The Round Table

three notes by helmut nickel

who was eslit?

Chrétien de Troyes lists ‘Eslit’ as the eleventh best of Arthur’s knights, but in spite of this Eslit does not play any significant role in any Arthurian epic. Although the Round Table was established to indicate the equality in valor of all its knights, there was nevertheless a sometimes fierce competition of who was the ‘best of knights,’ and in the very first roll call, given in Chrétien de Troyes’ Erec et Enide (ca. 1170), the first ten ‘best knights’ are set apart from the rest.

In W.W. Comfort’s prose translation of Erec et Enide, published 1913 in Everyman’s Library (Vv. 1691–1750), Gawain is listed as the foremost of knights, Erec the son of Lac, as the second, and Lancelot of the Lake as the third. Gornemant of Gohort is the fourth and the fifth is the Handsome Coward. The Ugly Brave is sixth, Meliant de Liz seventh, Mauduit the Wise eighth, and Dodinel the Wild ninth. After having tallied Gandelu, ‘a goodly man,’ as the tenth, Chrétien claims that numbering bothers him, and that he will mention the other knights from now on without order. Of the forty-one named knights that follow, the first is Eslit, listed together with Briien, and Yvain the son of U rilen.

In the verse edition by Carleton W. Carroll, in Garland Library of Medieval Literature, 1987, the list is shortened to thirty-one names altogether. Gauvains is first, Erec fils de roi Lac, is second and Lancelot del Lac third. The fourth is Gorneman de Ghoort, the fifth li Biax Coarz (the Handsome Coward) and the sixth li Lez Hardiz (the Ugly Brave). Melianz des Liz comes as the seventh, Mauduiz li Sages as eighth, Dodines li Sauvages as ninth and Gaudeluz is tenth, ‘car an lui ot maintes bontez’ [for in him were many good qualities]. However, Eslit and Briien are omitted, and it is Ywain the Valiant (Yvains li preuz) who leads the twenty-one unnumbered knights (ll.1680–1714).

Chrétien’s German follower and adapter, Hartmann von Aue, in his ‘Erec’ (ca. 1190) claims to list the full number of one hundred and forty knights of King Arthur’s court, but his roll call amounts to only seventy-five. Although Hartmann adds some thirty new names to Chrétien’s list, in general he follows it quite closely, in spite of some misunderstandings in translation. The first thirteen names of Hartmann’s roll call are an exact parallel to those in ‘Erec et Enide’ of the Everyman’s Library edition; first comes Gawein, ‘the brave knight,’ next Erec fil de roi Lac, and Lancelot of Arlac, then follow Gorneman of Groharz, li bdsCoharz (the Handsome Coward), Lais hardiz (the Ugly Brave), Melianz of Liz, Maldwiz li Sadges, wild

the round table

Dlodinel and good Gandelus. 'With them sat Esus, then the knight Brien and Iwein fili roi Vrien.'

Between 1210 and 1240 the Austrian poet Heinrich von dem Turlin, wrote his Grail epic, Diu Crone ('The Crown'), which contains two tests for 'the best of knights and truest of ladies.' In the Test of the Tankard the names of sixty-three knights appear in a sequence that bears a strong resemblance to the list in Hartmann's 'Erec.' It starts with Gawein, then follow Lanzelet of Arlac, Erec fils du roi Lac, Iwein, Kalocreant, Parzival the Welshman, Lenoval, Lais of Lardis, Milianz de Lis, Maldis the Wise, Dinodes the Old, Gandaluz, Ellies of Landuz, King Brien, Urien of Lof, Iwein of Canabus, and so on. For good measure Heinrich also adds 'Ellis of Climon' in the forty-eighth place.

From their positions in these lists, between Gandelu/Gandeluz/Gandaluz and Brien/knight Brien/King Brien, it is clear that Eslit, Esus, and Ellies of Landuz must be one and the same person, in spite of the difference in spelling the name. But the nagging question remains: 'Who is this elusive person, who evidently was counted among the most important—although not one of the ten best, at least the eleventh—knights of King Arthur's court, but who does not show up as an active figure in any Arthurian epic?'

Phyllis Ann Karr, in her The King Arthur Companion (1983) does not mention Eslit at all, and in its enlarged The Arthurian Companion (1997) there is only the terse entry: 'ESLIT (†) Among Arthur's knights in the list Chretien de Troyes begins in line 1691 of Erec & Enide.' The dagger symbol (†) after Eslit's name indicates that he does not appear in Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur, and neither is Eslit found among the 178 knights of the Round Table with known—of course fictitious—coats-of-arms listed alphabetically in Michel Pastoureau's Armorial des chevaliers de la Table Ronde (1983).

There is a common feature in the roll calls by Chrétien de Troyes, Hartmann von Aue and Heinrich von dem Turlin: they all three list Eslit/Esus/Ellies, but conspicuous by his absence is Bors, who after all is a major character in the Grail stories.

In the mid-thirteenth century another roll call, quite independent from the pattern established by Chrétien, is found as preface to L'Ystoire de Meliadus et de Gyron le Courtoys et du Bon Chevalier sans Paour. The printed edition of ca. 1501, under the title Gyron le Courtoys, mentions Rusticiano de Pisa as its author, but the earlier manuscripts give author's credits to 'Helie de Borron' (Pickford, introductory note). Among its 169 knights Bors is mentioned in the third place, after King Arthur himself and Lancelot, but before (!) Gauvain (Pickford, a ii). Interestingly, the seventh knight is Helyas le blanc, the son whom Bors begat in his single lapse from chastity with the daughter of King Brangoire. Helyas le blanc is not in the lists compiled by Chrétien, Hartmann, and Heinrich von der Turlin. On the other hand, Malory mentions at the Tournament of Surluse a knight 'that hyghte Elys la Noyre,' and was 'in the gouernaunce' of Duke Chaleyns of Clarance. H e 'encountered with' King Bagdemagus, who smote him 'that he made hym to auoyde his sadel.' Possibly he was invented as counterpart to Helyas le blanc. 'Elias la Noire' is mentioned only in passing by Phyllis Ann Karr, as a follower of Duke Chaleyns; his mere cameo appearance at Surluse did not deserve an entry of his own.
In the Armorial des chevaliers de la Table Ronde, Michel Pastoureau lists 'Bohort' (Bors) as entry no. 34, and mentions that parfois—sometimes—he was called 'l’Essilie' (the Exile) for difference to his father, 'Bohort Roi di Gaunes.'

Would it be possible that the enigmatic and elusive ‘Eslit’ of Chretien’s roll call, as ‘l’Essilie’ became a surname attached to Bohort/Bors? In this guise ‘Eslit’ not only could maintain his rightful place among the foremost knights of King Arthur’s court, but as Bohort he even was promoted to third best, while ‘Helyas le blanc’ was created as Bors’s son and could also be safely placed among the ten best knights.

notes

what kind of animal was the questing beast?

Much like the elusive Unicorn, which in Arthurian stories has only cameo appearances in le conte du papagaux and Spenser’s Faerie Quene, the Questing Beast has so far escaped zoological identification.

Among the animals found in the Arthurian stories there are some remarkable specimens, such as the monstrous boar Trwch Troynt and the terrible cat Chapalu. On the positive side there are King Arthur’s dog Cabal, his horses Aubagu, Dhu, and Llamrei, Gawain’s steed Gringolet, and Yvain’s faithful lion. The most enigmatic creature, however, is the Questing Beast, so called because from its belly emanated a noise ‘like unto the questing of thirty couple houndes.’

This strange feature seems to be taken from the Gesta Regum of William of Malmesbury, who reports a haunting dream King Edgar had while sleeping under an apple tree. He dreamed of a bitch whose whelps could be heard barking in her womb. This is explained by his pious mother as an omen of future attacks on the Church. In Perlesvaus, the ‘questing’ in the Beast’s belly is seen as Christ being hounded by the twelve tribes of Israel, and in Gerbert of Montreuil’s Continuation de la Contédel Graal, the Beast is the Church ‘worried by people who disturb the sacred service by talking and complaining of hunger.’ In both these early sources the Beast is killed by its offspring. Interestingly, in a South Slavic tale, the Twelve Dreams of Schachi, there appears a bitch with yelping whelps in her body. This tale has also an Arabic variant which is probably its ultimate source.
King Arthur had encountered the Questing Beast at a well in the forest, and found that the barking only stopped when the Beast drank. However, the questing after the Questing Beast was done by King Pellinore and Sir Palomysdes the Saracen. Eventually, at the Tournament at Surluse, Sir Palomydes ‘desguysed himself’ by taking the ‘questynge beeste’ as the charge on his shield and horse trappings. Since Sir Palomydes was the rival of Sir Tristram for the love of La Beale Isoud, his unending and unrequited love is mirrored by his unsuccessful and unending pursuit of the Questing Beast.

Though the Questing Beast’s allegorical and spiritual significance has been variously scrutinized and interpreted, little attention has been paid so far to what kind of real animal (if any) did serve as the model for this strange and seemingly imaginary creature whose physical appearance was far from consistent.

In Perlesvaus the beast is white as a fresh snow, bigger than a hare, but smaller than a fox, and it was pleasing to behold in its great beauty and its eyes that resembled two emeralds. By contrast, in Gerbert de Montreuil’s Continuation de la Conte del Graal, the beast is called ‘grant a mervelle,’ wondrously big. In the Merlin section of the Boron cycle, one version (ms. 112) gives a detailed description of the Beast’s appearance: ‘head and neck of a serpent, bristly (maned?) and flexible, eyes of carbuncle glowing like torches, a maw of fire, ears upright like a greyhound’s, body like a lion, legs like a stag’s,’ and further ‘a hide spotted in all the colors of the world,’ but also ‘wings on its shoulders that flash like rays of the sun.’ This last detail that makes the Beast look rather like a dragon was perhaps suggested by its serpent-like head and neck. Incidentally, ‘live’ dragons are rare in Arthurian literature, the helmet crests and battle standards of Uther Pendragon and Arthur himself notwithstanding.

In the Prose Tristan, the Beast is described as having the head and neck of a serpent, the body of a leopard, hind quarters and tail of a lion and feet of a stag. Here the wings and the maw of fire are omitted. The Prose Tristan description has become the standard for the Questing Beast’s appearance. Interestingly, the description is practically the reverse of that of the most notorious monster of classical antiquity, the Chimaera, which according to Homer had a lion’s head, a serpent as a tail, and the body of a goat (which presumably included feet with cloven hoofs and perhaps also a many-colored pelt). The Chimaera did not harbor any yelping whelps, but its breath came out in terrible blasts of burning flame.

Malory’s description of the Beste Glatysaunt follows the one given in the Prose Tristan; his Questing Beast has ‘a hede like a serpents hede, and a body lyke a lybard, buttocks lyke a lion, and fote lyke an herte’ [a head like a serpent’s, the body of a leopard, the hind quarters of a lion and the feet of a hart]. And, of course, there is the noise coming from its belly ‘like unto the questing of thiry couple houndes.’ The detailed description of the Beast’s body from the Prose Tristan is also taken over by the author of the Roman de Palamedes with the addition that the neck is like that of an animal called ‘Douce in his [Palamedes’] language.’ In Perceforest, it is said that the Beast’s ‘strange neck’ resembles that of an animal that the Saracens call Dagglor, and it has ‘all the colors of the world.’
From this description we can deduce that the Beast was an exotic animal, most likely from the Saracens' lands. Indeed, the name Douce 'in his [Palamedes'] language' might give a clue to the Beast's identity. The French doux (fem. douce) means 'sweet, charming, pleasant,' and it is generally thought that an Arabic word zrf = zurafa meaning 'graceful, nice, sweet' would be the root of 'giraffe.' However, Arabic scholars insist that this is a false etymology and 'giraffe' is more likely derived from zrf = zaraffa, which the Arabic-English Lexicon lists as 'camelopard or giraffe, a certain beast of beautiful make, the fore legs are longer than its hind legs; said to be called by a name signifying [that] it has the form of an assemblage of animals, i.e. camel-ox-leopard, because it has resemblances to the camel and the ox and the leopard.' It seems that with the name Douce the author of the Roman de Palamedes picked the wrong zrf, although he was on the right track. The long swaying neck of a giraffe can be word-pictured as that of a serpent—more flattering than that of a camel—the body with its pattern of irregular spots reminds of the spotted pel of the leopard, while its narrow hind quarters and tufted tail are comparable to those of a lion that also look narrow against its imposingly maned shoulders. Feet 'like a stag's' or 'like those of an ox' obviously are meant to express that there were cloven hoofs. Unfortunately, the Arabic-English Lexicon does not yield any explanation about the animal Dagglor.

In support of the notion that the Questing Beast might be based upon a description of a giraffe, there is from the other end of the world a report about an animal from foreign lands that was brought to the court of the Ming Emperor at Beijing in 1418. On its arrival it was expected to be the wonderful Ki-lin, the mysterious Unicorn of Chinese lore and harbinger of Golden Ages to come. In one of those amazing examples of record-keeping in the Middle Empire, it was soon realized that this marvel of a creature matched the description of an exotic beast duly reported almost two hundred years earlier, in 1225, by a customs official at the seaport of Quanzhou. Although it seems that this official had his information only second-hand, probably from some far-traveled sea captain, the description is quite remarkably accurate in painting a word-picture of a giraffe, as an animal called zula (probably a Chinese transliteration of zurafa), 'with a leopard's hide, a cow's hoofs, a ten-foot-tall body, and a nine-foot neck.'

It has been suggested that the Cat Chapalu might have been a leopard, perhaps a surviving escapee from a former Roman zoo. An escapee giraffe would have had a lesser chance of surviving in Arthur's Britain, even in an enchanted forest. Perhaps the description of the Questing Beast was styled after a tale about the private menagerie of Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), who liked to amaze his Italian and German subjects by taking his exotic pets, such as elephants, camels, lions, leopards and giraffes—presents from the sultan—along on his travels through his realm.

notes
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Among the various theories about the cavalry aspect of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table, ranging from R.G. Collingwood's blunt statement, 'King Arthur's knights are myths' to Robert Graves's vision of 'mounted commandos' led by a 'heroic British cavalry general named Arturius,' one of the most intriguing and original is presented by S.G. Wildman in his book The Black Horsemen: English Inns and King Arthur. 1

S.G. Wildman found that among English inn signs with animal names the most popular are 'The White Hart' and 'The White Horse,' but there are also more than two hundred named 'The Black Horse.' While 'The White Hart' (as the badge of King Richard II) and 'The White Horse' (as the badge of the Hanoverian dynasty) could be heraldic in origin, this does not apply to 'The Black Horse.' On the other hand, 'The Black Horse' is not necessarily simply a counterpart to a local inn named 'The White Horse,' but is found distributed over the map of England in a most peculiar pattern.

Of the various explanations tried, such as whether 'The Black Horse' could have been code-names for safe houses for Catholics during the persecutions of the seventeenth century, or named so by Jacobites in defiance of 'The White Horse,' which was seen as the badge of the Hanoverian kings, none turned out satisfactorily. Finally, by looking at the map of England, Wildman found 'The Black Horse' inns mainly in seven areas that correspond to the 'frontier' of the fights between Britons and Saxons in the sixth century, in short, to the presumed sites of King Arthur's battles (with minor adjustments).

Although he had to admit that he could not find any medieval literature mentioning the color of King Arthur's horse, Wildman came to the conclusion that the cavalry horses of the dux bellorum Arthur were of a breed black in color. Therefore,
the area controlled by Arthur's cavalry would have been Black Horse country, to be feared and avoided by the Saxons whose totem animal was the White Horse. These cavalry horses were thought by Wildman to have been of Frisian stock, which is black, and with a possible admixture of Fell ponies, also black. This theory must have inspired Anne McCaffrey's book *Black Horses for the King*. However, Anne McCaffrey's black horses were imported Libyan stock, acquired from an Egyptian trader at the horse fair of Narbo Martius in Septimania, in the South of Gaul.2

Earlier, the horse fair of Narbo Martius was the supply source for Arthur's cavalry mounts in Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset*. The prize stud stallion that Arthur acquired at Narbo Martius was the Black One, but in spite of that, Rosemary Sutcliff's Arthur 'always rode a white horse in battle'—first Arain, then Signus, and Grey Falcon—not because he found them better than horses of any other color, but because 'a white horse marks out the leader clearly for his men to follow.' Consequently, the cover illustration of the Crest Book paperback edition (1964) shows Arthur on his white steed holding aloft his sword like a cross.3

In *Erec and Enide* by Chrétien de Troyes (ca. 1170) King Arthur's horse is named Aubagu, which seems to mean 'White Points,' suggesting a dark overall color.4 The Alliterative *Morte Arthur* (ca. 1360) mentions Arthur's 'broun' or 'baye' steed.5 For the hunt of the boar Trwch Trwyth, in the *Mabinogion*'s *Culhwch and Olwen*, King Arthur was to obtain Dun-mane, the steed of Gweddw, but he also owned a mare, Llamrē (Fastpace). Llamrē's color is not mentioned. Gwyn, son of Nudd, for the same hunt had to borrow the horse of Moro Oerfeddawg, named Du (Black). Nevertheless, there are white horses in King Arthur's cavalry, too. In the third of the three romances in the *Mabinogion*, Gereint, son of Erbin, Gereint rides bare-legged a 'willow-grey' steed, and in the *Tale of Geraint*, the hero fights in the Battle at Llongborth along with Arthur or Arthur's men: 'Before Geraint, the enemy's scourge, I saw white horses, tensed, red... ’ and 'Swiftly there ran under Geraint's thigh long-shanked [horses fed on] grass of wheat, roans (with the) onrush of speckled eagles.' The perhaps best-known of Arthurian horses is Gawain's white Gringolet 'of the red ears,' an epithet that sounds very much like the prized 'medicine hat' of the Plains Indians.

The White Horse as the badge of the Hanoerian kings goes back to the tribal totem of pre-Christian Saxony. If the Saxon warleaders of the Adventus, with their tell-tale names, Hengist (Stallion) and Horsa, bore any device on their shields, it presumably would have been a white horse, as it is still the charge in the arms of Kent, their first foothold in Britain. A white horse was the favored sacrifice to Woden (see appendix). The sacrificed horse was then ritually eaten, a practice that Charlemagne had made punishable by death as a relapse to heathen cults after he finally succeeded in his thirty-year-long struggle to convert to Christianity the pagan Saxons. This is one reason, why even today horsemeat is not eaten in Germany. On the other hand, since no sacred meal of horseflesh was known in pre-Christian France, no ban was needed, and French charcutiers happily specialize in selling horsemeat as a delicacy.

In the *Dream of Rhonabwy* appear several troops of warriors on color-coordinated horses: those of the troop of Rhawn Bebyr are red as blood, those of Addaon, son
of Teliesin, from the front saddlebow white as the water lily, but downwards black as jet, those of the men of Llychlyn pale white with the forelegs black, and those of the men of Denmark with Edern son of Nudd black with forelegs pure white. Color-coordination within military units is of course highly desirable and a mark of sophistication. The Kings of France had two elite guards, ‘les Mousquetaires gris’ and ‘les noirs,’ called after the color of their horses (Dumas’s d’Artagnan became captain of les noirs). The steppe nomads of the dawn of history were often divided into color moieties, such as the black Coumans and the white, the white Kalpaks and the Kara (black) Kalpaks. In 201 BC the Han emperor, Kao, in person led a campaign against the Hung-no, presumed ancestors of the Huns of history. Far Eastern cosmology assigns colors to the five directions of the world: red for South, black for North, white for West, blue for East, and yellow for the center. The army of the Hung-no was arranged accordingly, those warriors on red (brown) horses formed the vanguard, those on blacks the rear, those on whites were the right wing, and those on greys (the closest to blue) the left. The wily Hung-no leader, Mo-tun, succeeded in trapping and surrounding the Chinese army according to this cosmic color code, and, as the finishing touch, had in the center of the trap the hapless Chinese emperor, whose sacred color was the Imperial yellow.

By the second century AD various steppe nomad tribes, Sarmatians and Alani, had drifted far enough westward to become a serious threat to Roman provinces along the Danube. In order to render this threat more or less harmless, Emperor Marcus Aurelius, in 175 AD, took 8000 Sarmatian tribesmen from Pannonia, today’s Hungary, into the Roman army as auxiliaries. Sarmatian warriors were heavy cavalry, in fact, they were the prototype of the fully armored cataphracts of the Late Roman and Byzantine armies. Of the 8000 Sarmatians, 5500 were sent to North Britain to fight Picts as cavalry attachments to the Legio VI Victrix, whose praefectus was a certain Lucius Antonius Castus. At Newstead, the former Roman fort Trimontium, pieces of Sarmatian horse armor were discovered together with nine horse skeletons. In the thirteenth chapter of her Sword at Sunset, Rosemary Sutcliff makes use of this extraordinary find. These horse skeletons have been identified as similar to still existing Turkmenian breeds, such as the Kabardin.

It seems that Western steppe nomads, too, practiced color coordination of their horses. For instance, in Dacia, today’s Bulgaria, the Roxolani (White Alani), cousins of the Sarmatians, were famous for their ‘hoarfrost colored’ steeds. We do not know the color of the horses of Trimontium, but the Kabardin breed is black.

Appendix

Woden was also the leader of the Wild Hunt that haunts the skies in the Twelve Nights after Christmas. These ghost riders, the souls of dead heroes fallen in battle, are following Woden on his eight-legged grey horse (the storm cloud). In the intricate use of kennings, metaphors, and code words in Germanic poetry, ‘riding on the...
eight-legged horse' was a kenning for the dead hero on his bier carried by four men. Another leader of the Wild Hunt is Dietrich von Bern, who as Theodor, King of the Ostrogoths (r. 471-526), not only was a historical contemporary of king Arthur, but is his equivalent in German and Scandinavian mythology. Dietrich’s steed, Schwarzer Falke, is black; it was a present from the legendary horse breeder, Studa, in the Black Forest, the eponymous hero of Stuttgart (the civic arms of Stuttgart, well known as the logo of Porsche, a black horse in gold). About fifteen miles east of Dresden (my home town), there is a large forest district, called Masseney, which when I was a boy was (and probably still is) a favorite hunting ground of ‘Bandittrich,’ i.e. Dietrich von Bern, and his Wild Hunt. In the middle of this forest is a country inn, ‘Zum Schwarzen Ross’ (In the Sign of the Black Horse).

Notes
2. Anne Macaffrey, Black Horses for the King (San Diego: H. a. c. o. r. a. t. e. d. e. c. a. n. t. e. m., 1996).
8. James Curle, A Roman Frontier Post and its People: The Fort of Newstead (Glasgow, 1911) pp. 153ff, pl. XXXI.

‘god bless the child that has his own’: the history of the las vine a r e r t u s t
by w.r.j. barron and g.n. bromiley

It was the worst of times, it was the best of times. The early 1980s in British education promised an uneasy future, cloudy in immediate prospect, gloomy on the far horizon. There were dark figures in the foreground with confident plans for our academic future. There was Sir Keith Joseph who worried that Business was not being serviced as it should. And he had—briefly—the ear of Mrs T., a
Science graduate whose contribution to the real world, before she discovered Law and Politics, had been an improved Jello. But she quickly learnt how the smack of firm government could bring academic drones and dreamers to heel. Sixteen percent cuts in her first year fell upon universities with nuclear accelerators and community theatres to support; Big Science it seemed was no longer the name of the game and the Arts must learn to hang by their own tail. As for medievalists, hard-pressed Vice Chancellors and panicking Deans decreed that they should be re-trained to teach something relevant. Relevance, recruitment, marketability, and profitability were the watchwords of the day.

Fortunately the market, as so often, proved sales-resistant. Students urgently offered relevance stubbornly preferred romance; romance resisted the latest literary critical fad in favour of age-old human values exotically projected as dream and desire; Arthur, as always, proved saleable in a variety of languages. Younger colleagues—some not so very young—conscious of the need to package him cheaply and attractively, had taken early to the new technology, circumventing the surge in printing costs by pouring out camera-ready copy; heavily-glossed editions took the sweat out of compulsory translation, en face translations allowed comparative study of an essentially cross-cultural subject, interpretative monographs multiplied. Too heavily occupied for re-training, medievalists devised interdisciplinary M.A.s, set up web-sites, crowded to conferences, cooperated as never before. The field was being widely and deeply cultivated; but in the harsh climate of the age a little seed-corn would have been welcome.

And pat upon its cue it came. A Swiss ceramics firm sought advice from the International Arthurian Society on production of a set of ceramic plates featuring Arthur. The IAS Directorate in Paris—what, one sometimes wonders, what exactly does it Direct—shrank from the clammy hand of commerce. But Eugène Vinaver and Cedric Pickford, both pragmatic men and not above an honest day’s work in the salt mines, cooperated briefly on Arthurian episodes, key scenes, significant symbols. And earned a five percent royalty for the IAS (BB).

The plates appeared, multi-coloured, super glazed, highly expensive. And sold; the size of the royalties check surprised everyone—not least the Swiss ceramics firm. The British Branch of IAS, a democratic body loosely organised, had no experience in handling such a nest-egg. And misfortune shortly deprived us of those who had earned it, through Pickford’s untimely death and Vinaver’s retirement to pursue his scholarly career in a wider world. An ad hoc committee embarked rather light-heartedly on a major project, worthy but expensive since it involved financial support of the young scholar undertaking the work as well as a long-term commitment to publish the results in several volumes. The Vinaver Trustees met rarely, kept no records, published no accounts, and reported to colleagues in somewhat vague if up-beat terms. Some years passed before it emerged that management of the project was slipping out of the Trust’s control, that its Reserve Fund had already been broached and its first venture threatened to be its last.

Fortunately there seems to be a divinity which watches over unwary, unworlly academics. Sir Keith, having eventually discovered the root problem of English education—that the wrong people were having children; about which, it seemed,
nothing much could be done— withdrew into private life. And Mrs T, bless her, handled the economy with superb confidence, modelled on a former Governor of California, which brought the Trust sixteen percent interest even on its somewhat timid investments, protected from the rapacious Inland Revenue by its charitable status. And Branch members began to exercise paternal oversight, requiring annual election of Trust officers and the circulation of its accounts. The Vinaver Trust survived and flourished.

Of course there were problems and pitfalls. The problem of finding projects of quality; of not doing too many festschriften — though honour where honour was due; of balancing the need to supply CRC against an attractive royalty from the publisher. Among the major projects were a multi-volume edition and study of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia, backed up by an en face edition/translation of Wace’s Roman de Brut and of Layamon’s Brut, partial and complete. OUP was prompted to produce a revised edition of Vinaver’s Morte D’Arthur. Such bulky projects are inevitably time-consuming; a multi-volume replacement of Loomis’s Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages has reached volume four, five is due next year and, all being well, there are three more to come. The complete edition of the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, of necessity, advances more slowly but is steadily on course.

An invitation to colleagues world-wide to apply for V.T. assistance in publication appears in every issue of BBIAS, together with some guidance on approaches to publishers, forms of grants, etc. So far as the trustees are concerned, the basic consideration is the academic worth of the proposed project. But colleagues will appreciate the need for the Trust to remain viable and solvent. Publication costs continue to rise, interest rates are at an all-time low, pressures on younger colleagues in particular to publish copiously grow continually. So making the maximum use of technology in preparing and submitting publications, proposing a grant which will reduce the sale price of the volume, securing a royalty which may repay the grant in whole or part would, in the long run, be enlightened self-interest. The V.T. is seed-corn not a sinking fund.

And there are clouds on the horizon again. The U.K.’s newest Minister of Education is another Benthamite pragmatist who has just discovered, to his fury, that Medieval History is being taught— says he can’t see why, or, if people will do it, why on earth they should be paid. He’s an economist, of course. But it seems to have slipped his mind that we don’t teach students any more; we teach customers now — and the customer is never wrong. Right? What, we wonder, will happen when he finds out that some of us offer Romance— Medieval Romance! So, cherishing its resources against the wrath to come, V.T. meetings open and close with a ritual murmur of ‘God bless the child that has his own’.

vinaver trust publications


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- Julia Crick thanks the Fund in two volumes for help in the purchase of microfilms.
- Neil Wright's research on Geoffrey of Monmouth was also supported by the Fund.

Projects promoted by the Trust without financial involvement:


Forthcoming publications:

News from the North American Branch

NAB Officers 2003–2006 (for full addresses see Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society [bbias])

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Back Issues of bbias and Arthuriana: For back issues of bbias through v. 51/1999, contact Joan Grimbert, Dept. of Modern Languages, Catholic U, Washington, DC 20064 (grimbert@cua.edu); for v. 52–53/2000–2001, contact Logan Whalen, U of Oklahoma 73019–0250 (lwhalen@ou.edu). Back issues still available are v. 25–29 (1973–77) and 31–34 (1979–82), all for $10 each; v. 36–41 (1984–89), 43 (1991), and 45–51 (1993–99) are $18 each; v. 51–52 (2000–2001) are $20 each. All other volumes are out of print. For back issues of Arthuriana, contact Arthuriana, Box 750432, SMU, Dallas, TX 75275–0432 (bwheeler@smu.edu).

Your bbias Abstracts Members are reminded that, for inclusion in the society's annual bibliography, they should send bibliographic entries and abstracts for articles or books published in 2003 or in 2004 to Dan Nastali (nastali@aol.com).

World Wide Web Sites and List: Members of the NAB of the IAS are reminded of three important electronic sites: the International Medieval Congress: <http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/congress>; Arthuriana, the official journal of the NAB: http://www.arthurianna.org; and Arthurnet, an electronic discussion group for scholars and students of Arthurian subjects from the early Middle Ages to the modern moment. Scholars in all fields of inquiry from literature and history to mythology and philosophy—and in the several languages pertinent to the Arthurian story—
are invited to participate in this open list. There is a moderated line in the list to allow more structured conversation for those who wish to engage in it. Details of the moderated list are broadcast online. Any scholar willing to act as a discussion moderator is asked to contact Assist. Editor Judy Shoaf (jshoaf@clas.ufl.edu) with potential topics and timetables. Each moderator will be asked to prepare a summary article about the topic line (crediting appropriate participants) for publication in the Round Table section of Arthuriana. To subscribe, send the command 'sub arthurnet [your name]' to listserv@morgan.ucs.mun.ca as an e-mail message.

The Arthurian Network: New or changed e-mail addresses appear on the Arthuriana Homepage.

Kalamazoo IAS Business Meeting: Friday, 7 May, 12 noon, Fetzer 1005
North American Branch Business Meeting with Box Lunches. Price to be announced.

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Minutes of the meeting of May 2003 (see Arthuriana 13:3, 108-109)
3. President’s report
4. Secretary-Treasurer’s report
5. Bibliographer’s report
6. Report from the Editor of Arthuriana.
7. Sessions for the 40th International Congress on Medieval Studies, 2005
8. 21st International Arthurian Society Conference, Utrecht, 2005
9. New business

Reception: sponsored by IAS/NAB, Friday, 7 May, 5:15 p.m., Bernhard 215.
Various drinkables and hors-d’oeuvres.


Kalamazoo 2004: Sessions Sponsored by the North American Branch of the International Arthurian Society, Thursday, 6 May to Sunday, 10 May, 2004:

Evening Session (Thursday, 6 May 8 p.m.) Fetzer 1005
Medieval Film Fest: A Connecticut Yankee
Sponsor: Medieval Institute and the IAS/NAB
Organizer: Elizabeth S. Sklar, Wayne State Univ.
Presider: Michael E. Torregrossa, Univ. of Connecticut

Session 208 (Friday, 7 May, 10-11:30): Fetzer 1005
King Arthur in the New World
Sponsor: International Arthurian Society, North American Branch
Presider: Elizabeth S. Sklar, Wayne State Univ.
1. Mark Twain at the Movies: The Adventures of a Yankee
   Alan T. Gaylord, Dartmouth College
2. Inner-City Chivalry: A South-Central Yankee in King Arthur’s Court
   Martin B. Shichtman, Eastern Michigan and Laurie Finke, Kenyon College
   Kevin J. Harty, LaSalle Univ.
4. *First Knight*: An American Gigolo in King Arthur's Court; or 007 1/2
   Donald L. Hoffman, Northeastern Illinois Univ.

Session 418 (Saturday, 8 May, 10-11:30): Sangren 2502
Textual Puzzles
Sponsor: International Arthurian Society, North American Branch
Organizer: Karen Cherewatuk, St. Olaf College, and Kevin Whetter, Acadia
Presider: Kevin Whetter
1. Malory's *Morte Darthur* and "Mortays" 
   D. Thomas Hanks, Jr., Baylor Univ.
2. Malory's Forty Knights
   P. J. C. Field, Univ. of Wales, Bangor
3. Malory's *Dinadan* and the Tournament of Surluse as Textual Conundrum
   C. J. Batt, Univ. of Leeds

Session 436 (Saturday, 8 May, 1:30-3): Valley III, 313
Arthurian Things
Sponsor: International Arthurian Society, North American Branch
Organizer: Donald L. Hoffman, Northeastern Illinois Univ.
Presider: Donald L. Hoffman
1. Before Romance: Combs, Shears, and Other Objects of Warrior Kingship
   Kristen L. Over, Northeastern Illinois Univ.
2. How Did the Taliban Get the Grail?
   Janina P. Traxler, Manchester College
3. Bed, Boat, and Beyond: Crafted Objects and *La Queste del Saint Graal*
   Lisa H. Cooper, Stanford Univ.

Session 496 (Saturday, 8 May, 3:30-5): Valley III, 313
Arthurian Literature and the Islamic World
Sponsor: International Arthurian Society, North American Branch
Organizer: Peter H. Goodrich, Northeastern Michigan Univ.
Presider: Zacharias Thundy, Univ. of Notre Dame
1. Postcolonial Palomides: Malory's Saracen Knight
   Dorsey Armstrong, Purdue Univ.
2. A Classical Conception: Relation of Language and Thought in Avicenna
   Mostafa Younesie, Tarbiat Modarres Univ.
Respondent: Peter H. Goodrich

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Many thanks to NAB Secretary Logan E. Whalen, who furnished much of this material.

Submitted by:  
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