

LETTERS

Book Review

by Darryl Gossett

The Book of Merlyn
T.H. White 193 pages \$2.25 - paperback

I've always been just a little suspicious of books that are "symbolic" and which have a "meaning." It's been my opinion that the only people who had any use for such things were literary critics, who invented them to put food on the table, and English professors, who had to fill time between spelling tests and term papers. The authors just wrote the books and relegated any future interpretations to the scholarly.

So imagine my surprise when, without so much as a single English teacher looking over my shoulder with red felt marker in hand and without even one smug critic telling me my lack of perception was positively uncouth, I arrived at the startling conclusion that I was reading a book which not only had symbolism and meaning, but, and perhaps more importantly, relevance.

Although *The Book of Merlyn*, written in 1940 by T.H. White, was originally intended to be the concluding part of a five-book volume entitled *The Once and Future King*, it is a gripping and self-contained story in its own right. It tells of the last tragic days of Camelot and how King Arthur searches for

and finds an answer to the eternal question "What is man?"

Arthur accomplishes this miraculous feat with the aid of Merlyn's magical powers which transforms the king in to first a pig and later a goose, and the wisdom of animals: the Badger, the Hedgehog, the Owl, the Snake, the Falcon, the King's falcon and Cavall, the king's loyal hound.

White wrote *The Book of Merlyn* almost forty years ago, but its pertinence to our world is amazing. The perfectly communal but perfectly boring police state of the world brings to mind many areas around the world which are striving for the same kind of existence, and when looking at the actions of geese one can see reflected the actions of countless humans who are trying to fly from a reality that is impossible to escape.

White reassures us of mankind's ability to survive when, in the last few pages, he predicts the eventual triumph of humanity over the inherent faults of its nature. So, in addition to being symbolic, relevant, meaningful and extremely interesting, *The Book of Merlyn* also has a hopeful ending. What more could any teacher ask?

Dear Editor,

I am writing in reference to the possibility of turning Melrose into an athletic dorm. I do not believe that anyone could possibly see this as a good idea. Before I attended Mars Hill, I went a year at Appalachian, where athletes were housed separately from the rest of the students, and it led to much ill feeling on campus. As a matter of fact, one of the favorite pastimes of the wilder element was harassing the athletes, and the athletes returned the attention quite conscientiously.

The only possible reason I can think of for housing all the athletes in one place is that it would make it easier to enforce bed times. But it seems to me to be a show of lack of faith, on the part of the coaches, in their players.

Also, I am afraid that this might be the start of an unhealthy trend. After dorms for athletes, why not dorm for fraternities and sororities? Or even dorms for Biology, English, or Math majors? Dorms for left handed, red headed people with blue eyes? Dorms for commuters? (Uh, maybe not.)

Anyway there's no telling where it could end, and I urge that a lot of serious thought be given to this subject.

Thank you
Ron Johnson

Editor's Note— The athletic dorm proposal has been abandoned. Student protest like yours and countless others carried weight in the decision.

To the Editor,

In the last two publications of the HILLTOP, you wrote articles concerning the prices and policies of the bookstore. As student workers in this establishment, we would like to correct some misrepresentations that appeared in these articles.

First, the prices of new books are set by the publishers, and we have no control over these prices. Therefore, as a service to the students, the bookstore attempts to buy back as many textbooks as possible. Unfortunately, time does pass, and textbooks are *changed* or become obsolete.

Second, the bookstore is subject to other authorities, such as auditors, who require us to see a cash register receipt for returned merchandise. This is also to protect students from people who might need "quick cash" —in the form of someone else's book, which would be returned to the bookstore and a refund be obtained.

Third, and most important, the Shakespeare book you spoke of attempting to return was in fact taken back, and you received your refund on February 8—long before the first editorial of February 23. Therefore, the bookstore could not have "offered" to buy it back after your article was published.

Rilla Williamson
Darryl Norton

Dear Aunt Dorothy

Dear Aunt Dorothy:

My father is a machinist who was laid off by the B-1 bomber cancellation. Military cutbacks cost him his job!

—Out in the Cold in California

Dear Out in the Cold in California:

Your father's employer, Rockwell International, was guaranteed total compensation for all expenses and losses from the B-1 cancellation. The workers got the ax. It was another case of socialism for the rich and "free market" for the workers. More jobs are created by converting to non-military projects. But planning is necessary. Support a bill for conversion planning presently in Congress (the Defense Economic Adjustment Act). Contact me or your congressional representative for more information.

Dear Aunt Dorothy:

Aren't the Russians ahead of us in the arms race?
—Scared in Sarasota

Dear Scared in Sarasota:

No. The US is twice as powerful as the USSR in destructive capabilities. You should be ashamed of yourself for believing that a top-heavy, centralized, inefficient state bureaucracy like the Kremlin could do any better. How un-American! You've been taken for a scare ride by our bureaucrats who are up to their necks in our public trough. But really, S.S., does it make any difference that we can destroy them 12 times and they can only kill us 6 times?

Send your heartfelt questions on politics, the military and international affairs to:
Dear Aunt Dorothy, c/o Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, N.Y. 10960

Campus Paperback Bestsellers

1. *The Women's Room*, by Marilyn French. (Jove/HBJ, \$2.50.) Perspective on women's role in society: fiction.
2. *My Mother/Myself*, by Nancy Friday. (Dell, \$2.50.) The daughter's search for identity.
3. *The Amityville Horror*, by Jay Anson. (Bantam, \$2.50.) True story of terror in a house possessed.
4. *Watership Down*, by Richard Adams. (Avon, \$2.50.) Tale of exile and survival in the rabbit world.
5. *Bloodline*, by Sidney Sheldon. (Warner, \$2.75.) Thriller about heiress who inherits power and intrigue.
6. *Coming into the Country*, by John McPhee. (Bantam, \$2.75.) Voyage of spirit and mind into Alaskan wilderness.
7. *Your Erroneous Zones*, by Wayne W. Dyer. (Avon, \$2.25.) Self-help pep talk.
8. *Midnight Express*, by Billy Hayes with William Hoffer. (Fawcett, Popular, \$2.25.) Young American jailed in Turkey for smuggling.
9. *The Thorn Birds*, by Colleen McCullough. (Avon, \$2.50.) Australian family saga: fiction.
10. *The Hobbit*, by J. R. R. Tolkien. (Ballantine, \$2.50.) The fantasy world of Middle-earth creatures.

This list was compiled by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* from information supplied by college stores throughout the country. March 5, 1979.

FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION Box 271, Nyack, New York 10960

Send me information on:

- The arms race
- Alternatives to paying war taxes
- Fellowship of Reconciliation

Name

Address Zip