

What makes a writer write? Monique Niederost's article makes the intriguing suggestion that chastity is necessary to intellectual creativity. CdP would not have written anything if she had not become a widow, and to remain intellectually fertile, she stayed chaste for the rest of her life. Roman Reisinger uses discourse analysis to identify the rhetoric of urban women's conversations in an article that is hard to follow at times.

In such a large collection it is perhaps inevitable that some of the articles are not very original or deal with tiny textual motifs or even twist CdP's words to fit the theses of their authors. In fact, this would have been a better volume if the editors had selected the twenty or so best papers. This would also have eased the daunting task of editing so many selections in four languages. Many Anglophone writers made the commendable effort to write in French, but the results are not always very good. Julia Simms Holderness's tenuous thesis presented in tortuous French is made all the more difficult to read by numerous semantic and grammatical errors. Margolis's article cannot be immediately understood if one does not notice that the numerical divisions of her essay are faulty. Zimmermann's article contains German and Spanish passages that are, for no discernable reason, sometimes translated into French, sometimes not. Forhan's translations of CdP are frequently erroneous. For all its faults, there is much to learn and enjoy in this book. It is a valuable addition to the ever-growing output of CdP studies.

—*Josette A. Wisman, American University*

**Lupack, Alan and Lupack, Barbara Tapa. *King Arthur in America*.
Cambridge and Rochester, New York: D.S. Brewer, 1999. Pp. Xi-382.**

The purpose of this volume is to account for the "paradox" of the "tremendous appeal of the Arthurian legends in America" (xi) where egalitarian ideals would seemingly conflict with the medieval social structure of Arthur's court. Lupack and Lupack elegantly support their argument that American Arthuriana accomplishes a "democratization" (xiii) of the European legends, drawing on those threads of the stories that address American concerns of the last three centuries. In the process, the authors examine minor works of canonical writers from Twain to Steinbeck from a perspective that invigorates analysis of texts that have often been disparaged or dismissed by critics. Perhaps more significantly, they provide the serious critical commentary on mostly forgotten writers, many of them women, for which their earlier anthologies, *Modern Arthurian Literature*¹ and *Arthurian Literature by Women*², illustrated the need.

In the first chapter, "Arthurian Literature before Twain," the authors show how nineteenth-century American writers draw on the works of Malory and Tennyson, but create a distinctly American voice in their reinterpretation of chivalric ideals. Lupack and Lupack argue that Hawthorne's "The Antique Ring," for example, "presents a tale that is deliberately flawed in order to comment on the nature of the tale itself" (2) as too dependant on an English

poetic past. Other authors downplay the role of Arthur in favor of that of Merlin and utilize the legend of the Holy Grail as a “metaphor for the American Dream” (3). The strongest part of this chapter is the analysis of the work of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps whose Arthurian works reflect her involvement in the social and religious debates of her era. Lupack and Lupack argue that Phelps presents female fulfillment as a kind of Holy Grail, unattainable for women in this world, a stimulating idea that deserves further exploration.

The second and third chapters address the influence of Tennyson on American authors. In “Reaction to Tennyson: Parody,” Lupack and Lupack tackle Mark Twain’s misanthropic view of humanity, particularly those idealists, whether capitalist democrats or chivalric knights, who attempt to change the world in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*. The chapter does not reveal anything particularly new about Twain’s novel, but it does provide a solid introduction to two American authors who preceded Twain in parodying Tennyson: Edgar Fawcett and Oscar Fay Adams. Chapter Three, however, “Reaction to Tennyson: Visions of Courageous Achievement,” is both more original and more interesting. It begins by noting the way that authors such as Louis Albert Banks and William Byron Forbush adapt the ideals of knighthood to the modern world by delineating virtues that anyone can emulate, regardless of his (or her) origin. These authors inspired the creation of societies for young boys—and later for young girls—that attempted to mold the character of America’s youth by creating “round tables” that inspired the emulation of chivalric virtue, thoroughly transforming knighthood into a moral state. The argument that these societies encouraged interest in Arthurian legends and inspired a new generation of writers is persuasive. Moreover, the account of the growth of these clubs stimulates a question beyond the scope of the Lupacks’ study: how exactly are these circles of knights, complete with draped costumes, related to the origins of the KKK and similar groups? Were they, too, partially inspired by Tennyson?

Chapter Four, “From Twain to the Twenties,” returns to a series of authors who adapted Arthurian Literature under the influence of Joseph Bédier and Jessie Weston, or who were themselves scholars of medieval literature. T. S. Eliot and Edwin Arlington Robinson are the dominant figures here, but readers may be especially interested in the chapter’s analysis of the works of John Erskine whose realism, according to Lupack and Lupack, is less dark, though no less complicated, than that of his more famous contemporaries. Chapters Five and Six concentrate on Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner and Steinbeck. The strongest sections of these chapters are on the authors’ minor works, though Lupack and Lupack succeed in placing the careers of these four authors firmly in the context of a longing for and disenchantment with the ideals of Arthurian legend, as well as the painful creation and recreation of the Wasteland as an emblem of the modern world. It becomes clear to the reader that any lingering belief that Arthuriana is the realm of childish (or feminine) fantasy can only be maintained by ignoring its persistence in the works of these most canonical of American writers.

Chapter Seven, "Contemporary Novelists," turns to a series of male authors, from Bernard Malamud to John Updike, who continue to adapt Arthurian motifs, producing a greater variety of approaches than perhaps any other literary period. Unfortunately, the division between this chapter and the final one, "Arthurian Tradition and Popular Culture," reinforces the contemporary canon, especially as it denies authors such as C. J. Cherryh or Andre Norton equal status, seemingly only because their works are labeled "fantasy" or "science fiction." This produces an odd disjunction: Lupack and Lupack provide a surprisingly sympathetic reading of Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon*, for example, but juxtapose all Arthurian fantasy and science fiction with board games, computer role-playing games, and film both serious and silly. The result is that none of these sources really achieves the sustained critical attention it deserves.

Nevertheless, *King Arthur in America* is a significant achievement and succeeds admirably in tracing the evolution and cultural status of Arthurian legend in the United States. It pays more attention to overlooked authors, especially female authors, than is usual and will certainly inspire further scholarly work in this area.

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¹ Alan Lupack, ed. (New York and London: Garland, 1992).

² Alan Lupack and Barbara Lupack, eds. (New York and London: Garland, 1999). For review, see *MFF* 33 (Spring 2002): 51-52.

Ranft, Patricia. *A Woman's Way: The Forgotten History of Women Spiritual Directors*. New York: Palgrave, 2000. Pp. 254.

Ranft's work looks at how Christian women through the centuries have guided others in their spiritual quest. Early on, Ranft explains what she means in calling these women "spiritual directors": "Every time a woman helped, advised, guided, inspired by example, instructed, preached, cajoled, reared, chided, or directed another to reach the...conclusion [that humans were created to find happiness in God], she was in fact offering spiritual direction" (5-6). Certainly there is truth in Ranft's statement, but I question whether it is the most useful definition, since it leaves open the possibility that every Christian woman who has ever discussed faith issues with another person could thus be defined as a spiritual director. In the context of her research, though, Ranft looks more narrowly at women who have offered advice and guidance to other adults for the purpose of helping them along their own spiritual path, which provides her with a coherent group for study.

Ranft situates her understanding of spiritual direction within a framework of logotherapy, a school of psychology that posits the search for meaning as the primary motivational force in humans (3). Applied to religious history, Ranft understands this to mean that spiritual direction has the goal of guiding a person to happiness. She rests her understanding of spiritual direction on the