



Reviews

JOAN UPTON HALL, *Arturo el Rey*. Austin, Texas: Turn Key Press, 2003. Pp. 315. ISBN: 0-9740030-2-6. \$17.95.

In Hall's novel, *Arturo el Rey*, Malory, T. H. White, and Lerner and Loewe meet Mad Max and the American western. Bio-terrorists have let loose a plague that, thanks to nuclear retaliation by the major powers, signals the end of civilization as we know it. In the novel's post-apocalyptic world, gangs fight one another for the meager spoils still at hand. In Texas, a former marine, Art Reyes, astride his trusty motorcycle, rallies the decent remnants of the state's population to establish a new world order. Reyes is haunted by dreams of himself as the legendary Arthur dying with a lance in his chest. His Arthurian former life subsequently becomes part of his own contemporary legend as he is dubbed 'Arturo el Rey.'

As other writers before her, Hall picks and chooses which parts of the Arthuriad to incorporate into her novel. Thus we meet reincarnations of Arthur, Guinevere, Merlin, Lancelot, and other familiar Arthurian characters, along with a gifted artist and scribe named Tom. Problematically though, at times little happens in long passages in the novel, while at other times, especially those parts of the novel most consciously attempting to incorporate elements of the Arthuriad, too much happens in too few pages. As a result, Hall's version of an oft-told tale lacks any sense of narrative balance or pace. Hall's premise does nicely reflect a comment by Raymond H. Thompson: 'the need for Arthur to ride yet again against the foe is as eternal as the human failings that foment strife, and as long as we continue to yearn for a better world, so will Arthur's return be' (*King Arthur's Modern Return*, ed. Debra N. Mancoff. New York: Garland, 1998, p. 11). But the Arthuriad as western or biker tale has been done better elsewhere, most notably on film.

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