bedivere, Arthur's foster brother. While living his own life, as a mercenary in Europe and then as one of Arthur's chief commanders, Bedivere follows Arthur's career as warrior and king, from young boy to old man. The story is told from the vantage point of Bedivere, Arthur's new chronicler, as he lies on his death bed, dying of old age.

Arthur H. Lewis, A World Called Camelot, 1976.

Galactic Wanderer Iyris Fern assumes the role of the legendary hero, The Gallin, on the planet Camelot-Pragia, in order to rescue the inhabitants from the Hish, an extra-galactic invader. During his mission he falls in love with a young and beautiful princess, attracts a central core of loyal supporters, and meets the Pug-Dee, Reoli, who becomes Fern's adviser and mentor. With the aid of his sword and his native magic, Fern wins the north land of the Hish's forces.

SYNOPSIS OF THOSE 1970'S ARTHURIAN WORKS
DISCUSSED WITHIN THE TEXT

Thomas Berger, Arthur Rex, 1979.

In this book, Arthur is a senile thirty-five-year-old; Launcelot is a disturbed knight with suicidal tendencies; Gawain is a pot-bellied, gardening husband, and Mordred is a sly sadist. The events are basically Malory's, with the insertion of behind-the-scenes action, and of Berger's version of Gawain's adventures with the Green Knight.

Vera Chapman, The King's Damosel, 1976.

Lynett becomes an envoy for King Arthur after her newlywed husband, Sir Gaheris, deserts her on her wedding night. After serving Arthur on several peace making missions to uncommitted lesser leaders, Lynett meets and falls in love with Lucius, a blind young man who has but a year left to live. After successfully completing her quest for the Holy Grail, she must choose to use the power of the Grail to save her lover's life or to return his sight to him.

Catherine Christian, The Pendragon, 1978.

Christian tells her story of post-Roman Britain through the eyes of Bedivere, Arthur's foster brother. While living his own life, as a mercenary in Europe and then as one of Arthur's chief commanders, Bedivere follows Arthur's career as warrior and king, from young boy to old man. The story is told from the vantage point of Bedivere, Arthur's new chronicler, as he lies on his death bed, dying of old age.

Arthur H. Landis, A World Called Camelot, 1976.

Galactic Watcher Kyrie Fern assumes the role of the legendary hero, The Collin, on the planet Camelot-Fregis, in order to rescue the inhabitants from the Hish, an extra-galactic invader. During his mission he falls in love with a young and beautiful princess, attracts a central core of faithful companions, and meets the Pug-Boo, Hooli, who becomes Fern's advisor and mentor. With the aid of his sword and his native knights, Fern rids the north land of the Hish's forces.

Arthur H. Landis, Camelot in Orbit, 1978.

In the sequel to Landis' first book, Fern, taking his loyal forces with him, pursues the Hish in his lair in the south continent of Camelot-Fregis. After he wins the cooperation of the southern natives, he invades the Hish's headquarters. As a result of his successes, Fern looks forward to marrying the princess and perhaps inheriting the throne of her kingdom.

Sterling E. Lanier, "Ghost of A Crown," 1976.

Brigadier Ffellowes captivates his audience with the story of returning spirits on the Cornwall coast. Ffellowes travels to the family home of James, Earl of Penrudduck, to help explain mysterious occurrences that surround an archeological dig conducted by the possessed Lord Lionel, the Earl's brother. When the spirit of King Arthur takes control of James' body, Ffellowes realizes that he will serve in the role of witness rather than as rescuer, and the two men pursue the Dark One and his emissary in an underground tomb.

Sanders Anne Laubenthal, Excalibur, 1973.

Rhodri Merrick, a Welsh archeologist and the current pendragon, pursues a clue to an ancient wall in an Alabama house; he meets Linette and together they search the site until they discover Excalibur, Arthur's sword. Meanwhile, Anthony, a friend of Linette's and a modern Galahad, pursues his own quest for the Holy Grail. In yet other action the eternal spirits of Morgan le Fay and her sister Morgause struggle for possession and control of those two powerful artifacts.

Andre Norton, Merlin's Mirror, 1975.

In this story, Merlin is the son of a Welsh chieftain's daughter and a Sky Lord, a member of an extra-terrestrial race that had visited Earth ages earlier. Merlin discovers the mysterious cave in his Welsh hills where a computer system has been built by the Sky Lords' machines; there he learns, through the power of the "mirror," all that he needs to successfully complete his two assigned tasks: to erect a beacon under Stonehenge that will call the Sky Lords to Earth; and to put the son of a Sky Lord on the throne of Britain. He succeeds at both missions, and together he and Arthur try to build a peace on Earth. They are thwarted in their plans by Nimue (the half-breed daughter of one of the Sky Lords' enemies and a human woman) and the nature of the times, and retreat to the Welsh cave where they await, in suspended animation, the coming of a new age.

Tim Powers, The Drawing of The Dark, 1979.

Brian Duffy, a middle-aged, Irish mercenary, accepts the position of bouncer in a Vienna brewery owned by the wizard Merlin during the Turkish invasion of Europe in 1529. As events unfold and begin to pile up, Duffy learns that the reincarnated Arthur shares his body, and, after a tumultuous adjustment period, the two fight as one man to protect Vienna and a vat of miraculous seven-hundred-year-old dark beer that has aged over the bones of Finn Mac Cool in the basement of Merlin's brewery. Merlin's magical powers struggle against the evil Turkish magician Ibrahim. By the end of the tale Duffy, Arthur, and Merlin successfully defend Vienna and, precisely on the 31st of October, 1529, renew the health of the Fisher King with the perfectly-aged beer; his good health signals prosperity for the West.

Keith Roberts, "The Big Fans," 1977.

Shortly before the controversial Coombe Hasset wind-powered energy-generation system is to be activated, three intrigued British citizens investigate a peculiar energy pattern that surrounds the system. On the night the switch is thrown, the three, Glyn Thomas, Alec Boulter, and Sarah Trevelyan, while out walking on the hillsides, are caught in a force field that throws them back in time to King Arthur's camp on the eve of his battle with Mordred. The three eventually return to their own time, and anxiously await the creation of another wind-powered energy system and another trip through time.

Mary Stewart, The Crystal Cave, 1970.

This first part of Stewart's trilogy traces Merlin's life from his early years as the bastard grandson of a Welsh king to the night of deception and promise at Tintagel. The young Merlin, after being taught the ways of his Sight by the hermit Galapas in a secluded Welsh cave, flees the political turmoil of his grandfather's land and the invading Vortigern and soon finds himself with Aurelius Ambrosius' forces in Less Britain. After learning he is Ambrosius' son, Merlin, through his Sight, learning, and skill, helps his father regain the British crown. During that time Merlin, compelled by his god, promises Ambrosius that, together with Uther, he will make a great king for Britain. By the end of this book, Arthur has been conceived at Tintagel, and Merlin is twenty-two years old.

Mary Stewart, The Hollow Hills, 1973.

In this the second part of Stewart's trilogy, Merlin spends most of his time waiting. He waits for Arthur to be born and then furtively removes the young prince from Britain. Merlin waits again and travels through Europe and the Middle East while Arthur grows up first in Brittany and then in northwestern England. When the boy is nine years old, Merlin settles in as the hermit in a chapel near Arthur's foster home and begins his role, in disguise, as Arthur's teacher. Finally, when it is time for Arthur to assume his heritage, Merlin takes him to his father's side at the battle field near Luguvallium. After an untried and as yet unrecognized Arthur, through the actions of fate, receives his father's sword in battle and leads the British troops in victory against the Saxons, he is acknowledged by his father as heir to the crown. Uther dies at the victory celebration and Arthur's right is challenged by King Lot of Orkney. Through Merlin's magic and his own strength, Arthur pulls the legendary sword of Maccsen from its stone hiding place in Merlin's chapel in the woods.

Mary Stewart, The Last Enchantment, 1979.

Arthur is recognized as high king by all factions, and, after burying his father beside Ambrosius within the circle of Stonehenge, is crowned and begins his service to his country. The remainder of the book concentrates on Merlin's final years, from his mid-thirties to his early-fifties. His waning powers leave him as Arthur's counselor; he is no longer the king's prophet. Arthur goes about securing his kingdom from the Saxon's and building his fortifications at Camelot. Merlin settles into a little house called Applegarth, close enough to Camelot to be ready to serve Arthur when the king needs him, and takes in Nimue, as a student with whom he later falls in love. By the time he settles in to live his final years in his Welsh cave (the crystal cave) he has been poisoned by Morgause, buried alive in his cave by Arthur and Nimue, who thought him dead when a malady caused by the poison overtook him, and finally outlived his role as counselor. He is still Arthur's friend and father-figure, and together in Merlin's cave the two talk away the remaining pages of the book.