

latter half of the nineteenth century, upon Hardy's thought. The author's notebooks are full of musings upon the latest researches as gleaned from these print sources, and Radford makes full use of the diaries in his analysis of the novels. Students of the role of non-specialist scientific discourses and the place of the periodical press in furthering and popularising Victorian research should find much in this line throughout Radford's text.

As is a virtual must in Hardy studies, the question of the author's abandonment of the novel and his turn to poetry is dealt with, at Radford's conclusion, in the sensitive, closely-read manner that the work has led us to expect. Disagreeing with Joyce's statement that Hardy had done nothing to further the form of the novel in the nineteenth century, Radford, as he has shown throughout his analysis, presents the multiple conclusions of *The Well-Beloved*, along with the combination of tone, "pathos, tragedy and the ludicrous," as firm evidence to the contrary (218). Having exploded the middle-class readerships' expectations concerning literary form and plot, Radford suggests that Hardy's move to poetry was inevitable. The author's disdain for easy answers to the questions concerning his contemporary moment's relationship to its own past seems to be extended to a distaste for the easy expectations of bourgeois literary taste.

Combined with an extensive bibliography, this text is a helpful and clear development in studies of Hardy's work. Radford's readings are sensitive to the nuanced play of register and influence in the novels, his citing of scientific sources impeccable, and the perspective taken original and bold. The study should be a welcome addition to the corpus of Hardy criticism, and will afford insight to literary, historical and scientific researchers alike.

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***Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture*, by Inga Bryden. The Nineteenth Century. Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Press, 2005. xi + 173. ISBN 1-84014-619-2. £40.00 (cloth).**

A study seeking to examine the explosion of Victorian interest in Arthurian legend is an audacious enterprise, if only because of the welter of texts and interests that an author must attempt to order. By examining broad cultural concerns and historical moments both literary and social, Bryden has here presented the nineteenth-century reinventions of Arthur as products specific to the enormously varied concerns of Britain from approximately 1830 to 1890, and, in doing so, has produced a text that is convincingly well-ordered upon thematic, rather than chronological, lines. This methodological decision on Bryden's part allows the reader a much more insightful

examination of the subject at hand. If, as the author admits, this necessitates the text's shifts to and fro within the century, it is a result of the impossible task of charting the sheer volume of responses to, and reinventions of, the Arthurian canon in the nineteenth century.

After an initial presentation of the treatment of Arthur in preceding centuries, Bryden discusses the nineteenth-century's "new historicism, or self-conscious pursuit of the past" that led to reawakened interest in the Arthurian legends, but that also produced original conceptions of the mythos by the new breed of historians (21). The relationship of Victorian historiography to Arthur is examined as a concomitant of the nineteenth century's burgeoning interest in national origins and identity. Bryden sees the Arthurian quest as a cultural metaphor that represents this search for British origins but also the desire for knowledge generally. The underlying theme of archaeology and excavations of the past informs the text throughout. Discussing contemporary Victorian historiographical documents alongside Edward Bulwer-Lytton's literary text, *King Arthur* (1848), the incipient scientific area of ethnography is shown to be intrinsic to both historical and fictional renditions of the Arthurian story.

Continuing her discussion of the quest narrative, Bryden then focuses upon the Victorian reconception of the Grail story and of other religiously-themed Arthurian tales, and their relationship to the contemporary doctrinal and theological debates, specifically those generated by the Oxford Movement. The peculiar fact that Arthur's legend was appropriated by multiple factions within the religious controversies of the middle years of the nineteenth century is studiously developed by an examination of varied texts; amongst these, early works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris, along with Henry Alford's *Ballad of Glastonbury* (1835) and Tennyson's *The Holy Grail* (1869).

Following this examination of the appropriation of Arthur toward a variety of religious ends, Bryden discusses the secular, heroic aspect of the quest narrative, as inherent to questions of Victorian social mobility, duty and national service within the ideology of the prevailing class structure: the "military, spiritual and domestic heroism which shaped the nineteenth-century knight" (82). The "democratizing" work of Carlyle in engaging a cultural shift in Victorian ideas about the hero, and the consequent focus of texts in the 1860s and 1870s on the Arthurian quest as a template of individual responsibility for all, not just those of aristocratic birth, is persuasively argued. Christiana Douglas' *Arthur* (1870) and Charlotte Dempster's *Iseulte* (1875) are two of the texts presented as evidence of the growing importance of conceptions of "dynasty and destiny" that had become part of the Victorian cultural fabric (91).

The notion of chivalric love in relation to changing Victorian views of adultery and purity, marriage and the role of women, is discussed in an analysis of, amongst other texts, Owen Meredith's *Queen Guenevere* (1855), Morris' *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), and Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882).

Bryden sees, from the 1850s onwards, and in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites in particular, the introduction of a “psychological” dimension to studies and texts representing the chivalric lover’s code (96). This development of new nineteenth-century psycho-social theories is examined as part of a cultural concern about the “growing assertion of female authority” in particular, and of gender roles in general (116).

The final chapter examines the legend of Arthur’s death and its cultural ramifications for the Victorians. Bryden reads two related effects of renewed interest in Arthur’s passing to Avalon: firstly, the parallel between topographical writing and archaeological practice with the literary quest to textually “resurrect” Arthur; and secondly, the 1850s’ and 1870s’ theological debates concerning life after death. The theme of dissolution and decadence is continued into a discussion of the fears revolving around the condition of the Empire post-1870s, reflected in the Victorians’ interest in the swift demise of Camelot.

Bryden believes that the aesthetic productions of the 1890s caused a shift in conceptions and presentations of Arthur, and, as a consequence, concludes her study at the *fin de siècle*. Whilst this may disappoint those enamoured of Beardsley’s decadent illustrations to Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur*, there are sufficiently large sections of the book covering the aesthetic cultural history of the century’s middle years to satisfy; and the general concerns of late-Victorians about social fragmentation, of shoring up cultural bulwarks against decay and change, are readily evident from Bryden’s analyses. Students of the 1890s will find much of interest here.

This study affords an abundant source of material to the Arthurian scholar, but also to those cultural historians interested in nineteenth-century questions of the growing discursive practices of science, of the changes in attitudes to gender relationships, to conventions of class and notions of national and social identity. The Victorian re-inscription of textual sources, their capacity for “myth-making,” is subtly teased forth from the poetry, novels, scientific documents and archaeological journals that are analysed throughout this volume. The bibliography provides an excellent resource to Victorian scholars along with those specialising in Arthuriana and Bryden’s closely-read studies of this wealth of textual material, and her interdisciplinary and inter-textual approach to the Victorians’ self-composed identification with Arthur, are well-conceived and wide-ranging in their purview. This fine examination does her subject the sensitive and scholarly service it deserves.

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