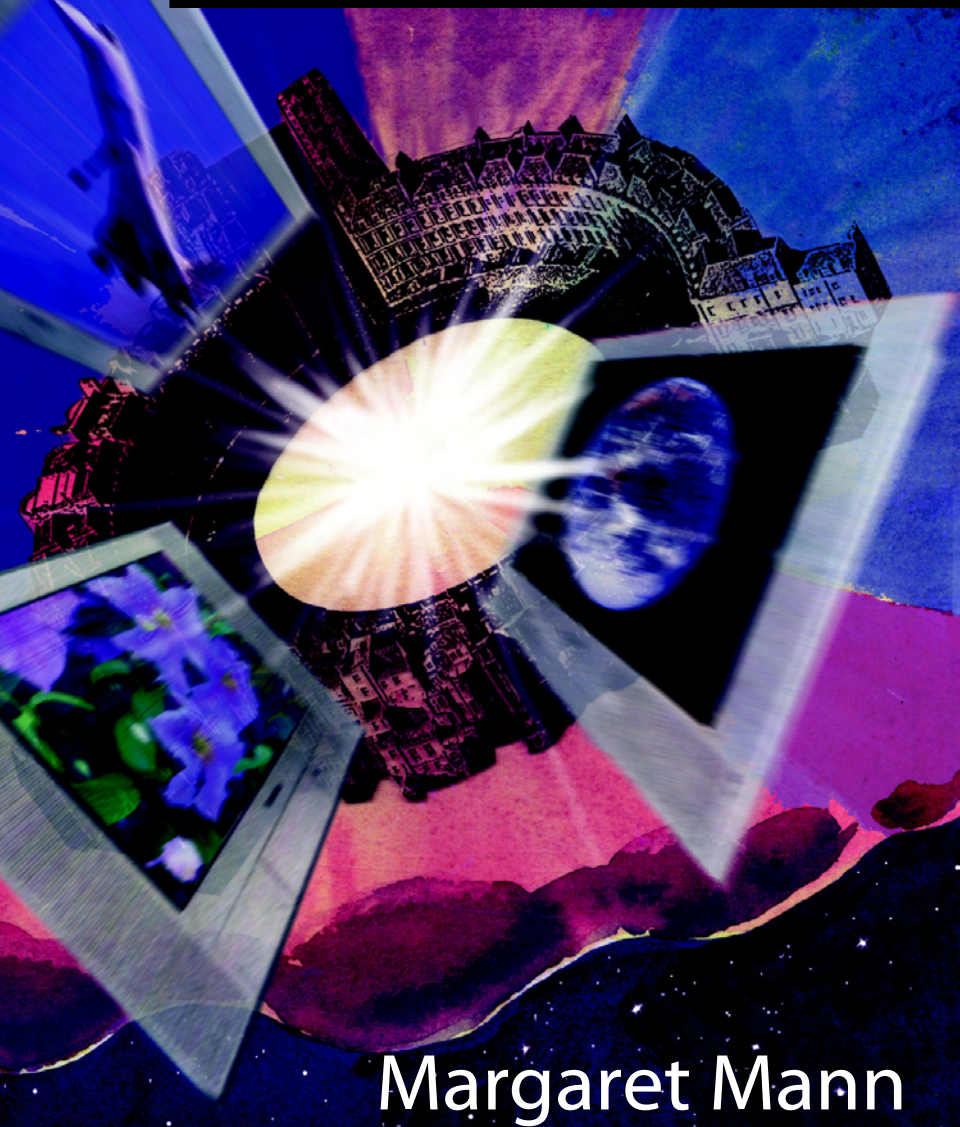


MERLIN IN CYBERLAND



Margaret Mann

MERLIN IN CYBERLAND

The Merlin Series

The Merlin Set-Up
Under the Merlin Spell
Merlin's Island
Merlin in Cyberland

MERLIN IN CYBERLAND

by

Margaret Mann

Published by
Tayar Books

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DEDICATION

To Pierre Teilhard de Chardin on the fiftieth anniversary
year of his death, and to my grandchildren.

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Thanks to Jim Marlow, who did some essential
pruning of my work and gave good advice.

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The Players

A list of the chosen knights of The Round Table, their Ladies and their 20th century ‘Stand-ins’:

King Arthur Sir Oliver Lodge

The Three Grail Knights:

Sir Galahad Teilhard de Chardin

Sir Percivale Charles Williams

Sir Bors Paul Tillich

Sir Lancelot Havelock Ellis

Sir Gareth John Robinson, a Bishop of
Woolwich

Sir Gaheris Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Sir Lionel Julian Huxley

Sir Hector John Dunne, the ‘Time’ man,
and Aircraft Designer

Mordred a cynical and arrogant scientist

Merlin a ‘Time-Lord’ in contact with
William Blake

‘My William’ Merlin’s name for Blake

Elaine, the Grail Princess Diana, Princess of Wales

Blanchefleur, the Grail maiden An expert in ‘Earth’ studies and
Percivale’s true love.

Dindrane, Percivale’s sister Christine, a former nun and
Eleila’s maid

Gwenevere an unhappy queen

ONE

THE CIRCUS ROOM — A FINAL CALL

It was two years since their last visit to Bath, and our four young Cybernauts were enjoying another stay with their Aunt Sophie, when they received a summons from their friendly Blake-style Guru — Merlin the Wizard.

After entering his familiar den again — deep in the basement of one of the elegant old houses that formed the famous Bath roundabout — they found themselves sitting, stiffly expectant, on the four chairs that were always put out for them, waiting for something to happen.

Soon they heard the deep and compelling voice break through to them:

“Greetings, my loyal Merlinauts. I expect it seems a long time to you young ones since you last came here, but to me it only appears as yesterday. But I must not call you youngsters any more, as I feel you are almost grown-up now — even my youngest apprentice, Jonathan! Now, soon you’ll all be off on quite a different sort of trip, involving adven-

tures in Cyberland itself. It will be a unique part of Cyberspace — a temporary habitation between two worlds — shown to you in advance of actual entry, and especially for you, my well-loved questers.”

“In the end, we never experienced the real Holy Grail vision — did we though?” ventured Sam, feeling he should respond in some way.

“No... But this can sometimes take a life-time. Anyway, I’m hoping that this next trip will help you all to choose your future courses of study and your professions. I believe that you, Sam, are entering university to tackle those mysterious Physical Sciences. As my oldest apprentice, I wish you good luck with your studies.”

“When Sam’s friend, Tom, left us and went abroad, he never came back to see us,” said Gillian. “And Lucy, my best friend, was once very keen on him.”

“He did e-mail me quite often,” Sam reminded her. “And Merlin once advised me about a reply, but I’ve not heard from him lately.”

There was a strange silence after this, till the voice resumed, in lowered tones:

“I’m afraid I have to prepare you for some bad news,” said Merlin gravely as his young Cybernauts waited apprehensively. “Our Tom was killed by a recent terrorist bomb in the island of Bali. He was the victim of a world at odds with itself, where pockets of greed and simmering hatreds result in these horrific explosions. I can tell you though, in your sadness, that during your next trip you’ll be able to regain some contact with him — I’ll make sure of that.”

“Oh no! We read about that bomb,” groaned Sam. “Many other young people were killed as well.”

After a shocked period of dismay and exchange between themselves, Gillian, Sam’s sister, asked Merlin if he knew what Tom had been doing on the days before the fatal event.

“He had been campaigning. He was beginning to notice things that he desperately wanted to do something towards changing. There are more and more people I can now observe who, like Tom, are rousing themselves to action against these sorts of things. Far away in foreign countries Tom had been writing pamphlets and articles and had been interviewed by European TV programmes.”

“Why was he doing all that?” enquired Lucy, in growing disbelief.

“He’d seen for himself the increasing influx of Western ‘sex tourists’ who came to join in the exploitation of under-age local girls — boys as well. He was outraged to the point of getting himself onto the internet to confront the crime, and then creating a website to help bring this state of affairs to other people’s attention. Since then he had started on his journey to find his heart’s ease and true self — the Grail quest.”

The four young people sat very still, trying to come to grips with what they had heard and wondering about the possible contact that Merlin had promised them.

Eventually, Jonathan, who had not known Tom, broke the mood by changing the subject and asking where Cyberland was but Merlin declined an answer, saying that they should leave him now and visit again tomorrow after they had taken things in properly. He promised that he would then answer their questions and carry on with the new adventure.



TWO

ACROSS THE DIVIDE

After our Cybernauts had been greeted by Merlin in his room the following day, they were told that they would shortly be taking off into another dimension, but that there was nothing to be frightened of.

“Your normal Earth selves,” he said, “will stay asleep in your chairs, but your super-selves will be in the very newest other-world. Right then, my loyal apprentices, please focus your eyes onto my big screen.”

Merlin’s wall screen had lit up and was showing a picture of the five tall plane trees in the grassy centre of the Circus — just outside the room.

“This is the way you’ll go over to my Cyberspace,” said the Mage. “I’ve sent Spriggy, the tree sprite, out and about again on a mission to help you across — you’ll know him as the bright green light that you saw once before when you entered the roots of that special tree during the course of your first KristOmega File.”

As the youngsters followed their instructions, they found themselves being drawn gently towards the trees and espe-

cially to the largest trunk which stood almost opposite their spellbound basement room. Then they were being slowly propelled up the rough surface of this tall trunk, bypassing smaller branches and feeling no friction or fear. The living bark was richly patterned and intrigued them, but looking up they could see the green light darting about overhead — they could also hear strange murmuring sounds as they went. Gilly was sure that it was Spriggy who was answering these with his own faint singsong hummings and guessed it must be tree-sprite natter between Spriggy and the local sprites. They imagined that the faint and intermittent sucking noises that they could hear, was water being drawn upwards by the tree.

When they reached the mottled green of the awesome canopy which spread over them like a soft roof, stirring in the breeze, the familiar little voice of Spriggy resonated around them:

“When you break through, my playmates,” he said, “and rise above the trees, you should all look down and take note. You will see the old buildings and ribbon-like roads as you’ve never seen them before.”

Soon after this the Cybernauts burst through the leaves and found themselves hovering high above the whole Circus scene. It looked magical and the circle of houses, with the three roads leading away from it, was clear and detailed — they could even see the sculpted acorns on the roofs. As she looked at them, Gilly was reminded of how the acorn-loving pigs had led Bladud to the original spring of healing water which was the beginning of the settlement that eventually became the city of Bath. She warmed to the thought.

Sam and Jonathan were mesmerized as they peered at what looked like little toy cars driving round the circular road and turning onto one of the three side roads. The boys were minded of their “Dinky Car” days.

Lucy, who had been delighting in the many patches, large and small, of green grass in and around the Circus, and the fluffy tops of the trees, suddenly let out a heart-felt admission:

“I feel homesick,” she cried out in deflated tone, and with difficulty.

“Don’t worry, my friend,” came an immediate response from Spriggy. “You are just voicing the feelings of the other three, who are having the same reactions, and it’s all quite natural. This is the end of the first stage of your crossover, but you will soon feel quite at home in the new dimension. Your love for family and friends and for specially favoured things in your native world can never die. You have given them a life that will follow you everywhere. Now, close your eyes, brave Merlinauts. Relax, and count up to seven...”

When they opened their eyes again they thought at first that they were back in Merlin’s Circus room, but they soon became aware of the changes. As well as looking larger it all seemed strangely different. In place of the door through which they used to enter and leave, there was now a large, dimly lit entrance to a passageway. Sam was sure it must be a televised picture, but when he went up to it and felt for what he thought must be a glass screen, his hand touched nothing. He realized at the same time that there was no crystal ball there any more — it had gone like the door. Then, as they all looked around the room, the puzzled youngsters saw that they were surrounded by flickering and seemingly glass walls.

“I read once that a part of the Grail Castle had glass walls,” announced Gilly in an effort to ease the tension. Merlin had specially contrived his room so that they could hear each other speak.

After a short while, however, they noticed that the flickerings were figures moving about on the brightly-lit

walls and, subsequent to much perplexed and serious staring on the part of the four adventurers, they realized that the figures were actually themselves — their cyberselves. They found that these would copy anything they did — and Jonathan performed a little jig to prove it — reminding them of CCTV cameras back home.

“Why is there a faint image of the Holy Grail behind your ‘alter ego’ Gilly?” asked Sam.

“That must be because I was thinking about it,” exclaimed Gilly.

“Yes!” reflected Sam. “It must all be more interactive than we imagined, and even our thoughts can be shown up there.”

The four chairs looked the same as the ones in the ‘real’ room, but when Lucy, who was still a bit stressed, tried to sit down on one of them she found there was really nothing there — but somehow she didn’t fall down and even felt supported in a sitting position while being able to rest and relax. The others just couldn’t help laughing and it did them all a lot of good.

This reception room, Merlin’s dream-like brain-child, was made to acclimatize his students to the truth that “thoughts *are* actual things”.

At the other end of the room, where the small basement window used to be — always with a closed Venetian blind over it — there was now a Round Table. The youngsters became more fully aware of this curious object. The static images of the knights sitting round it in their medieval court robes, seemed very out of date and irrelevant. Jonathan went over and walked right through it, but found something of more interest just behind it. There was, what looked like, a TV picture showing an open book with fluttering pages. While Jonathan was trying hard to read some of the larger headings, Merlin’s voice resounded around them again.

“Give it up now, my Boy, and go back to the others. I will then tell you about the book and the implications of the Camelot Round Table here.”

When Jonathan had meekly obeyed and they had all moved up nearer to the table, Merlin began to explain things in his rich and reverberating tones.

“Since the sixth century, the myth of Arthur has been re-worked many times to suit the needs of the country of the time. In this episode I get to work again to refashion this myth to meet the needs of today’s young people and their world of the Internet and cyberspace.

“You’ve read, I expect, that wizards are supposed to be able to change the shape and appearance of things whenever they think it necessary?”

“You mean,” interrupted Jonathan, “like... changing a person into a creature of some sort, or altering the size of things?”

“Well, not exactly, but something much more important. I’ve been busy shaping up a new Round Table for the Twenty-first Century. And I’m trying to bring everything together again, in Percivale’s Grail Country, still in the form of the old Arthurian stories and in the likenesses of some of the main characters. Percivale and Blanchfleur were married and left Carbonek to rule over Sarras. This time, in their Twentieth Century stand-ins, it will take shape in Cyberspace and will be the new kingdom of Logres, where the Word is made flesh once more. All you’ve learnt from the legendary knights, and from our prophet and seer — the New Galahad — will take on form and substance around you.”

“Will Percivale’s son, Lohengrin, have a seat at this table in his new guise for the Twentieth Century?” asked Gillian helpfully. “And his role in the twenty-first?”

“Certainly he will, in secret at first but soon blossoming to full stature — I already know him.”

While the four were still standing quite close to the Round Table, the wall beside them burst into light and animation. They saw this other Round Table alive with movement and new interest. Changed knights, sitting round it, showed up in various shades of clarity and shadow. New Galahad stood out, the clearest of them all. On his right was the rather ill-defined but still impressive figure of a bearded Twentieth Century Oliver Lodge (Arthur) wearing a rather faded looking crown. To the left of Teilhard (Galahad) were the clear figures of the former Grail knights, Percivale and Bors, and next to them was the new Lancelot. Beside him were the stand-ins for the brothers Gareth and Gaheris, both of whom died in the prime of their lives. All of them were clothed in their usual and familiar garments and all were recognizable from current well known photographs and had connections with their legendary originals — others will be mentioned later but they were gradually decreasing by degree in clarity till the ones with their backs to the viewers were in complete shadow — these are the knights who Merlin prophesies will emerge and shine during the next century. All were talking, eating and drinking.

“I can smell a whiff of the most gorgeous and wonderful fragrance,” exclaimed Lucy. “It seems to be coming across to us from the image — it’s a better scent than any I ever tried out at home.” The others breathed it in.

Merlin confirmed its presence and told them of its origin:

“It is the essential odour of that which was spread abroad by the Grail-Maidens and is reported to have entranced Arthur’s men when the procession passed through the Great Hall at Camelot and first inspired the Quest — when they’d looked at each other and seen a goodness and oneness they’d never seen before. The feeling they experienced even exceeded sexual rapture, but when the procession had gone

and they'd returned to normality, they'd felt an inadequacy in themselves as if a light had been put out. So many of them set out on the Grail search. Arthur stayed behind, but Gwenevere's thoughts had gone with Lancelot."

Behind the scenes of this new Camelot there were still the women who looked after things, picked up the pieces, and largely kept the place in running order. They shared in the lingering glory of the Holy Grail as it passed by on that momentous day, flooding the medieval set-up. Now they work beside the men to keep the many down-to-earth structures (the basic Christian centres) strong and real enough to be transplanted into Cyberland where they will blossom and mature. The women will add their mysterious ingredient of natural insight for the inspiration and encouragement of the 'neo-knights' of the new Round Table.

"Why aren't all the men as clear as Tayar?" asked Jonathan, seeming more intrigued with one knight than with the 'woman-talk', and watching the living picture.

"Well, because your Tayar has set out a new road-map for the Twenty-first Century. It was he who christened evolution — seeing Christ the evolver animating it from within and being its motive force — driving it towards KristOmega."

"I don't think Johnnie will quite understand that yet, Merlin, but we'll explain it to him later," said Sam, feeling he should intervene, and knowing his young brother so well. The Arch-Mage apologised!

"Of course — I'm forgetting that he joined us so much later. Thankyou Sam. You see, Jonathan, all new, renaissance-type movements (Sam will tell you about renaissances) must have a Guide or figurehead to be able to encourage and inspire its followers. Tayar will still have his hand on the Tiller because of the exhaustive writings that he left for you. He forecast the building up of a mechanism

that hardly even existed in his time and his vision was that this would complete our brains. It was he who predicted the use of the prefix ‘cyber’ in regards to the computer/human mould — the word ‘cyber’ means helmsman in the Greek... Teilhard also conceived the idea of a Noosphere, a union of thought among human beings, foretelling in the early 1900s the coming World Wide Web... But to answer at last your question, Boy, the degrees of clarity and shadow shown over each of the figures varies according to the amount of influence they will have during the coming century — it will be those who can envisage the man Jesus as the Universal Christ and see God as working through individual minds, who show up. The indwelling Christ — Blake’s Divine Humanity — may have had a name change because ‘Jesus Christ’ is often used as a swear word now, as Zeus or Jupiter once were.”

While Merlin was still speaking, Sam, who was surveying the newly displayed modern-style knights, gave a sudden gulp of amazement:

“Look at that new figure moving behind Tayar,” he exclaimed.

They all stared in disbelief as they recognized Jonathan himself, now standing behind Teilhard, and realised that their fourth Merlinaut was no longer with them.

Recovering his composure Sam addressed Merlin in slightly conspiratorial fashion, to show he guessed what was going on — and to put Lucy into the full picture. She had not always been with them. Sam began to sum it up:

“I expect Johnnie wanted so much to convince himself that it really was his hero who he saw through the wall, that he just thought himself into the scene — like Alice did ‘through the looking-glass!’” Sam paused before continuing... “He had a special relationship with Tayar, you see, since his dream-like adventure with him on the mythical bridge between sci-

ence and religion — to which Gilly and myself were witnesses. Johnnie told us that he'd got across the ugly gap at the top by crawling over his companion's body! Later, Johnnie came back down on a legendary flying horse."

In the background had been playing the classic song by Simon and Garfunkel, 'Bridge over troubled waters', and this had brought the whole strange episode back to Sam.

As they watched Jonathan, they saw him tap Tayar on the shoulder. The man turned around to look at him and spoke to him in gentle tones. Jonathan grinned and nodded, stepped backwards and disappeared. Their Tayar then turned back, looked straight at his viewers, and with a strong and steady hand he raised his wine glass to them and smiled with that wonderful, well-known smile of his. Jonathan was back with them to see it.

"All of them, especially Tayar, look younger than I imagined them from the photos I have seen of them," observed Gillian.

"Of course they do," replied Merlin. "As I've told you before, after the change from Earthly existence into the next advanced dimension, a person reverts to another distinguishing mental appearance — as in the prime of that life. Those sitting at the table with their backs to you will have their faces revealed to you as you grow into a new century and when the table can be viewed from the other side. There will be new heroes and heroines on whom you can pin your dreams and who could become role models for you."

"But shall we still have access to this new Round Table after we get back from this trip?" asked Sam.

"I will see to it," promised the Mage, "that you will always be able to bring it into your view, when so desired, by keying correctly into this place — my halfway departure room. The secret formula will be made available to you by way of some of my special computer games programmes.

You can then follow the development and changes of the goodly company, about whom I'm now going to speak.

"So now, my Cybernauts, I want you to go through the movements as though you were sitting down on those phantom chairs and feeling you can relax. Before you go through the tunnel into Cyberland proper for your temporary stay, I'm going to give you some brain work to be getting on with."

There were a few muffled groans from the youngsters, but they followed the instructions and settled down in readiness.

"I want to see how you are progressing in your understanding of your mission and, at the same time, to fill in some gaps in your KristOmega vision for the Twenty-first century — also, to test your memories from the Twentieth century. I hope to get some honest answers from you." Merlin paused and his Merlinauts waited.

"I've told you plenty," he then went on, "about Arthur and the three Grail knights with their Twentieth century stand-ins — especially your Tayar — but there were other spiritual 'giants' to whom I have not really done justice. Two such are Gareth and Gaheris in their Twentieth century roles. I'll deal with this in a minute. I shall also test you, and so refresh those memories, before you move on."

"Oh dear!" said Lucy, panic in her voice. "I'll be hopeless at this."

"Don't worry, any of you, for I'll just give you a typical quote from each of these characters and then find out how well you've all understood what they were saying, and what their special mission was. Just a few simple questions — and I guess that our youngest Merlinaut will bluff it all out quite happily, anyway!"

"We'll try to give you the answers you're hoping for, Merlin. But why is all this so important at the moment?" asked Sam.

“Well...” answered the Mage in a mysterious tone of voice. “You may be meeting some of these personalities during certain stages of your visit over there. So, listen carefully now to the reminders of these jewels of thought.”

There followed in quick succession some well-chosen pieces from works of the main Grail seekers.

After the questionnaire and responses had been completed, the youngsters were treated to a eulogy on the heroic qualities of the Round Table characters. They were told more about these well-loved men who pursued their vision to the very end, so making an impact on their century.

“They will be better appreciated in your own coming period,” Merlin assured his Cybernauts. “But meanwhile I’ll run through the history of their input.”

“We don’t hear much about Arthur’s deeds,” commented Jonathan, “after he’d grown older — nor of his life as king.”

“I agree with you, Boy, for though he started it all, after I left him he could never cope with problems such as Gwenevere’s liking for his chief knight and of course his relationship with his ill-gotten son... Anyway, we’ll now get back to our Twentieth and early Twenty-first century Round Table. Oliver Lodge, pioneer of the wireless and radio, is in Arthur’s place for he was the president of the Society of Psychical Research and as a scientist, passionately believed in the ‘after-life’. He was also an inventor and truly a great man. Next to him is your Tayar as Galahad, but I think I’ve told you enough about him! Then comes Havelock Ellis as our new Lancelot. Now, there’s more to say about him.”

“I always find it so sad,” lamented Gillian, “that he could never join the other Grail knights and be granted the reward of his long quest.”

“You are right to feel that way,” agreed the Mage. “The life of our new Lancelot also heralds big upheavals and heart-searchings for young people. He decided that what

was most needed was an opening up of sexual matters, especially on the female side, and bringing them out from under secretive Victorian covers. He became a doctor for this purpose and spent years of his life on the project, culminating in the writing of his classic book, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. In the 1960s, your parent's generation, it had all misfired though, and the teenage revolution had begun. The ecstatic celebrations of the new freedoms — flower-power and the rejection of tradition — became exploited by commercial interests jumping on the 'bandwagon'. Many now, I fear, are beginning to feel empty and depressed — to even wonder how all that freedom was used. 'Freedom for what?' they are asking."

"But it had to happen," said Lucy. "The knowledge must have been good, for they all enjoyed themselves, my mother said. It was called the Swinging Sixties and they made up their own new rules. They re-found the spirit of the Earth."

"Yes." was the reply. "But it should have evolved more naturally instead of in such explosive fashion — youth could not cope with this—"

"Do the men at the Round Table over there ever change their clothing?" cut in Jonathan, getting a bit bored and re-viewing it all with new intensity. "Tayar didn't wear a black cassock when he was on his many field trips and why is Sir Gaheris's stand-in wearing what looks like a prison uniform? Our new Gareth is even sporting the purple of a bishop's attire. I don't see the point of this."

"That question from my junior Cybernaut brings me nicely to those same two characters sitting next to our Lancelot. They are another two of our key figures in the Grail Search — supermen and stars of their time. One of them is in prison uniform because he stood up against the evil Hitler regime — one of the few among professing Christians — and he was in prison for a long time. It termi-

nated with his execution when, like a dove released to fly home, he became a saintly part of your freely accessible, collective, sub-conscious store... Yes Jonathan, they do often change their garments, according to the various points of emphasis placed upon their missions. The other man, with a patch of purple, was indeed a London bishop — the Bishop of Woolwich. He wrote, among many others, that very special book which you all heard about.”

“I remember,” said Sam with some hesitance, “Aunt Sophie showing us once a treasured paperback book which she said had quite upset our parents back in Ireland in the 1960s. It was called *Honest to God*, I think.”

“That’s the one, Samuel. These great works brought together — and out of the shadows — all the newest ideas about the Christ-Life and its implications. It was an attempt to rescue an ailing church from irrelevance and fringe concern, which suggested a ‘God of the Gaps’. It joined up in spirit with the other Grail knights, to put Humanity before doctrine. These prophets of the last mid-century will only be fully recognized in your coming one.”

Merlin paused. He seemed hesitant — starting to speak, then clearing his throat.

“I think I can tell you now,” he came out with, eventually, “that I’m in the beginning stages of setting up a sort of Exchange Room here. I will start it with you Earthlings and a few previous Cyberlanders — some quite recent. As I did in days of Arthur, through chosen circumstances and coincidences, I shall now do it through TV and computer interaction — pictures within pictures within pictures. It’ll also be a place where anyone who so desires can connect up to and resonate more easily with the memory storehouse of your species — giving you inspiration and help. Any special little thought, like a Text Message, should be able to come and go just as clearly in my new, inter-dimensional exchange.”

“That is the best magic ever!” whooped Lucy ecstatically.

“Well, I will still need the help of, among others, my remarkable and unashamedly favourite pioneer who will be revealed to you in my own time.”

“I’ll bet this man is connected to the new Lohengrin character — the Swan-Prince!” suggested Gilly playfully. “It’s like the old story when the hero rescues and marries the princess who is the rightful heir to a stolen throne. He tells her he will never abandon her so long as she doesn’t ask him who he really is. Sadly, she cannot contain her curiosity and he has to leave her to her fate. So... Merlin, we will not ask you any questions about this co-operator in the making of this ever-longed-for ‘Greeting and Answer’ word swap... between states of Being!”

“Spot on, my good mythology scholar! In my case I promise to give you all another chance should either of you, especially our youngest, be overcome with inquisitiveness and breaks this promise... Now, my Cybernauts, its time to enter Cyberland proper, so rise from your chairs and stand in the way each of you feels is the most normal and relaxed position for you. Then, look towards the old door.”

THREE

THROUGH THE TUNNEL AND A REUNION

As the four Cybernauts emerged from the insubstantial darkness leading out of the Merlin Room, they found themselves looking at an expanse of rather strange landscape. It reminded them slightly of pictures they had seen of the surface of the moon or even Mars. There were tracks though, which appeared to be vaguely natural and which wound between a variety of rock formations, large and small. All was bathed in a kind of light which they could only describe as 'white light', but Merlin had already told them about the permanence and inexhaustibility of this newly 'man-tapped' source of cosmic energy. There could be no sudden switch-offs of Cyber-light, he'd assured them.

As they stood up and looked around they were relieved to be able, gradually, to pick out some small groups of people walking about or standing together. As soon as our lot started to stroll along one of the tracks, they noticed another group walking towards them. As these people came nearer they

paused and consulted with each other, but kept looking in the direction of the new arrivals, who now went to meet them.

As they approached the group they became aware that they were looking at three more young people in quite normal, casual clothes, and at first no one recognized any of them.

Suddenly, Sam recognized one of them and made a shocked exclamation:

“It’s Tom! Isn’t it?”

Gillian, Lucy and Jonathan were staring incredulously at poor Tom, who now began to look overcome with emotion. The two people with him turned away in embarrassment and Sam quickly approached his old friend, put his hands on his shoulders and pressed them affectionately — for they seemed solid enough. Standing back, Sam smiled joyfully at Tom and got back an equally happy grin. Tom then greeted the others with obvious delight. He kept a special smile for Lucy, his one-time admirer, and expressed surprise to see Jonathan there. He had known him in Ireland only as a small boy.

Tom introduced his new friends, who he’d got to know during his sojourn in Asia at the end of his world travels. Michael had become his close friend, and also Mike’s recent girlfriend, Ellie — both of whom had been killed in the same explosion. They had all belonged to a Charity which was attempting to stem the misery caused by sex abuse, and Tom started to tell our awestruck visitors about the worst cases.

“The most abused personalities,” joined in Michael, “were those of the abusers themselves.” There followed sounds of agreement from Ellie.

“We had come together to that beautiful island for a short, much needed holiday,” said Tom, explaining about the lead-up to the fatal bomb.

“My own girlfriend, Marie, who I hadn’t known for very long, and who just happened to have gone outside at the crucial moment, escaped, I guess, the worst of the blast — she obviously survived. During the rest of our time here, some of which we hope to share with you later, we’ve been trying to come to terms with all this trauma. There have been many familiar spirits to aid us.”

“How did you all know about our coming here and how to get in contact?” asked Sam.

“Merlin summoned us back here to the ‘in-between’ place — Purgatrillia, he jokingly calls it — to meet some unexpected visitors to Cyberland. He made it all possible of course. We were each at slightly different levels of spiritual growth since we had moved to our next stage of existence, but we can still communicate with one another. We were excited and I even hoped I might be able to get messages back to Earth — especially to Marie.”

“Can you understand about everything now — like all that God stuff?” queried Jonathan in solemn tones.

“And are you happy?” added Lucy anxiously.

“Well, at least we know now,” answered Tom, slightly amused at the questions, “that what we called death was certainly not the end of all meaning to life, nor of our own individual thoughts and self-consciousness. It’s the awesome catalyst which triggers off this change in our way of Being. It’s like breaking the sound-barrier, only it was the death barrier! I should be happy, Lucy, but I’m not yet.”

“Oh Tom! I think I have a slight idea of how you feel, because I felt really lost when you left us to go abroad for your Gap-year. I’d thought, perhaps, you’d ring me, and I remember the deadly silence of that phone as it exuded a dying hope. Anyway, I’ve got good news for you: Merlin is setting up a special exchange facility between here and his room back in our present-day world. He’ll soon be adding a

‘texting’ service to the menu of his Cyber-link! He can do almost anything.”

“I’m sorry Lucy, I didn’t realize how you felt,” admitted Tom. “But actually—”

“You don’t look at all ghostly,” said Jonathan, breaking in again. “And your voice sounds normal. Dad told us once about some of the tricks they used in the film and TV industry. One was called SKIN, which gave the filmmakers a choice of various body and face styles. But you’re not a bit robotic or cartoon-like. How come all this when we thought you were dead? Blown up, as well!”

“Luckily, Jonathan, we all have body simulations which we can slip into whenever we want to be recognized, because, after all, it is our bodies, including the brains of course, and the affect of our Earth-life upon them, which are really us. They have made us what we now are. Oh, you of little faith!” jibed Tom.

“Just put a sock in it, Jonathan, and belt up — for the time being, anyway. You could upset Tom with all those questions,” said Sam quite sharply.

“Well, Jonathan, there is a lot to be explained. But where we’ve come from today, things are very different. If we had been able to revisit our native world from there, you certainly would not have been disappointed, matey, for we then could easily have passed through walls and closed doors, for your entertainment! To put you at ease though, be assured that those bodies are still intact in form, in spite of all possible accident or disintegration. In Merlin’s Cyberspace we can look real to each other again and experience a modified form of sound and touch.”

“It’s a new, ‘in between’ alternative for young people,” said Michael, joining in the conversation. “It’s chiefly for those brought up with computers and video games and conversant with this new language. We all came through here

earlier, so we can take you round. The technology is forty years ahead of our natural time, but Merlin is using it all.”

“By 2050 everyone will be eligible,” commented Sam. “The ‘Word’ embodied in many new ways, you could say.”

“Come to think of it, you’re spot on, Sam... It will all be a matter of data and information, symbols and images, plus collective memories, hopes and fears. We learnt, on our last visit here, that this white light all around us is only showing up what’s in our minds. Merlin quoted to us a passage from the poet he calls his William... ‘Christ is the sun, the human imagination in everyone.’ I expect you’ve all heard that one before!”

“Yes, of course, and Tayar used to tell us that the supernatural was just the futurenatural,” said Gillian. “But I can’t begin to understand about these physical feelings and functions that we seem to be experiencing now, for we haven’t got the normal use of eyes, ears or sound-boxes. So how can we be having our discussion?”

“I suppose that as soon as anyone’s blueprint is obtained (Merlin collected all my own body details when I was with you lot in Bath) anything can be done. It was all more complicated as regards Michael and Ellie. Merlin’s a powerful spirit and we also learnt that it’s really a matter of our inner faculties being extended and amplified to the last degree. For instance, many people in their natural lives hear inner voices sometimes and they can be very clear. I remember that you, Sam, often heard calls from within yourself. After all, who has not ever had a fairly accurate vision of something, in one’s head, or have never felt an unexplained touch on the shoulder, at one time or another?” Tom paused for more thought.

“And, of course, electronically produced speech will have been perfected by that period,” finished Samuel, by now greatly intrigued.

“You mean, Tom, that we are somehow being fed relevant information all the time, and being made a party to a certain unfolding story?” ventured Gilly.

“A good bit of thinking,” replied Tom. “You are now getting warmer every minute and I’m noticing, Gilly, that in spite of all Merlin’s metamorphics, your facial expressions belong definitely to the same girl I used to know!”

Tom looked around and studied the scene behind him. The other two smiled at the four uneasy-looking visitors and then followed suit.

“Let’s find a flattish shaped piece of rock and go through the actions of sitting around on it, all together. In that way we can feel relaxed and have a talk,” suggested Tom.

“Yes,” said Lucy as they moved away, “and you can tell us about your special problem if you think we Earthlings can help.”

As soon as they had settled down in this roughly arranged circle, Tom began to speak:

“I can’t seem to move on, you see. The old idea of being ‘out of the body’ when you die just doesn’t make sense to me. I don’t understand the fact that though we’ve lost and have no need of our body functions — heart, digestion, and specific male and female features — I still get these strong pangs of urgency and longing whenever I recall some cherished incident, however small, while being with Marie. They are almost as real, in a bodily sense, as before and they still hurt — and cloud my spirit with their all-embracing sweetness. In my new existence, the familiar soul-self which I made during my Earthly life, short as it was, seems still to feel these things.”

“Did you have a lot in common with her?” enquired Gilly — with real sympathy.

“Actually, no — not really. She didn’t have the same hobbies, and we often had opposite views. It didn’t seem to mat-

ter though. When I met Marie, I knew that this time it was completely different. I'd had the usual sexual encounters and arousals before, but they were not accompanied by this sort of magic. I fell in love with her almost straight away. The body mechanisms are so truthful and direct and she seemed to trigger off and bring to the surface many memories, half-forgotten needs and deep-seated longings — also excitement for the future. I soon found that I could become easily aroused sexually, when away from her, just by thinking about making love to her. It was a new and far better feeling than ever before, because it was directed to a very special person."

"That's what being in love is all about," said Sam. "It's surely wonderful just to have experienced it, even though you can't now bring it to fruition."

"I suppose," agreed Tom, with a certain ruefulness. "But I still can't come to terms with the loss of those times of complete bodily happiness when in her company, and knowing she liked me as well. The four of us had planned that short and well-earned holiday together in that romantic beauty-spot and I'd decided to tell Marie, that very evening, that I loved her."

"I'm sure she'd have known anyway," said Lucy, hastening to reassure Tom.

"Yes, but I wanted to put it in words and experience her response. The whole thing now seems so pointless — like another of life's cruel jests. I find it harder and harder to detach my thoughts from these matters — I can't let go."

Tom then lapsed into a dejected silence and the rest of the group looked at each other with somewhat shocked expressions.

"Perhaps you could get a special Text message through to her in advance of Merlin's coming exchange scheme," comforted Lucy finally. "Just the three words you want to say. I'm sure Marie still needs consoling as well."

“All this,” said Gilly, “brings to mind lines from the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas: ‘Do not go gently into that dark night / Rage, rage, against the dying of the light’. It’s rather depressing, I’m afraid.” They all thought about it for a while.

“No chance that *Tom* went gently into this,” commented Sam mournfully.

“But *we* are alright now,” broke in Ellie. “The two of us feel we can grow forward together and taste even greater happiness. We’d so like to have been able to Text our parents, who had such high hopes for us. We do try to help Tom.”

“And I think we can as well,” said Sam eagerly. “I’ve remembered something, so I shall now announce that our new Galahad could come to Tom’s rescue at this very moment. Just before we left the Merlin Room, we were given a sort of test to remind us of what we had learnt from King Arthur’s knights, and some of the statements of belief we revised were these from Tayar/Galahad himself. Merlin must have known we would soon need them. We now have something to say to you, Tom — about your problem. I should be able to quote a couple of these by heart... Here goes, anyway: ‘To love is to discover and complete oneself in someone other than oneself.’ Then the next one I recall was something about an essential role for Love which we’re beginning to feel the importance of... I think he was writing about: ‘the necessary synthesis of the two principles, male and female, in the building of the human personality.’ Do these offerings make some sense to you, Tom; begin to show you the goodness of it all, perhaps?”

“There was another one — a longer, rather awesome one — wasn’t there?” finished Gilly. “But I don’t think we can remember the exact words now, Sam.”

“I’m afraid not. But yes, it was about the cosmic role of

sexuality within his cosmogenesis,” said Sam, looking at his sister for help. He was then amazed to see on the front of her blue T-shirt these very words, lighting up as though on a TV screen. So Sam read them out, slowly. They spoke dramatically about,

*‘that terrifying energy in which the power
which causes the universe to converge on itself,
passes through us.’¹*

“You’re becoming Tayarites already!” exclaimed Tom, teasing them.

And so it was that after all this lengthy exchange of cyberwords, Tom suddenly began to see his way forward and to accept the real possibility of integrating his feelings into his new way of being. After Teilhard’s amazing claim for the formative power of sexuality, he could even feel that by falling ‘head-over-heels’ in love he’d been highly favoured, even after the great hurt that followed his beatific experience. He saw more clearly the appalling waste of this highly creative instinct which is being squandered casually throughout the world — remembering specially the tide of sex tourism he had witnessed with Michael and Ellie.

All this time, Jonathan had been largely distracted by some very strange characters that quite often wandered past his group, who were still spread around the flat-faced rock. These people took not one look in Jonathan’s direction, nor seemed to take a scrap of notice of anyone else. They were all dressed quite differently and, even to their watcher, were wearing the most outrageous outfits with hairstyles to match!

Before our young Merlinauts left the rock with their friends to enter the next phase of this trip, their eyes had been reopened to an important truth — one which Merlin

and Teilhard had been telling them about for a long time — that spirit and matter are one... And if, as is now asserted by Teilhard:

*Mind grows out of matter,
which contains the essence of spirit,*

then the spiritual self will always be part of its material body which contains the essence of cosmic mind. And Spirit is ‘the higher form of matter’ — so wrote the Twentieth century Galahad, and so his namesake, your Tayar, breaks through to the Twenty-first century. Are Merlin’s Cybernauts already tasting the reality of the noosphere he foresaw?

FOUR

PURGATRILLIA AND THE CHOICES

Soon after our group of young friends had moved away from the flat rock, they found themselves being drawn towards a very different type of rock structure. It stood almost perpendicular to the ground, but had a wedge-shaped base. As they got nearer to it they noticed that there was a faintly luminous ring around the whole rock and Tom and his friends began to recognize it.

“That’s where we must go now,” said Ellie, remembering their first visit.

Once there the group waited while Tom stepped inside the light-transmitting circle and read aloud the words which were now lit up on the lower side of the rock:

KRISTOMEGA
PASSABLE ROUTES THROUGH LOGARTIA
AND SARRAS

“Why those places, specifically?” asked Lucy, and Gilly attempted an answer:

“I imagine,” she said, “that one of them must be Merlin’s name for what Tayar called ‘The Divine Milieu’. The other, of course, is Arthurian Grail Country — isn’t it?”

The others nodded, but under the large-lettered words were other smaller ones addressed to those persons who wished to make the journeys. These ended with the instruction: LEAN ON ME.

“I suggest you take my place here, Sam,” said Tom. “And all of you had better come into the circle now.” He then moved back from the glinting panel.

When they’d finally fitted themselves in — or so they thought — there was a sudden, very curt interruption, which made them jump. A voice, seeming to come from an electronic source, wanted to know whether some person from their group wanted to be... “In or out!”

They then noticed that Jonathan was still watching the passing wanderers, and even looking for others who were keeping themselves a good distance away. He was only halfway into the circle.

“Get your legs in, you dope. You’re holding us up, Jonathan,” called Sam.

“I hope there aren’t Daleks where we’re going,” retorted his brother as he hurriedly complied, finishing up with a bit of bravado: “OK... Beam us up, Scottie,” he said, in his most theatrical tones.

Sam now turned to his task, with some trepidation, and was soon looking to Tom for support.

“Just lean over that nearest hump and press down,” said Tom.

After Sam managed to do this, strange things happened. The hard rock seemed to become pliable and softer. Sam, feeling it changing shape, had to stand up pretty quickly.

As our Merlinauts looked on in astonishment, an entrance hole opened up at the base of the rock and there, at their feet, were steps leading downwards.

“So, it’s *down* now instead of *up*,” quipped Jonathan, breaking the tension.

“Sorry... sorry, all of you,” said Ellie. “We should have warned you first. Anyway, we have to go down there.”

As they reached the dimly lit space at the bottom of the steps, they noticed that there was a passageway branching off to the left which looked temporarily blocked. Opposite them was another flight of stairs leading up again, so they hastily sped over to them and climbed up into the light.

When they emerged they were greeted with a completely different scene. There was lush greenery everywhere — shrubs, bushes and fields, interspersed with paths and narrow roads. Rolling countryside and hills showed in the background. The whole scene looked fairly familiar to a European but would have appeared quite strange for young people of other cultures.

However, in front of this pleasant stretch of landscape were some very strange objects. What looked like plain but traditionally shaped gateways were spread out across the grassy foreground and stretched away to the left and right of them. What was strange about them was that there was nothing different or special behind them on the other side — they were entrances to nowhere! On the front of the variously coloured gates was a slightly raised oblong shape which seemed to reflect back its darkness. Each gate was marked with a large, well-lit number. The whole scene was deathly still — not a leaf moved, no object stirred.

“Perhaps we are inside a picture or other work of art?” suggested Lucy, in some discomfort.

“Hang on, Lucy, you’ll see soon,” said Tom reassuringly. Then, suddenly, something new entered the scene — a

bright, green light flashing around over everything.

“Hello Playmates,” a funny little voice squeaked out. “Here I am once more — at your service as usual.”

“Who, or whatever in God’s name, is that?” questioned Michael.

“Oh! I’d know that voice anywhere,” replied Tom, excitedly. “It’s Spriggy, the tree-sprite. He’s quite harmless.”

“Thankyou, Tom! Yes, Merlin decided I could be of use to him here if I was out and about again.” Spriggy gave a little twirl in front of them. “My host can well do without me for a while — especially now,” he said.

Tom looked over at Gilly enquiringly and saw she was quite relaxed. Then Spriggy started to chatter again, accusing his master of asking too much of him.

“He’s still worried about poor Tom, you see, and he expects me to remember everything. He wants me first to recite two lines written by ‘His William’ person, which should help, he thinks, with the problem. Having learnt them, I’ll do it now:

*Joy impregnates,
Sorrows bring forth.*

“There you are Tom, and I think I’ve got it right — Merlin’s message to you. Now we can get on with procedures. In a minute Merlin will activate the next part of his KristOmega File — a run-through specially for you, the visitors here.”

“These are not a bit like our normal interactive video games,” chipped in Jonathan, addressing himself to Tom and his friends. “It’s like being in a dream.”

“For us,” replied Tom, speaking quietly, “this is the real thing.”

At Spriggy’s request, they closed their eyes for a few moments. They opened them onto a scene alive with move-

ment and sound. Now there were a few houses dotted around and some people walking about. The dark space on the front of the gates had now come to life with bright, ever changing pictures or swiftly thrown across words. They could hear bird-song. Under each number — and they picked out twelve of them — there was a luminous white button.

“That’s what you have to press,” said Spriggy in his funny voice as he hovered back and forth over the buttons. You see, you Merlinauts will soon have a chance to choose your own route through the Grail country by way of your personally favourite pursuits. You can thus make better progress towards your goal — which I hope you can all clearly identify to yourselves before taking this next step.”

Spriggy was now circling slowly around Jonathan, who had a confused and almost worried look upon his face — very unusual for him!

“I guess you mean the Omega point,” Sam volunteered. “It is rather difficult to define, I admit.”

“I thought that a little memory boost might be needed on this matter, so I’ve asked Merlin to put his own definition ‘on line’ (as he says) just for you lot. It will be short and simplified of course, and I can start up the recording right here when needed. You’ll hear it in good time, so rest easy. Take your time now to investigate those inviting gateways,” Spriggy said, beginning to move away.

“First though,” called Jonathan, “I want to know who those funny people were who I saw wandering around before we came here — and now I’ve seen another one over here.”

“Alright then,” answered the sprite, moving back to his cycling motion. “As you’re so interested in them, I’ll try to explain. They’re all so full of themselves, Merlin says, that they’ve no room for anyone else. They don’t believe in any-

thing except the rightness of their debunking of other's sacred beliefs. When they saw the verbal prefix, KristOmega, on that rock, they guessed it must refer to 'Christ', a name they didn't find 'cool' at all, and not their scene. It was anathema to them, for they blame all ills on religion! As for the legendary countries named there — they judged them *rubbish*, the same as all mythology in their eyes, including your King Arthur stories. They proudly retreated — quick-sharp.”

“So they ended up as sort of Refuseniks,” said Jonathan. “And the only things they could touch and see were the other rocks scattered around that first location — they were cool, at least!” he commented. “What about this other one though?” he asked, pointing to the nearby person.

“Ah! He was one of those who, out of sheer curiosity, decided to try it out — to amuse himself really — but when he came over and explored the possibilities, he just could not make up his mind. He wandered from Gate to Gate and nothing grabbed him enough to commit himself to it... You see — if you don't know where you're going, or want to go, any route will do. After a while he'll get in the way; he'll have to be sent back to continue his solitude until he finds another person to join up with.”

“Some of them must be women,” said Lucy. “But we all look the same these days — at a distance anyway.”

“Of course you're right, my friend,” agreed Spriggy, losing interest. He breathed a little sigh of relief at having dealt with Jonathan's questions.

“Now for a bit more excitement,” he continued. “Watch me.” The sprite then darted down to where one of the little roads turned sharply into a coppice of small trees, and out of which appeared three knights. They wore chain mail undersuits covered by their individually patterned tunics, and had swords sheathed at their sides. They walked purposefully

towards the spread of the gently flashing gateways and stood in their midst.

The Merlinauts and their friends looked at each other excitedly, and discussed the identity of the knights — all of them suggesting different names.

“Well, one or two of your guesses are almost right,” came in Spriggy again, feeling quite pleased with himself. “Two of them are the Grail Knights, Percivale and Bors (Galahad had died you remember) and the other one is Sir Lancelot, Arthur’s chief knight. They are here to help you through the interim passages of your choice. Before you tackle these specialized regions of your freed minds, I have to deliver a short summary of Merlin’s whole Arthur story — just to fill you in, he said. Arthur — who, as you know, was supposed to have been killed along with Mordred in that last battle which ended his kingdom — lives on, both in his Twentieth century guise (Sir Oliver Lodge) and in your future consciousness.”

“He may still be sleeping on Bardsey Island. Merlin hinted at that,” said Lucy.

“Yes. The Mage also promised that, just as he’d used every fit circumstance and coincidence in his original role to bring about those Sixth century happenings, so would he now do the same for your Twenty-first century.”

“Why was Oliver Lodge, his modern stand-in, so special?” asked Gillian, who, with the others, had known little about him before.

“I asked the master the same question once,” replied Spriggy, “and he’s been telling me, ever since and at regular intervals, the same reasons — in case I forget.”

The sprite then repeated to his charges what he could remember of the credentials of this man in the beginning of the Twentieth century. Among the best brains of the time, he was one of those enlightened minds, he told them, who

picked up the subconscious ground-swell of a new hope and confidence existing just before the two World Wars — they were all very brave and genuine human beings who daily strove to spread their vision of the joining of science with religion.

Merlin now took over and read out some notes of his own on these characters:

“In 1926, Oliver Lodge FRS wrote a little book called *Evolution and Creation*. In this book he proclaims a new attitude — ‘Philosophers are learning physics as never before’, he writes. It was one of his last books, due to his gradual loss of hope for the future. In 1927 in Tientsin, China, Teilhard wrote his classic book, *The Divine Milieu*, which was not published till 1957. Charles Williams wrote his Arthurian poems and his theological book, *He Came Down From Heaven* in 1936 and Paul Tillich wrote his book, *The Shaking of the Foundations* in 1949, not long after the Second World War. These four stand-ins for Arthur, Galahad, Percivale and Bors, were the founders, in the first half of the Twentieth century, of the new seekers of the Holy Grail — and their musician and songwriter was Sir Edward Elgar.”

After Spriggy had finished his Arthur lecture and identification of the knights he still had one more point to settle, and he began another long duty piece:

“Please don’t ask me now, Lucy, about the women. I *can* tell you though, that yes, Percivale’s lover, Blanchfleur, and his sister Dintrane, *are* with him here and you’ll be hearing from them later on. You might all be wondering, as well, why Lancelot is here with the two Grail knights. Well, he survived that last battle, being safe in his castle in Brittany and arriving back too late to save Arthur and his kingdom. Gwenevere was in a convent and Lancelot was left alone. He longed to make amends for his part in the fall of

Camelot and comes, at my Master's invitation, to join the other two knights in their efforts to help this new generation move forward. There, now you know. I'm off."

As the Cybernauts and their unexpected friends started walking towards the Gateways, they were surprised to see Lancelot draw his sword and strike at something running between the shrubs. The party stopped to look more carefully and saw two very strange creatures darting towards the trees. One of them stopped to look back at the knights and our Merlinauts decided that it was half human but deformed. Its body was excessively shrunken with skinny, twisted arms and legs, but top-heavy, with a large head which seemed almost to cover its eyes, ears and nose. A big mouth was just visible below. The oval shape of the head could best be described as a mini car bonnet! Its little legs could run though!

"For God's sake," shouted Sam. "What are they? And what's Lancelot doing? Where the hell has Spriggy gone?"

"Calm down Sam," urged Tom, for he'd seen these creatures before and knew their history. "They were banished by Merlin during various excursions through Logartia. It was because they were a nuisance to the travellers, I think. Spriggy will tell you — he'll be back. He gets fed up remembering so much. Lancelot obviously knows about these pests and is just trying to frighten them off because of you newcomers."

"Look," said Gillian, pointing to a patch of ferns. "I can see Spriggy over there." They all looked and saw that it was Spriggy, but his bright green light was making little stabbing movements into the thicket. As they watched they saw two more of these creatures scuttle out and stay for a moment, clearly visible out in the open, till the teasing stopped. Spriggy rejoined his charges.

"Now you can get a good view of them," he said, with

satisfaction. The ones you saw running out, we call *tippovits*. In Merlin's words, 'they tip over the balanced edge of his quester's minds and become obsessions — freakish entities'. So, to keep a sense of harmony and guard against doubts, he separates off these harmful parts. It keeps the trekkers in their right minds as they move on, but risks haunting the atmosphere for a while, on this journey towards KristOmega."

"Will we see many more?" asked Jonathan, in anticipation.

"I think they'll be hiding for the time being," said the sprite. "But there are others lying in the undergrowth who are too fat and lazy to move far. They just luxuriate indulgently in past pleasures and are not going anywhere. We call these *toppits* — chunks of their owner's makeup, Merlin says, that have topped, through greed or weakness, the normal reward of a person's activities. They've fallen out from there as well. The other ones you saw running about, sent here by the Mage, found themselves materialized upon touch down. Like me, when I first emerged from my fallen tree and had no home. Not like now," he said, hovering over Gilly. "I was invited in, but they are all bad, top-heavy sprites, I fear."

"Actually," came in Jonathan, "you're really only a sprite yourself!"

"I'm a *tree* sprite," retorted Spriggy proudly.

"And a very special one," added Lucy with great conviction. "He doesn't just play around. Do you remember, Gilly, when he first joined us in the country park on your 12th birthday? We saw other strange creatures there — a bit like these — and Spriggy helped us with the puzzle." Gillian nodded and smiled.

What the young people had seen — duly exposed by Spriggy — were two very large-headed Tippovits. The oval

head of one of these looked like a microphone and the two tiny eyes peeping out from underneath could only just be discerned. The other one had what looked like a striped and coloured sport's club scarf as its head, tied tightly in a huge knot. It was topped by a wide loop, and stuck in the knot was a knife. These were two of a variety of negative and breakaway portions of humanity disallowed by Merlin in the Grail country. They represent, among many other things, excessive preoccupation with money and profit-making, unfair competition, pleasure-seeking and football club rivalry — also house-pride and wardrobe changes. The whole thing has gone to their heads.

"I think we should both apologise to Spriggy," said Sam to Jonathan, "for not showing him enough affection and gratitude, and taking him for granted too much."

"I didn't mean to hurt his feelings," admitted Jonathan. "But it's all a bit much for him, isn't it?"

"Well, my master *does* sometimes treat me as a super-sprite, and I do my best, but I have to learn things all by heart and I don't sleep very much. Now, any more questions, because I want to go home?"

"What I don't understand..." said Ellie, joining in the conversation. "Why isn't this place overrun with these creatures?"

"Eventually," answered Spriggy, in a rather tired and croaky voice, "they'll find their way — as yet unknown to all others — to slink back to your Earth, I'm afraid. Even the Mage is mystified. He says though that they are joining all the other present-day types of pixies, gremlins and leprechauns, glimpsed occasionally in supermarkets, workplaces and leisure centres — looking for mischief I guess!"

"Thankyou Spriggy," said Ellie. "I think you've done very well." Spriggy had had enough for one session, and saying goodbye, his light went out and he was gone.

Spriggy had not forgotten to start Merlin's recording before he left the scene, and now, as his apprentices wandered among the numerous gates, they could hear the voice of Merlin. He was gently reminding them of the reasons for and importance of their quest, and of the other knights who would still be helping them. He even connected up again the softly-accented voice of Teilhard/Galahad, heard before by the travellers in a special place on Bardsey Island. Merlin had the capacity, as a top computer wizard — a frequent role of his — to guide users in their search for special information. With easy access to his own data source, he had retrieved his Teilhard contact. Merlin's relationship between his K Files and the computer screen was mystical — creating a sort of sacred space. Here is a short summary of his explanation of what he hoped to be the goal of his Merlinauts:

They were told of the KristOmega Lands, reached through the Grail Country — a place where everything comes together and true bonding begins. It's where people are united by all that is deepest and best in each one — where their smallest contributions to any progress, made in good faith, will be recognized and preserved. Here, he promised, they would learn the secret knowledge of how the two worlds — the one on Earth and the one after — were actually one and the same. Death therefore would seem less and less important and the quest towards such a goal more and more workable for Merlinauts who, claiming their parts in the building of the Earth, will find themselves drawn onwards by the pull from ahead.

The recording ended with two passages written and read by a familiar 'Tayar':

Our faith imposes on us the right and the duty to throw ourselves into the things of the Earth.²

*He (God) awaits us every instant in our action, in the work of the moment ... He is at the tip of my pen, my spade, my brush, my needle — of my heart and of my thought. By pressing the stroke, the line, or the stitch ... to its ultimate natural finish, I shall lay hold of that last end towards which my innermost will tends.*³

Merlin, the shape-shifter and ‘Two-world Being’, who first chose and appointed Arthur to be king and founder of Camelot and the Round Table, has now chosen Teilhard to take on the present task — to map and blaze out the KristOmega Trail in Cyberland. The Mage will protect the new ‘Kristen Lodges’ set-up on the way, which will serve to celebrate the true Kristos, the Cosmic yet human form of this universal figure — worshipful though intimate. Here the lines were always open, for Christ was still ‘the beloved of the heart’ for this new Galahad and Merlin knew that he had looked into the Grail. The luminosity from within this holy vessel would light up each amazing detail of this fair country of the mind where humanity is *always* put before doctrine. Galahad saw its reality with his inner eye and longed to share the insight, especially with the new generation.

When the Merlinauts and their friends had finished exploring and discussing the extended Gateways, but had still not decided about personal choices, they gathered together again at their original point of entrance. It was not far from where they had first seen the three Knights. To their surprise they noticed that there were now three different figures standing there. These were men dressed in more modern clothes — in rather old-fashioned Twentieth century attire as far as they could make out. They were beckoning to the young people to come and join them. As our youthful group began to walk tentatively towards the oddly dressed men,

the group were approached in the same way themselves and given a welcome. Next, they were addressed in a beautifully modulated voice by the tallest and best-looking one. It was the Lancelot stand-in, who now put them in the picture again.

“We will be waiting for such time as you four Merlinauts have each chosen your preferred Gateways,” he explained. “I won’t say Gateways to Heaven, because we all now know that heaven is within us.” Lancelot smiled and looked round at the upturned faces. “I’ve been told that three of you have been through here before and will just be choosing, this time, which friend to accompany. We’ll leave now, but when we find out which entrances you others have opted for, we’ll decide which of us will be best suited to assist each of you along your route.” The other two, in the roles of Percivale and Bors, nodded in agreement. Then they just smiled and walked back to their original location.

Our awe-struck young audience promised each other that they would speed up their decision-making, and they took off again to make some serious choices. This time they studied the offerings transmitted by the small screens and stopped in front of those they found attractive. There were so many alternative and exciting Gateways — all very different — that it took a long time to sift through them. They represented each person’s special interests in art, music, poetry and literature, as well as the sciences, technologies, architecture, geology and sport — each Gateway offering the route to the Grail country which best accommodated everyone’s favourite pursuits.

The one that seemed most attractive to the girls was one labelled ‘Crafts of the Nature-Lovers’ — Gate Number 7. Ellie admitted that on her first time here she had chosen one she felt had been wrong for her. It was the Fine Art Gateway, and she had not understood much of the demonstration. She now chose this one.

The initial pattern around this screen was a portrayal of the decoration on Georgian buildings, inside and out, with sensuous swirls of leafy sprays and the fullness of the flower and fruit designs. These were carved into cream coloured stone, affirming their worth for generations to come. It reminded Gillian of Bath and Merlin's den in the house in the Circus where these adventures had all begun.

Following this was a sequence of brightly coloured specimens of common wild flowers, exquisitely crafted to delight the eye. This sequence then changed to a sea of real meadow flowers and grasses gently waving in an Earthly breeze. This too was replaced by a show of many kinds of cloth made for many different uses and draped around the furniture and down the walls of a normal modern-day living room. The designs on all of these showed floral objects at the very peak of their blossoming. Twined outside the window was a climbing rose bush, artificial of course, but looking completely natural. On the wall could be seen a framed coloured photograph of a beautifully designed garden. Other rooms included a bedroom with tapestries, and even a kitchen where china and tea cloths also were bedecked with floral art. Everywhere there was a multitude of bewitching forms to regale the senses — a riot of exuberance and vitality caught expertly by a human artist who was in love with each subject. Did that person know that he or she were preserving them all for lasting affection and enjoyment and sowing them deeply into the collective subconscious mind of humanity? Always now, these man-made adornments will be instinctively popular when women come to decorate their homes or show themselves off. These works are hymns to petal, leaf and curving stem and will be given long life through people's feelings for them.

"I had a party frock once with that same pattern on it," exclaimed Gilly, pointing to a bright floral arrangement.



“Yes, I remember it,” responded Lucy excitedly.

“And the design on some of the china reminds me of mother’s best tea-set which always gave me a sense of comfort and reassurance. There are some plates there too, very like old favourites of mine which were part of special lines introduced by their makers in the potteries — like ‘meadow flowers’ or ‘hedgerow’. I annoyed my mother by turning items over to read the names on the back!”

“Oh yes, Gilly!” said Lucy. “I too was in love with a set marked ‘country vines’ and when I shut my eyes I can almost see those grapes and funny leaves.”

“Do you know,” said Gilly, “sometimes, when I was washing-up, I marvelled at how the design on a specially-loved plate of mine came back as if by magic — when all the messy bits of food had been washed off! This one was marked on the back ‘English Gardens by Ridgeway. Est. 1792’.”

Looking more closely the girls noticed a sheet of paper laid over a fold in the room’s coverings, and on which was painted a kitten, fallen asleep on a chair... They also made out the tiny model of a blue tit, perched on the windowsill. They then agreed that pets and birds as garden visitors completed their idea of home.

Between two of the floral display sequences these words by William Blake were thrown across the screen: ‘To create a little flower is the labour of ages.’

And so it was that the three girls, looking happy and in one mind, decided between themselves what their choice would be — Lucy always wanted to be with Gillian, anyway. As they moved away, though, they stumbled over a swiftly-retreating little Tippovit with a pumpkin-like head. It looked eerily akin to a rather gruesome All Hallowe’en apparition.

Meanwhile Sam and Tom had stopped at Gateway

Number 12, which was labelled simply — AVIATION. Now Sam had always been fascinated with anything to do with flying, and with aeroplanes of all descriptions. He'd dreamed of being a pilot since childhood. He was telling Tom how sad he had been when Concorde had been taken out of service and how he'd even shed tears while watching, on TV, her last landing at Heathrow. Tom shared with him the beauty of the moving images on the enhanced and ever changing screen. He guessed that Sam was going to make this one his choice.

Tom had chosen the science-fiction Gate before, during his earlier time here, but almost regretted it now. What was happening to him was so much more extraordinary than any of the other fabricated stories — this was all completely real. Nor had it helped to take his mind off the loss of Marie, or been much comfort to him. So he planned to join his friend on this new route.

“I often had dreams, in my previous life, of being able to fly,” he told Sam.

“Well, it's all so wonderful to watch — to see planes rise into the sky like huge birds and to know that they can move people around the world and bring them together,” said Sam.

“Actually though, its not always a happy meeting of cultures,” rejoined Tom, thinking of his experiences in Asia and the final cutting short of his own life.

“But Merlin says that these disruptive horrors, which pull us backwards, are the birth pangs of a new age,” Sam persisted, “and that hope will get us through.”

“He also told us, as I remember, that we each had fully to play our part in order to get to the other side of all bad history, hate and injustice. You see, Sam... Here, in spite of my lingering trauma, I've already learnt a few things, so perhaps I can now help you to discover your special role on this route — for you will return to Earth-life.”

“Ah!” replied Sam, after a short pause. “Working with others to ensure that these beautiful man-made creations are not used to drop bombs on people — that’s the sort of thing you had in mind, wasn’t it? The dark valleys!”

“Well yes, I suppose,” chuckled Tom, after Sam’s good-humoured question. “But I’m also thinking about the good things, large and small, that could be dropped from the sky!”

“I feel we definitely should join forces,” declared Sam, and the two decided to clinch the matter there and then.

Jonathan had wandered off, exasperated at such a superabundance of choice. He’d noticed but passed by many surprising Gateways with labels such as ‘Singing talents’ or ‘Dancing skills’ — even one named ‘Creature-care and conservation’ at which Jonathan had paused for a little while. He was very fond of animals, but this route looked too much like hard work to him! He did actually stop, though, beside the Gate marked ‘Motor-car matters’. Our Johnnie had always been very quick at recognising different makes of cars — often surprising and impressing his brother who loved watching motor racing with him. No Aston Martin DB7 could slip by without Jonathan shouting its full name!

After leaving this spot, he happened to spy Sam’s friend Michael standing glued to the screen of another Gateway. As the two of them got on very well together — it was a nice change for Jonathan to be away from Sam and his ‘older brother’ attitude — he went over to Mike and joined him there. They did some serious talking and stayed gazing for ages at Gateway Number 9 — Space Travel. Both were being treated to a fantastic array of pictures from NASA and other space centres. There was the luminous blue and white marble of planet Earth hanging in the black sky and photographed from the moon, then there were images of astronauts walking on the same moon. There were views of the

surface of Mars and close-up pictures of Titan, a shrouded moon of Saturn, plus many others. In the end, the two went for it and made their choice there. They then proceeded to join up with the others, after which they all made their way to where the embodied presences — the visitors from Teilhard's Christosphere — were waiting for them.

As they went, discussing their choices with each other, they passed closely by the Music and Singing Gateway and were delighted to hear some lovely music coming from it — the strange thing was that each of the passers-by heard a piece of his or her favourite type of musical performances, orchestral or vocal, classical or popular — all of it seemed to be giving wings to human aspirations.

They were, on the way, slightly hampered by some hurried changes of direction taken by certain creatures, resulting in their crashing into each other! This in turn ended in a couple of struggling Tippovits rolling round people's feet.

FIVE

A TRIPLE ENCOUNTER

As the youngsters reached their original site, Sir Percivale, in his new role of Charles Williams, stepped forward. This time he stood in front of the other two and addressed the waiting audience. He suggested that they relaxed and sat down again, for they must be quite tired.

“A funny place to sit down!” said Jonathan rather sarcastically.

“You keep forgetting we’re in Cyberland,” reminded Gilly, upbraiding him, and when they looked behind them they saw, to their surprise, a grassy bank close by.

“Fabulous!” exclaimed Lucy. “It wasn’t there before — we would have seen it.”

Anyway, when they had all settled themselves comfortably on the bank, Percivale began to talk to them. He was a slightly-built man with a full growth of hair over an exceptionally high forehead. He had very expressive features, as befitted a bard, and wore a dark, orthodox suit which looked surprisingly neat and tidy.

Having confirmed the choices of the participants and

who would join each of them, he started by telling them that the spirits of the sister and the well-loved bride of his Arthurian counterpart were both accompanying him. They would join him today with the girls.

“We’d pretty well guessed, you see, what you would choose, because Merlin had told us all about you beforehand,” he informed them with a wink.

Percivale explained that the new Dindrane and Blanchfleur lived with him now in spirit. “We’re all as one in the place where I now reside,” he told them. “We’re joined in the bond of love but are still separate personalities. You’ll meet them, through me, very soon.”

“Why did you choose to come with us then?” questioned Gilly.

“During my Earth life I thought a lot about women’s role in the progress towards KristOmega,” replied this Percivale, with a gesture of his shapely hands and a few quick steps to and fro in front of them. “I remember once writing that ‘women’s travel holds in the natural the image of the supernatural.’ I wrote other poems on the subject and had lots more to say about it,” he continued sorrowfully, “as well as other things — but I died suddenly at Whitsuntide 1945. So, you see, I was thrilled when Merlin invited me to come back here to meet some youthful inhabitants of the Twenty-first century! Galahad, the true Grail knight, also died suddenly exactly ten years later, on Easter Sunday, and he too had still much more to say. He found what I had been looking for all my grown life — he, it was, who saw the way ahead and how to make things happen and the dreams materialize.”

“How do you mean?” said Sam, trying to bring to mind the chief tenets of Teilhard’s teachings and their brief encounter with him on Bardsey Island.

“Your Tayar finally showed us how to perceive everything ‘as it is, infinite’ — this was how Merlin’s William

put it in one of his prophetic writings. From the same source came the proclamation that ‘Christ is the sun, the human imagination in everyone’. This fits in with the rallying call from Teilhard,” said the poet standing before them, “and our prototypes — The Grail knights. Once you can see that sunlight shining on the everyday incidents of life and all the natural objects you encounter, these can become the web of a future city where you can build new realities. You can expand the old ones too into a further life ahead. ‘Patterns of the Logos in the depths of the sun,’ would be how I’d put it... Like your favourite plate, Gillian, the underlying pattern can never be washed away. This colourful, stylised ensemble of flowering plants, producing the design you so loved on the dinner plate (I’m guessing the make-up here) can show up the importance of our reaction to ordinary things.”

“You missed out the grasses!” said Gilly, jokingly. “And it was a smaller plate, actually — but one often used for odd bits of food and leftovers.”

“Sorry!” replied our Twentieth century bard. “But I’m sure that your initial attachment to the plate stemmed from your delight in the natural beauties of the Earth.”

“I beg to interrupt,” called out Ellie, standing up. She then voiced her doubts: “Do you really mean,” she said, looking intensely at the revered speaker, “that it is what you *feel* about a thing, or how you personally interpret any natural Earthly object, that is the most important and most real? I’d never heard this before, nor of this Tayar/Galahad figure, until Tom sometimes spoke of him.”

“You’re right, Ellie,” he answered. “But in the end it all boils down to the new awareness and acknowledgement that science and theology have now become the same thing. There are no supernatural events, they all happen naturally. People will begin to find, as you are doing now, that every-

thing that can be seen and touched on Earth will gleam with its own light. Reflections from the summer stars. To make things clearer for you, I think I could do no better than repeat two final conclusions from the thoughts of our Tayar/Galahad! Merlin chose them for me.”

God is as pervasive and perceptible as the atmosphere in which we are bathed. He encompasses us on all sides like the world itself.

And,

God truly waits for us in things — yet He is beyond and underlying everything.

“The pattern of glory will gradually be revealed and we will begin to thank God more often for His gifts of reflection and imagination. The power of this can transform all our basic surroundings, which are part of our inner history and evolution anyway. Merlin tells us that ‘Man is born like a garden, ready planted and sown,’ — his William first said this. I’ll give you all a chance now to gather your thoughts and voice some reactions to my words.” The speaker then waited.

“You’ve made many things much clearer for me anyway, in spite of my favoured position across the further border,” admitted Ellie surprisingly... “Thankyou.”

“I’d say that what we’ve just been told,” said Gillian nervously, attempting to sum up, “could all be seen as a plea to the coming generation, to start building new temples to God *only* in our own hearts and nowhere else.”

During the following silence all eyes were focussed upon the other two figures in the background, whom Jonathan had been watching for the last few minutes — Lancelot, in

his Twentieth century role, was now sitting cross-legged on a small patch of carefully chosen short grass, remembering the Toppits that were hidden in longer growth... Sir Bors, in his new guise, was leaning against the trunk of a small tree which had suddenly appeared — in full leaf. They were both wearing the clothes with which they had been most familiar during their time on Earth — clothes that they felt most themselves in, clothes being a part of each person. Lancelot also had a full head of hair but a short beard to go with it. His face, as ever, was calm and serene.

“Will each of them be telling us why they have chosen a certain route and which of us they mean to accompany?” asked Sam.

“Sir Bors will do that,” replied Percivale. “But I’ve been asked to speak up for Lancelot who, in his role model, a man of action, finds it so difficult to put his thoughts into words — unlike myself! I gather that Merlin had told his Cybernauts, during one of their early visits to his basement room, a good deal about the characters of the new Round Table members. Merlin had characterised our present Lancelot as a whole and harmonious man with one of the greatest and wide-ranging minds ever recorded — he who had many marriage problems but always loved his wife and wrote volumes on the subject of sex.

“Merlin even repeated a description of him as a Bird of Dawn,” added Lucy. “One who heralded a new day, like the cock. I always remember the words that he’d read us from the writings of H.E. about the New Testament Gospels — calling them ‘the greatest achievement of human art to which nothing could be added and nothing taken away.’”

“Yes,” said Sam. “And Merlin had pointed out, on his screen, the close position of a certain pattern on one of the stone squares which are above all the doorways around the Circus. It depicted a cock perched on a trumpet!”

“I can never make out why the fact of Lancelot’s enduring love for Gwenevere should have had such disastrous consequences — the perfect knight and most chivalrous excluded from becoming a Grail Knight,” commented Gillian.

“It was because of the break in their courtly and Christian behaviour codes,” explained Percivale. “But he that is merciful will receive mercy, it is written.”

“Strange, though, that it was just a very human case of falling in love which caused all the trouble at Camelot,” said Tom. “But I am now beginning to learn through my own experience that falling in love could be a powerful and valid revelation of things to come, as in my present set-up — my new way of Being... Call it a part of the Christosphere, if you like.”

“Will Lancelot be coming with me and Tom then, on our aeronautic route?” asked Sam. “Even though he doesn’t like talking much!”

“Of course,” answered Percivale. “In his modern counterpart he’ll be given this special power to communicate, though only the three new Grail Knights, the Grail Maiden and my sister have developed the ability to talk to you here. But because Lancelot has had much experience with the sort of heartache with which Tom is now beset, he’ll have good advice to give. Then, as Havelock Ellis, with his many studies into the whole sexual factor and its expression in human life, he will help. And so, to interpret many everyday problems and worries, he can show you how, when flying above them all and seeing the wondrous layout spread below, to see everything in a new light.”

Percivale stopped speaking and turned his eyes in the direction of Lancelot, who had now risen to his feet. Jonathan got up as well and looked at Michael.

“I expect it will be Sir Bors who will be coming with us, then,” said Jonathan, resignedly.

“You should be really excited about that,” retorted Percivale, noting the boy’s tone of voice. “He’s the knight of your future, helping you to see and champion the way forward for awakened Christic ventures — and Michael can help you now, and later in spirit, from his forward existence with Tom on the way to that centre of personal centres — KristOmega.”

After another short silence and a gathering of wits, Percivale held forth again:

“The first Sir Bors took news of the Grail and its secret lore back with him to Camelot, hoping to save Arthur’s kingdom from disintegration, but it did not come about. Now his present embodiment needs your help so that the youth of this century can re-establish the great J.C. in hearts and homes. During Tillich’s life, as a favoured lecturer, he had lively dialogues with students and wrote many good books with titles such as *The New Being* and *The Courage to Be*. He fits in well with your chosen route of space travel, which deals with other perspectives.”

When our Twentieth century Percivale finally concluded, he directed an affectionate but exasperated gesture at Jonathan. Then he moved to meet Sir Bors who had left his supporting tree and was walking towards them.

After a short exchange of words between the two Grail knights, this second one was left alone to face his new audience. He was, after all, another Twentieth century character chosen by Merlin to embody the ideals of an earlier mythical hero and sit at the wizard’s Twenty-first century Round Table — so he’d got a job to do.

The new speaker had a thickset figure with a good-natured and kindly face. He spoke with a slight German accent but with great confidence.

“Well, fellow travellers,” he began. “I hear from Merlin that you, the visitors here, have had a good beginning on

your important quest — for, vocally, you have actually contacted Grail knight number 1 (Galahad 2000) in the person of your Tayar, so that will give you a kick-start. Every new movement of faith, I repeat, needs a figurehead to guide and encourage its followers — especially in cyberspace! The word ‘cyber’ comes from the Greek word for steersman, you know.”

“Yes, indeed!” spoke up Gillian, with surprising, wholehearted approval. “I, for one, could put my complete trust in him who gives us hope for the future.”

“Spoken like a true Merlinaut,” commented Sir Bors. Now I’ll explain why I took the opportunity to help in Merlin’s latest ambition — it’s to bring to the mind of today’s young people some of the main conclusions I’d reached and set out so passionately during my Earth life. I’ve chosen to go with Jonathan on his chosen route because he is the youngest here and, as it happens, the most adventurous. I’d got to know his partner, Michael, after he first entered my present sphere, not far ahead of here and where Merlin enlisted my help. Michael will be good with your trainee Cybernaut, and young Jonathan will enjoy sharing it all with you on return to your familiar life.”

“I wish you well,” said Sam. “But you’ll have a job with my kid brother, so be warned of unexpected outbursts and don’t believe all he says at times! But he means well enough.”

“Thankyou Sam, but I like to take a worthwhile risk and this one’s a winner... Now, back to my mission... All that remains for me to do here is to put you all in mind of a few snippets from the extensive body of work, my complete opus, which I left behind me. I shall quote them slowly from memory and repeat them, hoping they’ll be exciting enough to stick in that amazing memory of our species.”

“When can we get cracking on the search for our special

Gateways again?” called Jonathan, unabashed and standing again. “We can’t wait to get going on our new routes. Could your snippets, perhaps, be saved till afterwards?”

“Cheeky devil!” muttered Sam, not without a hidden smile.

“You must listen first,” ruled Bors, “because these are part of the whole process of giving you the confidence and understanding planned by Merlin. Afterwards, certainly, you all must hurry to find your chosen numbers and press the buttons. You’ll have to learn, Jonathan, to find more patience if you wish to survive the task ahead.”

There followed these three extracts from Tillich’s writings, spoken by the man himself to his future hopefuls, and playing the character of a Grail knight:

*Within itself, the finite world points beyond itself... it is transcendent.*⁴

*God is the basic and universal symbol for what concerns us ultimately.*⁵

*The certainty of God’s directing creativity... is based on the certainty of God as the ground of being and meaning.*⁶

After this, Bors ended his discourse by reminding his new students about the identities of the present Grail knights and the actual days of the mid-Twentieth century when each of them died —soon to blossom again in the next century.

Charles Williams	died Whitsuntide 1945
Teilhard de Chardin	died Easter Day 1955
Himself, Paul Tillich	died Michaelmass 1965

But living on in new realms, he told them, the knights can meet and work together — Merlin's new Round Table coming into operation.

After this, the session ended and the company spread out as they made for the twinkling lights of the entrance gates of their eagerly-awaited chosen routes.

Jonathan was the first to get into his position in front of his favoured space-travel route — before today he'd had many favourite pursuits, but now he was sure that this was the one!

SIX

GATEWAY NUMBER SEVEN — NATURE SQUARED

Immediately after Gillian pressed the IN button on their craft-centred choice, the girls found themselves standing in a very natural looking woodland glade. They looked around at the familiar sights, such as the bare, lace-like structure of the trees — for it was late winter — and the occasional movements of bird or beast. The reaction of the Merlinauts was, strangely, one of surprise and even disappointment — in some degree. However, they soon heard the voice of Percivale — by now well-known to them — and he told them that they shouldn't be surprised but ought to have guessed that this view of nature was a fixed part of their subconscious vision and always would be the same. He asked them the question as to whether they could really imagine a better paradise, mythical or poetic, than natural beauty at its harmonious best? There was a long pause, and they were advised to keep watching.

Our questers now noticed that, although the breeze gently

ruffled the ground cover at the side of the clearing, one of the larger bushes seemed almost agitated, its evergreen foliage more disturbed than other shrubs. Some leaves were even dropping off it into the undergrowth. Percivale spoke again:

“I’m warning you now that you are actually in the forest of Broceliande,” he informed them. “Merlin’s favourite haunt and the place of mystery and making, so anything can happen today.”

The gently-shaking bush began to part as they looked, and a green shape rose through the centre and pushed upwards, struggling to get free. Suddenly it reared up and leapt to the ground. The girls stepped back in fright. The apparition now stood up and could be seen to be a creature who looked at least half human — it had two strange-looking arms and hands, plus two longish legs, with padded feet. Its face was hidden by a crop of leafy growth and its body seemed covered in tightly plaited grasses or stems in various shades of green. These ungainly limbs seemed to serve him very well because the next minute, ignoring the presence of our three breathless watchers, this living imp-like thing began to hop, skip and jump around the glade and even shinned up some of the tree trunks and crawled expertly along bare branches — dropping to the ground in unexpected places.

“Don’t be afraid,” said their guide at last. “That’s only the Green Piper sprite. He soon will be awakening the sleeping plants and twigs — he alerts each group to tell them their time has come to show themselves. When you see him leave along one of the paths that lead out of this clearing — follow him.” The three listened gratefully.

The Green Piper reminded Gilly of their first view of little Spriggy, when he’d first appeared from his fallen tree back in Ireland, except that he had been a smaller sprite and had talked to them.

The girls had barely recovered from their initial shock when, after watching further energetic antics of this creature, they saw that it headed out along a path.

“After him now,” called Percivale, and the questers ran to catch up with the imp.

Outside, in the sunlight, they immediately felt that spring had arrived, but the Green Piper was nowhere to be seen. A grassy plain stretched to a line of high ground silhouetted against a clear blue sky and blocking any view beyond it. Nearer, in front of them, was a very green and normal-looking field around which were hedges and walls — and even what looked like a working farmhouse.

Right in front of them was a high garden fence, and along the length of this wooden structure something was happening. As they watched, a row of flowers sprang up on strong, tall stalks, bursting into very large bright blossoms at the top. There was a wide range of familiar species, some wild and some garden-grown, and the flowers were highly stylized.

Having come to a standstill, the girls now saw a brilliant orb of light moving back and forth over this border of flower heads — now fully opened — and wondered what it was all about and what their next move should be.

“That solid point of light you are watching,” explained Percivale, “is the spirit form of our Green Piper character, so keep your eyes on it.”

The first blooms in the row were the jonquils, the earliest of the spring flowers with their long, pith-filled stems — rush plants, which display a mythical rush-light or candle-light at night in the marshes. Next came the daffodils with their vase-like, yellow centres and halos of pale petals. These were followed by some more spring blossoms, and then there appeared a huge flower towering above the rest. This was the Amaryllis — a bulb based plant with a lily-

like flower, which is linked to the imaginary flower of legend, following the Greek word 'amarantis' meaning 'unfading'. This flawless plant will surely will live up to its name, with this out-size and vibrant bloom.

Anyway, the rounded point of glittering light, which was also the Green Piper sprite, descended on to the border show-pieces and began to move slowly along the line, hovering and hesitating at the mouth of each specimen. Starting with the jonquils, he examined some of its small but colourful flowers before passing on to the daffodils. He spent longer round these beautifully formed blossoms, but still the piper did not find what he was looking for. Passing slowly across the length of the spring display he came to the Amaryllis, and finally stopped.

As our three Cybernauts stared in fascination they saw that the Piper had suddenly vanished up the trumpet of the Amaryllis. The next moment the girls felt a strong current of air pulling them towards this flower, and as if in a dream and experiencing also an expansive sense of well-being — like falling in love — they were drawn to its mouth.

Next, a magical gust blew them up the side of the trumpet, avoiding the long stamens, which tickled their backs as they passed, and on in to the very centre of the bloom and through it. Flora, the Goddess of flowers, was then called upon to direct operations.

The transit was painless — no trauma was sustained — and soon after this dramatic happening the three partakers became aware that they were back in the original woodland glade. But there was a big difference. Though it was a verdant spring scene, everything was utterly immobile. There was a complete stillness as if all nature was holding its breath. It reminded Gillian of a summer evening at home where life had seemed to stand still and twilight had arrived tinged with magic.

A verse from one of Percivale's poems sums up the atmosphere:

*The air was clear, as near as earth can
in the third heaven, climax tranquil in Venus.
Only (what lacks there) it breathes the energy
from Broceliande that ever seethed in Logres...⁷*

As for bird, beast or plant life there seemed ample compensation for the total lack of movement. Fastening their eyes on a tiny, man-made wren seeming to be perched on a nearby branch, our girls marvelled at the perfection of its modelling, and the love and attention which must have gone into the making of this imitation. The bird's bright eyes reflected a shaft of light that broke through the trees, and Lucy, for one, expected it to take off at any moment.

Our intruders, caught in this still and silent place, soon found that they could move about. They passed a squirrel, awakened from its winter sleep and caught in the act of holding a retrieved nut to its mouth. Walking by clumps of blue forget-me-nots, they came to a standstill again beside a sea of bluebells where they heard the voice of their guide once more, outlining the plan.

"Because each one of you is a unique personality," Percivale explained, "all with unique personal histories, you will each take part in the next episode on this route alone. Every individual has precious memories which have helped to build up the person they have become, each one capable of changing, however slightly, the course of humanity. You will be reminded of your irreversible past. You must go first, Gillian, and then Lucy. Ellie has been through it before and doesn't need a dress rehearsal! In a minute I'll tell you what to do."

While the young people were still gazing at the bluebells

which, though unstirred by any breeze, looked totally real, they noticed a series of reflected lights pass over their surface. Looking up and behind them they saw the cause. Many glinting points of light had invaded this motionless scene and were circling around. They were then darting in between each other as though in a joyful dance.

“Those are the spirit sprites of some of Earth’s natural species,” Percivale told the girls. “The biggest one is our Green Piper friend. He will lead you, Gillian, to your new departure point under the overhanging branch of a certain beech tree whose pale young leaves have just emerged — a wondrous sight.”

Their guide now guessed that the two other girls were worried about the length of time they would have to wait before Gillian had finished her special thing and would be able to return to them, so he finished up by telling them that they’d hardly be aware of her absence; it would all take place within the blink of an eye, for Time was quite different in Merlin’s world. A happening that would take many Earth minutes to relate in words or write about could be experienced instantaneously. He then gave some further instructions to Gilly and wished her well. “For we’ve still got a big part of our route to traverse,” he added.

Gillian now followed the Green Piper sprite as it separated from the others, and it took her to a large tree. The base of the trunk began to divide and spread out. There was a dark gap there, like the one through which Spriggy had once accompanied them on their way to explore the human brain.⁸

“Have no fear,” comforted Percival. “This experience will be merely a trial run to help you to understand that death, whenever it comes, cannot separate you from the world that you love. Remember the old saying, ‘thoughts are things’? Well, your thought forms were all fashioned on

Earth. You can love God through the world, as your Tayar often tells you, so go for it, Gillian, and your own resident tree sprite will help sort out your memories from his favoured position.”

As Gilly stood looking down and wondering how far the tree’s roots reached below her, the small gap seemed to get larger and larger till she felt compelled to walk right into it. Going down the dimly-lit passage she began to relive her life with great speed. Each special memory flashed before her with photographic clarity and, most importantly, she felt again the feelings that had originally accompanied them.

These memories, Gillian concluded afterwards, were mostly good and happy ones, or else ones that had either taught her something or surprised her. They included the sighting of the first celandine in early spring; the time when she realised that she was no good as an actor, something she’d always fancied herself being; singing on the lawn to some workmen who were doing lengthy repairs to the outside of the house! She remembered her first kiss from a boy friend (with which she’d been disappointed), watching the working of an old restored water mill, and the time her father had run to pick her up after she’d fallen down — feeling the strength of his arms.

Coming to an end of her run of memories, Gillian suddenly felt tired and sat down against an accommodating tree root. She saw a barrier ahead, beyond which was a constant and mellow light. There was a stile to be climbed, in order to cross over and she soon felt a strong desire to rise up. She found herself drifting over the stile and standing, quite relaxed, on the other side. There, before her now, were familiar landmarks; she could just make out her village back in Ireland and felt sure she’d be able to find her house. The same path she’d been following before stretched ahead of her, and walking on with surprisingly airy and light-footed

steps she arrived at her home. She thought that the garden looked better than she'd ever seen it. There was a mixture of each seasons favourite flowers, in top condition — nothing, obviously, could fade or show any decay in these new dimensions. There was no-one in the house but she found her room was just as she had recently left it except that some of the older magazine cuttings which had been pinned on the walls, and which were torn and faded, had been replaced with clean, blank spaces — ready, perhaps, for new loves... she thought. Her beloved collection of horse pictures, photos and holiday mementoes were in place and fresh flowers were in her vase — she'd always felt sickened when throwing away the sad, dead remains. Though reassured, she began to feel a bit uneasy. Then in walked Tom, Sam's old friend and hers too, who greeted her with his old smile.

“Well, Gilly, we meet again!” he said in his usual voice. “I thought I'd find you here. Merlin alerted me about your presence here today and I've come to answer some of your questions and to ‘put you in the picture’, so to speak.”

“I am very glad to see you, but where did you come from?” Gillian queried in awestruck tones.

“I was here already — remember? Quite nearby, anyway,” said Tom as he looked around the room. “This episode of yours was set up before your visit to Cyberland and our good wizard included me in it, with my full consent. I remember it clearly and I'm here now to help — so fire away!” He gave her his slightly ironic smile again.

“Well, to start with, there's no-one else around, and what shall I do next?”

“You're still young,” he replied, “so luckily you've not yet lost any close relatives or friends while on Earth, so that's why they're not here, you see. You will meet other people when we go out again. Your grandmother too would be able to come.”

“Actually, Tom, I did lose a little sister many years ago. I expect you’d forgotten that — not surprisingly. Could she come too?”

“Sorry, Gilly — forgive me. I’m afraid that a meeting with your little sister would take too long to arrange just for your short visit here. Children who die early and are brought up in the spirit often inhabit a specially advanced sphere — call it ‘angelic’ if you like. Merlin only meant to give you a taste of this mind-world so that you would not live in ignorance of the natural manner of that change over from death into life to come. After my own violent exchange, there were helpers already alerted to help me here.”

“Oh, poor Tom! Thankyou though. How much wiser you’ve grown since I last saw you. Let’s go out together now, before I embarrass you.”

Walking through the village they saw other people, dressed as they were themselves in normal customary clothes, and who waved happily to them.

You would be able to talk to them if we had more time,” said Tom. “It’s a bit like being at one of those conferences where everyone comes together to share the enjoyment of their favourite pursuits or chosen commitments, and also to extend their special knowledge.”

“Are they all roughly of the same frame of mind then, with the same beliefs, because that could get rather boring?” observed Gillian. “And how, for God’s sake, could these houses look so real here after being transplanted from Earth?”

“Ah! Big questions now, after your previous flattery!” Tom smiled again. “I’ll do my best, Gilly, but you’ll have to add your own imagination to my attempt to answer them. First, I must stress that there is still plenty of variety of thought around here. It’s just that their chief loves and centres of attention during their Earth life, which resulted in

certain hopes and expectations, found them in this specific place after their transmigration — it just got us here too. As for the houses... Well, just think how a TV producer and team gather all the information about a project needing to show historical or imagined structures — how they can use many skills and computer tricks to produce the result. Surely then, over here, with the added memory, expertise and willing labourers, any thought-made equivalents could soon be ready for the newcomers. Thoughts *are* things, I've learnt, and 'everything exists in the human imagination', so Blake tells us."

"Are there many other scenarios, different from this one?" asked Gillian.

"Yes, I'm told that spread around us here are separate spaces for all those who are joined together in a particular mind-set — but there is communication between every one of them, including ours." Tom quoted from Merlin that 'faith is a place to be', and he finished by observing that because of the extra knowledge and understanding over here, there was movement together and therefore truth in Tayar's saying that 'All that rises converges'."

"I'm reminded of the words: 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' which were spoken once by His son — the Son of Man," recounted Gillian as she admired the gardens with their perfect flowers.

Looking around again she saw people talking in groups and even a cat going into a house. She was informed that some pets, often dogs and cats, who had developed a close relationship with their owners, could join them here in spirit form. It's always love that unites.

"Talk about Mixed-Reality Games," she reflected. "I'd guess that human life itself was always a mixed reality affair." Turning to note Tom's reaction, she was surprised to see that he'd gone. As she sadly left the village, the road

shrunk to a small path at her feet... and she soon found herself back with her two friends.

* * * *

Lucy was next to enter the gap at the bottom of the big tree. She had much the same experiences as Gillian — her memories being quite different of course. One of her flashed events was when she saw her poem printed in the school magazine; another was when her language was not understood on a holiday abroad. However, there was something a bit unusual in her choice of pin-ups on the walls of her room. They were mostly of female pop-stars and friends and she didn't seem very interested in boys. Sometimes the secret realization of this made her uneasy — that is, until she discovered she was falling in love with Tom! That was back in the early days of the Merlinauts, so it had set her mind at rest on this subject. Now she'd had the delight of Tom's company in her latest Merlinaut experience — for he'd been enlisted to give the same support to her in the new dimension as he'd given to Gillian.

After Lucy's return it was time for the party to continue their progress along the route and they found themselves on a hedge-lined country road.

"I suppose there are no cars to worry about?" said Gillian as they walked in the middle of the road.

"No, we don't have to deal with that sort of thing on this route," replied their guide. "But now I want to pass on to you some advice and comments from the sister of the original Percivale — Dindrane. As I told you, her image, as well as that of Blanchfleur, have been accompanying me on this trip and Merlin has been invoking their words. She now wants to give you all a taste of her specific responses to those suspected girl-problems."

Percivale began to talk in a slightly changed voice but it was not unnatural or freakish in any way. In fact he was transposing the things that Dindrane was saying across to the girls. She was telling them always to listen to their bodies and to respect them because, she asserted, it was more often the human spirit and the ego which had ‘sinned’ rather than the body itself with its fullness of ancient wisdom. She lamented the fact that by giving too much of her blood away, she had lost the chance to find the Holy Grail on Earth and join the other three Grail knights. Dindrane was referring to her fatal incident at a castle they were passing, when servants rushed out appealing to her to give blood to save the life of their mistress.

Percivale began to speak normally again and had this surprise news for them:

“Moving forward now to my own period on Earth, I had a brief contact with Dindrane’s modern stand-in, namely Christine the nun. I met her during my early Oxford days when we were both published poets, and I kept irregular track of her later life. We’ve met up again over here and she’s with me in spirit today.”

Christine had recounted to Percivale the story of how she had neglected her body and lost the balance between good works and a healthy self — ‘the balance and poise needful to all joys.’⁹ Then she had told how she had survived only through the discipline and aid given her by entering a convent. Although she’d found a Christ-like unity there and a speedy advance in spirituality, it was not, she now suspected, the main route to Galahad’s KristOmega. It was just too specialized...

Her message to Lucy, said Percivale, was to show more tolerance to her body and to be able to relax at times of anxiety and indecision to let it take over the problem, in its long-tested and ever proven ways. She should trust in the

goodness of all natural trends as long as love was there, and no pain or outrage to others was included.

“My friend,” ended Percival, “kept her sense of humour, never reached old age, mental or physical, but died, I was told, loved by everyone and loving everyone.”

* * * *

As the girls moved on down the road, they noticed that one of the trees at the side of the road looked different from the others. There was a dog sitting on the other side and looking intently at this tree into which a bird he had been watching had flown. Lucy went across to stroke the dog, but to her disappointment he had disappeared when she got there. Turning to look at the shadowy tree she was amazed to see that the same one which had seemed so basic, sombre and lacking in interest, even though accurately defined, had become lit up like the others in its full spring glory. The other two girls were equally intrigued and questioned each other as to its meaning.

Lucy rejoined them and they walked on still wondering what their guide would say about it all. Before long though, a gate appeared beside them, which led onto a small garden with a patio. Behind it was an ordinary little house with two windows and a door in the front. Standing proudly on the patio was a very un-ordinary plant in a pot. It had a tall, smooth stem and one most beautiful blossom on top — the result of someone’s lifetime of experimentation with new plants. This specimen could have come straight from the Chelsea Flower Show! The pot was decorated with a great variety of twining leaf shapes. In the garden was a ginger cat looking decidedly bored until it spied a butterfly fluttering across the glass of one of the windows. The cat made a mad dash over to the windowsill to catch and destroy his prey, but

because the painted pot was in the way he knocked it flying. Someone rushed out with a wringing of hands, for pot and plant were in pieces, and then the vision faded away.

“Now it’s time to hear from my other accompanying spirits,” said Percivale at last. “Blanchfleur, once my Arthurian love who ended with me in Sarras, and also her present-day stand-in, Sophia, an expert in Earth studies. They’ll show you the significance of these incidents. They both seem to have the same problem on their minds — the fact that no-one believes, at face value, that God is now continuing His creation from within human individuals — some more amenable than others!

The old Blanchfleur is now asking why everyone is still addressing their God as someone, somewhere in a mythical heaven. She believes that, since the advent of reflective minds, all humans have received the small, indestructible God-flame within them. It was either ignored, covered or, as it should be, allowed slowly to grow brighter. Since the beginning of Christianity, with shouts of joyful ‘Emmanuel’ — God with us and Christ in us — the enlivened flame should be identified and gloried in. The Grail, she claims, is the symbol of this thing happening. It’s the same flame the disciples first saw at Pentecost. When did they forget?

Percivale seemed to have been listening to an answer from one of the women, so he continued by repeating this idea to the girls — about God within every person.

“Blanchfleur was saying that all the bards, story-tellers and early script-writers before the time of Arthur must already have known about this digression from the truth and expressed it freely, but the Church wouldn’t listen. Seeing, just now, how you girls stopped and looked at each other, when trying to envisage the ‘God within’, and noting your expressions of near horror, I guessed you must be feeling like the first Christians when they pictured rapists and mur-

derers — with God in them as well? This they couldn't take — even in exchange for the gift of free will.”

Next, Percivale transposed for the girls some of the first Grail maiden's own words and his voice sounded slightly unfamiliar and laboured, but clear... “We are pinning our hopes on all of you,” she'd said. “Merlinauts should end up at the front of the Grail Trail — loyal to memories of Galahad, the Grail Knight. I still mourn the fact that no-one was able to prevent the fall of Camelot, even though Sir Bors returned after the death of Galahad to tell the remaining knights about the Grail and its meaning. It could happen with the Church today.” Percivale started again — Merlin's wayside sketch had put the first Grail Maiden in mind of all this. “I remember now that Mordred,” she said, “like Felix the cat with the pot, broke up the hard-won achievements of the Round Table and still had no regrets! He had temporarily stifled his flame with overriding jealousy and hatred. No-one was there to help — Lancelot, with renewed condemnation of his old disgrace, banished. It is a sad story with none of those sworn ideals of forgiveness and mercy. Could this be repeatable, I ask? And in how many Mordreds could this precious flame be rekindled — in how many souls would it be taking its true place?” Blanchfleur ended with a note of despair.

“She didn't know of Merlin's William then,” said Percivale. “But he has since reminded us that ‘every criminal was once an infant Love.’ Also I could remind the Grail maiden herself that my namesake, the first Sir Percivale, was a very self-willed and wayward knight and never asked the crucial question about the Grail. But she still took him on and they fell in love. He became a Grail knight.”

There was a long pause and the girls took to their sitting position on the grass verge — they could still hear some muffled background voices and even some laughter —

Percival had light-heartedly commented that he wished Lucy and Gillian would pull their trousers up over their hips, and Sophia had suggested that it was probably not a sign of laziness in them but just the latest fashion!

Now Percivale was hoping that perhaps this strange youthful style of displaying the navel could be a symbol of rebirth and freedom from old ways of thinking. He'd not met Sophia during his Earth life but wished he had. She was younger than him, but time and age had no meaning where they now were and they'd become quite close — he felt she may be the soul-mate he'd always been looking for.

Anyway, it was time for the girls to listen to her and revere her greetings and support as her waiting questers. This is what she said, in a quite familiar accent:

“Merlin has told us about you all and how your ‘Tayar’ figure, with his evolutionary vision, is changing your view of the future, so I’m puzzled how many of you still sing, quite happily, some of the words in favourite hymns — for instance like these: ‘All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above,’ and the displays at harvest festivals have been ‘fed and watered by His almighty hand’. What had evolution been developing for millions of years and what had the experienced farmers been doing? Shouldn’t you be thanking Him for the gifts of reflection and imagination evolved in the mind of Man? That’s what Merlin’s first parabolic drama with the dog was about, showing up the different world you humans can live in and rejoicing in it.

“With the bread and wine,” she added, “which you make from the harvested crop, I’m glad it’s still offered back to Him in the churches, acknowledging the Christ in your heart.”

Sophia ended up by quoting some favourite lines from Merlin’s William, which stated again that, ‘Christ was the sun, the human imagination in everyone’, and that the Earth

is now seen by Christians ‘as an eternal world ever expanding in God’.

“Well, that’s something for you girls to think about,” voiced Percivale. “Although you’ll gain strength and confidence — even comfort — in your new Kristic outlook, I admit it will be difficult at first. To picture the slow workings of your Father-Creator within your own mind in the same way as He has been working throughout Man’s history and natural evolution, is a tall order! But His first-born son is now deep in our consciousness, revealing the yearning for unity, Love and cooperation and the forward pull that is constant through all the evolving universe.”

“What can we now look forward to?” asked Gillian, finding her voice at last.

“You’ll begin to see good and intriguing things you’ve never noticed before, if you look around,” he promised. “Things that neither the newspapers or the Media have even noticed (not gruesome enough!). For instance, in the midst of some medieval characters in an old stain-glass window you’ll see the naked figure of Blake’s famous painting — Glad Day. Then you may come across it again surrounded by robed Twelfth century statues decorating some church door. Few people, except perhaps tourists, ever look properly at these sort of items nowadays, so you’ll be able to discover more and more changes as you look around. The changes will be in your ‘mind’s eye’. You will soon now find yourselves back in Merlin’s basement room in Bath joined by the boys, but missing three others, and you will remember these new ways of seeing everything around you.”

“I, Percivale, end now with a line from my poem, ‘Taliesin in the Rose-Garden’ which says, *‘Bring to a flash of seeing the women in the world’s base’*. I then give you a rousing cry from Merlin’s William, *‘To those who dwell in realms of light He doth a human form display’*.”

Percivale added, after delaying his retreat: “I also hope you’ve begun to learn that all the wonderful things we are able to make with our hands and achieve with our intellects should be our special praises to God, and a form of prayer in which He takes great delight. You’ll build the future, with all Grail seekers, together with Him.”

As they walked up to the brow of the heightened ground ahead of them, the girls stopped and peered over at the view below them. Through a golden haze they saw the faint outlines of a huge city spread out there.

“That’s the new Jerusalem,” announced their guide. “A city of harmony in the grown-up future, which you will have helped to build.”

As they were looking, they heard the voice of Merlin again. He was quoting from the Christian gospels:

*Ask, and it shall be given you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you.¹⁰*

SEVEN

UP AND AWAY — ROUTE 12

Having gained access into the first stage of their chosen route — Aviation — Sam and Tom found themselves standing in a large empty field on the perimeter of a busy airport. They were watching planes take-off and touch-down — one of the boys' favourite occupations. After a while they noticed an old abandoned car left in a corner of the field, and they went over to sit on its roof.

While there, our players heard for the first time the calm and measured voice of their guide — Lancelot. He told them that they would be taking a helicopter trip over the countryside and that he would be pointing things out to them.

As they waited, sure enough, a helicopter appeared in the sky overhead and landed in the field right beside them. The passenger door opened, but the pilot — a shadowy, motionless figure — wearing all his flying gear, didn't look round at them or make any sign of greeting.

“Get in there, boys, and hurry up,” came Lancelot's voice once again. They did as they were bid and no sooner had

they settled in than the 'copter took off, rising quickly into the cloudless sky.

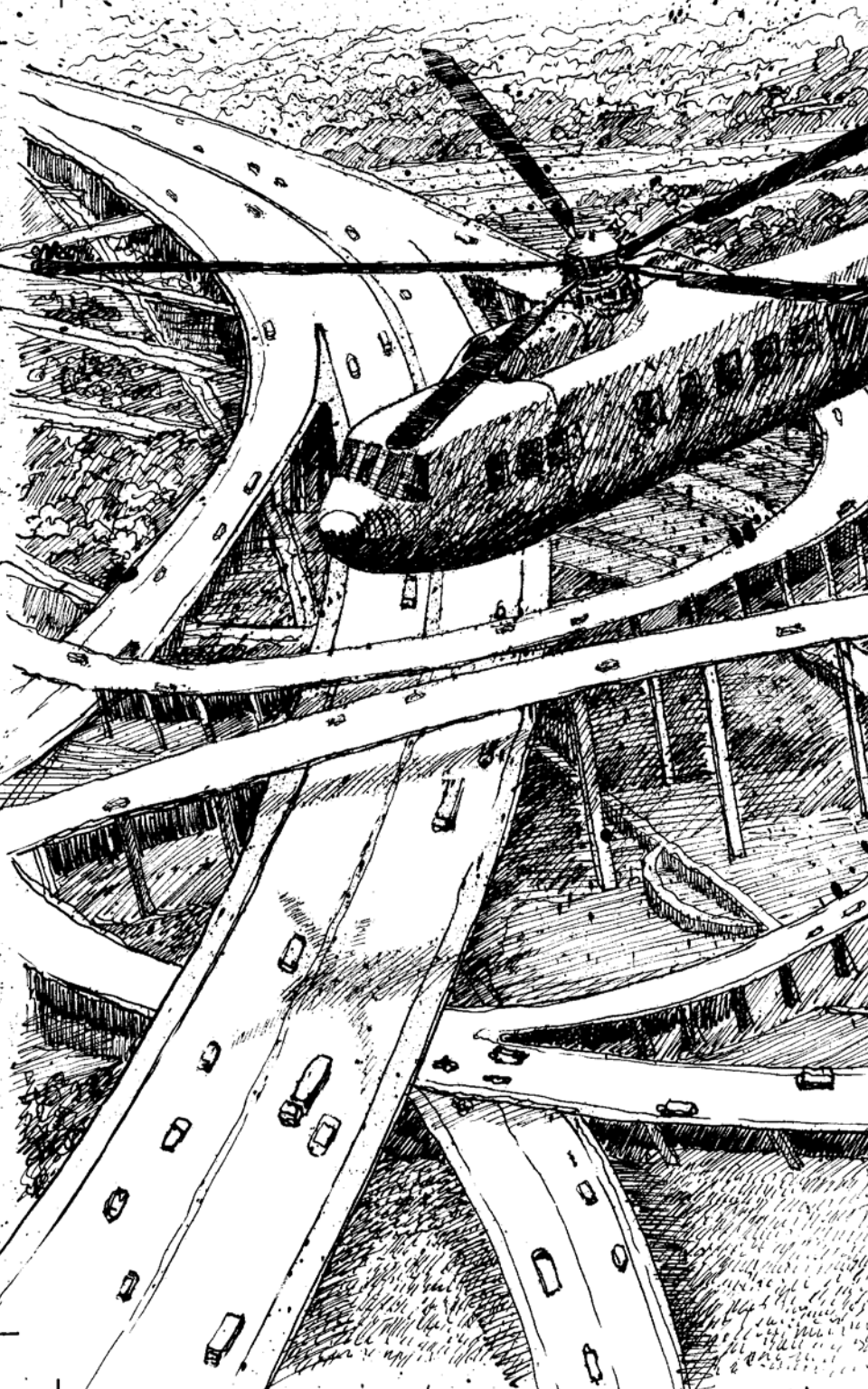
Looking down on the network of fields, the isolated houses, the little villages and connecting roads, reminded the boys of their first flight from Ireland to England. It was the beginning of a series of visits to Bath to stay with Sam's Aunt Sophie and to meet Merlin in the old Circus house. Sam remembered that during that flight he just could not take the smile off his face. Now the scene below them seemed to bring together, for Sam, all of his own past life, as if in one ever-changing experience. It was highlighted for him by certain unusual events.

At one stage of the present flight, when scanning the view, Sam had in mind a cleverly painted picture he'd once seen while on Bardsey Island — the Isle of the Bard himself — which showed the outlines of the imagined face of Merlin, half hidden within the landscape, and also a part of it.

Soon after this they found that they were actually passing over the city of Bath, and the Circus and Royal Crescent stood out in fine relief from among the many other examples of the Georgian layout — superbly planned.

“I can imagine Merlin being very much at home down there,” said Tom. “And the whole place looks as if—”

“We are told,” interrupted their guide, “that the Crescent is symbolic of the moon, but the Circus symbolizes the Sun, and that all the mysterious images and adornments attached to its brilliant design came from the mind of one man — who, with some help from his friends, produced this miracle.” Lancelot paused a while. “John Wood,” he proclaimed, “who had plenty of youthful enthusiasm, an over-active imagination and a passion for history and legend — he was a romantic. As he sat at his sketches and intricate designs he dreamt, firstly of Bath as the new Rome, next as a celebra-



tion of the old British king Bladud, founder of the city, and finally as Bath lovingly permeated by the Greek influence. This last idea was suggested by the excavation of a bronze head from under the city centre and thought to be Apollo, the Sun God. It was actually a head of Minerva, the Roman goddess. Anyway the result of the mistake was splendid for Bath.

“This amazing man ended by paying homage to the old Celtic religion of the Druids, having found that exact measurements taken from a nearby stone circle were the same as those of Stonehenge. His masterpiece, the Circus, was given the same measurements. Now come the many reminders of the older nature worship and demigods who inhabited Annwn, Earth’s underworld from whence emerge the hot springs of Bath. These spirits could be contacted, deep down, beside the entrances to wells and pools — in contrast to the Christian God who, more often than not still lives above the bright blue sky... So you see Tom, you were quite right about Merlin feeling at home in Bath. I think you’d forgotten many things relating to the Earthy magic of this city.”

Leaving Bath and the Circus, the helicopter moved quickly northwards above a magnificent motorway which cut across the country, over bridges, through tunnels and straight past anything in its way. Tiny vehicles could be seen speeding up and down it. Reaching the more industrial areas of the country, and taking the boys over the sprawl of a big city their aircraft passed over the last of their selected views. On the outer perimeter of the city, proudly displayed below them, was a fantastic sight. A number of motorways were there entwined one with another and merging beautifully together with some of them overlaying the others.

The boys were intrigued and overcome with the perfection of the planning and voiced their admiration to each

other in no uncertain terms — till the steady voice of their guide broke in again:

“Evolution is a fact. Progress is a feeling,” he said, quoting from his writings. “With human progress ‘there is always a flaw, visible on nearer view’.”

You’ve seen beauty in the motorways, unlike some people, but I’m sure you’ve also registered some areas of ugliness as we passed over the city suburbs and the old industrial sites. You can find beauty also in ugliness, as some artists have done, by facing it, whether it’s here, in nature, in one’s fellows or, of course, in oneself, you could do it — slowly, patiently, with the exercise of much skill the beauty can be found and revealed. One can transmute things into beauty and even create beauty oneself. This I’d say, is the art of living.”

Lancelot finished his piece and the boys were a bit subdued for a while.

After flying down south again, they found themselves on the ground outside what looked like a huge aircraft hanger or shed. The faceless figure of their pilot just sat silently, not turning his head, but as the door of the helicopter had opened by itself the boys gathered that they were supposed to get out.

No sooner had they started to walk towards this unnamed building, so daunting in its size, than they found themselves standing right inside it — greeted by a noisy buzz of activity. There were scores of men employed on variously related projects around the stupefied boys, but most of them were climbing around different parts of the body of a very large and awesome-looking aeroplane in the process of construction. It was the latest model of the newest Jumbo jet. Each man knew his special programme of work, which he followed exactly and confidently — the smallest job being of utmost importance within the whole design.

When our Merlinauts had been watching for a short while they were approached by a confused and worried-looking security official who escorted them nervously to the entrance and waited for them to depart. Outside, they noticed that the helicopter had gone and then heard the voice of their guide once more:

“Thousands of people will be involved in the work of bringing this giant flying machine to life,” he said. “The instigation and design began in the minds of a very few engineers and planners — just like the creation of those Gothic cathedrals. You must begin to learn, boys, about the potential of each person. One single and accessible mind has got the potential to change the world — like the mind of Christ — but everyone also has the power to move the world a little way backwards as well as forwards. You should all have a vision of the future and work on it.”

“A tall order,” groaned Sam. But soon brightening up he added, “And one man *did* invent the Spitfire and one woman *did* found the rescue nursery for orphan elephants in Kenya and one person *did*—”

“What about the single-minded dictators like Hitler, and the like?” said Tom, challenging his friend.

“Yes, and also the Hate-Fanatics, greedy trading predators and others.” So Lancelot, with his memories, answered them both with deep feeling in his voice.

“These Tragic characters did follow some initial dreams with drive and motive, but got themselves caught up in a very bad story, so losing their natural humanity. Power had firmly damped down their inner light. You, Tom, sadly, have had to learn the worst way about the awful results of this — putting back the true progress of the world for whole generations, while it learnt its terrible lessons.”

“Where are we going next then?” asked Sam, wanting to change the subject.

“You will be spending time on a different sort of aircraft,” was the answer. “It will be an earlier version of that future Jumbo Jet which you have just seen in the making. Are you ready then?” called their guide.

There was a second of blankness and when Tom came to again, he was sitting in the seat of what was obviously a long-haul plane in the mid stages of its journey. It was night time. Sitting on one side of him was Sam, fast asleep, and on the other side was a lovely young woman who was peering out through the small, round window. She turned and smiled at Tom, saying that she’d just seen a spectacular array of lights amid the surrounding darkness and guessed it must be Teheran or some middle-eastern city. Tom felt his heart jump for joy and when she turned back to the window he could hardly resist putting his hand over hers as it lay on her lap. Tom was falling head over heels in love with her, as if he’d been grabbed by something greater than himself — this was a new feeling for him and one that he would experience again on this special flight.

Later in our story, while getting to know each other, these two people would find out that they both belonged to the very same Foreign-Aid charity and were on their way to join the Eastern agency of this association. This had been the beginning of their love affair. It had blossomed progressively in the months to follow and Tom had been incredibly happy. As they’d worked together on sad and difficult problems, Marie had responded favourably to his attentions.

Merlin had now been acting out again for Tom, memories of his first meeting with Marie. Having found this particular memory still so vivid and clearly detailed, including all the background details, the wizard has reconstructed it for Tom today. Now Lancelot has a chance to speak his mind on this special subject. He first quotes from his own autobiography written after his wife had died:

Nothing in the end really matters but love. For other things are of the individual but love is of the species — It is nature, or, as the early Christians said, Love is God.¹¹

As Tom now listened to this, quietly content — Marie dozing beside him and Sam still asleep on the other side — he was in receptive mood. Lancelot was attempting to get across to him some thoughts coming from the original Sir Lancelot figure of the Arthurian period — the man who'd once been the icon of true knighthood.

“Passion transcends sex,” this character was saying, “but never belittle the great roots of sex in life — it inspires and empowers questers to their finest deeds.” He then went on to share some things he had learnt from being a part of the many stories about his legendary life.

“To love a woman because she is beautiful,” he pronounced, “is as unreasonable as to fall in love with a beautiful statue — but today, in this place, I detect the birth of a true and lasting love.” The old Lancelot now broke in and began to extol the achievements of this Twentieth century stand-in for the new Round Table — Havelock Ellis:

“He was a new type of man,” he said. “He was one of the first to view sex without the emotion of guilt — the monster is slain. The air has been cleaned. The stone has been rolled from the mouth of the cave.” The two voices stopped speaking.

Meanwhile, Sam, having woken up, was now looking at the communal TV screen and wondering what the strange film was all about. Earlier in his life Sam had found that he had considerable artistic talent, but he'd not actually used it up till now — his chief ambition being, as ever, to become a pilot. Once though, he had painted, with loving care, a really good picture of Concorde in flight. It had shown all

the signs of meticulous attention to detail and he had been quite proud of it. Now, as he watched the film, the picture suddenly changed and there he saw a magnified version of his own painting of Concorde — replacing everything else. Then, still staring in disbelief, the picture changed again and he was able to follow once more that recording of the last flight of Concorde over Bristol's famous bridge, and then its final touchdown.

Sam's painting came back on screen and there was now a very mysterious happening about to occur... a picture of the real plane in its supersonic glory was superimposed over the painting and the two became inextricably joined together in a perfect fit. With this came the reassuring voice of Lancelot, who reminded him that 'the practise of art ... is praise to God.'¹²

"You should relax again, Sam," he said. "Merlin was only trying to get across to you, through this picture, the importance of a great truth — the unity of Art and Life and how they join together, forever to be. Tom would gladly verify that this, for him, was an already proven fact. But keep looking — there's more fun to come."

The picture changed and Sam saw a crowd of people standing in the very field in which he and Tom had been first located on this route, but they were now watching something different. It was the take-off of a new plane on its trial flight. This was a future supersonic replacement to Concorde and though it had a strangely different shape and was much larger, it was still beautiful. Surveying the crowd Sam was startled to recognize himself among the otherwise unfamiliar faces — was this his double cyber self he wondered. Looking for Tom though, he could not find him, because, of course, he was not there. Turning quickly in his seat, he gladly confirmed that Tom was still beside him, with Marie — but both were asleep. What surprised Sam

was that Tom had his hand placed lightly over the hand of Marie — a hand that was gently curled up and lying on her lap. With a feeling of amused satisfaction Sam turned back to the TV, but it had gone blank, so he too dozed off again.

When the boys awoke, they were back in their initial departure area and Lancelot was with them in his Twentieth century embodiment again.

“I shall accompany you back to the others because I have something to tell you on the way. I’ve just heard some news from Merlin which I’m permitted to pass on to you.” As they walked, Tom learnt, with a surge of emotion, that he was to become a father! Marie had found she was carrying his child.

For reasons known only to Tom, this welcome news from the world he had left seemed to lighten his heavy burden of loss, and after a few minutes he told Lancelot that he at last felt his love for Marie could now take him forward instead of impeding his growth. He thanked him for all the help he’d been given.

Sam then admitted that he’d discovered many new things about himself and had finally decided what his special ‘calling’ had really meant and how to set about acting upon it.

Joining the others and conversing together, they waited for the return of Jonathan and Mike. Lancelot seemed to have faded from view.

EIGHT

THE MAKING OF AN ASTRONAUT

Jonathan was in a state of weightlessness and, at the moment, quite jittery!

It was the year 2020 and for the first time he had ventured, as a space-tourist, to partake of a few circuits of planet Earth. He had often tried to imagine what it would feel like, but had never thought it would be like this. As he looked down he happened to see the picture of a daemonic face printed on the back of a fellow traveller's T-shirt and he called across to Michael, saying—only half jokingly, “I knew I shouldn't have told Father Patrick to ‘get a life—and leave mine alone’, when he caught me kissing a girl. He ticked me off and I was cross!”

“Don't worry, you're not in hell, Jonnie,” said his friend. “You're just weightless—you're supposed to enjoy this.” Mike was still there in spite of the time-change, so as they found their space legs and arms relaxed and enjoyed their body movements, the voice of their new guide came through.

It was Sir Bors No.2—Paul Tillich—and he now took over.

“Yes, boys,” he said. “Your Merlin’s powers are manifold—I’m learning this. So here I am again to guide you on your route. Any questions yet?”

“Who, exactly *is* he—this Merlin?” asked Jonathan, rather cheekily.

“Well...” The voice was hesitant as though slightly taken aback. “I only know traditional Welsh stories about him,” the voice went on. “He was born near Carmarthen a long time ago and was said to be the illegitimate son of a local nun who had a pre-Christian ‘half-blood’ identity.” He paused, and then remarked quite playfully that undoubtedly all book-reading young people today would know what that meant! “She was also a princess and, of course, a virgin—so there was plenty to keep the tongues wagging, especially as Merlin was said to have been conceived in the graveyard of nearby St Peters Church. Soon Merlin’s mother was spoken of as a Goddess—akin to the great ‘Earth Mother’, Modron or Matrona.

“I hope that her father wasn’t like the dark lord in that other book,” said Jonathan. “And anyway, what do you know about Merlin’s father?”

“Actually,” came the reply, “our wizard was once reported to have said that his father was a Roman Consul, but the story is strangely unclear on this subject, and it was sometimes said that his father was a rebel spirit. As your Tayar often told you—beginnings are always fragile and shrouded in a hazy uncertainty. It’s what they become that is the important reality. Merlin is a powerful spirit who works to further a sense of the unity of mind and body in human beings, and spirit and matter in all life. He is wiser and more cosmic than any ‘dark Lord’, and opens up a universe into which humanity can expand—”

“I wish he’d supplied us all with wands though,” inter-

vened Jonathan, having trouble again with his alien state of being. “I think I’d wave mine right now!”

“Actually,” said Michael. “I’ve got the feeling that the wizardly arts of your Merlin have a different magic than the old types. He’s showing how science lights up the wonders and miracles of your own bodies and the natural world around you while on Earth. The supernatural is natural to him, and a wand could be anything to hand that you will learn how to recognize. For instance, I can see some rather strange-looking handles and bars just below us and I figure if we can grab those we’ll be able to pull ourselves down to join the others who all seem well hitched up. I think we’ve had enough hovering for now.”

Soon after our two questers managed to manipulate themselves back into the company of their two partners in the space adventure and, of course, the crew of the ship, they were talking again. They had been shown how to eat and drink without spilling things over everything, including each other. They were intrigued with the queer shapes of the cleverly designed containers and servers and the company quickly got to know each other. Jonathan chatted to the T-shirt wearer:

“Why do you wear such a fearsome image on your shirt?” he asked him. “It’s so gruesome, it gave even me quite a shock!”

“Well, I get so bored,” he answered with a shrug, “that I grab at anything to distract me. There was a competition the other day to see who could create the most grotesque and scary face — half human perhaps... This one got the prize and I bought the T-shirt in order to attract some attention—which I’ve now done!”

“If I want to attract any attention,” commented Jonathan, “I just pull out a mask of Michael Jackson which I keep folded in my pocket—it always works.”

The fellow tourist, whose name was Steve, found this funny and smiled at Jonathan, asking him if he often got bored as well.

“Not really,” said our Merlinaut. “I’m always too busy trying to fit too much into one day — but I do try hard to get more attention.”


“I get depressed,” went on Steve, “because I can’t think of anything I really want to do or goals I want to reach. There’s not much football to watch just now, but plenty of TV crime and violence, and the News upsets me. There’s plenty of athletics but I’m not an Olympics fan, nor into ‘yoga’, meditation, kung-fu or even Pop music.”

“You do sound rather hopeless, I must say. Have you ever tried making some sort of good news yourself, I wonder? But I can’t think of a suggestion. Surely anything would be better than being on a road to nowhere. We’re lucky, because we know we’re en route to a very special place and on a quest as well. Have you tried falling in love? That’s all about being in ‘a state of grace,’ so Tayar says.”

“I have,” he replied. “But she got bored with me, and left me for someone else. I’ve often dreamt about coming on this trip — in fact I’m not sure if I’m not still dreaming and will wake up at home,” went on this sad young man. “But please tell me more about this special place that you’re heading for — and, who is Tayar?”

“Well — I am a Merlinaut you see, but I’ve still got to find this out myself! Tayar was a priest and a scientist with a strange French name, who Merlin has chosen to be our Galahad figure to guide us on our evolutionary way.”

After this rather serious conversation, and as a bit of comic relief, so Michael thought, there was a small accident. Jonathan, wanting to try more food in zero gravity, had managed to deposit a smodge of mushy peas onto the front of Steve’s grisly T-shirt!



[www.merlin in
cyberland](http://www.merlin.in.cyberland)

As they were laughing, one of the crew called out that it was Jonathan's turn to have a look out through the 'port-hole' of their spaceship, and he was escorted there and left to behold the greatest sight of his life. There was the bright, round, solid reality of his planet Earth, all in one piece, with the blue, brown and white colours gloriously contrasting with the inky black around it. Jonathan had already seen pictures of Earth from the moon, but this was closer, larger and more intimate. This Merlinaut was completely bowled over by it. He would never be the same again. When he finally moved his eyes into the void — the empty space around the world — he was surprised to see another bright object out there which looked very like a TV screen with moving images. It came nearer and then he heard a voice coming either from the screen or from within himself. It was Merlin's voice. Merlin, a master of space and time... plus a sense of humour!

"Hi! Jonathan," it was saying. "As my youngest Merlinaut, I fancied it would be good for you to be the first one to hear my secret plan. You'll really enjoy, I imagine, telling the others when you return, but you must pay great attention to the information — all your friends are depending on your getting it right."

Jonathan stared and stared at the strange antics of the persons on the screen — mostly young, but a few not so young — for they all appeared to be trying to grab their legs and ankles. Some were sitting on the ground or on chairs and some were half dancing or even hopping around, looking for support. Jonathan was trying desperately to make some sense out of it, when the voice continued:

"There will be," it said, "a moveable academy for Grail-seekers and Merlinauts in Cyberspace — a definite place where they can learn how to use their newfound powers, and friends will be made by connecting what is deepest in

each person. Their teachers will be familiar characters from Arthur's Round Table and all entrants can stay there as long and as often as needed. When you are all back from this trip, you will be able to find this Cyberschool, wherever it settles, by contacting the Internet, just like any other website. But here's the difference, and my big secret... Take good note. The details and address for access to this site will change every day and sometimes twice a day!" The only place where they'll be updated will be on the soles of your feet — where human bodies meet the Earth."

Jonathan was even further confused. Surely, he thought, looking again at the peculiar goings-on across the hovering screen, everyone would soon guess what those figures were trying to do — some secret this was! Then suddenly the whole thing vanished and there was just dark space again.

"Don't look so worried, young zealot," relented Merlin. "I was only teasing you, but also I needed to get this act firmly in you mind. Merlinauts will quickly become so good at doing this that other people will hardly notice the procedure. If they do they'll just think you are investigating a corn or an itch between the toes! You may lose a few socks but the information will show through nylon and only on the bottom of the feet of would-be questers or journeying Merlinauts. My new set-up will be waiting for you back here in Cyberspace after your return to planet Earth, of which you are a part. You have now got my secret of access, Jonathan. Don't let me down... Your friend will not need this website."

The voice cut out and Jonathan, as though sleep walking, made his way back to the others. As he passed Michael who was on his way to take his own turn at the window, the sight being more familiar to him, Jonathan seemed to come to life and pronounced to all and sundry that he was going to be the best Merlinaut ever, and never ever *not* be one.

Michael stopped and looked at his partner with great surprise.

“You looked as though you’d seen a ghost,” he said. “What happened?”

“I saw the world,” came the exuberant reply. “And I know what I must do to play my part in it.” Turning to Steve he said that he would soon know more about the special place he was heading for, and he’d hope to have a chance to tell him more after they returned to Earth.

Later, when they were all struggling into their re-entry protective suits, helped by the crew and checked by each other, Steve said that his friend was also interested in the Merlinauts. They’d try to give Jonathan their names and those of the nearest towns, if he could give them some reference — which he did. Neither they nor Jonathan knew, though, whether any of this would be possible.

At the conclusion of this little space jaunt, during Michael and Jonathan’s chosen route they found themselves still in the rehabilitation room well after the others had left. The voice of their guide came through again.

He told them that Merlin had fixed a quick visit to a training centre for Astronauts where they can talk to the spacemen and women. As to meeting up again with the two accompanying tourists when back on Earth, I can’t vouch for that — but I could have a word with our wizard, who can arrange most things it seems, looking at my young Merlinaut’s altered state of commitment! Anyway, more questions please.”

“Did you know about my secret?” Jonathan asked him.

“Yes, I’ve been told, and I think you’ll handle it like a true Merlinaut. Now, I’m sure you’ve got some more questions for me?”

“What did you mean then,” he began, “when you described Merlin as cosmic?”

“Well,” came the slow reply. “The said wonder-boy, so the story goes, lived in a cave on a hill just east of Carmarthen and it’s still called Dinas Emrys (Merlin’s Hill). There, as later in his glass tower on Bardsey Island, he was able to observe the heavens and ponder the meaning of our universe. Because he had a foothold in the region of the underworld immortals — the Celtic demigods — and also of course a presence in the human after-life, with prophets and saints, he is very wise, especially about the cosmic connections to your everyday life.”

“What could he really see from this special hill?” Jonathan wondered aloud.

“Merlin could see ‘stars streaming outwards in a great band to mingle with the whole cosmos’. This was called the ‘Milk Road’ in Welsh — our Milky Way. It was said that ‘with stars in his eyes and the cosmos conceived Merlin cures the mind-body split... and his strange otherness was able to strike home, infusing the mundane world with his numinous glow’¹³ He found unity with above and below.”

“I studied astronomy during my old life,” said Michael. “I remember being impressed with the knowledge that we on Earth were well-placed to observe the universe. This was because our Solar system, arranged round a common-or-garden and medium-sized yellow star, on the arm of the Milky Way Galaxy, allows us to peer both inwards and outwards — Merlin must have known this and made the most of it.” Michael was full of admiration and awe, but he had a serious question to put to their guide. “Being so wise a prophet and a super-being, why did Merlin allow the world to get into such an awful state?” he asked, with disbelief.

“He only visits our Earth every 200 years, you see,” explained their Twentieth Century embodiment of Sir Bors — their present KristOmega guide. “It’s still a mystery where he goes in between times, but when he reappears he always

seems to have gained extra power and wisdom. The trouble is that now he is able to get a better picture of our growing capacity for Love, as he explores the ‘caverns’ of individual minds, he realizes that also, it follows, there is as much extra capacity for hate. The pain and suffering of the struggle for new birth and growth are therefore much worse. He has now to cover the whole Christian World instead of just European culture or a British Camelot, to pick his next Grail people. He will choose from those who seek for God within themselves and who acknowledge a universal Christ. They will then challenge any hopelessness or bitterness that they find — perhaps in American countries or Commonwealth ones. They will also counteract spiritual bossyness, physical cruelty and revenge.”

“But how can he be everywhere at once?” objected Jonathan.

“He chooses certain individuals,” his guide replied, “and each one can gradually make a difference. He knows that everyone, human as we are, needs a story to be a part of. You must each choose the one you feel is most real to you and which you can honestly believe in — but he begs you to choose one with the most love and light in it and the least hate. Otherwise, Jonathan, the world that you’ve just learnt to love and cherish will break up and be your home no more.”

Straight after they’d made their visit to the special training and fitness centre for future projects, Michael and Jonathan found themselves back outside the entrance to their chosen route, and their guide was back in his visible form.

“Tell me what you liked most from what you saw at the Space Centre,” he said. “And what you best remember about the answers to your questions.”

“Actually, I was very surprised at how long and hard their training was,” said Jonathan. “And I was intrigued when one of them admitted having sensed a sort of new con-

sciousness around him to which he felt connected while in space. But another one spoke of his terror at the thought of the loneliness, darkness and nothingness of the space around our planet. I know what he meant.”

“Yes, I think you’ve learnt a lot as an apprentice Merlinaut on this trip,” said Bors. “You can now imagine the impact that humanity has made upon the Earth and so upon the cosmos itself. As Shakespeare talked of us ‘giving a name and habitation to airy nothingness,’ so our imagination has altered the face of the natural Earth and given names and identities to everything.”

Michael said he’d been thrilled to hear one of the older astronauts tell them that he’d heard music while on a space walk — a siren song of the universe, perhaps.

“Thankyou both,” said Paul. “I’ve so enjoyed being your guide today and we’ve all learnt something. As Tayar says: ‘to know more is to be more.’ I think also that all astronauts will know about the great importance of personal relationships and would probably agree that God is Light as well as Love.”

“I do find it difficult, though, to get on with some of the boys at school, and especially the girls!” intervened Jonathan, in a rather flattened voice.

“But now you are more in touch with that light within — the light that is somewhere in everyone — you’ll find it easier and quicker to detect it in others and want to link up. When people are seriously engaged in working towards a similar attraction, the lights join together and expand into a new force... You’ll begin to experience this, Jonathan,” went on their satisfied guide, but Jonathan had already started to walk away.

Jonathan called back with a polite apology: “Please excuse me, Sir,” he said. “I just can’t wait any longer to tell the others my secret. I think they will be really thrilled.”

Our Sir Bors turned to Michael, and in good humour, smiled at him and said:

“Well, I can finish my final speech to you, my friend, and then, our time being up, we can return together to where we came from under Merlin’s guidance to fulfil his wishes. I’m sure he will keep us in touch with the progress of our ‘Jonathan Maybe.’ He’s still the old Jonathan though; he even forgot to say *au revoir* to us. He perhaps thought he’d see us again. I expect Merlin will use his impatience to better effect. What has happened within the mind of that young person will one day, I feel, bear much fruit. Anyway, I can’t resist ending up with a taste of the writing I left behind after leaving my Earth life — the theme seems to fit in with our thoughts today. I’ll also quote you a verse from their Tayar/Galahad.

Tillich:

*Reality at its very deepest level is personal.*¹⁴

and from Teilhard:

*The consciousness of each of us
is evolution looking at itself
and reflecting upon itself.*¹⁵

Shortly after this, the Merlinauts who’d been on this last trip into Cyberland found themselves back in Merlin’s den—the basement room in Bath’s Circus house. It was for the last time, and they were told by their friendly wizard that they would now be on their own. He would still watch over them and see that they got the encouragement they deserved. He gave a blessing on their future lives. When they came out, the Circus trees looked more beautiful than ever before.

The End

August 2005

Epilogue

Merlin's Logartian and 'one-off' Cyberland Academy is an isolated lodging facility for contact between Earth-based Grail Seekers (as committed Merlinauts) and others in Cyberland or passing through it. It is in a central realm of Teilhard's noosphere, which 'houses' the religious aspirations of Humanity, but is specifically within Purgatrillia — the halfway house and waiting venue for those in a Christian and Western culture and tradition.

This new computer-located safe-house, which Merlin calls 'Omegabode', has 'Tayar-talk' sessions for advanced members (Omegans) and ones for beginners (Abodians) but normally they all communicate together and enjoy the fun of cyber-enhanced Search Parties and Wayside comforts.

Beings from forward and advanced dimensions are frequent visitors, and they are welcome at the Academy to impart their wisdom and recall some of their Earthling memories. The three Grail Knights will often be there to help and advise with other members of Merlin's new Round Table. These include Sir Gaharis (Twentieth Century Bonhoeffer) with his worldly holiness approach and Sir Gareth (John Robinson) who brought all the new ideas together and lit them up again. It was he who emphasized and made accessible the importance of Tillich's teaching on the

‘personal’ in relation to God. Tillich put it like this:

*Personality is of ultimate significance in the constitution of the universe... In personal relationships we touch the final meaning of existence as nowhere else.*¹⁶

This Twentieth century knighthood in waiting, appointed by Merlin, will be joined by a first few up-to-date newcomers — male and female — ready to face the tuneless and torn-apart Twenty-first Century from within Cyberland. Their spirits will come across regularly from their true position in the After-life and will be more readily recognized. They will build on Galahad’s inspired new creation story and encourage or re-activate people to seek out the secrets of the Holy Grail themselves.

This completes number 4 of the secret K Files in the form of Merlin’s magical computer games. Number 5 is to come. After our four participants in this last episode had returned from their adventures along the chosen KristOmeagan routes, they’d all felt a kind of change in themselves. It was as though they’d had a glimpse of their goal and such scenes that achievement of the Grail would show them — the kingdom of Heaven that was within them, as once proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth Himself. During their time in Cyberland they’d matured — even been relieved to be without the constant chatter on mobile phones and the recurring effort to be ‘hip’.

The Merlinauts had then understood how, from there, they could eventually, some day, move on to the Christosphere and be reunited with their fellows who were also on the Christic Way — like Tom and his new friends.

Though Sam and Gillian are still the leading couple within the Merlinauts and of those who join up with them,

Lucy and the newly transformed Jonathan are a growingly important back-up with plenty of ideas and romantic plans of a decidedly daring nature — not always approved by Sam, but often favoured by Teilhard.

So now, at the end of our story, it could be said (no fooling) that the Merlinauts' Tayar/Galahad *did* come as a knight in shining armour, to the rescue, together with the other two Grail Knights and the members of Merlin's new Round Table. They came to heal and revive the ailing and weakened Kristic presence in the youth of our Western culture — no more looking for help or the word of God from above the sky, but within themselves. There, our unknowable God, but still our Father (the man Jesus assured us of this) is no less majestic or praiseworthy because He is within human minds, conscious and subconscious. From there he is still working out his plan through the long process of evolution. In Merlin's Cyber-Academy his recruits will learn more about the change in the face of God and Teilhard's thoughts about the God of tomorrow, or rather 'A God of ahead' — (in extension of the Human understanding of Him and its unified invention of a better future).' They'll also be shown the real drama and interest in life and how always 'to do ordinary things with the perception of their enormous value'. More of Teilhard's thoughts might be in place here:

For him who has seen it, everything, however humble, provided it places itself in the line of progress, is warmed, illumined and animated — and consequently becomes an object to which he gives his whole adhesion.

Life has meaning again.

The special idea that Merlin had tried so hard to make

clearer to his apprentices was Teilhard's vision of the completion and fulfilment of the world in KristOmega, toward which the Merlinauts already claim they are travelling. In his Cyber Academy there are new ways to make it come alive to them. Teilhard had written these words in a letter to his cousin, Marguerite: "The one clear thing to which I should like to devote myself as intensely as possible in my remaining years is to 'Christify' evolution... to bring out the universal nature of the Christ of history." This was in 1953 and now, in the Twenty-first century, seekers are instilled with new hope and the joyful notion that 'in Christ-Omega the universal takes shape and appears in personal form.' As a personality of personalities and collector of all human contributions, it awaits us far ahead in time, but it is still supremely present with all receptive mortals today and every day. This indwelling presence of a human and Cosmic Christ helps to connect its host with God the Father. In St John's Gospel it says:

By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His spirit.

The Merlinauts will learn that once anyone accepts and believes in the reality and potential power of the Christ-light within, more and more young people will again respond. They've heard it said of their Tayar/Galahad that this same Christ was always the great Love of his life.

As a start, the three Grail knights have left their Questers with three important ideas for them to think about: Galahad's conclusion that the progress of the spirit against the backward pull of basic matter is often the cause of pain and suffering, but that even the accidents of Life can become the web of a future masterpiece, when it is part of the extended Christian story. Then, Percivale's eagerness to

show the importance of the human body where soul and flesh meet and where we can discover the beauties of its construction and perfect measurements... The third contribution, by Sir Bors, was his attempt at convincing any star-struck, would-be 'sky-walkers' on interplanetary trips, that space is not full of 'Darth Vaders' who want to control their galaxy and our Earth. Nor is it a place for 'Jedi' battles and evil 'Droids,' but, like the new mind-spaces now forming, full of hope. In these spaces around the on-going Christic faith, Questers will fight the dark materials within human minds, and all its words of doom, with ceaseless 'mental strife.'

Like their wizard, these young people will never be static, for the growing edges of living things are always the strongest — in humans too, mental or physical.

Finally, we acknowledge our debt to Merlin's William (William Blake) — one who always dreamt of the coming together of, what he called, the 'Jerusalem in everyman'. Merlin first met him on his last visit to Earth in 1800 — a 'John the Baptist' figure, he thought, for his chosen new Galahad. He identified Christ as the Divine Humanity, and saw, with Teilhard, an enlightened future with a blossoming Hope for the new order.

Perhaps, when our present City of Bath gets its new Baths in working order, it will itself qualify as a place no longer dwelling on its past history, but on its even more beautiful future! For, as Teilhard tells us in his forecast for Mankind:

*The future is more beautiful than all the pasts.*¹⁷

As I end I wish to make a proposal:

On Easter Day in New York, fifty years ago, Teilhard had been invited out to tea with friends, and while he was stand-

ing he was offered a cup of tea by his hostess. As she held it out to him and he reached to receive it, he fell over like a falling tree, as if struck from behind. It was a heart attack and he died soon after. I now suggest that we link with this saintly man, prophet and poet, and his fresh way of 'seeing', and join him in spirit every time we begin a first cup of tea. We would feel we were drinking with him the tea he never took that day — a tribute from ordinary life — the Cuppa Extraordinaire? Already the Merlinaut's Tayar seems to be their permanent 'cup of tea'!

Another memory which Sam and Gillian hold dear is the last words of their little sister, Mary Joy, who died in hospital many years before. It was reported that she asked the nurses for a 'cup-a-tea'.

Anyway, I can report that Merlin is content to see the hazy outlines of his new Set-up, taking shape in the chilly-grey of 'first light.' It will brighten to Glad Day.

September 9th 2005

Margaret Mann

Postscript

This contains the last of Merlin’s own special K Files, a parting gift for his inexperienced Merlinauts after their return home to Ireland. They still had their four CDs containing sound extracts from these files. Sam had been given a television set for his 18th birthday and they all met again in his bedroom to try it out. They had a very big surprise. What they saw and heard was the following magical sequence from the Arthurian Legends — retold in great detail so as to appear more real. Those who read it should feel an actual part of it — witnesses to the happenings within it. They will be reminded of the lasting power of stories.

KRISTOMEGA FILE NUMBER FIVE

A LINK UP BETWEEN *MERLIN’S ISLAND* AND

MERLIN IN CYBERLAND

“I expect you thought I had forgotten this file!” came the voice of Merlin again. “But here I am — and my one-off sequel with its full wizardly enchantment. You can still join

in with the conversation and ask questions, as before, so sit back and enjoy it.” Merlin then started on his long explanatory preamble:

“Many people choose to focus almost entirely on the dark side of this life, yet if they looked good and straight they’d see as much, or even more, that is bathed in light. No longer that ‘world of darkness’, so often mentioned in the old hymns, but a world learning to love. When facing the darkness of malice, ignorance and fear, always remember the words of Merlin’s William: ‘Every criminal was once an infant Love.’ And, shining out of the dark side are the other heroes and heroines of this mortal scene of conflict — those dedicated to the relief and reduction of pain, physical or mental, and to the sharing of grief.” Merlin paused.

“I want you now,” began the Mage again, “to take your minds back to my island off the coast of Wales where I treated you to a fantasy visit and suggested to you a dream of mine for linking it to the mainland. It would take many years to complete that miracle tunnel from Bardsey Island to Aberdaron, the mainland town. ‘But it’s right underneath the swift-flowing currents of that treacherous channel, so why would it be even necessary?’ you might ask. Well, I also know you all saw the beginnings of this feat of engineering just before you left that island after your last fast-forward trip from here. By 2050, with a future ultra-modern technology, it should be built and in good, safe running order. And the reason the whole thing is worthwhile is because that little township and everywhere around the region will be swamped with pilgrims and visitors. They will come from far and wide to see where it all began.” Merlin paused.

“All *what* began?” enquired Jonathan with his former boldness.

“The new pattern of thinking and ways of looking at nature and evolution so as to become a part of it all. People

will want to cross over to the holy island and breathe its atmosphere now its exclusive holiness is joined up again to everyday, normal living — and permeating it.”

“But will all the simple and historical beauty of the present day town and island be spoilt or even lost in the process?” questioned Gilly with a touch of unease in her voice.

“Never fear, my discerning Merlinaut. They’ll keep the aura of the district intact and Bardsey and Aberdaron will retain their natural charm and powerful allure. All new buildings will be carefully vetted, positioned, designed... and limited, of course. Those Twenty-first Century houses and reception or accommodation centres in the town will be structured in the favoured zoomorphic style — no sharp corners or tall, four-square edifices but with curved and softer proportions.”

“I know that ‘zoo’ is something to do with animals,” said Sam, “and that ‘morphic’ relates to shape, but whatever do zoomorphic buildings look like?”

“Smooth and rounded shapes, more organic and related to the natural setting. There will also be an exact model of the old town, built just outside the transformed original one. There, you will be able to gaze upon the Gegin Fawr, the stone bridge and Ship Inn, all with their nostalgic appeal. The new state of the art constructions will, as far as possible, keep their old names.”

“Bardsey itself featured many times in the oldest of the Arthurian tales,” interjected Gilly. “In one that I came across, by a German writer, Percivale is recorded as having a broken sword which he takes back to the swordsmith who had forged it in the first place. This legendary sword-maker once lived on this very same island, which we now know and love. This man had made Arthur’s Excalibur as well. He was encircled though by twin serpents which Percivale

had to slay before he could reach him. Anyway, the sword was duly restored and the knight was told that it had been broken at the gates of paradise.”

“Your story, Gillian, suggests to me that these serpents were symbols of the old churches which separated spirit from matter, Christianity from the natural world, and love from sex. A piece had been missing from Percivale’s sword which had then been made whole again... By the way, Lucy, the German writer would probably not have known that there were no snakes on that island!”

“And how does Galahad come into all this post-tunnel scene,” asked Sam, after a few chuckles and a short reflection on possible developments.

“A good question from my lead-quester,” replied the Mage approvingly. In a minute I’m going to give you my new version of the final episodes which end traditional Grail-quest themes in the Arthuriad — it’s one I’ve invented to fit my story better.”

“I hope you’ll be able to bring Galahad back to life again in the new ending,” said Jonathan with genuine interest.

“Well, that’s just what I mean to do — in my own way of course... You see, when Galahad had drunk from this ‘long sort-after’ holy thing — said to be ‘the root and blossoming of human heart’s desire’ — he didn’t die but walked out of the Grail chapel and then disappeared. The other two knights (Percivale and Bors) had been watching him and were hoping for a sip from the same chalice themselves. They’d seen the look of great joy on the face of Galahad. Soon after this though, there had followed a shocking sequence. As the Grail knight had replaced the shining goblet onto the altar, they’d noticed with horror that there was a serpent coiled around its base. Next thing, the Grail had been withdrawn — faded out — and the creature, left writhing on the altar, had dropped down and was gone.”

“But there are *no* snakes on Bardsey,” called out Lucy in grave agitation.

“We know this, Lucy, and there’s no need to doubt it. At the time of writing, these ‘Matter of Britain’ stories of Arthurian background located Corbonek as being somewhere, I guess, in north Wales. Our holy island was only a part of it. The exact site of the Grail castle was, and still is, my secret. In one of these old stories it tells of two young men who chanced upon a ruined building while walking in this area in later years. They went inside and stayed there a long time. When they came out their lives had been changed by an intensity of experience. The Grail legend always had a lingering and powerful affect on human minds.

“Didn’t Percivale and Bors go out and look for Galahad after he had left them?” said Jonathan after a pause, but impatient as ever.

“Not straight away, but when they did and had looked everywhere, they could not find him. By then he’d sailed away in a mystical boat with his father, Lancelot. In the old chronicles the boat is called ‘The ship of Solomon’.”

“But how could that happen?” interjected Gillian, who knew the Arthurian stories very well and was now really confused.

“Well it’s happening this time in the context of my new ending, you’ll find it will all come together shortly — but do keep checking things out, my young friend... For you all, I shall now go through my version — step by step.”

As the four youngsters moved a little restlessly in their chairs, they were confronted, quite suddenly, with the large TV screen, which now lit up on the wall. It was showing a pleasant landscape with a path leading through the green grass towards the coast. Merlin began a short commentary as they waited.

“This is a scene outside the Grail castle,” he said. “Soon

you will see Galahad, who has just left the sanctity of the chapel, come down the winding stairs and out of the fabled building through a back entrance.” Merlin was silent.

Now, as they watched, a figure was seen walking slowly along the path. He had no armour on, save for some chain mail, and no helmet or sword. His tunic had a red cross upon it. As he got nearer the coast he passed a strange sight, for there on the bank they saw a saddled horse roaming free and cropping the grass. Its reins were dangling down over its head and nearby lay some weighty bits of armour and a lance. Galahad surveyed these with surprise but walked on. Arriving at a small inlet of the sea he saw a little boat with someone sitting in it and holding it against the side of the rocky bank. There was a rail to grasp. The boat’s sails were set and blowing in the wind so they could see the design on one of them — it was in the shape of the Grail, but its outline was green in colour.

There was now some soft music playing in the background. As Galahad approached the bank, he stopped, but the man in the boat who had obviously been waiting, beckoned to him. Galahad descended some rough stone steps and joined him. Galahad now recognised him, joyfully, as Lancelot, his father, who then greeted him as The Grail knight. After this, a gust of wind miraculously filled the sails of the little boat and it moved towards the open sea.

The screen in front of them went black again and Merlin continued the story:

“During one of Lancelot’s knightly adventures,” the Mage explained, “he heard, within himself, my voice. I was forcefully constraining him to dismount and walk towards the coast. There, I told him, he’d come to this inlet where he’d see the little boat, seemingly pressed up against the bank. He was to enter it and wait there for the young knight, Galahad, who had been seen at Camelot in his gleaming,

rust-red armour, to sit in the long-empty ‘Perilous Seat’ at the Round Table. This had happened that very year on the first day of the month of May.”

“Did he know that Galahad was also his son?” asked Lucy.

“Not at this point,” came the answer. “But they were in the boat a long time, during which all these things would come out. Lancelot, described in the traditional cycle of stories as ‘the best knight in the world’, was certainly the strongest and most courteous and merciful of Arthur’s knights. But he also had this seemingly fatal flaw — his love and desire for Arthur’s wife, which in the end caused the downfall of the Christian kingdom. Yet, what was called a ‘mortal sin’ produced the child Galahad who became the most spiritual knight ever to sit at the Round Table... Now, these two characters were together, able to converse and get to know each other.”

“They surely would be too cold and cramped in that small boat on a choppy sea, to want to talk about anything serious,” commented Jonathan doubtfully.

“You must remember, boy, that this is a magic ship in a make-believe, mythical happening. The story itself is the thing to enjoy, and as you get older its inner truths will become clearer — don’t worry about it!”

Jonathan, feeling quite old enough and a bit slighted, sulked for a while. But he soon forgot to be hurt, and his abounding confidence returned.

“Anyway, Lancelot sorrowfully explained to Galahad how he had been struck down for daring to enter the Holy Place where he’d once sighted the Grail. He’d guessed the reason for the bann — his wrongful love — and had confessed his faults at a nearby hermitage. He couldn’t change though, and lamentably had given up the quest. Then Galahad broke the news to Lancelot that he was actually his

son. He reminded his astonished father of that night spent secretly with Elaine, daughter of the Fisher King, guardian of the Holy Grail. Though Lancelot had known later that he'd been tricked into thinking, in the darkness, that Elaine was Gwenevere, in his shame he'd put it out of his mind. Now he understood."

"Was he then proud of his son in spite of his guilt?" asked Lucy.

"Yes — he joyfully commended Galahad for his extraordinary purity of purpose, who then admitted that he'd admired his father's stubborn worldliness — 'Not for you,' he agreed, 'is the way of the Grail. You've chosen another path.' Lancelot accepted this statement and they smiled wryly at each other as the boat sails on."

"Of course, Lancelot couldn't help falling in love with the Queen," burst out Gillian quite passionately. "It just happens to people and is a bodily thing — heart over mind. It wasn't really his fault. A collision with the rules and rites followed. I myself was in love with somebody once and will never forget the feeling of complete happiness, engulfing all worries and fears. It was always a wholly irresistible take-over, when in his company. I seemed to be in a sort of dream."

Gilly was blushing, for the others were looking at her, but she carried on.

"We were surrounded with an aura of magical delight which caught in its spell everything we did and wherever we went. A glow remained long afterwards. The relationship was also, at times, a bit like a roller-coaster with its highs and then lows of doubts and recriminations... these last, happily to be forgiven and forgotten the next day when we met again and the enhanced view returned. Then of course there was always the after feelings... the sudden expansive surge in the breast at some memory — the tentative

parting kiss, the touch of his hand or the feel of his arm on one's shoulder... my heart singing.”

“How did it all end though?” questioned Jonathan, rather cheekily.

“He had to move away,” Gilly replied quietly, and in deflated tones adding that it was a very long way away and that they'd gradually lost touch. “But I'll never forget how I felt,” she ended. “And charges of sin can't possibly be connected with anything like that. It was all so wonderful.”

The youngsters waited intently for Merlin's response to these outpourings and were quite surprised at his next words, which finally came.

“Well spoken, Gillian,” he exclaimed. “I totally agree about wrongly ascribing sin to so many natural feelings. Lancelot did try for a long time not to hurt the King whom he served — and, of course, Gwenevere was also in love with Lancelot. It's the culprit's underlying loss of self-respect, after disruptive affairs, that does the extra damage in a sin-ridden society. People can either succumb to it or cast it violently aside. Both ways lead to anger and unloveliness — grave dangers.”

“Is that why we hear so often of strangely horrific crimes?” lamented Lucy.

“It sometimes seems very tempting,” came the reply, “to try to escape from the existing network of religious and political structures. To do so often leads to complications, sorrow or even abuse. It greatly saddens me that such natural, freely-given bliss, such as our dear friend has described, should sometimes lead to disaster. The initial attraction, always, is just the working out, within human beings, of the instincts that even the summer flowers experience when they crave for their pollinators. I expect that Gillian made a big effort to look her best and show off her assets before her date, in the same way that the flowers display their al-

luring shapes and bright colours to the passing bees! To *our* great benefit as well.”

Merlin waited till the discernable sound of whispering and good-natured chuckles — directed in Gilly’s direction — subsided.

“Seriously though,” continued the Mage, “I must suggest that this early experience of Gillian’s, like all expressions of genuine love, is a taste of things to come in evolving humanity. The heart has its reasons, and when it feels the unifying pull of KristOmega, it dreams of ‘Paradise Regained’ — reward of faith and hope. So, my thanks again to the girl who lit up a precious memory for us.”

“But she *did* rather interrupt your story, didn’t she?” complained Jonathan. “I’m longing to know where the boat is taking them.”

“Right then... I’ll now continue — full speed,” announced Merlin calmly...

After the two men had come to terms with the parting of their ways, the sail of the little boat began to flap loudly. The boat turned and headed towards a distant coastline. When, later, they arrived and grounded smoothly onto the pebble beach, they thought back to their warm encounter and momentous revelations out at sea and were sorrowful it was all ending. Knowing it had to be, Galahad laid his hand on his father’s shoulder and their eyes met with deep affection. When they looked again at the wide, deserted beach, they saw a hermit-like figure coming into view from one end, and he was leading a white horse. The men then detected a chapel, or a small monastic building, partly hidden by sheltering trees. It was from there that the figure came, and who now, being nearer to the boat, called out to its occupants, ‘I’ve come for the Grail knight.’ The voice rang out on the scented breeze.

“Galahad jumped into the shallow water, and after greet-

ing the monk, leapt up onto the well-saddled and bridled animal. The robed figure pointed out a path rising to some rolling country ahead with the hazy outlines of a city in the background — towers and spires in plenty. Knight and horse set off alone, but the rider turned once to wave to Lancelot who was left damp-eyed, but still filled with pride for his newly found son. Merlin had told them before they reached land that they were approaching the new Grail country, reserved for Grail seekers everywhere, and now being developed and built up for KristOmega. This place was called ‘Sarras’ in the old Arthurian annals.”

“What happened then to poor Lancelot?” chirped up Lucy during the following pause.

“You’re as bad as Johnnie,” said Sam. “Give Merlin a rest, for goodness sake.”

“Thankyou Sam,” the Mage responded with a touch of amusement in his voice. “I never get tired, actually, but I was just deciding how best I could make my story at least as convincing as some of your favourite ‘soap operas’ — or whatever you call them. You see, during your visit to Cyberland you will be living out my story yourselves — and others as well. All the long-running installments of the lives of certain characters who react to special events and form the narrative of these TV programmes, are the result of many feats of the imagination. They must be plausible, consistent and acceptable in every detail. When brought to life on the screen they can influence you as much as people you meet in real life and become loved or hated, copied or rejected — sometimes affecting normal relationships. Now, I’d like to hear how you feel about all this, so please talk among yourselves for a minute, and I’ll shut up!”

The youngsters did just this, and came to the conclusion that they often *did* get lost in some of the soaps, and did find that they had stronger feelings for the fictitious charac-

ters than for the actors themselves. Sometimes, also, they agreed, the drama was more real than actual life and the boys admitted it often affected their later behaviour.

“One episode of ‘Neighbours’ last week made me cry!” said Lucy.

“And it made me understand better the staying power of true love,” added Gilly, “and the sting of spite and ill-will. These on-going programmes do seem to cast a semi-magical spell over us — as do some books I’ve read.”

“Many thanks, my Cybernauts, for confirming my notion about your new leisure activities. I’m now able to return to the fate of Lancelot — at last Lucy! — and to Galahad’s progress.” Merlin was heard to draw in his breath — sharply.

“When Lancelot was left alone,” the words continued, “he was instructed to set out to sea again, so he got out of the boat and, with his legendary strength, pushed it back into the water before re-boarding. As if from distant regions of space and time, a fresh wind from the sea caught again his sail and the little boat took Lancelot home to the kingdom of Logres where, with my help, he made his way back to Camelot — and, of course, to the Queen, Gwenevere. But on the sea journey he’d had a happy dream where, as a father, he’d seen his son holding the Holy Grail in his hands — and Galahad’s face had been full of light. Our sadly erring knight had taken great comfort from this when he had wakened, and had again felt pride at his son’s achievement. He’d known that the spirit which ‘breaths through all creation’ was around him there in the boat.”

More silence followed.

“Now, you can go on picturing the next scene in your heads,” went on the Mage, “like Gillian and her books. Imagine this unwallled medieval town where, to begin with, Galahad was welcomed joyfully and taken to the people’s hearts. He was followed everywhere, was asked questions,

and offered shelter and nourishment. He talked and listened to them in churches, houses and roadside clearings. Sometimes he gave council in the Palace where lived the elderly king. Klingsor — of dubious repute in Arthurian chronicles — who was trying to hide his increasing jealousy of Galahad. This had shown itself by subtle doubts and disparagements of Galahad, who was called the Grail Lord.”

“I find that hard to accept,” admitted Sam. “I can’t think that someone like Klingsor should have been in the Grail Country at all and also that he would have been so unimpressed by Galahad.”

“Of course, you’re right. But in one of the original Arthurian romances there is a character called Klingsor who tried to appropriate the Grail for his own personal aggrandisement. I’ve named my character after this model and I’m implying that this king was spreading rumours of basic errors in Galahad’s vision — which, after all, did take quite an effort to take in because of its newness.”

“You mean that this Klingsor was so keen to lead the people in their Grail search,” suggested Sam, “that he thought his own way must be the only way.”

“Roughly so, I guess. Something like that certainly occurred because poor Galahad was becoming frustrated and depressed. He took to wandering around the adjoining countryside, determined to recover the power in the memory of what he saw when he looked inside that sacred chalice. No-one must ever distract him from this vision, he decided, so he ended up back in the region of Brittany where he was brought up by the nuns at a convent run by a sister of the Lady of the Lake. Here his youthful dreams came flooding back.”

“Isn’t that where you, Merlin, arranged to take Galahad, as a child, to be brought up?” asked Gilly. “And where the enchanted forest of Broceliande is located?”

“Full marks, Gillian. Like your brother you use your inner eye with special ease. I was there at that time and living within this very woodland with Vivienne, the enchantress. We’d caught up with Galahad and spent much time with him. I knew about such people as Klingsor and their cronies — they have ways of undermining the confidence of the strongest of visionaries. But Galahad had seen the great secret within the grail and this would never leave him, though he was world-weary and needed rest. I took a decision.”

“You promised that in your new story Galahad didn’t have to die,” Jonathan reminded the Mage in no uncertain terms!

“Yes, I did. But I also stated that it would be in my own way. You’ll be just as pleased in the end young man,” Merlin assured him, before putting to them the nature of his plan.

“In the ‘High Books’ of the old Grail stories there is a tradition of withdrawal. This involves incidents where great and noble beings who have withdrawn to an inner plane of existence from where they can watch over the progress of humanity, can sometimes take a direct hand in historical events. The legendary Galahad is now one of the people described there. He entered Broceliande with us and didn’t come out. He fell asleep, and you’ll not hear of him again until he returns, after many centuries, as my stand-in Grailfinder of the Twentieth Century — and your Tayar. This is a fantastic evoking of this tradition for my story. He well deserves the honour. Fifty years later you should have felt his presence on Bardsey Island where, reawakened and revealed to the eyes of his followers, he was working at the building up of the spirit of the Earth with all those other wakened saints.”

“So we could have seen him during our last trip to the

island when the time was the future year 2050?” said an excited Gillian.

“Do you know...” followed up Lucy, equally intrigued. “While you were all staring at the gold chain that Johnnie was showing to the three VIPs sitting in the reception hall of the Grail Centre, I saw this tall figure in a black cassock. He was standing in the background and looking our way, but his face was in the shadow. I’d noticed him before moving about inconspicuously behind the scenes. I thought at the time he was a queerly-dressed attendant insuring the smooth-running of the Centre, plus any special happenings — such as the enlivened saints walking in — then *us* as well! I did see him being consulted once or twice, though.”

“It could have been him,” burst out Jonathan. “And we did hear his voice earlier, and were able to talk to him, so perhaps it’s all true.”

“It was just at the time when the work had begun on the building of the tunnel across to the mainland,” remarked Sam. “We saw this, and it all fits in to the story.”

Our Cybernauts carried on discussing these developments between themselves and putting some anxious questions to Merlin.

“There *was* a rumour going round at the time,” said Merlin, concluding his period of exchange between his apprentices, “that Klingsor had persuaded Galahad, citing some fabricated reasons, to leave that country for a while and travel to another far-off one to preach his new vision; it would enlarge his mission, he told him. Galahad complied, but was unhappy. He died and was buried there in the foreign country, but such a passionately alive person could not stay long in a grave, I don’t think! And I’m sticking firmly to my new story... OK with you Jonathan?” he asked.

Now that Merlin has finished relating his new story to the youngsters, we can pick up a modern sequence, also from

the old store of Arthurian legend and Celtic myth. Soon after the Mage sent Galahad to his long sleep, he is himself put under the same enchantment by Vivienne with whom he was in love, but it was reported in one of the early narratives that Gawaine, another of the famous knights, heard Merlin's voice once afterwards, when the knight passed a certain spot in Broceliande on his way through the forest. It was during one of his Quest adventures, but Gawaine never quite achieved the Grail and in the end contributed to the downfall of Lancelot and the break-up of the Round Table.

Of course, not long after Galahad left the Grail country, Percivale and his wife, Blanchfleur, established themselves there. Klingsor having died, they were able to carry on Galahad's work. Their son, Lohengrin, you'll hear more of later.

Anyhow in our story, Merlin and Galahad (now Teilhard) come back to full life on the Holy island of Bardsey at just about the same time in history, and they knew themselves to be at the place once called 'The Rendezvous of the Dead' in the land of the Celtic other-world — Avalon. Avalon was believed to have had an enchanted hill, holy wells, and caverns of sleeping heroes — the abode of ghosts — but your Tayar, in his new mode of existence, has other plans for it now. With Merlin's help he's presiding over the task of fitting new belief in divine humanity within the colourful shells of older ones — from pre-Christian and pre-Roman times through to the Twenty-first Century. Spiritual evolution grows through its progressive stages in the same way as natural evolution — one stage always growing out of the one before and never losing anything on the way. So, on one of the seven special Celtic islands, the Welsh *Caer Siddi* (island of glass) it was said that the seeker entered different states of being on the soul's journey in quest of knowledge.

Then, as it is in Annwyn, the Celt's innermost realm, it is possible to look out and study all the manifold forms of creation. It's the place from where the seeker becomes aware of all possibilities.

Arthur was one of the seven men voyaging around these seven islands searching for the prize in the old story. The world's prize is still The Holy Grail, and starting from Bardsey our new Galahad will lead us in the contemporary search. We know it's not just a gold cup for sporting triumphs, or heights of scientific achievements, although these are a hint of the sorts of things for which we make our greatest efforts.

In the last visit to Merlin's den in the Circus these young people had learnt much more about the part of Cyberland where he has prepared a special place for them, as a temporary abode, from where they could experience and explore the new country of the mind. The shape of it all will be in the guise of Merlin's new story continuing in the Arthurian tradition.

Merlin finished this last of his K-Files with a final admonition:

"You should have known that Arthur and his loyal knights would wake from their sleep when needed again, and come to the rescue."

This was followed by a Grail knight's assurance from the voice of Sir Percivale: "Now I can humbly announce," he said, "that myself and Blanchfleur, as the Prince and Princess of Merlin's Grail Country, and with my fellow Grail knights — Peter and Paul — can soon be seen and heard to enter our new realm..."

"These perspectives will appear absurd to those who don't see that life is, from its origins, groping, adventurous, and dangerous. But these perspectives

will grow, like an irresistible idea on the horizon of new generations.”¹⁸

This quotation ended the last K-File.

Then our Merlinauts well-loved wizard bid them another farewell and wished them very good questing. He then repeated to them his favourite lines from the writings of his new Galahad, who was also their own Tayar:

The conclusion is always the same: love is the most powerful and still the most unknown energy of the world.¹⁹



Glad Day by William Blake

Endnote

As in natural evolution it is the survivors that determine future growth, so it is mostly human survivors who affect our future direction. Teilhard survived the First World War as a stretcher bearer, winning an award for bravery at the end of it. The war made basic changes in his Christology.

Something big can sometimes just happen within anyone's mind during his or her life, which becomes a fresh and powerful future vision. It is due to the temperament, upbringing, background, collected data and favourite pursuits of this person, making, by chance, the vital mixture.

In his last essay, "The Christic", written a month before he died, Teilhard says:

Truth has to appear only once, in one single mind, for it to be impossible for anything ever to prevent it from spreading universally and setting everything ablaze.²⁰

Suggested Further Reading

Roger Lancelyn Green, *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*.

Marcia Williams, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, Walker Books.

Notes

- ¹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, 1936, p.74.
- ² Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin*, p.42
- ³ Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin*, p.37
- ⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.2, p.8
- ⁵ Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, Oxford University Press, 1960, p.109
- ⁶ *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, MacMillan, 1961
- ⁷ From the poem “Taliesin in the Rose-Garden” by Charles Williams
- ⁸ In my earlier book, *Under the Merlin Spell*.
- ⁹ From “Taliesin and the Rose-Garden” by Charles Williams
- ¹⁰ Mark 7.7 and Luke 11.9
- ¹¹ Havelock Ellis, *My Life*, Neville Spearman, 1967, p.489
- ¹² From William Blake’s Prophetic Books
- ¹³ Michael Dames, *Merlin and Wales: A Magician’s Landscape*, Thames & Hudson, 2002, p.160
- ¹⁴ Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, SCM Press, 1951, p.65
- ¹⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Harper & Row, 1959, p.221
- ¹⁶ John Robinson, *Honest to God*, SCM Press, 1963
- ¹⁷ Teilhard de Chardin, *Letters to Two Friends*, New American Library, 1968
- ¹⁸ Teilhard de Chardin, from his essay “Human Energy”
- ¹⁹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Letters to two friends*, New American Library, 1968, p.182
- ²⁰ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Heart of Matter*, Collins, 1978, p.102