VOLKER MERTENS and FRIEDRICH WOLFZETTEL, eds., *Fiktionalität im Artusroman: Dritte Tagung der Deutschen Sektion der Internationalen Artusgesellschaft in Berlin vom 13.- 15. Februar 1992.* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993. Pp. xi, 259. ISBN: 3-484-10691-3. $98.

Among North American Arthurians there has recently been a noticeable focussing on new historicist and cultural approaches to medieval and postmedieval Arthurian texts. The contributors to the Festschrift for Valerie Lagorio, *e.g.*, describe the social implications of the Arthurian legend and regard it 'as a set of unstable signs appropriated by differing cultural groups to advance differing ideological agendas' (*Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legends*, ed. M.B. Shichtman and J.P. Carley, New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1994, p. 4). The proceedings from the 1992 Berlin congress of the German Branch of the International Arthurian Society try to re-uncover a much less 'engaged' aspect of Arthurian literature. The 14 essays in this collection investigate the possiblity of the autonomous and conscious discussions of fictionality which Arthurian authors negotiate in their texts.

A majority of contributors is interested in the status of the fictional as it appears in the classical and post-classical Arthurian novel: Peter Kern's essay demonstrates the diversity of aesthetic modes used in texts by Hartmann von Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Ulrich von dem Türlin, and Ulrich Füetrer to draw attention to certain fictional aspects. Their narrators' self-fashioning as mere mediators as well as their ironic constructions of a world of Arthurian story beyond the individual novel indicate a rather conscious and playful approach to fictionality. Matthias Meyer finds an even stronger element of metaliterary concerns in the thirteenth-century Arthurian novels of the Stricker, Konrad von Stoffeln, and Heinrich von dem Türlin. Meyer shows how the latter author stylizes himself/his narrator as a 'werltgot' (= creator of his fictional world) and thus invents the readability of his fictional world as a criterion of his own dignity and value as a writer. Ingrid Strasser detects a tendency toward an autonomous aesthetic stance in Hartmann's *Erec*. She reads this text as the German poet's corrective response to the new phenomenon of free poetic invention in Chrétien. Similarly, Ricarda Bauschke argues that Renauts de Beaujeu's *Bel Inconnu* is a radical reaction to Chrétien. Renaut's novel technique of citation and recombination of familiar elements leads to an ironization of fiction, one which coincides with the first-time use of *romaunt* as the term describing the genre. Moreover, the confrontation of the two female characters, fairy and lady, contrasts fictional dream and feudal reality, thus defictionalizing the genre. Wolfgang Spiewok discusses just another German example of creative German Chrétien reception: he explains the extreme representations of *Minne*-casuistry in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet* as the result of conscious 'hyperfictionalization.' Gertrud Grünkorn suggests, not entirely convincingly, that the tendencies toward autonomy in the courtly and Arthurian novel are prepared by an increasingly positive view of the author as mediator in early scholastic theories of fiction. Gerhard Wild's essay, the most comprehensive and theory-oriented contribution, centers on the status of fictionality in (post)Arthurian

'Schwellentexte', the prologues and epilogues in which a pretended real author introduces his own creation. In Wild's view, it is the function of such texts to create fictionality by distinguishing between a framing discourse and the actual story: Chrétien's authentication of his narrator figure establishes a 'contract of fictionality' with his readers; the prose novels fade out the narrator and rather refer to written authority; the sixteenth-century Spanish novels of chivalry, because of the transition from manuscript to printed book, lead to a quantitative expansion of 'Schwellentexte,' as title page, royal printing licence, printer's/censor's/editor's/redactor's/translator's prefaces are added to the picture; more than in any other text, the necessity of creating fictionality in the ambivalent change from the construction to the deconstruction of textual illusion is palpable in *Don Quijote*. Finally, Fritz Peter Knapp investigates the fairy-tale qualities in several Arthurian novels (*e.g.* Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Crone*, Pleier's *Garel*) and postulates that, while constructions of fictionality still dominate the German post-classical Arthurian texts, some coeval French novels (*Claris et Laris*) begin to challenge the unhistorical character of the material.

  Knapp's contribution offers a transition to another important theme in this essay collection: the problematic relationship between fiction (fictionality) and history (historicity). Joerg O. Fichte establishes the status of historiography in medieval education and centers on the rhetorical understanding of *historia* in the twelfth century. According to this tradition, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (criticized already by William of Newburgh as abounding with *fabulis et mendaciis*), shares an astonishing number of formal (rhetorical) structures with the 'real' historiographers William of Malmesbury (*Gesta Regum Anglorum*) and Henry of Huntington (*Historia Anglorum*). Nevertheless, Geoffrey's text remains a work of fiction which appears so realistic because it makes perfect use of the rhetoric of historiography. At the same time, it is the inclusion of fictional material, the standard elements of Arthurian legend (*e.g.*, descriptions of characters, single combats, and public speeches), which render his historical account more imaginable. In a parallel investigation, Michel Stanesco investigates the first vernacular medieval biography, *L'Histoire de Guillaume de Maréchal*. In this text, the fictional is presented as a necessary part of history which could not be told otherwise. Stanesco concludes that in the transitional period from the twelfth to the thirteenth century fictional texts (esp. the Arthurian novels) take on the task of opposing the coeval ontological crisis and 'demystification of the world' (Walter Haug). Hans-Jochen Schiewer describes Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois* as a radical patchwork of different fictional worlds, historical and moral–eschatological narratives. This combination enables the protagonist to appear exemplary with regard to all narrative worlds and reinforces the universal validity of the novel's Christian message. Finally, Cora Dietl postulates that Johann von Würzburg intentionally and ostentatiously breaks the boundaries of his historical sources to fictionalize his novel, *Wilhelm von Österreich*.

  Two essays, the contributions by Elisabeth Schmidt and Ulrich Wyss, cannot be subsumed under either of the volume's prevalent themes. Schmidt cogently discusses the conspicuous identification of grail message and writing in the *Estoire del Saint Graal*. She delineates how the author's veritable obsession with written texts, visible

in his symbolic confrontation of Reading/Writing with Eating/Speaking, implies the conscious victory over an orality which had still been important to Chrétien. Schmidt also holds that through this new form of fictionality, one guaranteed by written sources, the *Estoire* suggests the 'reversibility' of both Revelation and Arthurian novel.

Wyss develops a provocative theory of the historical psychodynamics of the fictional from an 'infantile' form of the imaginary in the epic and the *chanson de geste* toward more 'adult' and complex forms in the novel. Where the earlier genres orchestrate a superelevated mythical past, the novel, in its new genre-specific addiction to reality, fashions a postnaive fictionality, a gentle and delightful pedagogy of experiencing fictional effects to cope with reality.

Although the interdisciplinarity postulated in Friedrich Wolfzettel's introduction (p. viii) is somewhat limited to intratextual observations and to literary and/or historical perspectives from four national philologies (France, Germany, Spain, England), this volume contains a fine selection of original readings of Arthurian texts. It also reasserts the dominant influence of Walter Haug's theses in *Literaturtheorie des deutschen Mittelalters* (Darmstadt, 1985) and in 'Wandlungen des Fiktionalitätsbewußtseins vom hohen zum späten Mittelalter' (in J.F. Poag and T.C. Cox, eds., *Entzauberung der Welt: Deutsche Literatur 1200-1500* [Tübingen, 1988], pp.1–-18) on current medieval studies in Germany. More importantly, this collection of individual case studies clearly establishes the desideratum of a comprehensive investigation into the various functions of fiction and fictionality in the Arthurian novels.

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