

Illustrating Camelot by Barbara Tapa Lupack. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008. xii, 265 pp. + 32 full colour plates, 46 b/w illus. ISBN 978-1-8438-4183-8. \$60.00; £25.00.

Once again Barbara Lupack's Arthurian research makes clear that she possesses an impressive command of the lore surrounding the legendary King. Her exhaustive inquiries into all aspects of the illustrated Arthur are continuously revealed throughout this most recent study. Exploring the complex engagement of text and image, Lupack demonstrates how pivotal pictorial conventions were to the dissemination, broadening, and overall shaping of the Arthurian legends, popular and otherwise. Of the latest volumes dealing with the visual manifestation of Arthur and his cultural currency, her study is the only one entirely dedicated to book illustration. Yet this alone is not the reason why *Illustrating Camelot* is of note. Other Arthurian publications such as Muriel Whitaker's *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (1990), Debra Mancoff's *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend Through Victorian Eyes* (1995), and Christine Poulson's *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art 1840-1920* (1999) have also focussed on illustration and argued for its prominent position within the Arthurian canon. Lupack's work is more significant for its chapters devoted to American illustrators and its extended explorations of obscure British figures who, having been only cursorily mentioned before, receive nuanced and much-needed reassessments. It is in these studies that her main contributions lie and prove the most useful to those interested in the visual potency of King Arthur.

Charting the peaks of illustrative work from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth, *Illustrating Camelot* is divided into thirteen chapters, each dedicated to an individual artist (although some are merely centred on). The book may not be encyclopedic, but it is driven by biographical information. This is welcomed for lesser-known figures, but it seems unnecessary for notable ones. After providing brief anecdotes, Lupack moves on to more detailed explorations of each artist's particular engagement with Arthurian texts, the leitmotif of which is that each of these artists presents a particular "revision or rewriting of the text" and inculcates his or her work with "their own values as well as the values of their age." The pliancy and richness of the legends, Lupack suggests, allows for multiple and diverse aesthetic camps and political agendas, from Julia Cameron's images of women, whom she puts forward as a kind of proto-feminist, to Aubrey Beardsley's decadent perversions, to Arthur Rackham's nostalgic, mournful realm of trauma-inspired imagery: each artist mirrors his or her age and bestows a sense of immediacy to the legends through later additions and reinterpretations.